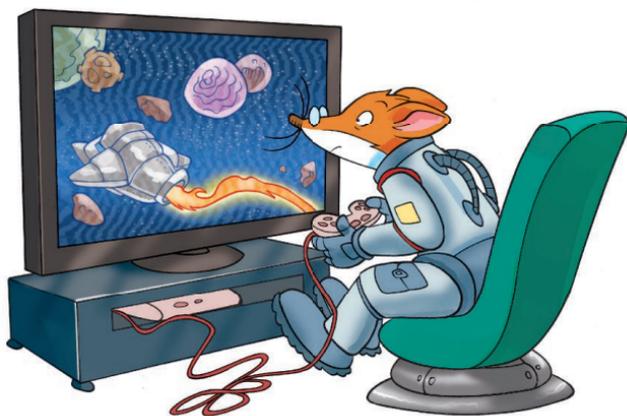


Geronimo Stilton

MOUSE IN SPACE!



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Text by Geronimo Stilton

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TWO CHEESEBRAINS IN BLACK MASKS

It was a dark, chilly, moonless night, and I was snoring **contentedly** under my cozy comforter. I was having the most **fabumouse** dream! In my dream I was floating in space, happily **hovering** over cream cheese asteroids, Swiss cheese planets, and mozzarella comets.





Just as I was about to nibble on a yummy-looking cheese crater, something woke me up. I heard a **CLICK**, like the sound of a lock being broken. Then I heard a **creak**, like the sound of a door opening. And finally, I heard a **SWOOSH, SWOOSH**, like the sound of muffled feet. . . .

Holey cheese! Someone was in my house!

In a panic, I grabbed something to protect myself. Unfortunately, it wasn't a **BASEBALL BAT**. It was my **slipper**.

Rats! Still, I forced myself to scamper into the living room.

And that's when I saw them.

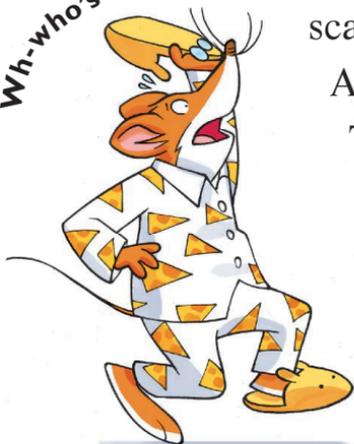
Two shadows in the dark . . .

"Aaaaah!" I yelled.

"Aaaaaaaaah!"
yelled the shadows.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

Wh-who's there?





I yelled louder.

I was so scared, my heart was racing. The SHADOWS were looking more like mice wearing masks. WHO were these intruders? WHAT did they want? Money? Jewelry? A homemade Swiss cheese sandwich on rye?

I'd have to wait to find out. A moment later I fainted.

Clunk!

I woke up the following morning





when a **ray** of sun hit me in the eyes.

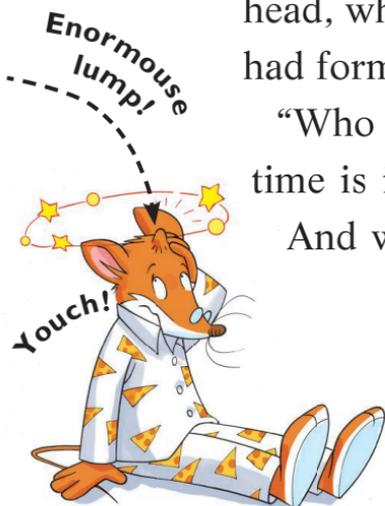
With a groan I sat up. Then I rubbed my head, where an **ENORMOUSE** lump had formed.

“Who am I? Where am I? What time is it? Why aren’t I in my bed? And why do I have an enormous **lump** on my head?” I muttered.

Then I tried my best to answer myself.

“Well, um, my name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I’m the editor of *The Rodent’s Gazette*, the most famous newspaper on Mouse Island. I’m in my house, and it’s morning,” I answered.

I **SIGHED** with relief. At least the **lump** on my head hadn’t turned me completely clueless!





A few seconds later, everything came rushing back to me: the two shadows *sneaking* around my house the night before . . . grabbing my slipper . . . **FAINTING**. Had anything been stolen?

I ran to check on Hannibal, my **little red fish**. I gave him some of his favorite food, and he slapped his tail in greeting.



He was as *frisky* and *cheerful* as ever.

Then I checked my collection of **antique cheese rinds**. I'm very fond of them because I found each rind, one by one, in antique shops all over New Mouse City.

Not one was missing. Phew!

I began *opening* drawers and cabinets to make sure everything was where it should be. Carefully, I





pawed through it all — my favorite books, my ties, a **cheddar**-colored sweater from my aunt Sweetfur, a **PAINTED** rock from my dear nephew Benjamin.

Luckily, everything was in its place.

I was so happy. The **intruders** didn't take any of the things that meant the most to me. I didn't really care about my money — but even that was all there, in my wallet, on a table in the living room.

How **odd!**

If nothing was stolen, then what did those two cheesebrains in **black masks** want? Why did they run off?

Suddenly, it dawned on me what had happened. When I held up my slipper and **screamed**, I had scared them away!

That's right — I, *Geronimo Stilton*, biggest **SCAREDY-MOUSE** on all of Mouse





Island, had sent those **rotten** cheesebrains running!

I couldn't believe it. I was a true **HERO!**

I couldn't wait to tell everyone! I **scampered** to the bathroom and began getting ready for work, happily **whistling** to myself.

I looked at myself in the mirror. Yes, I decided, I did look stronger, and prouder. In fact, you could say I looked **heroic!**

I was so busy staring at myself in the mirror that I hadn't heard the phone **ringing**. I picked up after the tenth **ring**. It was my grandfather William Shortpaws.

"GRANDSON! What are you doing?





Why didn't you pick up the phone sooner? I refuse to be kept waiting! Get your tail in gear **PRONTO!** There were a ton of robberies in the city last night!" he **SCREECHED.**

"I know, Grandfather. Last night two cheesebrains in **black masks** broke into my house, too. But I chased them away with a slipper! Oh, and then I fainted. But still, I was a real **HERO!**" I squeaked.

Grandfather snorted.

"A **slipper?** Sure, those slippers can be very scary. Now listen, **HERO**, get your fuzzy head out of your fairy-tale book and get moving. We need to get the scoop on those robberies for the paper. I sent your sister, Thea, over to you with **precise** instructions. You need to figure out who's behind all these robberies. After you do



that, write an **ace** article and have it on my desk by tomorrow morning! Got it? **NOW MOVE IT!**” he shrieked.

I tried to interrupt, but Grandfather wasn’t listening.

“**cheese niblets!**” he continued. “If it weren’t for me, *The Rodent’s Gazette* would be a complete mess! That’s right, I’ll tell you who the hero is! It’s **me! me! me! me!**”

The next thing I heard was the dial tone.

