



Geronimo Stilton
A learned and brainy mouse; editor of *The Rodent's Gazette*



Thea Stilton
Geronimo's sister and special correspondent at *The Rodent's Gazette*

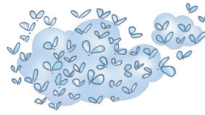


Trap Stilton
An awful joker; Geronimo's cousin and owner of the store Cheap Junk for Less



Benjamin Stilton
A sweet and loving nine-year-old mouse; Geronimo's favorite nephew





SOMETHING STINKS!

I **tossed** and turned in bed. The night air was hotter than the inside of a grilled cheese. I counted cats, I stared at the **moon**, I tried listening to a podcast about the history of **Parmesan**. Just as I finally drifted off to sleep, a **LOUD** noise jolted me awake.

Ring, ring, ring!





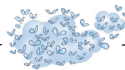
Holy cheese, I had to get to the office! I am *Geronimo Stilton*, the editor-in-chief of *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most **famous** newspaper on Mouse Island.

I rushed to the office and sat at my desk. I quickly drank my **cheddar kale smoothie** and got to work on my latest article. Deep in thought, I barely noticed when the door to my office **squeaked** open.

But I did notice a strange **SMELL**. In fact, it was hard not to notice! The smell was really more of a **big stink**. Or a big stinky stench. What was that?

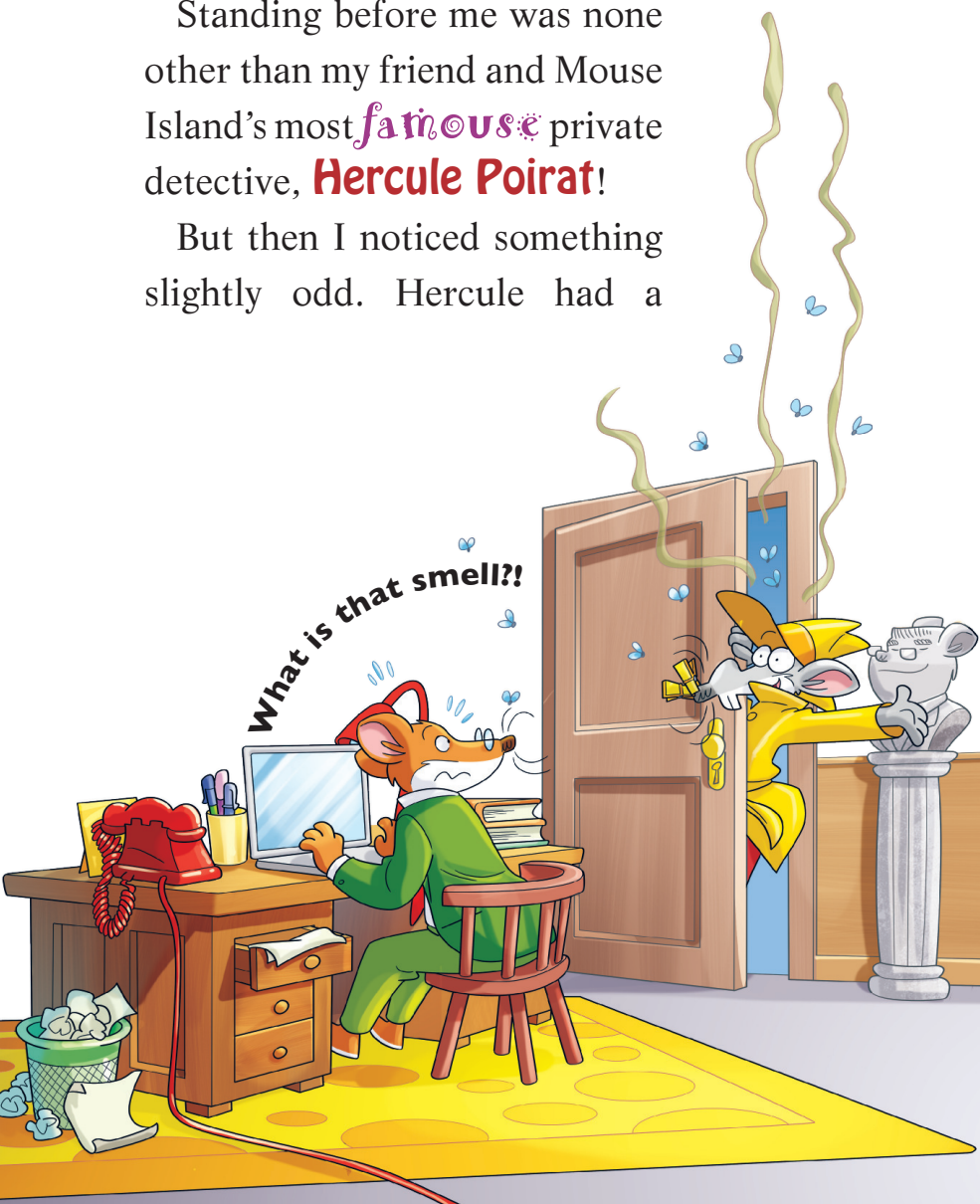
Without looking up from my computer, I held my nose with my paw. "**Rotten Gorgonzola**, who's there?"

