

A Love Story for the Ages

Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) was an important philosopher during the Enlightenment. But he wasn't exactly the best-looking guy, and he suffered from a hunched back. But in one fell swoop, he turned his "handicap" to his own advantage and won the heart of a young woman named Fromet. It is one of the most touching love stories of all time. Here's how it goes.

Moses and Fromet were having a chat. (Nobody says you need to find someone attractive just to talk. Besides, the conversation is often better than with less attractive people than with superficially handsome types.) It didn't take long for Fromet to realize this as well. She was soon enchanted by the depth, elegance, and pleasant voice of the Berlin philosopher. They discussed everything under the sun—including the topic of love.

Moses: "Dearest Fromet, have you ever heard about the angel in heaven that announces who is meant for whom?"

Fromet: "Come now, Mr. Mendelssohn, do you really believe that marriages are made in heaven?"

Moses: "Most certainly I do."

Fromet: "That when a child is born, this angel announces: 'This person will end up with that person?'"

Moses: "But of course. And in my case something very special occurred. Right as I was born, you see, the angel announced my future wife, but then he said: 'Alas, she will have a hump, and a terrible one, I'm afraid!'"

Fromet: "Oh, my goodness!"

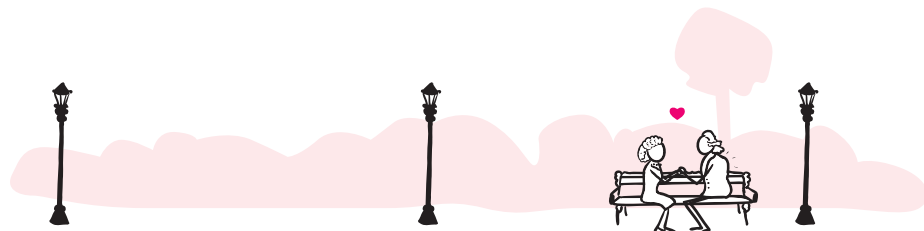
Moses: "So I said, 'Dear angel, a girl with a deformity can easily become bitter and hard, but a girl is meant to be beautiful. Please, dear angel, give me the hump instead, and let the girl be slender and lovely.'"

According to the story, Fromet then fell into Moses' arms.

In June 1762, the big day arrived: Moses Mendelssohn and Fromet Gugenheim were married. It was an incredibly happy marriage, producing seven children, each more talented than the last. Fromet Gugenheim outlived her sickly husband by twenty-six years, and even lived to meet her grandson Felix Mendelssohn, the famous Romantic composer, who was three years old when she died in 1812.



Bernard Meuser, *Sternstunden* (Fontis Verlag, 2016), 11ff.



REFLECT

Read this story aloud. How does it make you feel? Why is it so moving?