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-Geronimo Stilton

## The Curse of the Cheddar Touch

by Geronimo Stilton

When I awoke this fine morning as I usually do, I truly didn't know what I would be getting myself into, or out of. It seemed like such a good morning too. I woke up promptly in time to get myself dressed and ready for work. I was able to eat a tasty meal of milk and Cheddar Flakes cereal for breakfast. Outside there were no dreary rain clouds ready to rain on my parade, and I was able to catch a taxi from my home to my workplace, The Rodent Gazette, without any trouble at all. It seemed all too good to be true as I found my way to my office without accidentally tripping on a carpet, or someone accidentally stepping on my tail, or getting harassed by my cousin Trap over some inane scheme of his. Even my sister, Thea Stilton, was actually walking around the office like a regular mouse instead of riding in on her great, stinking motorcycle. If anything my optimism was getting the better of me, as all this pleasantness and my being on such perfect time should have tipped me off that something dreadful was coming for me like a boulder made of mouldy cheese. I was in such a good mood as my assistant Mousella went over schedule for the day. It was all quite airy and non-stressful, which is something a mouse like me needs with all the crazy adventures I go on. I was just about to take a sip of my morning coffee when Thea burst into the room. I was so startled I ended up hurling warm coffee all over my face! Oh whiskers my poor green suit was stained brown with all that coffee. "Gerry Berry! I got a hot scoop for ya, fresh off my sources!" Thea announced grandly.

"My name is Geronimo" I replied icily.

Oh it makes my whiskers curl that so many members of my family are so ardent in their refusal to call me by my proper name. "Never mind about that! I got a hot scoop that even a 'fraidy mouse like you won't hesitate to accept" Thea smiled.

As I wiped coffee off my whiskers I couldn't help but feel dubious about Thea's claim. I still cannot forget all the crazy adventures Thea's "hunches" have taken me on, starting all the way back in our search for the Emerald Eye. Admittedly despite nearly losing my life by a whisker so many times did prompt me to turn that adventure into a best seller, I still sometimes have nightmares about all the adventures Thea has dragged me on. "Well I'm sure someone else could take it then, as I have quite a full schedule" I informed her.

"Didn't I say "never mind about that"? Look, I'll tell Mousella to clear your precious schedule because I got you an interview with Professor Blackbeard, expert antiquarian who is secretly preparing an exhibit for New Mouse City's Mouseum of Natural History. But if a boring squeaker like you doesn't want it, then I cooooouuullldd find someone else to do this perfectly safe, not-very-adventurous interview instead" Thea purred wickedly.

Not-very-adventurous? Perfectly safe? This was unusual for Thea to find me a scoop that didn't involve risking my life and/or dignity for days or weeks at a time. "Now hold on," I began, my intrigue piqued, "I haven't necessarily said no" I conceded.

"Then shall I book you in? He already knows you're coming. By the way the interview's at ten sharp so you better get going and change out of those coffee-covered clothes" she called as she slammed the door shut behind her.

Ten sharp? That wasn't much time, but thankfully after so many adventures I could at least manage the Gazette's stairs three at a time going down. And after returning to my home for a quick touch-up and a change of clothes, I was soon at the New Mouse City Mouseum of Natural History with minutes to spare. I made it to the front desk panting but ready as the tawny lady rat behind the counter seemed perplexed to see me. "Visiting the Mouseum are we? Ticket for one?" she asked chirpily.

"Actually," I panted, "I'm here to see" I began, but suddenly recalled that Professor Blackbeard was here in secret. Looking about conspiratorially, I leaned over the counter, my snout hovering by the attendant's ears. "My name is Stilton, Geronimo Stilton of The Rodent Gazette, and I'm here to interview Professor Blackbeard" I whispered.

"Professor!" the rat began squeakily before lowering her voice. "Nobody's supposed to know about Professor Blackbeard" she whispered. "He's got some very secret research going on in storage room. Which... I shouldn't have told you. But I recognize you from your books Mista Stilton, so I'll just call security to take you to him" she whispered.

I gulped hard, thinking maybe I was in the thick of it as two burly security mice appeared out of nowhere, and rather roughly took me by the arms. But instead of being taken out they took me through a staff-only door and down a metal flight of stairs that creaked as we went down them. Soon enough I was mousehandled to a room labelled "Professor Blackbeard's Secret Research Station", and that was that as the security mice left. I can't quite vouch for the secretness of a secret facility labelled "Secret Facility", but I was a mouse on a mission, so I politely knocked on the door. "YEAHWHADDYAWANT!?" a crotchety voice incomprehensibly grumbled.

A shiver ran up my spine; that voice reminded me of an old lecturer back from my Junior Years. Suddenly I was back in front of class nervously trying to spell "Hippopotamus". "H-I-P-P" I started to babble until I caught myself. "I-it's Geronimo Stilton, of The Rodent Gazette? My sister Thea Stilton arranged an interview with you?" I shivered.

"Oh, Stilton? Stilton. Stiiliilton. Yeah whatever, get yer tail on in here then" the grouchy voice grumbled.

