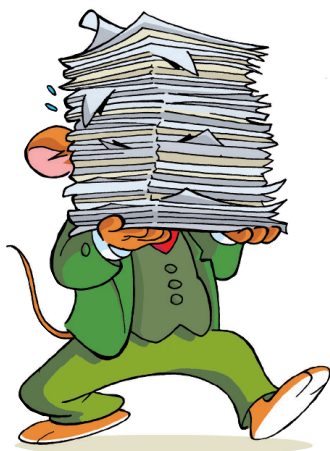


Geronimo Stilton

CYBER-THIEF SHOWDOWN



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I WAS ONE HAPPY RODENT!

My dear readers, it all started early one morning, when I woke up feeling as *fresh* as newly made mozzarella!

I felt very **happy** — as **happy** as a rat in a cheese factory!

Why was I in such a **GREAT MOOD**? Well, I woke up to warm, bright sunlight shining on my snout. The little birds were *chirping*. There was





a whiff in the air of freshly baked **CHEESE BREAD** . . .

Yes, it was one of those days when you want to say to every rodent in the whole wide world: “**Life is beautiful and the world is mousetastic!**”

I was in such a good mood that I decided to **work out** (*which does not happen too often . . .*)!

Then I brushed my teeth. I took a quick **shower**, humming one of my favorite





tunes, and quickly got dressed to go to work.

And what is my **job**, you ask?

The most **amazing** job in the world!

I run *The Rodent's Gazette*, Mouse Island's most famous newspaper.

My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*! And when I walked to the office that morning, I greeted everyone I saw with a **smile**.

First, I ran into Miss Angel Paws, Benjamin's teacher, on her way to school.



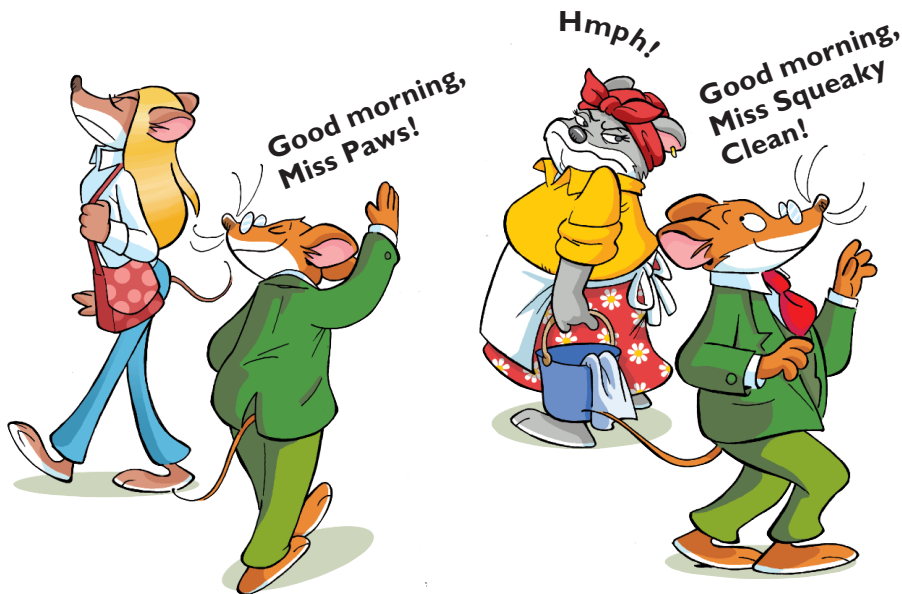


“**Good morning, Miss Paws!**” I squeaked, waving to her.

But she looked the other way. **It didn't bother me.** I just assumed that she hadn't heard me.

Then I ran into Samantha Squeaky Clean, my housecleaner.

I have known her for a long time. She is always kind, helpful, and friendly.





“**Good morning, Miss Squeaky Clean!**” I squeaked with a smile.

She looked at me and scowled. “Hmph!”

At the moment, **it didn't bother me**. I figured that she was in a bad mood.

Then I ran into my tailor, Sartorius Stitchfur.

“Hello,” I said politely, but he didn't reply, either. Weird! Was he also in a **bad mood?**





Next, I said hello to Mrs. Busymouse. We have been **neighbors** for a long time. I help her with her grocery shopping, and every day I send her a **large-print** copy of *The Rodent's Gazette* because she is older and has trouble reading the **small print**.

But she **frowned** at me. "Shame on you, Geronimo," she said in a disapproving tone.

I wondered if maybe I forgot her birthday.

"Hmm . . . I am sorry," I replied. "Have a great day!"

Still looking **OUTRAGED**, she turned and walked away.

I started thinking that some **outbreak** of a weird bad mood was spreading in New Mouse City. Otherwise, why was everyone being so **unfriendly**?

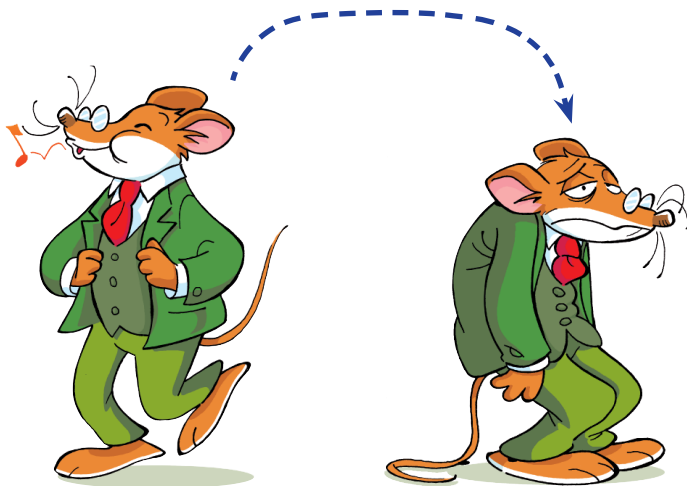
The rest of my walk was exactly the same. I smiled at every rodent I passed, but



nobody would greet me. Everyone **turned** the other way, pretending not to see me or replying in a **RUDE WAY**.

Pretty soon I started to wonder if the bad mood outbreak was **contagious**, because my **happy** mood turned more and more **rotten** with each step I took!

I only realized what was **wrong** after I reached the newsstand. All the newspapers (except for *The Rodent's Gazette*) featured

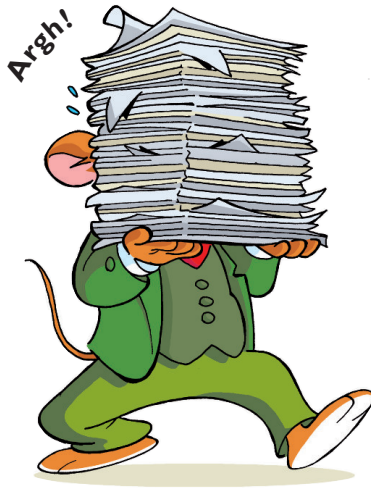
**BEFORE GOING OUT****AFTER GOING OUT**



terrible stories about me on the front.

What was going on?

Red in the snout from **embarrassment**, I bought all the newspapers. Then I quickly walked to the office, **HIDING** behind the big **stack** so nobody could see me.





What bad manners!

What?

Grunt!

Grrrrr!