

# Fabulous Feebles



Gerald M. Weinberg

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# **Contents**

<b>The Mouse and The Iron</b>	1
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# The Mouse and The Iron

One Tuesday, Morris the Mouse was exploring the kitchen when he found himself on top of the ironing board facing an electric iron. The iron's face was so shiny he could see his reflection, as if it were a mirror. The iron was tilted a bit backward, so his reflection seemed to be another mouse who was a bit shorter than he was. Morris was a lonely mouse, so when he saw this short mouse, he imagined that it was a girl mouse come to the kitchen to make his acquaintance.

Shyly, Morris moved a bit closer to the lovely stranger. Because she was his reflection, she advanced toward him with equal shyness.

Cautiously, he smiled. Just as cautiously, she smiled back. He introduced himself as Morris, and he could read her lips as she very softly whispered her name, which looked like Dorris. As you can imagine, Morris quickly fell head over tail in love with such a warmhearted partner.

They sat for a while, Morris and his mirror image, gazing into each other's eyes in loving rapture. Suddenly, Mrs. Mumble, the lady of the house came into the kitchen to do her Tuesday ironing. "Run," Morris commanded his sweetheart, and then scampered away from the iron. Glancing back for a moment, he saw that she was running away

as commanded, but in the opposite direction. "Dorris must live over in that neighborhood," he thought.

All the next week, Morris looked for his darling on the opposite side of the kitchen, but she was nowhere to be found. On Tuesday, however, the ironing board was set up again, and the iron was placed on top and plugged in. As soon as Mrs. Mumble left the room, Morris scooted up onto the board.

Sure enough, there in the iron was Dorris, his one true love. As he ran up to her, he could not conceal his emotions, and he saw that she could not conceal hers, either. He reached out to her, and she reached out to him. They touched paws. They kissed. Morris was overcome with love for her, though enough in control of his senses to see that Dorris was likewise overcome with love for him. He kissed her again, and it seemed to him that her kiss was growing warmer.

Again and again he kissed her. Now her growing warmth was unmistakable. Indeed, Morris was becoming so warm that he had to move away from her a bit to cool off. Dorris moved away, too.

Morris smiled and told her things about himself. Though Dorris did not answer, he didn't mind. He liked girls who were good listeners, and he felt that her smiles were responding to what he said. At last, he could no longer resist her charms, and rushed forward to kiss her once again.

By this time, of course, the iron had reached its full heat. “Eeeow!” he screamed, jumping back with burned mouth and paws. “Why did you do that?” But before Dorris could reply, Mrs. Mumble came back, and they both had to run away to safety.

All week long, Morris brooded about what he had done to offend his girlfriend. Perhaps he had been too forward. Or, perhaps, not forward enough. On the other hand, he *had* spent a lot of time talking about himself. Perhaps that was what Dorris found offensive. “Next time,” he resolved, “I will let her tell me about herself. I will beg her forgiveness.”

The next Tuesday was Mrs. Mumble’s ironing day again, and she set out the ironing board and the iron. As soon as she left the kitchen, Morris rushed out to see his love, his heart pounding for fear she would not come. But Dorris was there, in the iron. Since Mrs. Mumble had not plugged in the iron, his image greeted him in a friendly, but somewhat cool, manner. They passed a pleasant hour, kissing and holding paws, and not a word was said about their previous trouble. Before Morris had a chance to bring it up, Mrs. Mumble opened the kitchen door, and the lovers had to part for another week.

For Morris, it was another week of brooding. Delighted as he was that Dorris had taken him back, he could still recall the coolness she had never shown before. He finally decided that he must be very careful on their next meeting.

On Tuesday, their meeting was delayed for more than an hour because Mrs. Mumble stayed in the kitchen making

raisin tarts while the iron was warming. Then she stayed in the kitchen to finish the ironing, and didn't leave until she had unplugged the iron.

No sooner was Mrs. Mumble out of the room than Morris leapt onto the ironing board and raced into the outstretched arms of his darling Dorris. "Eeeow!" he screamed as he ran right into the searing iron. "Why did you do *that*?"

He questioned her, pleaded with her, even confessed all his shortcomings to her, but she would not tell him what he had done wrong. At last, even though she had said nothing, he began to detect a change in her attitude. "Perhaps," he wondered, "she has forgiven me, seeing that I have been punished enough." He moved forward cautiously, and sure enough, she moved cautiously toward him. She returned his tentative kiss, then his embrace, with all warmth and affection of their second meeting.

And so it went, from Tuesday to Tuesday, sometimes hot, sometimes cold. Poor Morris was soon covered with scars from the branding of the iron. But fortunately for Morris, Mrs. Mumble got tired of ironing and threw away all of Mr. Mumble's dress shirts. Then she bought him a new wardrobe of wash-and-wear shirts that required no ironing. She sold the ironing board in a garage sale and gave Mr. Mumble the iron for a paperweight to hold down his pile of recycled newspapers.

Morris never saw Dorris again. Many weeks later, he met another lady mouse in the pantry. She wasn't as beautiful as Dorris, but she was fascinated by all his scars, and

soon they married. They lived happily ever after, but not so happily that Morris didn't occasionally dream of how wonderful life would have been with Dorris.

**Morals:** If you are foolish enough to suppose that the iron turns hot and cold for you, you are foolish enough to be badly burned.

**In other words:** True love always involves two creatures, not one creature and a mirror.