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Opening extract from

Geronimo Stilton: Curse of the Cheese Pyramid

Written by

Geronimo Stilton

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Wake Up!
Wake Uuuuuuup!

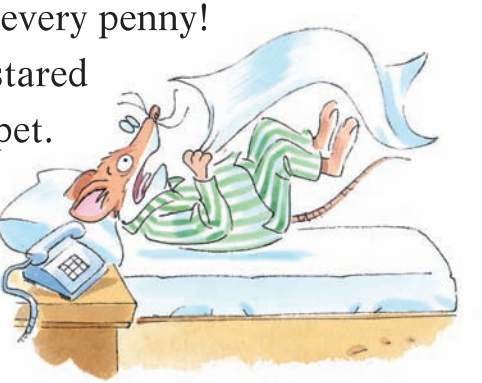
It was just before dawn in the middle of winter. The moon shone down over the mouse holes of New Mouse City. I was fast asleep under my comfy, cozy blankets, snoring away.

Suddenly, the phone rang.

I stumbled out of bed, sinking my paws into my new cat-fur rug. It was so *soft*. I had bought it last weekend at The Fur Mart with my uncle Nibbles. It was expensive, but worth every penny! Still half asleep, I stared down at the fluffy carpet.

Then I *picked up* the phone.

Ring!
Ring!
Ring!
Ring!



"Hello! Stilton speaking, *Geronimo Stilton*," I mumbled.

A strangely familiar voice shrieked back at me. "**WAKE UP!**" it cried.

**WAKEUUUUUU

Oh, yes, I forgot to mention that I r u n a newspaper. It is called *The Rodent's Gazette.* It is the most popular newspaper on Mouse Island! I'd like to say the paper's a success just because of me. But I have lots of help. Still, I'm the big cheese at the office.

As I was saying, I got to work at nine o'clock sharp. I opened the door to my office wide . . .

. . . and found myself snout-to-snout with my grandfather **William Shortpaws** — also known as **Cheap Mouse Willy**.



Grandfather William is a tough-talking mouse. Everyone at the office is afraid of him. That's because he is the founder of *The Rodent's Gazette*!



My Wallet Bleeds

I barely had taken two pawsteps into the room when Grandfather William began SHOUTING at me. "Graaandson! How dare you arrive at this hour?" he thundered.

I cringed. Where had I heard that shrieking voice before? "But, Grandfather, it's nine o'clock! This is when the office opens," I explained.

Grandfather William just shook his head. "RIDICULOUS!" he cried. "Do you realize you've slept half the day away, Grandson?! I've been here since six o'clock!!!"

A light went on inside my mouse-sized brain. So that was the shrieking voice I had heard on the phone this morning. "Thanks for the wake-up call," I grumbled.



"You're spending too much! Too much! T-o-o m-u-c-h!"

Curling his whiskers, he sniggered with satisfaction. "Now, you listen to me, sonny boy!" he ordered, pulling my ear. "Things are looking bad around here, very bad indeed! Do you know why?"

I opened my mouth to reply, but he didn't give me a chance to answer.



"I'll tell you why!" he bellowed. "Because you're spending too much! TOO MUCH! T-o-o m-u-c-h! You must economize! Economize, economize, economize!"

Then he stuck his snout in my ear. "Do you know the meaning of the word, my dear grandson?" he hollered at the top of his lungs. "I'm talking

Economize!

E as in **End this extravagance immediately!**

C as in **Cut back on all expenses!**

O as in **On your toes! Things are about to change!!!**



N as in **No more spending!**

O as in **Oh, what a mess you have made of things!**

M as in **Mend your ways, Grandson, or I'm taking back the firm!**

I as in **I feel sick when I hear such things!**

Z as in **Zero, zilch, no spending!**

E as in **Economize on everything!**"

I gulped. *"Y" as in yikes!* I thought. I guess it wouldn't be a good time to tell Grandfather William about the expensive leather loveseat I had ordered for my office. "B-but, Grandfather . . ." I began.



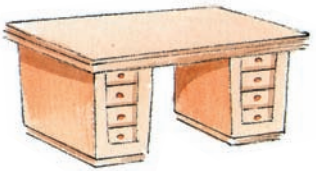
He pulled my other ear. "Grandfather, my paw! Starting today, I'm keeping track of **EVERYTHING**!" he shouted, waving the account books under my snout. "I expect to see lots of changes. For example, how did you get here this morning?"

I chewed my whiskers. "Well, I took a taxi," I replied.

He slammed his paw on the table. "Exactly! This is what I'm talking about! My wallet **BLEEDS** when I hear such things."

He grabbed me by the tie. "Grandson, from now on you'll take the subway to work. No, even better, you can come **ON PAW**. This way, you'll save on the fare and you'll get in first-rat shape!!!"

I felt completely **dazed and confused**. I tried to sit down to catch my breath.



But when I looked around for a chair, I realized Grandfather William had already made some changes. Some perfectly *horrifying* changes! All of my furniture was gone!



The desk designed for me by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Rat was nowhere in sight. I whirled around in **shock!** What had happened to my precious leather pawchair, my imported Cheshire cat-fur carpet, my expensive artwork, and my priceless library? The office was empty!



My heart sank like the big ball of cheese in Singing Stone Plaza on New Year's Eve. I had been robbed by my own relative! A plastic table and a plastic chair were the only





pieces of furniture in the whole room!!!

Grandfather looked around, satisfied. "I sold everything to a second-paw dealer," he said with a SMUG SMILE. "You don't need any furniture, just a chair to sit on and a table to write on!"

As he spoke, he banged his paw on the plastic table, which began to WOBBLE.

Quick as a rat half his age, Grandfather caught the table edge before it tipped over. "I may have gray fur," he exclaimed, "but this rodent's not dead yet! I've still got it!"

I swallowed hard. "Grandfather! You sold my precious furniture to a second-paw dealer!" I squeaked. "How much did he give you?"

He waved a wad of money under my snout. "Look at that!" he boasted. "Not bad, huh?"

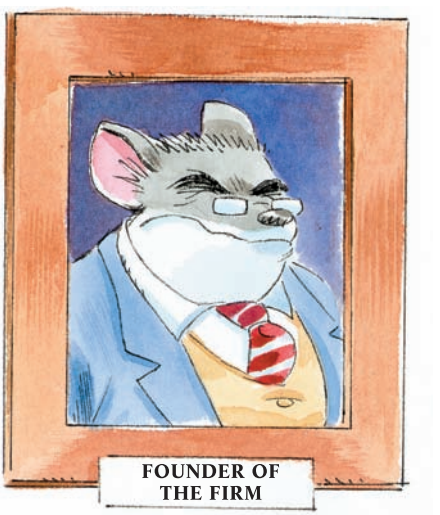
I counted the money and went PALE!

"But this is way too little! Those were antique books, valuable paintings . . ." I cried, shaking my head in disbelief. "And they were **MINE!**"

By now my head was spinning. I was in a sad state. I was either going to pull out all of my fur or **sob** like a newborn mouslet.

Grandfather William didn't seem to notice. He stuffed the money back into his wallet.

Then he shouted, "Grandson, you are about to get a lesson in business you'll never forget! Remember, I am the founder of this firm!



I can shut it down with a twitch of my tail!"