

Geronimo Stilton



**FANGS & FEASTS IN
TRANSRATANIA**

WELCOME TO THE WORLD
OF
Geronimo Stilton







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Geronimo Stilton

FANGS & FEASTS IN TRANSRATANIA



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OH, WHAT A HAIRY, SCARY NIGHT!

Oh, what a hairy, scary night! It was the month of November and it was so cold I had **MOUSEBUMPS** the size of marbles! I buried myself under my great-aunt Ratsy's quilt and opened my book. It was a collection of ghost stories, *The Haunted Cheese Shop and Other Tales to Make You Squeak!* An icy rain pattered against my window as I turned the pages. The wind blew open my window. My curtains danced about wildly like a ghost in an aerobics class. I jumped out of my bed to shut the window. **RATS!** I was still shivering, and it wasn't just from the cold. Those ghost curtains looked pretty scary.

As I climbed back into bed, the phone **RANG**. I bounced so high my bed did double duty as a trampoline.





Who could be calling so late? It was almost midnight. I picked up the receiver. "Hello, hello! Who is it?" I demanded.

"HELLOOO? GERONIMOOO?" a voice answered. It sounded very far away.

"Yes, I am Geronimo. *Geronimo Stilton!*" I shouted.

"It's me, Gerrytails," the voice continued. I groaned. The "me" was my annoying cousin Trap. I should have known. Only Trap would bother a mouse in the middle of the night. Still, he sounded sort of strange.

"Trap, where are you?" I asked. The line crackled loudly. I could only make out some of my cousin's words. But what I heard sent a **SHIVER** up my tail.

"I'm ... in Transratania!" he squeaked. "I'm at ... Castle ... Count von Ratoff ... Get out ..."

Before I could reply, the line went dead.

Yes, it was certainly one hairy, scary night!





WITHIN PAW'S REACH

Seconds later, I had my sister, Thea, on the line. "I just had a call from Trap. He may be in trouble," I told her.

"And you woke me up just to tell me that?!" my sister squeaked. "I was in the middle of the most fabumouse dream. I was getting married on an **enormouse** yacht. Only I couldn't make out who I was marrying."

I wasn't surprised about the last part. My sister has more sweethearts than I have kinds of cheeses in my oversized fridge!

"Listen, Thea," I continued. "Trap said he was calling from **TRANSRATANIA.**"

"Did you say Trap was calling from Transratania?!" Thea cried. "We have to go find him **right away!** Let me check out the train schedule. We'd better get going!"



“Wait a minute,” I protested. “We can’t just go scampering off. What about my job?”

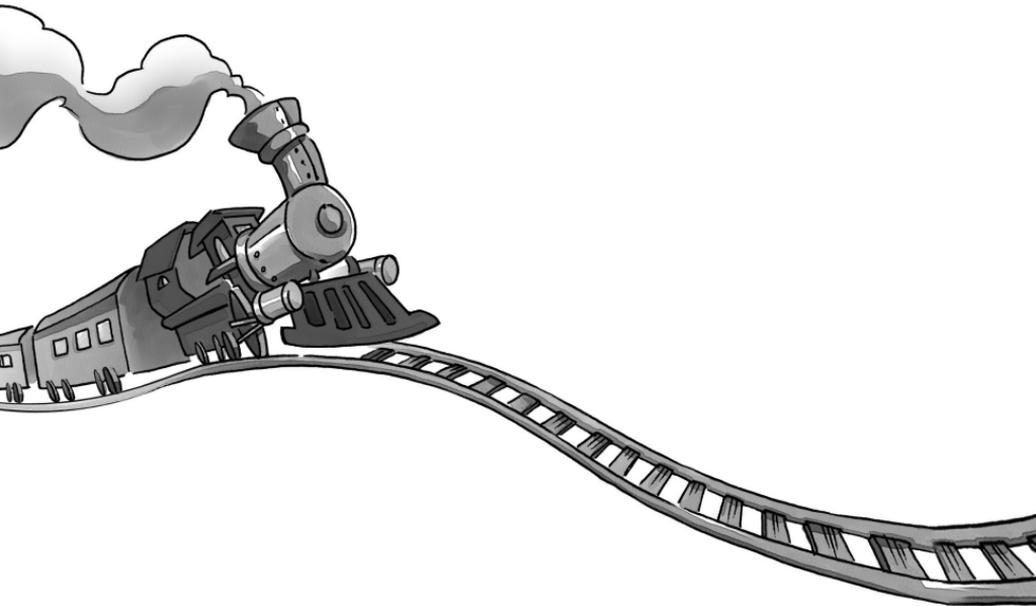
My sister snorted. “Your cousin’s in trouble and you’re worried about that silly newspaper?”