My body suddenly obeyed on its own, maybe for fear of the ruler as I helped myself inside. But in an instant my school boy fears vanished, replaced by wonder at the treasure trove of ancient artefacts littering the room, with walls coated in countless posters and painting from what I assumed to be the Mousepotamia era. Among them, dressed like a sea captain in a heavy coat, was Professor Blackbeard. I remember, of course, how I used to read stories when I was younger of dashing sea captains and villainous pirates, and Professor Blackbeard was like the very picture of both come to life. He bore an eyepatch over his right eye, with a thick beard like a shag carpet. He had grey fur and a mean look in his one good eye, which was squared directly on me. If he had had a peg leg too I could have thought him fresh out of the Great Age of Piracy. "Well don't take all day boy, it's me life yer wasting not yers" he grumbled.

"Sorry," I apologised, "I was just so drawn in by all the items here. Those paintings are Mousepotamian aren't they? They look lovely" I said, and meant it too.

The professor glanced over at the painting I was looking at, and his one good eye bore into me as if he was dissecting me whisker by fur strand. "Hmm, when yer sister gushed to me how clever ye were, I still thought I was wasting me time. Maybe she was right; just a bit" he conceded.

Really? Thea gushed about me? I could feel my cheeks get a little rosy from that amount of praise. "Well I do happen to enjoy books on history Professor Blackbeard. And I've been meaning to ask, that name of yours. Were you perhaps a...?"

"Not by choice" Professor Blackbeard snorted as he fiddled with some artefacts. "Me pops was the pirate, and I was his little cabin boy. But eventually I grew from enjoying treasure to enjoying the history of it. When ye sail the world ye get yer paws on all kinds of fancies, and mine was figuring out why the heck some ancient civilisation from a million years ago did stuff. Right now me and me crew are working on some Mousepotamian stuff, specifically relating to the curious era of Hammuratty the Seventh" he explained to me, gesturing to a tapestry I hadn't spotted.

It was quite a wide tapestry, in order to hold all that rat. I was rather perplexed, as while great weight was indeed a sign of affluence only afforded to nobility back in those days, I never thought there'd be one so vast that it'd require a double-wide tapestry just to show all of them off. Hammuratty the Seventh had been quite the hefty rodent, and a tall one too if there was any truth to the other rodents he stood head and shoulders and ample cleavage above. "He was certainly quite a umm, a large figure" I murmured.

"He was as fat as they came, but not by any tyranny or force. It was said that Hammuratty the Seventh was blessed, or some say cursed, by a djinn he freed. So grateful, or vengeful, was the djinn that it gifted Hammuratty with the Cheddar Touch" Blackbeard explained.

"The Cheddar Touch?" I repeated, a little intrigued (and hungry).

"Look here Stilton" Blackbeard said while pointing to a small desk, the kind you'd find in a classroom.

Following him I looked down at an ancient scroll with an enormous paw print on it, with ancient and faded symbols around the print. Naturally I couldn't help but reach out, and exhaled as my paw didn't even fill the print's palm. It was the paw print of a giant! "Incredible" I gasped.

"I said look but touching's fine, I guess" Blackbeard grumbled, discretely rolling his one good eye. "See that Stilton? That is supposedly the very paw print of Hammuratty the Seventh, the only one ye'd ever find normally."

"Why was that?" I asked, utterly drawn in by the intrigue.

"The Cheddar Touch he was "blessed" by turned whatever the porker touched into the most delicious cheese in the world. Far more delicious than ye could ever imagine, according to the old texts" he explained.

Far more delicious than I could ever imagine? Well, I don't know, I feel like I could imagine some pretty delicious cheeses. "Anything he touched?" I repeated, feeling a little jealous.

"So the scrolls say. The Cheddar Touch was gifted to both his paws, so anything he touched turned to cheese that he could dine on, morning noon and night. He ate so much cheese he turned into the one tonne wonder ye see on the wall" Blackbeard explained.

I looked back up at the enormous tapestry. "He truly was a giant among rodents" I uttered.

"Yeah. Lucky for him the Cheddar Touch came with a dignity clause, so he could get as fat as he liked and his clothes would never burst, as it'd grow with his tubbiness. Otherwise it would've taken all the fabric in Mousepotamia to cover his wide behind" Blackbeard sniggered.

As I stared in awe at the tapestry, and with Blackbeard's explanation fresh in my mind I still couldn't grasp how much cheese it'd take to become so gigantic. "Wait," I realized, "but how did he make the scroll? If everything he touched turned to cheese this couldn't be his exact paw print" I pointed out.

"That's what we're still figuring out. The print is genuine to him, so me and me crew are working out how the Cheddar Touch was trapped in the scroll" Blackbeard told me.

"They trapped it?" I repeated, staring back down at the scroll. "They trapped the blessing-Curse- Blurse? They trapped the blurse?"

