

Geronimo Stilton



CAT & MOUSE
in a
**HAUNTED
HOUSE**

WELCOME TO THE WORLD
OF
Geronimo Stilton







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Geronimo Stilton

CAT & MOUSE in
a HAUNTED HOUSE



Sweet Cherry
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IT WAS A FOGGY OCTOBER NIGHT

It was a foggy October night. **Oh, how I wished I was home in my comfy mouse hole!** It was the perfect night to curl up with a good book and a cup of hot Cheddar.


But I wasn't at home. I wish I could say I was bowling down at Lucky Paw Lanes. Or nibbling on a delicious dinner at my favourite French restaurant, *Le Squeakery*. But I was far away from every mouse I knew. I was stuck in the middle of the *Dark Forest!* Do you want to know why?

Let me tell you ...



Oh, but first let me introduce myself.

My name is Stilton,
Geronimo Stilton.





I live in New Mouse City, where I run a newspaper. Yes, that's right, I am a newspaper mouse. I publish a paper called *The Rodent's Gazette*. It is the most popular paper on Mouse Island! Our only competition is **The Daily Rat**. But that's another story.



Let's see, where was I? Oh, yes, how I got to the *Dark Forest*. Well, I had left New Mouse City to go visit my aunt Sweetfur. She was on holiday in the Pleasant Paw Hills. To get there, I had to drive through the *Dark Forest*. Have you ever been there? It reminds me of the woods where Hansel and Gretel Mouse get lost. Very dark and spooky.

I had just passed Cat Claw Rock when a foggy cloud settled over my car. I felt like one of the Three Blind Mice. I couldn't see my own paw in front of my snout! I tried to check out my map, but it was no use. I was lost!

The road grew narrow and finally led to a dirt path. **STALE SWISS ROLLS!** This didn't look good. Now I really was in the middle of nowhere. I shivered.

Who knows what kinds of crazy rats lived out here



in the deep, dark woods? What if they jumped on my car? What if they jumped on *me*?

With shaking paws, I tried calling my sister, Thea. Rats! I couldn't get a signal on my mobile phone.

Oh, how I wished I was home!

I drove on for another half an hour in the thickening fog.

I tried turning on my radio to get my mind off things, but I couldn't get a station.

Instead, I listened to my teeth *chattering*.

Then suddenly, out of the fog, a sign appeared. It read: *To Cannycat Castle*

Too shocked to speak, I checked my map.

Strange, very strange, I thought. There was no castle listed.

I folded the map and shoved it into my coat pocket. Well, there was only one thing to do. I headed for the castle. I would ask for directions there.

Just then, a *BOLT OF LIGHTNING* streaked down right next to me! For a split second, the *DARK FOREST* glowed. It reminded me of the time my uncle Flickrat





turned on the lights before the movie was over at the Grand Squazak Cinema. The audience went crazy. Every mouse wanted his or her money back. After that, Uncle Flickrat got stuck working the cheese-popcorn machine. His boss wouldn't let him near a light switch.

I blinked my eyes in the bright white light. I could just make out the shape of a weathered old castle in the distance.

Right at that very moment, my car stopped!

I groaned. This was just not my day or night. I hopped out of the car.

Now what? I knew next to nothing about cars. I have trouble pumping my own petrol!

Suddenly, it started to rain. My whiskers were soon dripping with water. And it was bitterly cold. I turned up my collar and started along the path leading to the castle.

It was covered with dried twigs that crackled under my paws. The grass surrounding the castle looked like it hadn't been mowed in years.

Overgrown bushes lined the walls. *This place really*



needs a good lawn service, I thought. Maybe I could give the owners my cousin Greenpaws's business card. He cut lawns for a living. "Next to yellow, green is my favourite colour," he liked to say.

Staring up at the *dark castle*, I stumbled over more twigs. Maybe there was another reason why this place was a mess.

Maybe the castle was empty.





