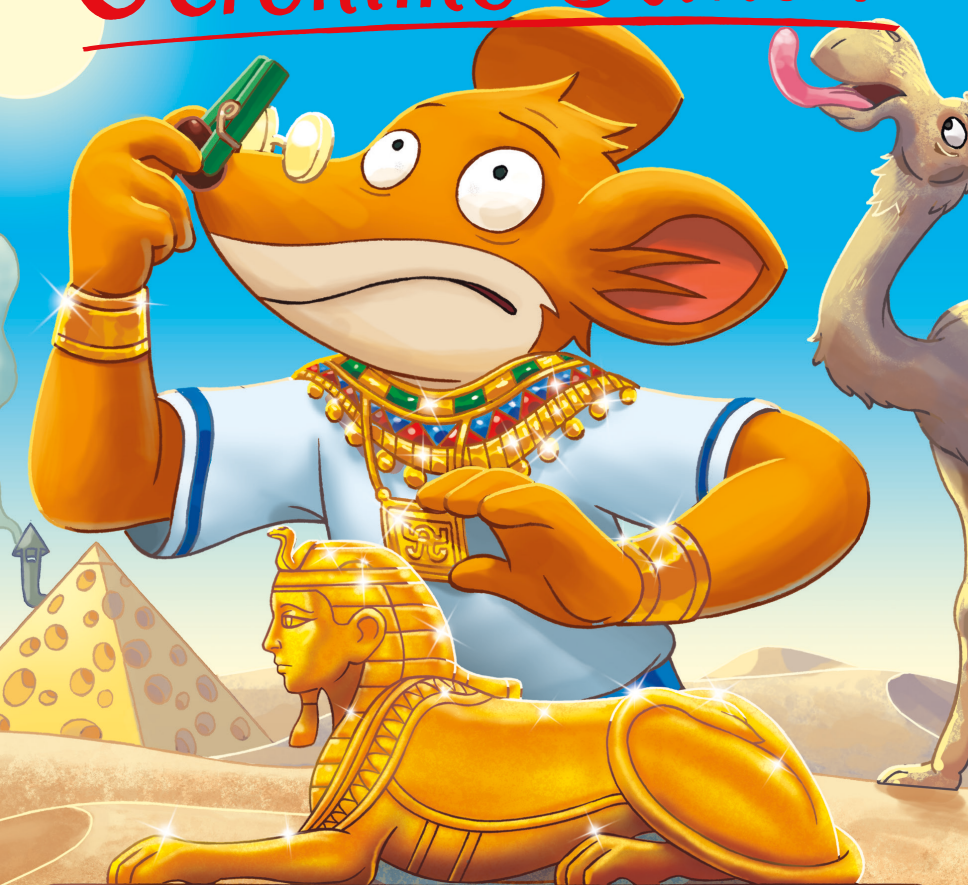


Geronimo Stilton



**THE CURSE OF THE
CHEESE PYRAMID**

WELCOME TO THE WORLD
OF
Geronimo Stilton







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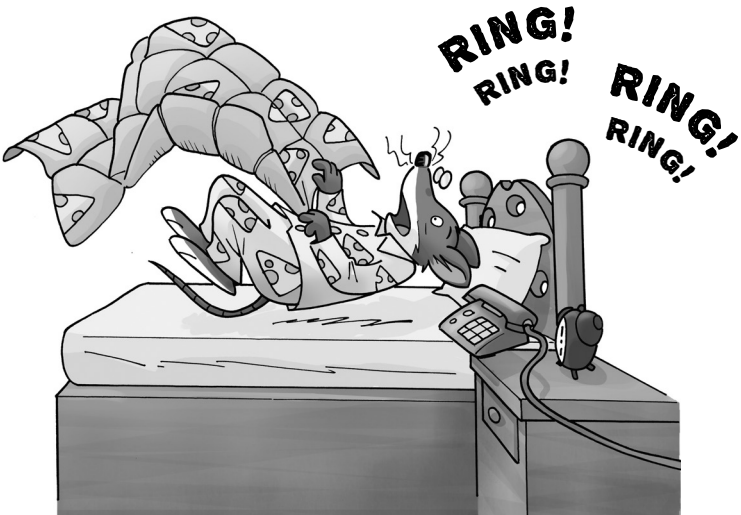
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WAKE UP! WAKE UUUUUUUP!

It was just before dawn in the middle of winter. The moon shone down over the mouse holes of New Mouse City. I was fast asleep under my comfy, cosy blankets, snoring away.

Suddenly the phone **RANG**.