"So they say. See the scroll, it's not the normal stuff ye'd usually find back then. Usually any writings, if any, would be written on papyrus scrolls but this stuff is more in line with the fabric used for noble clothing of the age. Haven't got a clue why but the hide is also reinforced with ancient leather to prevent the scroll from being torn apart. We're still working on deciphering the ancient text on the scroll. It's that note on the desk next to it. If we fully crack it I reckon we'll figure out the spell that trapped the blurse without the whole thing turning to cheese" Blackbeard figured.

Incredible. This was going to be the scoop of a lifetime. "So the Cheddar Touch is actually real? It was something Hammuratty the Seventh had been blursed by?" I pressed, hungry for more information.

"We reckon so, but heaven help the poor sod who gets blursed by it. I couldn't imagine eating nothing but cheese for the rest of me life" Blackbeard sniffed as he messed about with some of the other artefacts.

Maybe not, but for a cheese lover like myself I would literally bathe in cheese if I could. Well, probably not as it would be so hard to get all the liquid cheese out of my fur. But oh to have the greatest cheese whenever I wanted would be a dream come true! Setting aside my things I looked upon the scroll again, and the translation on the desk. Casually I rested my left paw in the middle of Hammuratty's own gargantuan print. I couldn't imagine being such an enormous rodent at all; I can scarcely even comprehend the size of my friend Dingo. Imagine that, being the size of ten of my friend. How much cheese would that even require? Probably a feast enough for a hundred mice. It occurred to me at that point that I had begun drooling, quite substantially too. I hope Professor Blackbeard didn't catch that, as I wouldn't want this interview ending because I had drooled on the scroll. Wiping my jaw I quietly read aloud the translation:

"Oh Cheddar Touch, Blessing and Curse of the Djinn. Seek now this vessel and grant it Your Cheese-"

I paused my recitation, as the translation to end there. Looking down at the original scroll, I noticed that the last of the ancient text seemed to have faded to a point it's almost impossible to even see. Twitching my whiskers I turned to the Professor for help. "What is this last word?" I inquired curiously. "It's very hard to make out."

"Yer guess would be as good as mine Stilton. If I knew I'd lock the darn thing up and throw away the key. The Cheddar Touch is too much power for any modern rodent to handle. Nobody should ever have that much cheese" Blackbeard answered gruffly. "We're stuck on guessing as the material can't be read with any kind of scanning light. Those Mousepotamians were pretty clever like that."

Disappointed, I put the translation down as I gazed, almost longingly, on the scroll. He was most probably correct: No rodent could be able to handle that much power. They'd put all the cheese factories out of business, and that's an industry you wouldn't want to upset. Just imagine if the likes of Trap got a hold of it. He'd turn everything at Cheap Junk for Less (his thrift store) into cheese and sell it at a premium. Maybe it was for the best that the word remained lost? But with how it was written though. "It'd be pretty funny," I mused, "if it was like my favourite pizza. Nothing like a Cheese Supreme" I snickered.

**BLORP!**

I stumbled backwards, treading on my tail and falling to the ground as I looked in horror in front of me. "WHAT HAVE YE DONE STILTON?!" Professor Blackbeard howled.

The small desk, the scroll, the translation... IT WAS CHEESE! Everything had been turned to cheese. "I just... I didn't..." I stammered anxiously.

I had been blursed. Blursed... by the Cheddar Touch. Professor Blackbeard looked about ready to kill me he looked so angry. I held my left paw out to try and keep him away from me, and it was like two magnets repelling each other as he rapidly backed away from me. "Put that thing away Stilton! Ye trying to turn me into cheese too?" he snarled.

I squeaked and stuffed my left paw into my jacket, fearful of turning anything else into cheese. I was also fearful of the professor, who grumbled angrily to himself as he paced back and forth around the desk. "What did ye even say Stilton? Me crew have been playing the guessing game for ten months now!" Professor Blackbeard growled as he helped me up.

"I umm, I said "Cheese Supreme". It's my most favourite kind of pizza" I explained, grateful that the former pirate's temper had cooled.

Professor Blackbeard's one good eye seemed a million miles away for the moment, before he suddenly came back and pounded a fist on a bench. "Cheese Supreme? CHEESE SUPREME?!" he howled to the world. "Trust an ancient food spell to be like a takeout menu" he grumbled, before eying me up. "Well how's it feel Stilton? How's it feel being the bearer of the Cheddar Touch when we have no idea how to reverse it?" he asked me.

How did I feel? Scared? Angry? Happy? I held in my left paw the power to turn anything into the most delicious cheese in the world. **Grumble!** I think that was my answer. "Hungry" I admitted, eying the cheese desk.

"Well ye better eat up then Stilton, before it starts going all runny" Blackbeard chortled.

"Runny?" I asked, confused.

"I didn't want this leaking out before the exhibit, even to ye, but since yer blursed I might as well tell ye that nothing lasts forever Stilton. Nothing" he grumbled, jabbing me hard in the chest. "Ye can make all the cheese ye could ever want and more, but ye better eat up as that cheese has a limit. Hammuratty the Seventh learned that the hard way when he turned a boulder into cheese by showing off, then he had to eat it all before it started going runny. The bigger the object is, the faster it'll start going runny and shiver me timbers Stilton, ye do not want to be near the cheese when it starts going runny" Blackbeard explained.

