



# TWO BLOCKS OF ICE

It was a cold – I mean, **FREEZING** – I mean, teeth-chattering December morning. Snow covered New Mouse City, and I was trudging through it on my way to work. **Brrr!** My paws felt like two blocks of ice.





It's beautiful!

It's heavy!

It's freezing!



OOPS ...

OOPS!



Have a merry one!

Happy holidays to all!

GOOD WISHES...

I'm pooped!

Wow, look at the way it's snowing!

Merry Christmas!  
ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS!

Thank you!



I finally got to the office and ... Oops, silly me! I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I am the publisher of *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most famous newspaper on Mouse Island.

As I was saying, I got to the office and sat down at my desk. But before I could start working, a plump, furry mouse burst through the door. It was my grandfather *William Shortpaws*, also known as **Cheap Mouse Willy**. Rats!

Don't get me wrong, I love my grandfather. But for the past month, he has been driving me up a clock!

Grandfather is the founder of *The Rodent's Gazette*.

He started it a long, long time ago. He doesn't work here anymore. Lately, he's been into golf. But he still loves to stop by the office and check up on things.

Grandfather is one tough, no-nonsense rodent. His favourite







saying is: **ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES A MOUSE RICH, RICH, RICH!**

Before I could even squeak, “Hello,” Grandfather William began thumping his paw on my messy desk. A stack of papers crashed to the floor. “Grandson, this desk is a **DISGRACE!** Have you been working or eating cheese bonbons? Remember, I built this company with my own bare paws. If you’re not careful, I’m going to come back and you’ll only be in charge of the water cooler!” he thundered, pulling my whiskers.





I gulped. My worst nightmare is my grandfather coming back to head *The Rodent's Gazette*. And lately, I was afraid he might do just that!

"I'm doing my best," I squeaked meekly.

Grandfather rolled his eyes. "Tell it to the paw!" He smirked, holding one paw towards me. Then he pulled my whiskers again. And stormed out.

I got right to work. What else could I do? I was worried. **And besides, I don't know a thing about water coolers.**



# I DREAMED I WAS SLEEPING

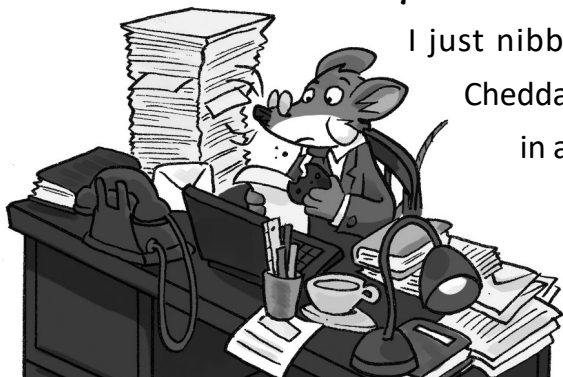
It snowed every day for a whole week. I had to put snowshoes on my paws just to get to work! I would have

loved to call in sick, but I couldn't.

What if Grandfather William found out? I'd be out of a job faster than you could say *'egg and cheese on a cream cheese bagel'*. Instead, I got up every day at the crack of dawn and dragged myself to the office.

There I read manuscripts, signed cheques, and researched stories. **I was so busy I never even took a lunch break.**

I just nibbled on some stale Cheddar crackers that I kept in a bowl on my desk.

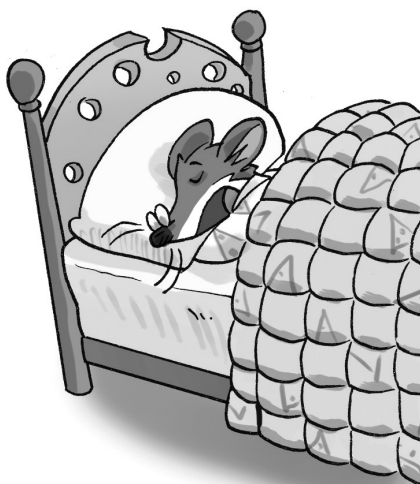






Finally, at midnight, I'd head home. I was so tired I'd fall into my bed and start snoring before my snout even hit the pillow. I dreamed I was sleeping.

The days flew by. I was **EXHAUSTED!** But I had to keep working. I couldn't let Grandfather William take over the newspaper. I loved my job. **Too bad it was taking over my life!**





# UNCLE GERONIMO, WHY DIDN'T YOU COME?

On the morning of December 24, something awful happened. I was at my office reading some mail that had piled up on my desk. I came across a letter from my dear, sweet nephew Benjamin. When I read it, I nearly jumped out of my fur. It was an invitation to his Christmas play. I twisted my tail up in a knot.

“December 24!” I squeaked. “**Mouldy mozzarella balls, that’s today!**” I was so busy with work that I had completely forgotten.

dear Uncle Geronimo,  
Can you please, please, please  
come to my school's Christmas play  
on december 24 at 9 a.m.?

Can't wait to see you!

Love,  
benjamin



I ran to Benjamin's school as fast as my paws could carry me. But it was no use. When I got there, the play was already over.

Principal Sharp Whiskers shook his head when he saw me. "Mr. Stilton, why are you so late? Your nephew is **CRUSHED**," he scolded.