A CASTLE WITH BLOOD-RED WINDOWS

The castle was surrounded by a deep moat filled with slimy green water.

I stared at the building. The walls were made of huge square stones. Windows protected by **THICK** iron bars stared back at me. I flinched. The windowpanes were blood-red.

Just then, a light came on in the highest tower. In the darkness, it looked like the glowing eye of a terrifying monster!

Oh, how I wished I was home! My fur stood on end from fright.

As quickly as it had turned on, the light flicked off again! It was then that I noticed the flag hanging from the castle's highest tower. It showed a picture of a blood-red **CAT**! The cat's back was arched and its claws were drawn.



In front of the entrance stood two **CAT** statues. The cats' jaws were set in evil snarls. I gasped. All of these cats were beginning to give me the creeps. Was this the homeowners' way of scaring away the riffrats? Well, I guess it was cheaper than an alarm system.

I studied the statues. One of them had a sign with instructions for the doorbell. It read: *Press your paw here ... if you have no fear!*

I looked closer. The doorbell was blood-red!

Shivering, I pressed the ringer.





MEEOOOOOWWW!!!

A horrifying meowing filled my ears. Terrified, I scurried behind a bush.

HOLEY CHEESE! This cat must be some monster!

After a while, I peeked out from my hiding place. Strange, very strange. Not a furry face in sight. Finally, I realised the meowing was *taped!* It was coming from the bell!





Once again, I approached the door. It opened, as if by magic.

By now, I wasn't exactly dying to go in. In fact, you could say I was dying to scurry on out of there!

But then a *BOLT OF LIGHTNING* practically took off my paw.

Yikes! I didn't want to go inside, but I couldn't stay outside in the storm. I practiced my deep-breathing exercises. Then I tiptoed inside.

CRUSTY CHEESE SLICES!

It was so Dark and Spooky.

Oh, how I wished I was home!





I'M TOO FOND OF MY WHISKERS!

Teeth chattering, I entered a dark and **GLOOMY** hall.

Suddenly, another bolt of lightning struck close by. The blood-red windowpanes glowed like the eyes of a hungry **CAT**.

I jumped. Talk about a fur-raising experience!

I headed down a dark corridor. It led to a heavy





wooden door. “**M-m-may I c-c-come in? Anybody h-h-home?**” I stuttered, pushing open the door.

In front of me was a huge room filled with antique furniture. Dust and cobwebs hung over the sofas like unwanted guests the morning after a party. Gigantic paintings of cats from *centuries ago* covered the walls. I was glad not to be living in that period! Too many cats back then.

Then I noticed a velvet wall hanging with embroidered writing. It read:

This castle belongs to the most honourable Duke Bigpaw Cannycat.





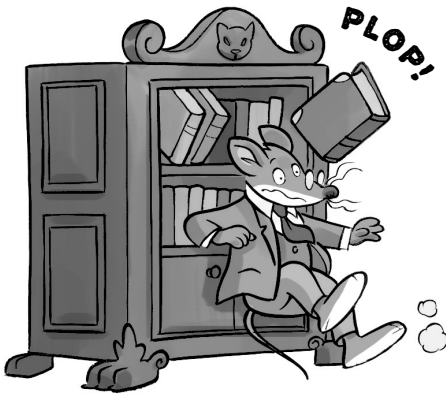
Cannycat? That reminded me of something. I closed my eyes and pictured my precious set of the *Encyclopaedia Ratannica*. Now, what was it that I had read about Cannycat??? Oh, yes, of course!

The Cannycats were leaders in the great battle of Raterloo. It took place in 1754. The cats and rats fought courageously with paws and claws. Of course, as every mouse knows, the rodents won. Since Raterloo, there have been no cats on our island.

Just then, I noticed a plaque above the fireplace. I crept closer for a look. My whiskers began to **TREMBLE** as I read the writing.