A mild panic overtook me as I looked at the desk; small as it was, it was still more than little ol' me could handle even as breakfast, lunch, and dinner. "W-why don't you help me eat it then?" I stammered as I dabbed at my brow.

"I keep telling ye Stilton, the blurse gives ye all the cheese ye could want. Ye. Y-E. If anyone else tried to eat the Sacred Cheese it'd taste like sweaty gym socks. The sweatiest ye've ever had. Only the blursed gets to enjoy the Sacred Cheese, which is why Hammuratty ended up the porker he was. Ye don't see how bad this sort of thing is until ye finally begin to experience the blurse in full" Blackbeard told me.



"B-but I'll be fine," I chuckled nervously, "I still have my other paw to eat with. I can just avoid turning stuff to cheese and enjoy other foods as well" I reasoned.

"Can ye Stilton? Can ye?" Blackbeard said daringly as he handed me a shiny red apple. "Take a bite Stilton. Let me know how it tastes."

Gulping nervously I took a defiant bite, and in an instant I had to spit it out. "Cheese and crackers it tastes like sweaty gym socks!" I exclaimed, scraping at my tongue with my fingers.

Professor Blackbeard chuckled evilly as he took the apple back and took a big bite, chewing it almost spitefully as he eyed me up. "Welcome to the blessing and curse that is the Cheddar Touch Stilton. All the cheese ye could ever want, because that's all ye get to have. If ye happen to enjoy sweaty gym socks ye can have another bite of me apple, but judging by the look on ye face, I'd say that's a no" he cackled. "Ye a living legend now matey. The Second Bearer of the Cheddar Touch."

I groaned despairingly as I straightened my glasses. All the cheese I could ever want, at the cost of every other food on Earth? "But, can I at least enjoy the cheeses I do have?" I pressed hopefully.

"Nope. Ye get to enjoy the Sacred Cheese and that's it. Word to the wise Stilton, ye can't turn cheese into the good stuff, so better hope that fridge of yers isn't full of the stuff" Professor Blackbeard smirked.

I was too upset to even bristle at how much Professor Blackbeard was appearing to enjoy himself. How could he not when he was going to be able to see the focus of his current research in action. "Isn't there anything you can do? Can't you just seal... seal..." I paused, my nose wiggling at a sudden smell. I gagged loudly, pinching my nose shut as I looked about. "What is that smell?!" I said all nasally.

It was so absolutely repugnant I swore my whiskers had begun to curl. It was like taking every sock from every gym on Mouse Island and putting them in a big pile to marinate in the sun! Professor Blackbeard had already pegged his nose as he gestured to the cheese desk, which had begun to steam and slowly melt. Cheesy bubbles rose and popped in thick wet gloops as everything was melting away. I've never seen anything so revolting in my entire

life! And I've seen my cousin Trap in just his boxer shorts! "I told ye it was going to go runny" Blackbeard reminded me.

"Do I have to eat that?! It smells like my Grandfather's closet!" I wailed.

Oh my, I was starting to turn a little green at the idea of putting that revolting, festering mess into my body. It smelled as bad as that apple tasted. "Touch it Stilton. Don't be yellow and give it a poke with that Cheddar Touch of yers. She'll be right then" Blackbeard explained.

My whiskered twisted about each other. Was he suggesting I touch that awful steaming blob? Not on your life! "Can't I just let it melt?" I insisted, waving my paws in refusal.

"Stop being a land blubberer Stilton, and touch the cheese" the Professor grumbled, grabbing me by my left wrist and leading me forwards.

He was definitely a very strong rodent, and as much as I resisted he managed to get me over to the melting cheese desk and forced my paw onto it. I yelped, expecting disgusting glop. But instead it was as firm as ever, the desk returning to normal the moment I touched it. I felt almost a little silly resisting like that. Like I was a mouseling refusing to take a bath. Professor Blackbeard appeared satisfied as he released me. "It just goes back to normal, just like that?" I asked.

"Just like that. It's how Hammuratty kept the boulder nice and fresh as he ate it all. He cared a lot about his subjects, enough to not stink up his entire kingdom with the smell of rotting gym socks. Ye gotta be careful with yer Cheddar Touch Stilton, because everything ye touch will turn to cheese and stay as cheese until the blurse is trapped once more" Blackbeard informed me.

Oh whiskers, how could this be happening to me? What if I touched one of my employees? What if I touched Thea? Heaven forbid I give my darling nephew Benjamin a pat on the head and suddenly he's Swiss cheese! I was feeling sick to my stomach at the possibility of erasing someone from my life, leaving behind a curdled replica. "How can we trap it?" I whimpered.

"That I don't know. Somehow Hammuratty touched the scroll and left his mark, siphoning the curse out of his paws and into it. We know the words now, thanks to yer motor mouth.

