



# Refund: Stories

*Karen E. Bender*

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## **Refund: Stories** Karen E. Bender

We think about it every day, sometimes every hour: Money. Who has it. Who doesn't. How you get it. How you don't.

Bender uses this very powerful force to pull together a unified collection of stories that deeply explore the ways in which money and the subsequent estimation of value affect the lives of her characters. The stories in *Refund* reflect our contemporary world—swindlers, reality show creators, desperate artists, siblings, parents — who struggle to figure out how to obtain money, how to give it, earn it, lose it, all the while trying to answer the question: What is the real definition of worth?

In “Theft,” an eighty-year-old swindler, accustomed to tricking people for their money, discovers she has Alzheimer's and boards a cruise ship to see if she can find something of true value—a human connection. In “Anything for Money,” the creator of a popular reality show is thrown into the real world when his estranged granddaughter reenters his life in need of a new heart; in “The Sea Turtle Hospital,” a young teacher and her charge survive another school lockdown to seek out comfort in stranded sea animals, as they learn to cherish themselves and all living things; and in the provocative title story, young artist parents in downtown Manhattan escape the attack on 9/11 only to face a battle over their subtletted apartment with a stranger who might have lost more than only her deposit.

Set in New York City, the American South, and Los Angeles, these stories explore what we can afford and what we cannot and herald a work of singular literary merit by an important writer at the height of her power.

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