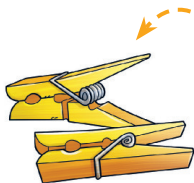
A familiar snout peeked through the door. The snout was familiar and so was the banana-yellow overcoat . . .



Standing before me was none other than my friend and Mouse Island's most *famous* private detective, **Hercule Poirat**!

But then I noticed something slightly odd. Hercule had a





clothespin perched right on the end of his snout!

He started talking a mile a minute. “Beronimo, can you doo bee a bavor?”

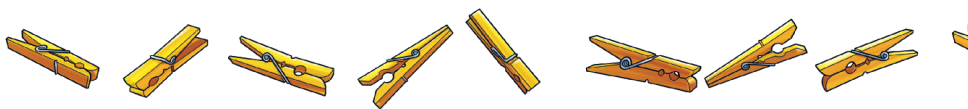
I waved my paws to get him to **STOP**. “Slow down, Hercule! I can’t understand a Parmesan-dusted thing you are saying!”

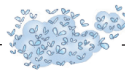
He started over, **LOUDER** and **slower** this time. “Beronimo. Can you doo bee a baaaaaaavooooor. Bits urgent!!”

My **WHISKERS** shook with impatience. “Hercule! I have no idea what you’re saying. I don’t have time for this. I’m working on a very important fondue article!”


Hercule let out a **squeak** of surprise and pointed a paw at the **clothespin** on his snout.

He removed it and started over. “There! Can you understand me now?”





I nodded **warily**.

“Great! Because I need you to do me a favor! It’s urgent!” He clasped his  together.

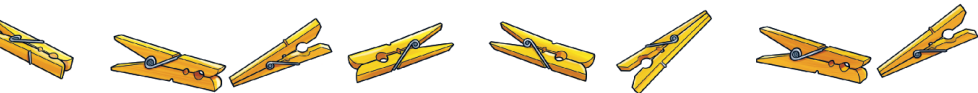
I sighed. “**Twisted cat tails!** Every time you visit, it’s because you need something. And it’s always very urgent.”

Hercule just grinned at me in response. Reluctantly, I gave him my full attention.

“Okay, what’s so urgent? And why are you wearing a clothespin? And why do you **smell** so terrible?” I said, sniffing.

Hercule leaped toward my desk and pulled a tissue out of his overcoat pocket. With it came an avalanche of **clothespins**.

“Geronimo, something in New Mouse City stinks worse than **rotten** Gorgonzola. And I’m not talking about this smell. I’m talking about — a thief!”



“A thief?” I repeated. “What are they **stealing?**”

“That’s just it, Geronimo. That is the strangest thing about the whole case. This rascally **rodent** is stealing . . .” He paused dramatically.

I rolled my eyes.

“The thief is stealing **GARBAGE!**” Hercule cried.

I gasped.