But we need to figure out what exactly he touched that didn't turn to cheese. So while I'm figuring that out, I need you outta here so you don't accidentally cheese up me entire research station" the Professor told me, shooing me towards the door.

"B-but can't I just use my other paw?" I wailed as he shoved me out. "It's not blursed!"

"No dice Stilton, it's gotta be the afflicted paw, and that afflicted paw is one I want nowhere near me research" Blackbeard answered.

"B-but what am I supposed to do? Am I to go my entire life without using my left paw except to feed myself with?" I whimpered.

"Hammuratty figured it out, and he only had the blurse for six days" Blackbeard grunted as he shoved me out the door and slammed it shut.

"Six days?!" I squeaked, my knees shaking. "He had the curse for six days and ended up as big as an elephant?!"

Professor Blackbeard appeared again as he opened the door. "Boulders play havoc on your hips Stilton. Speaking of which, this is yers" he explained, pushing the cheeseified desk into my quivering paws. "Now don't come back unless you somehow figure out how to trap the Cheddar Touch!" he barked, slamming the door again.

So there I was: My knees knocking as I was holding a desk made of cheese with the reality of the Cheddar Touch weighing me down. How on earth was I going to be able to work with just one paw? If I used a typewriter or my keyboard they'll instantly be turned more yellow than I was feeling right now. I was so nervous I couldn't help but take an anxious bite of the cheese desk, if just to calm my nerves. And what an incredible change it was. I simply couldn't believe how delectable it was. Sharper than cheddar, yet more mild than brie. Tangier than chevre, but nuttier than parmesan. It was every cheese I loved and more. It was better than any cheese I had ever tasted, and I could not tell if I was crying out of joy for this cheese, or at the terror I had previously been feeling. At a later time I concluded it must have been both, as the Sacred Cheese was beyond compare, and I did feel a little hopeful in that eating this stuff for the rest of my life wasn't such a bad thing after all. Of course, something I failed to account for was that the cheese was so good I couldn't stop myself, eating my feelings away on this magnificent desk of cheese. Cheese cheese cheese! I couldn't stop until there was nothing left to continue on.

I was there outside of Professor Blackbeard's Secret Research Station with but the crumbs of what had been a small desk on my paws. Gulping the remains of the desk down, I cautiously looked down, and my whiskers just about jumped off my snout! Now, I'm not exactly the fittest mouse around, but I certainly wasn't so plump I looked about ready to have quadruprats! My shapely figure was now Figure 1. A Sphere in the textbook of anatomy as my round middle jutted out like the figurehead of a ship! Oh whiskers what have I done?! If I'm not careful I was going to end up like Hammuratty the Seventh! Bigger than life and larger than reason! Flustered I gave my new belly bump a firm bouncing, confirming that all of that mouse was indeed me. My face was so red as my mind raced through all the possible explanations I could give my staff as to why I was suddenly fifty pounds heftier. All this stress couldn't possibly have been good for me as bubbles rose up from my overlarge stomach, letting loose a dreadful belch powerful enough to echo off the walls.

Blushing intensely I chose to scurry away, if just to avoid a verbal lashing from Professor Blackbeard about the noise I was making. And I swear as I walked up those creaking metal steps, my round belly was already flattening. Apparently the Sacred Cheese was easy on the digestion, as love handles bloomed along my side, and, well, embarrassingly I was fully aware of the creaking in my pants to accommodate a little more padding in the chair warmer. Gosh I hope no one notices, because I couldn't bear it to hear Trap call me something juvenile like "Jelly Belly Stiltbutt". It didn't help I had to do all this with my left paw stuffed into my suit, to avoid turning anything to cheese. It made me all the more aware of how much Hammuratty must have suffered as my chest became chestier, and my belly became bellier. I prayed I would not come across a mirror, for fear that I was going to look like Trap. Soon I scurried out of the staff door and rushed past the rat at the front desk. I had to get back to The Rodent Gazette. "Taxi" I called, waving my untainted paw.

I had a lot to do, and I knew I was going to need Thea's help on this. As much as I didn't want anyone to know, at least someone as adventurous as her might know something, ANYTHING, about blurs.

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I tried to be as sneaky as I could making my way through the Gazette's office, which was in full swing with so many employees milling about. I had to use all of my powers of subtlety to avoid attracting their attention, or to at least obscure as much of my new size as possible. I still kept my left paw hidden, out of fear of cheesifying anything or anyone around me. It wasn't easy and it involved strategic use of a potted plant, but I managed to make it to my

office without raising too many questions. At least nothing relating to my current ventripotent appearance. Now all I had to do was track down Thea and maybe I could save myself and my staff from a fate worse than cats. "Uncle Geronimo!" the sweetest voice called.

Oh no, why now? Why did my darling nephew Benjamin have to call in now when he was the most at risk? "Dearest Benjamin, what are you doing here today? Don't you have class?" I asked brightly, trying to hide my dread.

