

Geronimo Stilton

THE PHANTOM BANDIT



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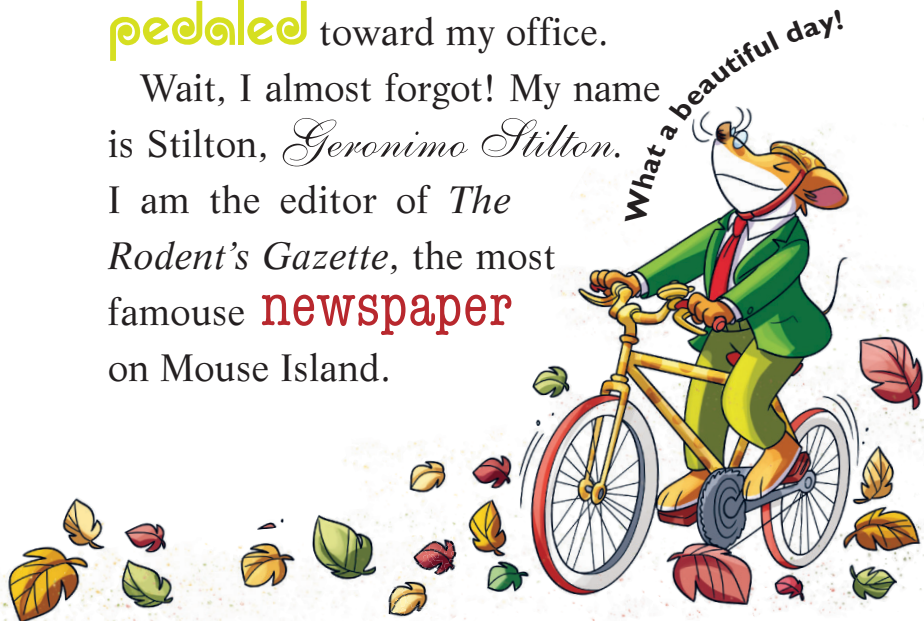
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OH, HOW I LOVE FALL!

It was a beautiful **FALL** morning. It had just stopped **raining**, and my whiskers twitched at the smell of **damp** leaves mixed with the scent of **freshly baked** cheese pastries wafting from the café. I breathed in the cool, fresh air as I **pedaled** toward my office.

Wait, I almost forgot! My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I am the editor of *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most famous **newspaper** on Mouse Island.





SUBWAY



What a day!

Hi!

Hi,
Geronimo!

POE 99
Bartlett



As I was saying, my dear rodent friends, I was really enjoying the **BEAUTIFUL** autumn air. I couldn't wait for the weekend. I planned to invite all my **friends** to the Stilton **farm**, out in the country. There, we could pick **CHESTNUTS** and **roast** them around a fire.

OH, HOW I LOVE FALL!

The leaves are so **colorful**, and it's the best season to eat **grilled cheese!**





Nice job!

It smells so good!

Get the ball!

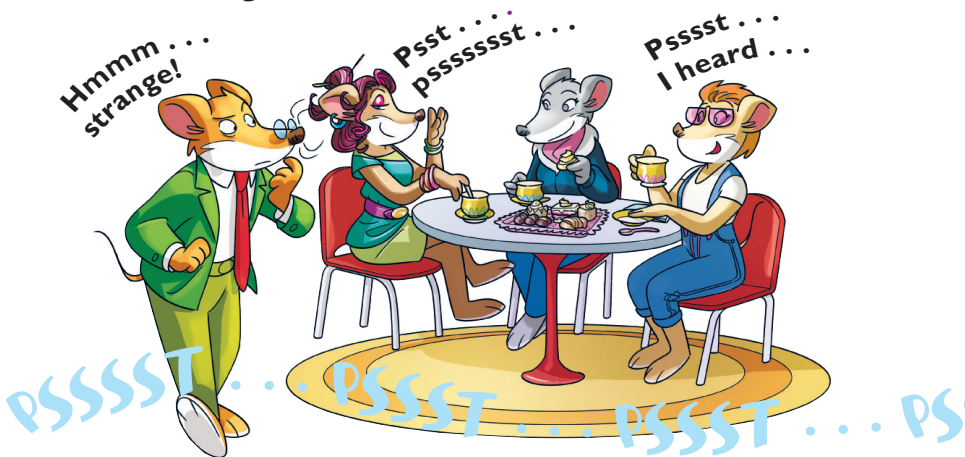
Yum!

Nice!

When I reached 17 Swiss Cheese Center, I parked my **bicycle** in front. On the way to my office, I passed by the break room. There, **MUNCHING** on cheese, I saw **Vanessa Vogue** (the *Gazette's* fashion journalist); my sister, **Thea**; (the *Gazette's* special correspondent); and **Cara DeColores** (the graphic designer for the *Gazette*).

They were all whispering mysteriously, “**PSSST . . . DID YOU HEAR?**”

“**PSSST . . .** everyone will be there . . . **PSSST . . .** it will be scary, scream-worthy, a real frightfest!”





I interrupted them. “Hello, everyone!” I said. “What exactly are you saying is going to be **SCARY**, **SCREAM-WORTHY**, and **frightening**?”