“That’s why I stink. I’ve been up all night sorting through dumpsters,” he said while he clacked his **clothespin** at me.

I shuddered. “Who would want to steal trash?”

WHO, WHO, WHO?

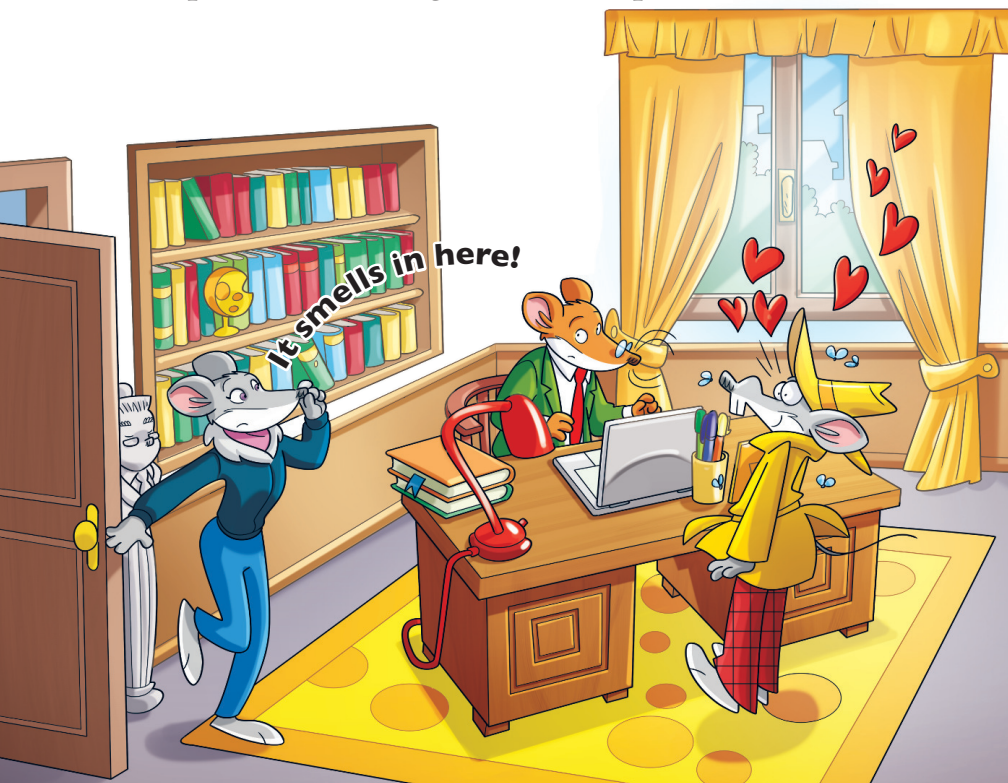
Just then my sister, Thea, walked in, holding her snout with a paw.

“When was the last time either one of you

rats took a shower? Your office **stinks** like an old bag of shredded cheese that's been left out in the **sun**."

I groaned.

Hercule stood up a little straighter and moved away from Thea. "So sorry about the **SMELL**, Thea. That's the scent of a very important investigation!" He puffed out his



chest. “Help me convince Geronimo to join me in finding a crafty **trash** thief!”

“**COOL!**” Thea said. “That could be an interesting story for *The Rodent’s Gazette!*”

I didn’t like the **sound** of that. Before I could make up an excuse to escape my office, Thea was hustling me up out of my chair.

“Come on, Geronimo, we have to investigate!” She put her **camera** in the pocket of her jacket.

“Oh, sugar-crusted cheese curds! Thank you, Thea!” Hercule **squeaked**. “How can I ever thank you enough —”

“By **talking** less, and getting **cracking** on this investigation!” Thea interrupted.

I tried to sit back down. “I have a lot of cheese on my plate right now, guys. I think I better stay,” I said.



“This is more important!” Thea **shook** her snout at me.

“Fine,” I grumbled.

“Yay!” Thea **cheered**. She grabbed my arm and practically pulled me out the office door.

“We’re doing this!” Hercule cried. “**Let’s go catch that thief!**”