Just then, I noticed a little mouse sitting all alone on the stage. It was Benjamin. He looked at me sadly.

"Uncle Geronimo, why didn't you come? You always come to my Christmas play. And this year I had the best part. I was one of the fur trees," he said.





I felt awful. How could I have let my favourite nephew down? I grabbed his paw. "Come on, I'm going to buy you an early Christmas present," I said, smiling.

I took him to the best toy store in town, the Rollicking Rodent. Have you ever been there? The place is huge! The salesmouse showed us a **SUPER-SCARY CAT MASK** and a squeak-controlled race car. But all Benjamin wanted was to go home. When we got there, he ran inside before I could even say goodbye.

I felt lower than a sewer rat. I hung my head and headed back to the office.

**What else could I do? I had so much work to do!**





# I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR SURPRISES!

When I got back to the office, I slumped behind my desk. **What a rotten day.** How could I have forgotten my favourite nephew? If only I didn't have so much work to do. Just then, I noticed the light on my answering machine blinking. I hit the message button. "Why aren't you at your desk, Geronimo?! **DON'T MAKE ME COME IN THERE!**" Grandfather William's voice bellowed through the speaker.

I cringed. Suddenly, I heard a knock at the door. Who could it be? A delivery mouse wheeled in a huge package. It was decorated with a shiny bow and some tiny yellow bananas.

**"I love bananas! B-a-n-a-n-a-s!"**

I looked around to see who had spoken, but didn't see anyone.

Then, a sooty grey rat sprang out from the package. He was wearing a long trench coat and matching hat.

It was my friend Hercule Poirat, the famous detective!



He handed me a little package. "Surprised, Stilton? I wanted to wish you a merry Christmas!" he shouted.

Before I could respond, I heard a knock at the window.

My eyes nearly popped out of my fur. A rodent was hanging in front of the window ledge. He had a

crew cut and big, bulging muscles. He was dangling from a bungee cord.

I opened the window with shaking paws. Was he some kind of spy? Was he from another planet?

**“Hey, fellow camper!”** the rodent yelled. “Just dropping by to say happy holidays!”

It was my friend Burt Burlyrat,





otherwise known as B.B. We'd met at a survival boot camp deep in the jungle. Why would a ~~scaredy-mouse~~ like me go to boot camp? Well, that's another story.

Now my teeth began to chatter watching B.B. sway in the wind. **I felt like I was about to have a nervous breakdown.** Of course, Burt didn't seem to mind that he was dangling forty feet in the air by a little cord. Instead he just smiled at me and handed me a gift-wrapped package.

I was still worrying about B.B. when the door to my office slammed open again.

"Merry Christmas to you, dear Geronimo!" a magnificent voice sang out.

A beautiful rat wearing a scrumptious Cheddar perfume stood in the doorway holding a gift. She had amber-coloured fur, twinkling eyes, and a dazzling smile. It was my dear friend Squeaky Star.

Do you know Squeaky? She is



a very famous singer. Her CD, *Under a Cheddar Moon*, has been number one on the charts for almost a whole year. We met a while ago on top of Kilimanjaro during another one of my crazy adventures. I'll have to tell you about it sometime.

"I see you already have guests," Squeaky said, smiling. "Why don't we all go out for a holiday lunch and you can open your Christmas gifts?"

**CHEESE NIBLETS!** I hated to be a Scrooge. But what could I say? I had so much work to do! And what if Grandfather William decided to stop by? He'd have my tail!

"Thanks," I said. "But I don't have time. You'll all have to go without me. I am too busy."

Disappointed, my friends headed out the door. Well, except for B.B. He lowered himself down to the pavement, instead. I tried to wave goodbye, but he never looked up.

**I felt like the worst friend in the whole world.**



# I DON'T HAVE TIME TO TRAVEL!

The snow kept falling, thicker and thicker.

I had my snout buried deep in a pile of papers when my friend Petunia Pretty Paws stopped by. She is a fascinating mouse. I guess you could say I have had a **huge crush** on her forever. Too bad whenever I'm around her, I turn into a *babbling, blundering fool*. I stammer. I stutter. Sometimes I can't even tell my left paw from my right.



Petunia hugged me. "Geronimo!" she squeaked.

"Yes, um, that's me, Seronimo Gilton. I mean Geronimo Stilton," I mumbled, grinning.

Petunia giggled and grabbed my paw. "I have the most exciting news! I'm headed off to Australia after Christmas to film a documentary about dolphins. Why don't you come with me?" she squeaked. "Just think,



right now the sun is shining in Australia.”

I stared out the window. Oh, it would be so nice to get away. Then I looked at the stack of papers on my desk.

“Ahem, thanks, but I’m really too busy to go,” I said.

Petunia put her paws on her hips. “Yes, yes. I know you’re a very busy mouse, but there are some things in



life that are more important than work, G,” she scolded.

I chewed my whiskers. Maybe she was right. Maybe I should take a break. I was just about to say yes to Petunia when I noticed the big, framed picture of Grandfather William on the wall.

His piercing black eyes seemed to be glaring at me. **ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES A MOUSE RICH, RICH, RICH!** Grandfather’s voice echoed in my head. “Get working, Nephew!”

“Sorry, Petunia,” I muttered as she turned and walked out.