I stumbled out of bed, sinking my paws into my new cat-fur rug. It was so soft. I had bought it last weekend at the Fur Market with my uncle Nibbles. It was expensive, but worth every penny! Still half asleep, I stared down at the **FLUFFY** carpet.

Then I picked up the phone.

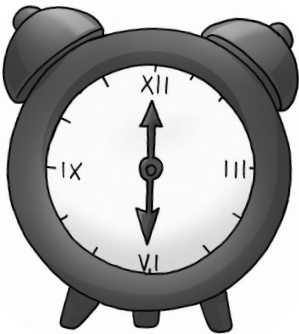
“Hello! Stilton speaking, Geronimo Stilton,” I mumbled.

A strangely familiar voice shrieked back at me. “**WAKE UP!**” it cried.

My ears were ringing like church bells. “W-who ... w-what ... who is it?” I stammered.

But the mad shrieker had already hung up.

I glanced at the alarm clock. **RANCID RAT HAIRS!**



It was six o'clock in the morning!

I dove back under my covers and continued snoring.

I woke up again at eight o'clock. I called a taxi to take me to the office.



I arrived at nine o'clock sharp.

Oh, yes, I forgot to mention that I run a newspaper. It is called *The Rodent's Gazette*. It is the most popular newspaper on Mouse Island! I'd like to say the paper's a success just because of me, but I have lots of help. Still, I'm the **BIG Cheese** at the office.

As I was saying, I got to work at nine o'clock sharp. I opened the door to my office wide ...

... and found myself snout-to-snout with my grandfather *William Shortpaws* – also known as **Cheap Mouse Willy**.

Grandfather William is a tough-talking mouse. Everyone at the office is afraid of him. That's because he is the founder of *The Rodent's Gazette*!





MY WALLET BLEEDS

I barely had taken two pawsteps into the room when Grandfather William began shouting at me. **“GRAAANDSON! HOW DARE YOU ARRIVE AT THIS HOUR?”** he thundered.

I cringed. Where had I heard that shrieking voice before?

“But, Grandfather, it’s nine o’clock! This is when the office opens,” I explained.

Grandfather William just shook his head. “Ridiculous!” he cried. “Do you realise you’ve slept half the day away, Grandson?! I’ve been here since six o’clock!!!”

A light went on inside my mouse-sized brain. So *that* was the **SHRIEKING VOICE** I had heard on the phone this morning.

“Thanks for the wake-up call,” I grumbled.



Curling his whiskers, he sniggered with satisfaction. **“Now you listen to me, sonny boy!”** he ordered, pulling my ear. “Things are looking bad around here, very bad indeed! Do you know why?”

I opened my mouth to reply, but he didn’t give me a chance to answer.

“I’ll tell you why!” he bellowed. “Because you’re spending too much! **TOO MUCH!** T-o-o m-u-c-h! You must **ECONOMISE!** Economise, economise, economise!”





Then he stuck his snout in my ear. “Do you know the meaning of the word, my dear grandson?” he hollered at the top of his lungs. “I’m talking **ECONOMISE!**”

E as in **End this extravagance immediately!**

C as in **Cut back on all expenses!**

O as in **On your toes! Things are about to change!!!**

N as in **No more spending!**

O as in **Oh what a mess you have made of things!**

M as in **Mend your ways, Grandson, or I’m taking back the firm!**

I as in **I feel sick when I hear such things!**

S as in **Save! Save! Save!**

E as in **Economise on everything!”**

I gulped. ‘*Y’ as in yikes!*’ I thought. I guess it wouldn’t be a good time to tell Grandfather William about the expensive leather loveseat I had ordered for my office. “B-but, Grandfather ...” I began.

He pulled my other ear. “**GRANDFATHER, MY PAW!**”



Starting today I'm keeping track of everything!" he shouted, waving the account books under my snout. "I expect to see lots of changes. For example how did you get here this morning?"

I chewed my whiskers.

"Well, I took a taxi," I replied.



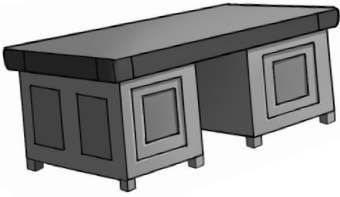
He slammed his paw on the table. "Exactly! This is what I'm talking about! My wallet **BLEEDS** when I hear such things."

He grabbed me by the tie. "Grandson, from now on you'll take the Underground to work. No, even better, you can come on paw. This way, you'll save on the fare and you'll get in first-rat shape!!!"

I felt completely dazed and confused. I tried to sit down to catch my breath.

But when I looked around for a chair, I realised that Grandfather





William had already made some changes. Some perfectly **HORRIFYING** changes! All of my furniture was gone!

