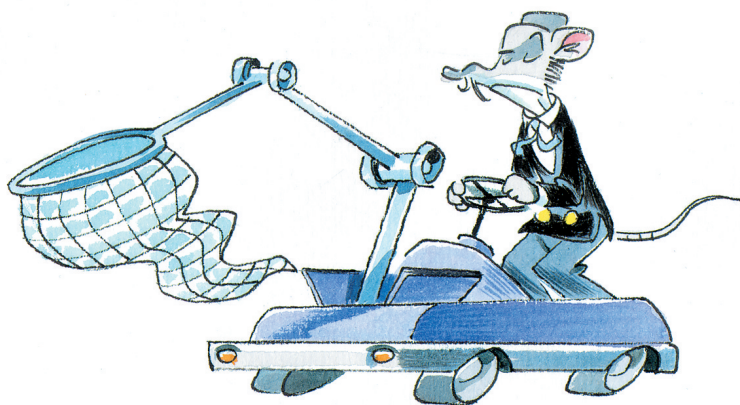


Geronimo Stilton

THE SECRET OF CACKLEFUR CASTLE



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ON A CHEESY AUTUMN AFTERNOON

Let me introduce myself. My name is Stilton, *Gerónimo Stilton*. I run *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most *famous* newspaper on Mouse Island. My office is in 17 Swiss Cheese Center.

That is where I was when this terrifying tale began. It was a beautiful **autumn** afternoon at the end of October.

“What a lovely, peaceful day!” I said out loud.

I spoke too soon. All of a





sudden, the walls started to shake.

Vrroooooooooooooom!

A loud roaring sound filled my office. My desk began to tremble. The pencil cup that my aunt Sweetfur gave me for my birthday tumbled to the floor.

“Holey cheese!” I cried.

Vrroooooooooooooom!

The roaring got louder. Then a mouse on a motorcycle rode through my door. It was my sister, Thea, of course.





“Thea!” I squeaked. “How many times do I have to tell you not to ride your motorcycle into my office!”

“I’m worried about you, Geronimo,” Thea said. “You have not written a new book in a long time. What’s wrong?”

Thea is a special correspondent for *The Rodent’s Gazette*. Still, I did not appreciate her sticking her snout into my business.

I pointed to the pile of papers on my desk. “I am too busy to *write*,” I said. “There is lots of other work to do around here.”

Thea frowned. “This is not like you, Geronimo. You always had time to write before!” she scolded. Then she peeled out of the office, her tires **SQUEALING**.

I sighed and sat down at my desk. What could I do? I had to do my paperwork.

My tail had just hit the chair when the



Trap Stilton

door flew open a second time. This time my cousin Trap burst in. He held a triple-decker cheese sandwich in one paw.

“Geronimo, you have become lazier than a mouse with an automatic cheese slicer. **you must write something new!**” he yelled.

“I need to be inspired before I can write,” I huffed. “I can’t just pluck an idea out of my whiskers.”

The door flew open a third time. Pinky Pick, my very young assistant editor, bounded





in. “Hey, Boss!” she said cheerfully. “I am organizing a **PARTY** for your next book. It’s going to be *fabumouse!*”

My tail twitched. I was starting to get annoyed. “But I haven’t even written it yet!” I squeaked.

The door flew open a fourth time. It was my favorite nephew, Benjamin, on his way home from school. “Hello, Uncle,” he said. “My friends are all asking when your next book is coming out!”

I felt embarrassed. I hated to disappoint Benjamin. He gazed up at me with his sweet round eyes. “It will be out soon, Benjamin,” I said. “I promise.”

Trap, Pinky, and Benjamin left me to my work. I finished





I looked out over New Mouse City.



the stack of papers on my desk. But I could not stop thinking about what everyone had said. What would my next book be about?

The beautiful autumn afternoon turned into a beautiful crisp evening. I looked outside my window and gazed out over **NEW MOUSE CITY**. **A cold wind blew up and lifted the cheddar-colored leaves off the ground. I watched them float and swirl in the night air.**

I needed an **idea**. But I didn't have any! I had to think. I sat down at my desk. . . .

A few hours later, I was still thinking.

I had no ideas. **NOTHING**. My mind was as dry as a stale slice of cheese.

Feeling helpless, I started to **sob**. "It is no use!" I moaned.

"My writing days are over!"