"It's Saturday Uncle Geronimo!" Benjamin squeaked brightly, and, as typical for children under the age of ten, immediately noticed my paw hidden in my jacket. "Why are you hiding your paw Uncle Geronimo?" he asked curiously.

"We-well you see," I stammered, knowing how hard it is to lie to my nephew, "I-I burned my paw on some coffee, so I'm keeping it safe in my jacket so it can cool off" I lied half-heartedly.

"Won't it be cooler if you kept it out of your hot, stuffy jacket?" Benjamin astutely pointed out.

Oh I could grind my teeth into flour with how hard I was forcing myself to smile. Why did Benjamin have to be so observant? "It's umm, it's not important why it's in my jacket today. I just uhh, I just feel like it" I decided, hoping that was enough to deter him.

"Are you okay Uncle Geronimo? You look scared about something" Benjamin pressed, before looking more carefully. "Have you gotten fatter Uncle Geronimo?"

"Oh! Look! See? My paw's fine ha ha" I chuckled nervously, my stomach doing somersaults as I carelessly waved my left paw about.

A bit too carelessly, as I swung about and bumped my bookshelf with my wrist, knocking one of my volumes off of it. "Oh cheddar balls" I gasped, catching it out of scholarly instinct.

**BLORP!**

My nephew's eyes were as wide as dinner plates as he saw the heavy book turn into cheese before his very eyes. But before he could say a word I desperately slapped my right paw over his mouth, looking about very carefully. "Benjamin, when I remove my paw I need you to say nothing, alright? Uncle Geronimo is going to explain everything as long as you don't talk" I hissed.

Nodding his understanding, I released my nephew, who stood there expectantly. I am so grateful to have such a trustworthy nephew. "Okay," I began, lowering my voice, "I had an accident at the Mouseum of Natural History. I was talking to an antiquarian studying Ancient Mousepotamian artefacts, and one of them was a scroll containing a blurse called the Cheddar Touch."

"What's a blurse?" Benjamin asked.

"A blessing or a curse, you can't really tell which. But the Cheddar Touch is very dangerous, and I accidentally completed the spell that would release it. It's blursed my left paw, so everything I touch with it turns to cheese. That can include people Benjamin, which is why I have to be very careful to avoid touching anyone, or anything. I don't want to turn you into cheese Benjamin, I could never live with myself if I did" I told him.

I could see on his face that he understood the gravity of what I was telling him, but that blessed child could only radiate optimism as he gave me a smile warm enough to melt cheese. "But it's okay Uncle Geronimo, I know you won't turn me to cheese" he whispered.

"What's this about turning Benny into cheese?" a crude voice cut in.

I jumped back in fright as, somehow, Trap had materialized amongst our little huddle. Confound it why didn't I lock the door? "Nothing Trap" I stammered, stuffing my paw back into my jacket as I hid the cheese book behind my back.

I couldn't let Trap know; the very promise of a business venture of this size would set his greed off like a fire alarm. I could already hear the gears turning in his head as he was already sizing up the situation. "Say Benjamin, what was ol' jelly belly here talking about turning you into cheese?" he asked sweetly.

My blood went cold, though I knew in my heart that Benjamin wouldn't so easily betray me. "He umm, Uncle Geronimo said umm, he said... he was having a nightmare last night where he turned me into cheese. He was very upset about it so he wanted to tell me he was hoping he wouldn't turn me into cheese" he explained while looking at the floor.

"Man Gerrykins, I knew you were a worrywart but now you're freaking out over your dreams?! This is next level yellow belly you've got" Trap guffawed loudly.

"It's Geronimo" I said pointedly, hoping maybe one day my words might stick.

"Is it? Cause I recall Geronimo being a bit trimmer than you are" Trap pressed, cruelly prodding my middle.

Gosh I was definitely softer around the waistband, but I absolutely despise being touched there. I swatted it away out of instinct, which unfortunately meant I smacked Trap with the book made of cheese. Oh no, what have I done? My cousin's eyes were locked on the cheese book and he grabbed my wrist faster than I expected him too. "Is this a book made out of cheese?" he asked inquisitively, snatching it from my paws.

More inquisitorially really, as I knew I had stepped in the cheese curd now. "Now, Trap, I need you to understand that what's going on here is nothing you want to be involved in" I warned him, hoping that was enough.

My cousin unfortunately gained an even more one-track mind when money was involved, and I dreaded the greedy look in his eyes. "You turned this into cheese, didn't you?" he guessed. "That's what you were telling Benjamin here, weren't ya? That you could accidentally turn him into cheese if you weren't careful" he went on.

Oh whiskers why did he have to get a clue at the worst possible time? Oh why couldn't the Cheddar Touch come with the gift of invisibility too? "Trap, this is very serious. I'm not blessed but blursed with the Cheddar Touch and it could be really bad if I made too much cheese" I tried to explain.

Why was I even talking? Every word out of my prodigious mouth was just making that look in Trap's eyes get sharper and more focused, and he was getting a little too worked up

about all this. "Too much cheese huh? Gerry Berry, let's take a walk" Trap said, putting on his attempt at smooth talk.