The desk designed for me by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Rat was nowhere in sight. I whirled around in shock! What had happened to my precious leather pawchair, my imported Cheshire cat-fur carpet, my expensive artwork, and my priceless library? The office was **EMPTY!**



My heart sank like the big ball of cheese in Singing Stone Plaza on New Year's Eve. **I had been robbed by my own relative!** A plastic table and a plastic chair were the only pieces of furniture in the whole room!!!

Grandfather looked around, satisfied. "I sold everything to a second-paw dealer," he said with a



smug smile. “You don’t need any furniture, just a chair to sit on and a table to write on!”

As he spoke, he banged his paw on the plastic table, which began to **WOBBLE**.

Quick as a rat half his age, Grandfather caught the table edge before it tipped over. “I may have grey fur,” he exclaimed, “but this rodent’s not dead yet! I’ve still got it!”

I swallowed hard. “Grandfather! You sold my precious furniture to a second-paw dealer!” I squeaked. “How much did he give you?”

He waved a wad of money under my snout. “Look at that!” he boasted. “Not bad, huh?”

I counted the money and went pale!

“But this is way too little! Those were antique books, valuable paintings ...” I cried, shaking my head in disbelief. “And they were **MINE!**”





By now my head was spinning. I was in a sad state. I was either going to pull out all of my fur or sob like a newborn mouselet.

Grandfather William didn't seem to notice. He stuffed the money back into his wallet.

Then he **SHOUTED**, "Grandson, you are about to get a lesson in business you'll never forget! Remember, I am the founder of this firm! **I CAN SHUT IT DOWN WITH A TWITCH OF MY TAIL!**"





I FIRED THEM ALL!

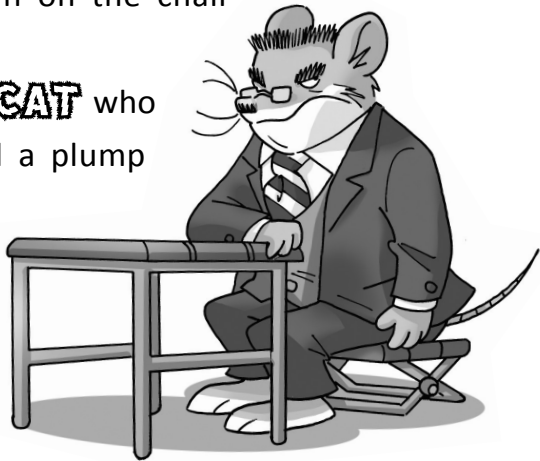
Just then, I noticed something else. The office was so *quiet*. Where were the reporters, the editors, the proofreaders, and the secretaries? Could they all be taking a coffee break? Somehow I didn't think so.

I had a terrible feeling.

My whiskers began to tremble. "Grandfather!" I squeaked. "Where is everyone?"

He plopped down on the chair and grinned.

He looked like a **CAT** who had just swallowed a plump Christmas mouse. "I thought you'd never ask, Grandson!" he said, laughing.





He pulled me closer and put his snout up to my ear.

"I came up with the most brilliant idea," he whispered.

Then he suddenly **SHOUTED** at the top of his lungs. "I fired them all! Have you any idea how much money we're going to save by getting rid of those **CHEESE GUZZLERS?!**"

I jumped. Something was ringing, and it wasn't the phone. It was my ear!

"**You f-f-f-fired everyone?**" I stammered.

"But, Grandfather, how are we supposed to run the paper?"

He snorted, waving his paw in the air. "Grandson,

I've made up my mind! The paper

will be run by the family.

Our family. The Stilton Family!" he declared.

Just then, the door

banged open and

three rodents

charged into the

office.

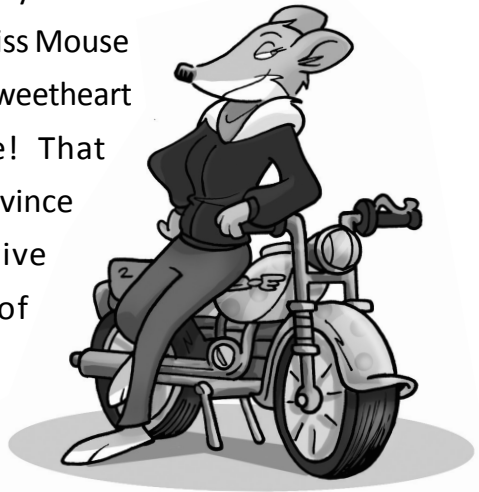




The first was my cousin Trap Stilton, also known as **Pushy Paws**. He is a plump mouse with a loud voice who loves to tell terrible jokes. He's had a ton of different jobs, including ship's cook, cheese taster, stunt mouse, and extra in a horror movie (he played a zombie rat in the graveyard scene).