Oh, yes, I forgot to mention, I run a newspaper called *The Rodent’s Gazette*.

“Really, Gerry, your heart must be frozen solid!” Thea shrieked. **“YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF!”**

I chewed my whiskers. “Well, m-m-maybe we could go ...” I stuttered.

“We’ll leave first thing tomorrow morning!” Thea declared. “The train leaves at half-past six! See you at the station!”





WHEN THE CAT IS AWAY ...

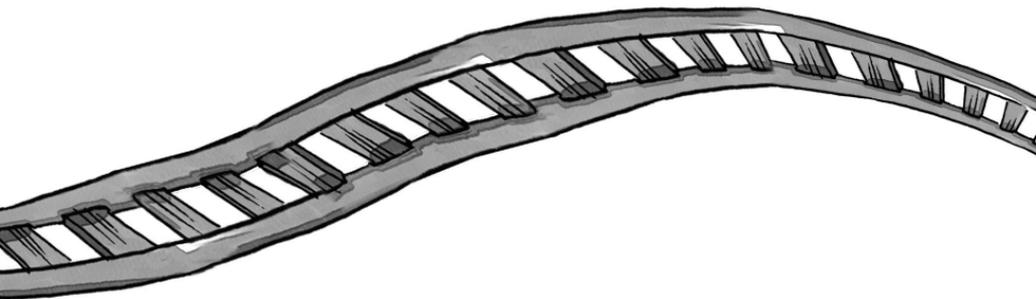
At six o'clock, I was at the station. I had been listening to the weather report. There would be clear skies all over Mouse Island.

But ... fog, as always, in **TRANSRATANIA!**

Why, why, oh, why did my cousin have to get lost in the coldest part of the island? The coldest and the most mysterious, too. There were lots of stories about the castles of Transratania. Some believed they were crawling with *ghosts!*

At last, Thea showed up. She was dressed in a smart wool coat with a fake cat-fur scarf and matching hat.

"Hey, big brother! How are you?" she greeted me. She was grinning.





“Awful, thank you,” I grumbled. “How will the paper manage without me?” I worried out loud. “You know what they say: When the cat is away, the mice will play!”

My sister laughed. “Oh, **PUH-LEASE**, Gerrykins,” she scoffed. “You’re not all that important. Really!”





“In case you have forgotten, I run a newspaper,” I said in my most serious tone. “If I am not at my desk, who will publish *The Rodent’s Gazette*?”

“Oh, give me a break!” Thea snickered. “The office can run just fine without you. In fact, they will probably be better off. No nervous old **CHEDDARFACE** breathing down their fur!”

“I am not a Cheddarface!” I protested. But I have to admit, I did worry about the paper. After all, mice everywhere were reading it.

“By the way, Gerrytails,” Thea interrupted my thoughts. “Do you ever read **The Daily Rat?** I was reading it the other day and –”

Before my sister could continue, I jumped to my paws. “**THE DAILY RAT???**” I squeaked. “How can you read such garbage? You know that paper is written by the slimiest sewer rats in the city! They would rob their own mothers for a good story! They would feed a **CAT** the entire graduating class of Mouseville Primary School if it sold papers! That junk is only good for wrapping up rotten herrings!”



