

ROMANCE AND THE VENDING MACHINE AND OTHER STORIES
WILLIAM S. FRANKL, INFINITY PUBLISHING.COM, Haverford, PA, \$13.95,
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Keeping in tune with the fast pace of modern life, William S. Frankl, M.D., the author of the novel "Damaged Heart: A Medical Tale" and several published stories, has moved away from the traditional type of short story and exploited the very short form to showcase his creative work in "Romance and the Vending Machine and Other Stories." Comprising forty-two stories, this anthology focuses on the consequences of choices, by exploring five different settings – during lost opportunities, in a dubious relationship, in a marriage beset by problems, when providence plays a role, and while on the deathbed.

The title story - perhaps one of the most entertaining one of the collection - relates an incongruous tale of a mathematics and physics genius from Princeton University, who is love-struck with an automated woman's voice on a vending machine that dispenses beverages and snacks, and finally ends up in a lunatic asylum. In "So, What is There to Say?" immediately after a woman breaks off her relationship with her boyfriend because of his inability to provide her with the luxuries of life, she realizes what a good chance she has missed when he announces that he has just won a very big lottery. The briskly-paced "E-Mail Romance" outlines how an Internet relationship boomerangs when the lovers plan a face-to-face date. The author's captivating dark humor and the hand of fate are evident in "Sudden Change" and "Francisco Franco is Dead." In "Another Time," a cancer patient who is at death's door takes a trip down memory lane, reminiscing about past events and experiences. This imaginatively conceived collection embraces all the elements of successful short-short stories: the brevity required to engage the reader's interest in a short time span, and the inclusion of a limited number of characters, a single setting, and an astounding disclosure. Each story is unique, aptly reflecting the experiences of life, while highlighting fascinating insights into human relationships.

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