“Oh, you foolish rodent who has made it thus far, I bet you don’t know how unlucky you are! Retrace your steps and hit the old trail, if you wish to save your miserable tail! Meooow!!!”



Now I was shaking all over. I started to back away and bumped into a bookcase. A big fat book landed on my right paw.



CHEESE NIBLETS!

That book weighed more than a ten-tonne block of Cheddar!

Ouuuuchhh!!!!

I shrieked, hopping around like the Easter Rat. **HOP!**





Seconds later, I tripped over the carpet. I landed snout-first in the fireplace. Now I was covered in ashes from head to tail! How would I explain this to Starchette, the cute mouse down at my dry cleaners?



I tried to grab the edge of the fireplace but missed. Instead, I grabbed a doily with a **HEAVY** silver tray on it. The tray plonked me on the head. **ROTTEN RATS' TEETH!** I was going to have some lump on my head.





I wouldn't be able to wear a hat for weeks! Of course, I never really wear a hat. It would clash with my suit and tie.

But now I wouldn't have a choice. I sighed, leaning against a suit of armour standing beside the fireplace.

BIG MISTAKE. The armour tumbled to the floor.

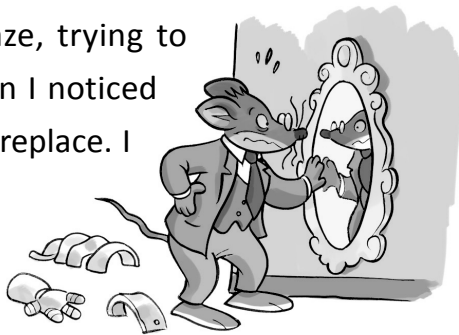
Whoosh! A sharp hatchet nearly took off my snout!

I'M TOO FOND OF MY WHISKERS!!!





I got up in a daze, trying to steady myself. Then I noticed a mirror over the fireplace. I peered into it. In the dim light, I saw a horrifying sight.



**A GHOST WITH A
GREY SNOUT WAS STARING BACK AT ME!**

I let out an ear-splitting squeak! “W-w-who are you? W-w-what do you want?” I stammered. I turned, ready to run. The ghost turned, too. I nervously twirled my tail. The ghost twirled its tail. I leaned forward and pointed at the ghost. It pointed back at me.

“Oops,” I mumbled.

“That’s no ghost. That’s just me! How could I be such a nincompoop?”

**Oh, how I
wished I was
home!**





MOUSE BONES AND RAT SKELETONS

I left the room and scurried down the hall. Soon I came to a wooden door with a sign on it. It read: *Kitchen*

I went in. The place was **HUGE**. You could cook dinner for a hundred mice in this place. There was a huge wood-burning stove, pots and pans of every size and shape, and a massive fridge.

I opened a side door and found myself in a cellar.





I spotted some cans of tuna, some dried meat, and a big block of Swiss cheese. **IT SMELLED DELICIOUS!**

So the castle was inhabited after all!

But by whom? That was still a mystery.

I crept back to the wood-burning stove. A huge copper pot hung inside the fireplace. It had a picture of a snarling cat engraved on it. I looked closer and noticed a strange white object lying inside the pot.

I picked it up to study it.

"SOUR CHEESE CHUNKS!" It was a bone ... a **MOUSE BONE!**

I flung the bone back into the pot. Then I looked around, terrified. What was this place?

I decided I didn't want to stick around to find out. I had to make a run for it before I ended up like that poor mouse in the pot! No fur, just **BONE!**

In a panic, I flung open the first door I saw. Behind it was a cupboard. I wish I could say I found a puffy chef's hat and matching apron in the cupboard.

My uncle Hotpaw wears this silly apron at our annual family barbecues.

GERONIMO



STILTON

It has a picture of a smiling mouse juggling kittens on it. But there was no apron in this cupboard. Instead, there was the ...

SKELETON OF A HUMONGOUS RAT!

Oh, how I wished I was home!