“Yes, well, that’s all very interesting,” Thea said. “But last night, I had a great idea for an article. I will write a story on the castles in **TRANSRATANIA**. Horror is very in these days, you know.” she explained. “Anyway, I’ve already sold the article. And they paid me a bundle!”

“Whattttt did you say???”

Why was I so upset? Well, you see, Thea is a special correspondent for my paper, *The Rodent’s Gazette*. Could she really be working for my rivals over at **The Daily Rat**? “Whattttt? Are you telling me you want to quit the *Gazette*?” I squeaked. **I felt faint.**





ON MY RODENT'S HONOUR

Just then, I heard a creaking sound. My sister leaped in front of me.

“What’s that?” I said. “What are you hiding?”

“Nothing, nothing at all,” Thea answered, waving her paw at me. “What would I have to hide? Boy, are you **JUMPY** today!”

I jumped to the left. But Thea was quicker than me. Next, I jumped to the right. Again my sister beat me to the spot.

After a few more jumps, I gave up. “**Enough with the dance number!**” I shrieked at last. “What are you hiding?”





“Don’t get your tail in knots, Gerry Berry,” Thea smirked. “It’s just a little old **trunk**.”

At that moment, the lid of the trunk opened. A pair of tiny ears popped out. It was Benjamin, my young nephew. “**hello, Uncle Gerry!**” he squeaked.

“Benjamin, what are you doing here?” I cried. I turned to Thea. “We cannot take such a young mouse with us to Transratania!”

My nephew flicked his tail in the air. “I am not young! I am nine years old!” he insisted. “Besides, Aunt Thea said I could help you!”

That’s it, I thought. For once, I have to show them I’m in charge. “Forget it!” I announced in my most take-charge voice. “On my rodent’s honour, this time we do it my way, or my name is not **GERONIMO STILTON!**”





NEXT STOP, RAAATOFF!

Ten minutes later, the three of us were comfortably seated on the train. **Grrr ...** *So much for taking charge*, I grumbled to myself. Maybe I shouldn't have dropped out of that **TOUGH-TALKING MOUSE** class I had signed up for last summer. The teacher was this old grey rodent with one eye. He had picked on me so much the first day of class, I was afraid to go back!

I sighed and settled back in my seat. My sister was happily reading aloud from a tourist's guide of Transratania. "Hidden in the foggy hills of Transratania sits the mysterious **Ratoff Castle ...**"

Meanwhile, Benjamin had snuggled under my coat. "Brrr, it's cold, but I don't mind! I'm so happy to be travelling with you, Uncle Geronimo!" he squeaked cheerfully.



I stroked his tiny ears and smiled. Did I tell you that Benjamin is my favourite nephew?

An hour later, I pressed my snout against the window. The landscape was getting **gloomier** and **gloomier**. At every stop, mice seemed to pour out of the train. But there was no pushing and shoving at our stop. That's because by the time we reached Ratoff, we were the only passengers left!

"Ratoff! Next stop Ratoff!" echoed a lonely voice in the fog.





GARLIC, GARLIC, AND MORE GARLIC

We climbed off the train and looked around. Now we just had to figure out how to get to **Ratoff Castle**.

“Excuse me, sir, which way to Ratoff Castle?” I asked a tall, lean rat wearing a ragged coat. His eyes opened wide. He clutched at his garlic necklace. Then he disappeared into the fog without a word.

My sister rolled her eyes. “Let me try,” she grumbled. “You are absolutely useless, Germeister!” She tapped the arm of a passing female mouse. “Excuse me, could you direct me to Count Vlad von Ratoff’s castle?” she said.

“Aaaaaiii!”
shrieked the
mouse.





She scampered off, shaking her bracelet of garlic cloves in the air.

We decided to check out the souvenir shop across from the station. A mouse with a crooked tail stood behind the counter. He looked at us with curiosity.