The three rodents looked **startled** to see me.

“Why, um, we were just talking about a new article idea I just had,” Vanessa answered. “About the, um, **frightening** new fashions in Transylmousea.”

“That sounds **mousetastic!**” I said. “**Good luck** with the article!”

They all quickly stood up.

“Thanks, Geronimo!” Thea said. “But, um, it’s late and we need to get back to work!”

Then they **ran off**, and I was confused. Why were they in such a rush?

WHAT A STRANGE ENCOUNTER!

SST . . . PSSST . . . PSSST... PSSST..



On the second floor, I spotted my **assistant**, Mousella, chatting with reporter Babs Bonbon.

“**PSSST**,” she said in a loud whisper. “Everyone will be there . . . **PSSST** . . . it will be scary, scream-worthy, a real frightfest!”

I interrupted them, too. “Excuse me, but what is going to be **SCARY**, **SCREAM-WORTHY**, and **frightening**?”

“Um, we were just talking about the new horror film, **The Ghost of Cheddar Castle**,” Mousella explained. “Sorry, we have to get back to work!” Then they both scurried away.

ANOTHER STRANGE ENCOUNTER!

I ran into Jim Dribbles (the *Gazette*'s

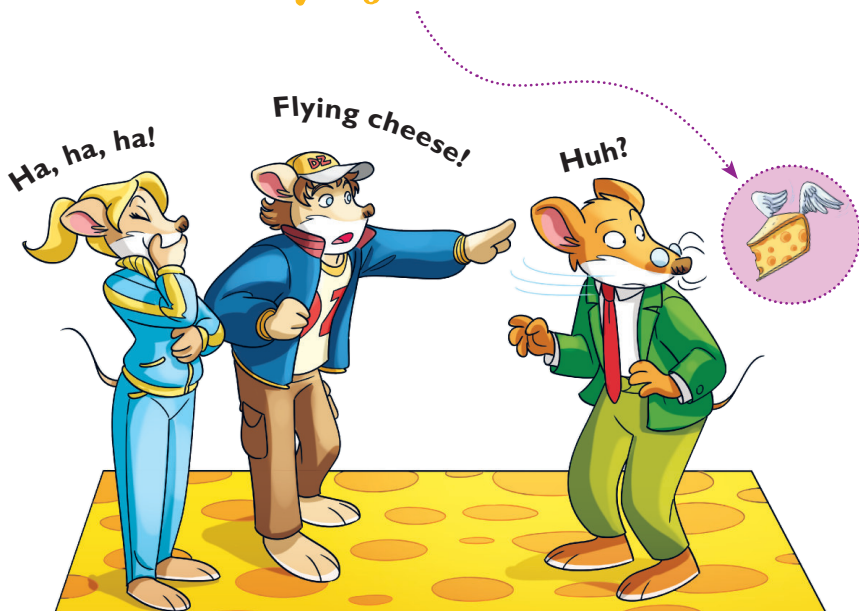
expert **SOCCER** commentator) who was whispering with his sister Gloria.

“**PSSST**,” Jim whispered. “Everyone will be there. **PSSST** . . . it will be scary, scream-worthy, and a real frightfest!”

“Excuse me, friends,” I asked. “Can you **PLEASE** tell me what is going to be scary, scream-worthy, and frightening?”

Jim’s eyes got wide, and he pointed. “That piece of flying cheese right behind you!”

“What? **Flying cheese?**” I asked.





Confused, I turned my head, but there was **nothing** behind me! When I turned back, Jim and Gloria were **running** away, giggling.

“GERONIMO HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY DISTRACTED!” Jim was saying to his sister. “The **secret** has been protected! And it will be truly **SCARY, SCREAM-WORTHY**, and **frightening!**”

How strange!



I tried to follow them, but they were in much better shape than I was and I couldn't catch up.

THAT WAS MY THIRD STRANGE ENCOUNTER IN A ROW!

Jim had used the word *secret*. Now it was clear that my coworkers were **hiding** something from me. But what could it be?

I needed some **fresh air** to clear my head. But when I opened my office window, what I saw made my whiskers **shake!**

A long black car marked **Funeral Movers** was parked in front of the building.

Some rodents dressed in black were unloading **coffin-shaped** boxes.

THIS WAS THE STRANGEST ENCOUNTER OF THEM ALL!





I **quickly** ran downstairs to see what they were up to. As I passed by the cafeteria, my nose **twitched**. The smell of **cheesy** goodness wafted through the doors. But who was cooking so early?

HOW STRANGE!

I started to push open the doors, but a **furry** paw pushed me back.

“Geronimo, why are you being so **nosy**?”



“**f**eeeeeeek!” I squeaked.

Then I realized that it was just my cousin Trap.

“**Don't call me nosy!**”

I snapped. “Strange things are happening around here, and I am the **ONLY ONE** who doesn't know what's going on!”

I tried to look past him, but he kept moving his body, **BLOCKING** my view. Then he started to tease me by singing a silly song.

“Geroni-mini is a curious **ninny!** Geroni-mad is a curious **LAD!** Geroni-mule is a curious **FOOL!**”