"Let's not. I have a lot of work to do and- Oh where are you taking me?" I groaned as my cousin wrapped his arm around me and forcefully marched me out of the office.

How on earth was he always so strong? Well, probably from moving all his junk about but I felt like a doll a young mouseling was marching about the place at play time. Before I knew it he was marching me out of The Rodent Gazette and down the road to his smelly old truck. I couldn't even say a word, lest I frighten all of my staff with the terrors of the Cheddar Touch. Or, worse still, they might ask me to turn stuff into cheese. The very thought of being put in the centre of attention like a circus attraction was already tying my stomach into knots. I couldn't even think as Trap pushed me into the passenger's seat as drove up. I was being mousenapped by my own cousin, and I couldn't even use my left paw for fear of touching anything, or him. Certainly I could maybe eat a larger meal or two, every once in a long while, but I doubt I could even eat a whole truck of cheese, even if my stomach could stretch to do so. "Trap this isn't a very good idea" I spoke up as we were driving down the busy road.

"Au contraire Gerrykins, this is a brilliant idea. I don't know how you can turn stuff into cheese, but I got a warehouse with a lot of cheap junk that I've been meaning to sell off. And with your cheesy wonder, I'll be able to sell stuff off at a premium and blah blah blah."

And he just went on, I couldn't get a word in edgewise as he couldn't stop talking about all his future business ventures involving me. "I'll be compensated" he says, even though I'd be the one making all the cheese! As his business partner I was actually quite upset about that, until I remembered I hadn't agreed to anything! I wasn't going to make cheese for my cousin when I didn't even want to make cheese for myself, even though that desk had been pretty delicious, and regrettably the book I ate on the way there. For some reason I couldn't stop thinking about it as Trap dragged me into his dusty, smelly warehouse. It reeked of old clothes and old furniture, much like my Grandfather's room. At least I stopped thinking about cheese as Trap cleared some junk away, leading me to an airier spot that had a very old car in it. I'm not much of a car mouse but even I felt that whatever it was, it could probably sell for quite a bit of money. "Why haven't you sold that?" I asked. "An antique car like this could go for quite a bit to a collector" I pointed out.

"Hunk of junk won't start. But it doesn't have to because, YOU, Gerrykins, are going to turn it into cheese!" he announced.



I rubbed at my temples in disbelief. Really? This had been his grand plan? He was going to make me turn a car into cheese? Who would even want cheese shaped like a car? Wouldn't it go all runny unless you kept it in an ice room? Wait... RUNNY?! Oh no! I had been so worried about turning someone or something into cheese I had forgotten it'd be cheese only I could enjoy! If I turned that car into cheese it'd turn into a stink bomb that'd curl the whisker of every rodent in New Mouse City! "Wait Trap, I can't turn the car into cheese" I protested.

"Sure you can. Now you said it was the Cheddar Touch right? With your paws? So why not give it a little poke so I can see the cheese for myself" Trap declared.

"No! I mean yes, I just have to touch it but that's beside the point" I wailed as he loomed over me, grabbing me by my left wrist. "BE CAREFUL!" I shrieked, curling my fingers into a fist to avoid touching Trap.

"I knew it was the left paw! You kept on hiding it so I knew you were hiding something, now stop being a big baby Jelly Belly, and give the car a touch" Trap grunted as he dragged me over to the car.

"NO TRAP!" I cried, trying to pull away. "IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK!"

"Not with, grr, you dragging your feet like that" my cousin grunted as he pulled my protesting fist inches away.

"No, it's because there's something wrong with the CHEESE!" I screamed as my fist made contact with the cold metal.

**BLORP!**

I fell backwards as Trap let me go, the miserable deed done as the antique car had turned into cheese. My cousin crooned smugly, no doubt his mind already counting the dollars and cents he'd be making. "Wait, what's wrong with the cheese?" he asked, my words finally reaching him.

I grunted as I picked myself up slowly, my face red from the struggle of doing it one-pawed and from how upset I was about all this. "Because," I began slowly, "THE CHEESE ONLY TASTES GOOD TO ME YOU BIG IDIOT!" I screamed so hard I felt hoarse.

My face was bright red as I huffed loudly, my cousin's eyes darted back and forth from me to the car and back again. "What, you mean this cheese is just for *you*?" I sneered, his tone reeking of jealousy. "That doesn't sound very fair! Why do you get all the good cheese?!"

"I didn't ASK to be blursed Trap, and now this car of yours is going to go all runny and it's going to make New Mouse City the stinkiest city in the world" I moaned.

"What do you mean runny and- Pwoar, what's that pong?" he grimaced, grabbing at his nose.

I sighed as the cheese car was already starting to melt, much faster than the desk had. Blackbeard was right, larger objects go runny much faster. That boulder Hammuratty ate must've been turning to goop the moment he took his paw off it. With little recourse I had to slap my paw on it, the cheese turning fresh as ever once I had done so. Trap released his nose as he sized things up. "Man that stuff stank like sweaty gym socks!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, and now I have to keep my paw on it to stop it from going runny" I pointed out.