“Pardon me,” I began.

“Ye-es?” said the mouse.

“Could you direct us to a castle?” I continued.

“Ye-es?” said the mouse.

“We’re looking for the castle of Count Von Ratoff,” I finished.

At the name **Ratoff**, the mouse’s eyes nearly popped out of his furry face. He flung a handful of souvenir garlic necklaces around his neck. A tag hanging from the necklace read **GREETINGS FROM TRANSRATANIA**. Then in smaller letters it read *‘Garlic and me, perfect together!’* How strange. I wondered what it all meant. But I didn’t get the chance to ask. Before I knew it, the mouse was shoving us out the door. He clicked the lock behind us and turned out the lights.

“**How rude!**” squeaked Thea. “What a way to treat



tourists! I wouldn't buy his silly souvenirs if they were the last ones in town!" she ranted. "Did you see those ridiculous garlic keyrings? And who would want to send a **garlic postcard?**"

A few minutes later, we passed a fancy restaurant. I read the menu out loud. "Hearty garlic pot pie, jumbo garlic burgers, pasta with extra garlic ..." What a strange menu!

A large mouse came to the door. "Would you like to have dinner, sir?" he asked. His breath smelled like he had just sampled every dish on the menu.

"No, thank you," I gasped. "But could you tell us how to get to the castle of Count von Ratoff?"

In a flash, the mouse pulled out a big bottle and





gulped down the liquid inside. Judging by the stench, it must have been garlic juice. **“Get out!”** he shrieked, slamming the door in our snouts.

What was it with the mice of **Ratoff** and their garlic? I thought about all of the mice we had passed wearing garlic necklaces. I thought about the garlic bracelets and the garlic wreaths on the front doors. No, this wasn't just a passing trend, I decided. In fact, there is only one reason why rodents would keep so much garlic. A shiver ran up my fur. **Some say garlic is what you use to keep vampires away ...**



WHO FLEW IN THE DARK OF NIGHT?

It was a **pitch-black** night. You couldn't see your nose in front of your snout. We were like the Three Blind Mice trying to figure out which way to run. A sudden flash of lightning filled the black sky.





“That’s it!” shouted Benjamin. “That’s the castle over there!”

I caught a glimpse of the castle’s pointed towers.

“What a perfect picture!” cried Thea happily, pulling out her camera.

Just then, we heard a **NOISE**. A very odd-looking steam-powered car rattled towards us. The mouse at the wheel appeared to have a hunched back. He was dressed all in black with a dark hood pulled over his head. The strange rodent was humming an even stranger song.

Who crossed the sky in the dark of night?

Oh what terror, oh what fright!

Who crossed the sky on the wings of a bat?

Discover the secret, ask a wise rat!

Who crossed the sky in the dark of night?

Oh what sheer terror, oh, what sheer

FRIGHT!





A large copper boiler was attached to the front of the **funny-looking** car. Pipes of all shapes and sizes stuck out of it. Every now and then, the driver would pull a chain and smoke would shoot out of the largest pipe. The driver would cough and choke.

Afraid of being seen or squished, we dove into the bushes along the side of the road. The mouse drove by, coughing and hacking away. He reminded me of my great-uncle Scratchy before he gave up smoking.

We continued on towards the **castle**. But half an hour later, we spotted another strange creature. This one wasn't driving a car, though. In fact, it wasn't even on the ground. It was flying through the air. It was black and looked sort of like a gigantic bat. No, not the





kind of bat you'd use to knock a six out of the park. I'm talking about the furry black **squeaking** sort of bat. The kind that comes out at night and sleeps hanging upside down. The strange creature seemed to have come from the castle. It flew over our heads and headed off towards the village.

"W-w-what was that?" stuttered Benjamin as the creature disappeared into the clouds.

"Beats me," said my sister. "But whatever it was, I hope it smiled!" She patted her camera. "I just took its picture!"