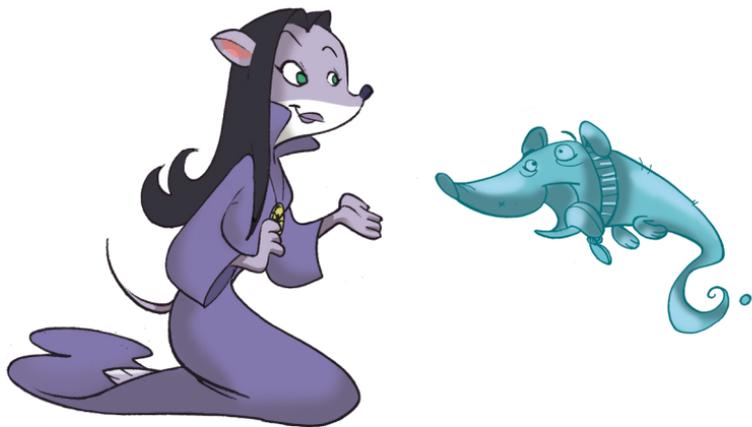


# Geronimo Stilton

## CREPELLA VON CACKLEFUR

# THE THIRTEEN GHOSTS



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# A MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

Night fell on New Mouse City as quickly as a flash of **lightning**. The sky was as black as the eyes of a hungry cat. Only the **CHEDDAR YELLOW** light of the full moon **shone** through the **DARKNESS**. I pulled my jacket closer and hurried on my way.



Sorry, I haven't introduced myself. My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I am the publisher of **The Rodent's Gazette**, the most **famous** newspaper on Mouse Island!

You're probably wondering: What was a



mouse like me doing out on a **spooky** night like this? Well, I'll tell you.

You see, I had to go back to my office to get some papers. I had done a bunch of research on **SCARY** stories. Just thinking about those stories makes my whiskers **curl** with fright!

Anyway, when I arrived at **The Rodent's Gazette**, I jumped in surprise. A light was **glowing** in one of the windows. I thought that was **STRANGE**. I'm always careful to turn the lights off when I leave. I don't like wasting energy!

I **slowly** stepped inside my office. **Whoosh!** A gust of **ICY** wind blew through an open window. I didn't remember leaving a window open. I went to close it when . . .

**“A A A H H H!!!”**





I noticed a purple **BAT** sitting on the windowsill, **STARING** at me!

I let out another scream of **TERROR** and fainted.

I started to wake up when I felt something tickling my whiskers. The bat was waving a wing in front of my nose.

“What are you **fainting** for?” the bat screeched in my ear.

“**Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!**  
**Message for you! Message for you!**  
**Message for you!**”

I was terrified. “F-f-f-from wh-whom?” I stammered.

The bat sneered. “Why, from **CREPELLA VON CACKLEFUR**, of course!”



That’s when I finally recognized him: It was **Bitewing**, the strange



von Cacklefur family's pet bat.

Then I noticed that Bitewing was holding a sealed roll of papers in his **claws**. Before I could ask what it was, he dropped it on my desk and flew off into the **DARK** night, squealing,



*“Publish it! No complaints! That’s an order!”*

I must admit that I was relieved to see **Bitewing** fly off. I took a deep breath to calm myself. Then I sat down at my desk. With **trembling** paws, I unrolled the papers and began to read.

My friend **CREPELLA VON CACKLEFUR** had written a long story set in the faraway **MYSTERIOUS VALLEY**. After reading just a few lines, I could tell I was in for a **CHILLING** **adventure**.



**CREPELLA** had drawn illustrations to go along with the story. I have to say, she has a very **ORIGINAL** style!

The story was so fascinating that I couldn't put it down. I read all through the night. I finally finished when the first **RAYs of SUN** shone through my office window.

I yawned. "What a strange tale."

At that moment, my nephew **Benjamin** and his friend **Bugsy Wugsy** walked into my office.

"Hey, Uncle, what are you reading?"

Benjamin asked curiously.

I read them one of my favorite sections of the story. They loved it!

"It's such a **STRANGE** story . . . but **THRILLING!**"

they both agreed.





My sister, **THEA**, arrived next. She works as a special correspondent for **The Rodent's Gazette**. I showed her the story, too.



“These illustrations are **STRANGE** . . . but **THRILLING!**”

Thea commented.

Then my cousin **TRAP** stumbled into my office. He read the story while eating a cheese sandwich, smearing mozzarella all over my desk.

“It’s a **STRANGE** adventure . . . but **THRILLING!**” Trap said.

One by one, all of the mice who work at **The Rodent's Gazette** came into my office. They were curious to see what all the **fuss** was about. I shared





Creepella's story and illustrations with all of them.

“What **STRANGE** characters . . . but so **THRILLING!**” they murmured. Soon my office was crowded with chatting mice. The last time I saw everyone so excited was on **FREE CHEESE DAY** at the market! Then a loud voice rang through my office.

**“GRAAAAAAANDSON!”**

Strange...  
but thrilling!



Strange...  
but thrilling!



Strange...  
but thrilling!



Strange...  
but thrilling!



Strange...  
but thrilling!





It was my grandfather, **William Shortpaws**.

“What’s happening here? Is this some kind of **party**?” he yelled.

“Let me tell you —” I began.

“I have no time for stories,” he **SNAPPED**.  
“Get to work!”

“But this *is* a story. I mean, a story is the reason we’re excited,” I explained. I handed him Creepella’s tale. “What do you think? Isn’t it **STRANGE**?”





He read the pages, tapping his foot on the floor. His tail **twitched**. He stroked his **whiskers**. Finally, he shouted, “It’s an **EXTREMELY STRANGE** story, Grandson . . . but it’s also **EXTREMELY THRILLING!**”

As you can see, everyone was very excited about Creepella’s story. So I decided to publish it! It’s called **THE THIRTEEN GHOSTS**. In fact, it’s the very story you hold in your paws.

**HAPPY READING!**

Strange . . . but very thrilling!  
Now back to work!





# THE THIRTEEN GHOSTS

Story and Illustrations by  
Creepella von Cacklefur