Once, he even took a job with the **CIRCUS** training fleas to do silly tricks!

Next came my sister, Thea. She is *The Rodent's Gazette's* special correspondent. Thea can fly a plane, scuba dive, and ride a motorcycle. She has a black belt in karate. She has big violet eyes and more charm than last year's Miss Mouse Island! Thea's got a new sweetheart every week. It's true! That sister of mine could convince a starving rat to give up his last stick of **CHEDDAR CHEESE!**





Of course, Thea is also Grandfather William's *favourite*.

The last mouse in the door was my **adorable** favourite nephew, Benjamin.

He is nine years old and the sweetest, most amazing little mouse ever. **Oh, how I love my precious nephew!**



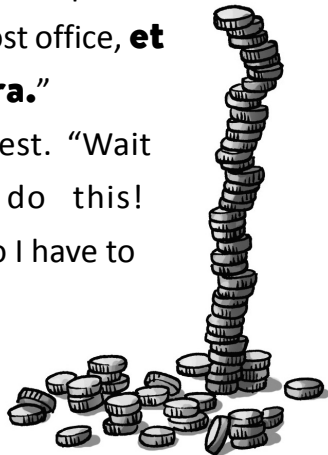


GERONIMO, DO THIS! GERONIMO, DO THAT!

Grandfather William eyed us with pride. “My dear, dear family,” he said. “Hold on to your tails. We’re about to save more money than **Scrooge Rat** during the holidays! Let’s see ... first, Geronimo can sort the mail and sweep the floors starting at five in the morning. During the day, Geronimo can also write the articles, take them to the printer, answer the phone, make photocopies, go to the post office, **et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.**”

I held up my paw in protest. “Wait a minute. **GERONIMO**, do this! **GERONIMO**, do that! Why do I have to do it all?”

Grandfather William just shook his head sadly. “Well, cry





me a river of cheese,” he said. “Geronimo, I’m surprised at you! Why can’t you be more like your unselfish little sister?” He then began to explain how Thea would be in charge of interviewing all of New Mouse City’s **VIRs** (Very Important Rodents). She would be going to parties and hanging out with **CELEBRITY** mice while I swept up mouse hairs! I was fuming. But there was no sense squeaking about it. Thea was Grandfather’s darling, and that was that. To prove my point, my sister twirled around the office, showing off her new designer fur jacket.

“Do you like it, Grandfather?” she asked. “I charged it to the paper. After all, I need to look fashionable in my position.”

Grandfather William beamed at her with pride.

“**Of course, my dear, sweet Thea!**” he agreed.

“You charge anything you want to the paper!”

My sister threw me a smug smile. I bit my tongue. “So much for economise, economise, economise!” I muttered under my breath. Just then, Trap passed Grandfather a basket full of sandwiches. “They’re your



favourite, Grandfather, blue cheese with extra garlic bread and red-hot chilli peppers!”

Grandfather licked his whiskers and began nibbling away on a sandwich. “This really hits the

spot!” he declared. “What would I do without you, my dear grandson?”



Trap winked at me and announced, “Grandfather has hired me to be his personal cook!”

This was ridiculous! I was getting hotter than a bag of **CHEESE POPCORN** in a microwave. Who would help me run the paper?

At that moment, I felt a tug on the sleeve of my jacket. It was my young nephew Benjamin. “Uncle Geronimo, guess what?” he beamed. “Great-grandfather William has hired me to be his personal assistant!”

Grandfather stroked Ben’s tiny ears.

“Ah, the family, there’s nothing like the family! The Stilton family, that is ...”



I snorted. I could see I was the workmouse of the family. It looked like I would be the **ONLY** one doing any work!

Suddenly, Grandfather whirled around towards me. Uh-oh. What next? Maybe he'd ask me to sharpen all of the *pencils* by paw. Or maybe he'd want me to chop up twigs to make our own paper.

"Geronimo, it seems you are not happy with your duties," he began. *Here it comes*, I groaned silently. "Well, I've got a little surprise for you, Grandson," he continued. He stuck a **DC** plane ticket under my snout. "Here you are! I'm sending you on a little trip. That's right. A trip far away from Mouse Island. You're going to **EGYPT** to do a special report on the pyramids!"





I could hardly believe it. **I felt like a new mouse!**
I hate travelling, but I've always wanted to see the
pyramids! It was a dream come true!

I stared at the tickets. "Thank you, Grandfather," I
said, gasping. "When do I leave?"

He put his snout right up to my ear.

"NOW!" he screamed.

My ear was ringing again. But this time I didn't care.
I was off to **EGYPT!**