

Geronimo Stilton

Thea Stilton AND THE SECRET CITY



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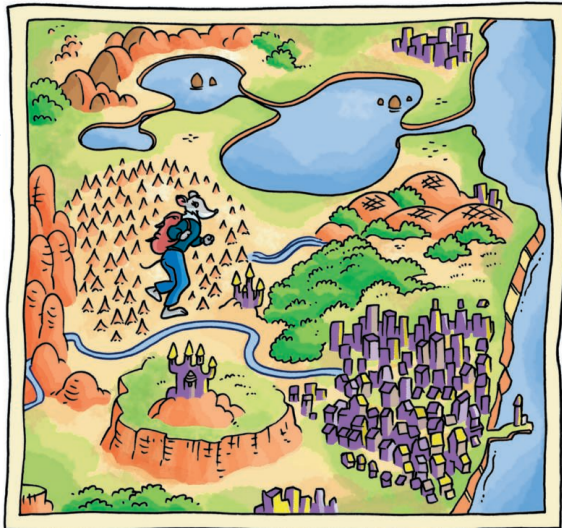
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A MESSAGE CUT SHORT

I had just come back from a **FABUMOUSE** vacation to Mouse Island's **NATURE RESERVE PARK**. I'd spent three days hiking all the way to the Lake Lake. The trip was **INTENSE, FILLED WITH ADVENTURE, AND THOROUGHLY EXHAUSTING.**

MOUSE ISLAND'S NATURE RESERVE PARK





In other words, it was my favorite kind of vacation!

When I got home to my mouse hole, I was beat! I dumped my backpack by the door, **SLOUCHED** to the living room, and sprawled on the couch.

Oh, dear me, I almost forgot to introduce myself. My name is Stilton, Thea Stilton. I am a special correspondent for *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most famous newspaper on Mouse Island. Usually, I love nothing more than to be on the open road, feeling the wind in my fur. But just this once, I was really **happy** to be home.

I closed my eyes for a moment. When I opened them, I saw the light on my answering machine **BLINKING**. I gathered the little strength I had left and pressed **PLAY**. As a journalist, I have to stay in touch with my



contacts, and it doesn't pay to fall behind on my squeakmail.

FIRST MESSAGE: "Hi, Thea! I wanted to ask you about your catamaran . . . Oh, I forgot you were on vacation!" **CLICK!**

The squeak belonged to my friend **Penelope Poisonfur**. We'd met during a survival course.

SECOND MESSAGE:

"Thea, it's me, Penelope! Do you remember the Alpine guide who . . . Oh, for the love of cheese, are you still away?" **CLICK!**

THIRD MESSAGE: "Hello, Thea? I was calling to find out if— Oh, right, you're still on that trip!" **CLICK!**

The fourth, fifth, and sixth messages were also



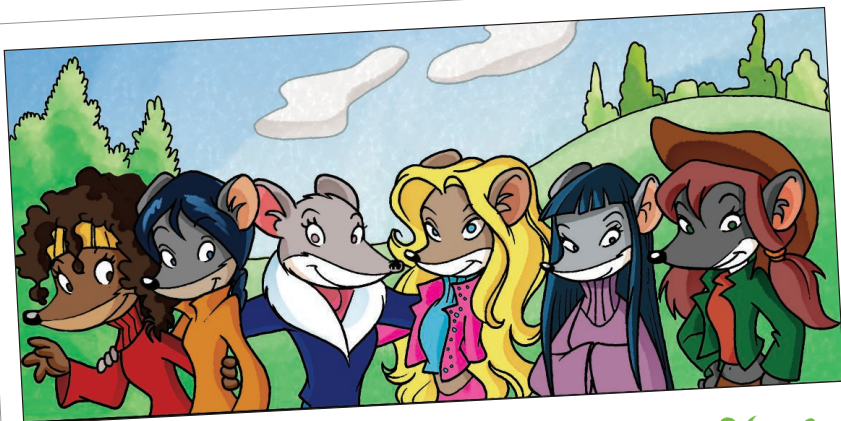


Penelope: “All right already, Thea! Are you ever planning to come home?” **CLICK!**

When I heard the seventh message, I **jumped** up from the couch: “Hi, Thea. It’s **PAULINA**. I’m in Cuzco. I need a—” **CLICK!**

Crispy **cheese fritters!** The answering machine had run out of memory! Paulina’s message had been cut off.

What was Paulina doing in Cuzco, **PERU**? Why wasn’t she with the other



Pamela

PAULINA

Colette

Violet

Nicky

My friends, the Thea Sisters!



THEA SISTERS at **MOUSEFORD ACADEMY**
on Whale Island?

Despite my exhaustion, my paws were itching to find out!

Oh! I'm so **tired**, I haven't explained who the **THEA SISTERS** are yet. I'm *fonder* of those five mouselings than I am of my own fur. I first met *Colette*, *Nicky*, *Pamela*, **PAULINA**, and **Violet** at **MOUSEFORD ACADEMY** when I was teaching a course on **ADVENTURE** journalism. It was almost as if I'd adopted them. I feel like their big sister.

My eyes moved toward my laptop, which was sitting on my desk. Suddenly, a **thought** occurred to me!



Of course! Paulina never went anywhere without her **laptop**! I hurried over and checked my **E-MAIL**.

My hunch was right! Paulina had sent me



a **looong** e-mail. It was the latest installment in the adventures of the **THEA SISTERS**.

This time, my five dear mouselings were in South America, in faraway **PERU**! The e-mail was accompanied by beautiful digital photos. And that's not all! The **music** of the Andes played from my computer.

HOW AMAZING! I felt like I was there in Peru with five of my **favorite** rodents by my side.

As soon as I finished reading Paulina's note, I knew I had the subject of my next book: **THE SECRET CITY!**

It all started on Whale Island one warm spring morning. . . .