"I mean, that's not my problem. Really, I should be charging you for the car-shaped cheese since I'm currently down an antique car" Trap complained.

My whiskers bristled, and loathe as I am to admit it, I almost wanted to give my cousin a good poke with my left paw. "After you made ME touch it?" I countered reproachfully.

"Well we can split the cost later, but now YOU have to get rid of it" Trap decided.

"How?" I demanded.

"Well it's cheese isn't it?" Trap pointed out. "So just be a good mouse and eat it!"

My ears lowered as I eyed the family-sized car, my mouth hanging open at the sheer idiocy of Trap's suggestion. "I can't eat a whole car!" I protested.

"Sure you can; slowly I guess. You can just stay here for a while and just pick at it every time you feel hungry. You'll be do in about two weeks I think" my cousin guessed.

TWO WEEKS?! I can't stay here eating a cheese car for two weeks! I don't even need two weeks as I could eat it right here if I wanted too. But then the tapestry of Hammuratty floated in my mind. Looks like I had found my boulder, and what choice did I have? If I left the car be it would make New Mouse City stinkier than Stinksburg. But if I ate it I was going to need a 10XL wardrobe. Well, at least I had my suit, and maybe my other clothes would stretch in the blurse. No! What am I thinking? It's absolute madness to humour eating an entire car of cheese. "Maybe we can find an ice room to store it?" I said weakly.

"Would that help?" Trap inquired.

"Probably not" I admitted. "Why didn't you listen to me?" I moaned loudly, already tired of keeping my paw on the car.

"Hey hey hey Gerrykins, you forget I'm the injured party here. You just have to keep your paw on the car, while I'm not down an antique car that goes runny the second you let go. I'm the one suffering here" Trap insisted as he eyed the car up and down. "You're SURE I can't eat it?" he queried.

"No," I sighed, "it'll just taste like sweaty gym socks to you. Remember how bad it smelled? That's how bad it'll taste to you, and I would know. I ate an apple that tasted like sweaty socks because of this accursed blurse."

"Why did you eat an apple that tasted like sweaty gym socks?" Trap grinned.

"BECAUSE I'M BLURSED!" I shrieked, feeling at the end of my rope.

So fed up I didn't even realize I had absently taken a piece of the car cheese and shoved it in my mouth. Comfort eating truly does make the ills go away. "Oh blessed gouda this is so good" I moaned rapturously.

"Pfft, it can't be *THAT* good" Trap pouted.

He gets really sour when he feels like he's being left out on purpose. "You can try some, but I hope you like sweaty gym socks" I said, almost pleased with myself as I took another piece.

My cousin reached out cautiously, his paw hovering inches from the cheese, but I could see the memory of the smell on his face, and he pulled away. "Just eat the darn car already Gerry Berry!" he huffed.

Staring down the sizeable car, I admit, I was feeling very hungry, and the cheese was simply divine. Could I really eat the entire thing in one sitting? I could, but then I remembered the tapestry of Hammuratty the Seventh. If I ate the car, I'd wind up needing to dedicate two pages to anything I put my picture on. But if I didn't, it was going to stink out all of New Mouse City. So, for the good of my home, I was going to have to eat it down to the last crumb. "Can you bring me a chair, please? I fear I won't be able to do this on my feet" I asked of Trap.

He at least obliged, though I just knew the sniggering he was making behind my back had to do with my larger rump. It's not my fault that weight likes to build on my stomach and my behind! I would go on a diet, but with what someone in my position had to do on the regular, I usually lost a few pounds from all the times I had been running for my life. I'm sure Thea will take me on one more crazy adventure and I'll lose the weight in no time. I hope. But with a chair cushioning me, I hunkered down to feast. And, dear reader, I make no illusions in how amazing the Sacred Cheese is. In truth I was terrified of the fact I may one day lose the Cheddar Touch, because I doubt all my cheddars and brie in my fridge could ever compare to the feast before me. And while I can be quite the picky eater, when allowed to be, even I found it almost hilarious how I was eating a car engine made of cheese! But no grease or oil here, just pure dairy as I gobbled down most of the front of the car, which did all it could to add to my front.

I tried to ignore it, but even I couldn't miss my stomach swelling with every delicious morsel of cheese. I was more stuffed than a Christmas turkey, and as I kept eating my belly kept getting bigger, as did the rest of me. My suit, my precious suit and pants and undershirt! They were all getting tighter around my ballooning body. My once airy sleeves were full of

my pudgy mouse arms, and my pants were filled to the brim with my chunky legs. The fabric strained so much that the creaking could be heard from the other side of the warehouse, and for a moment I was terrified that maybe my modern clothing wouldn't stretch like Hammuratty's robe! This was especially bad because, while I didn't fancy being "mouse naturale", I especially didn't want Trap seeing my Squeaktoria Secret underwear! It's embarrassing because, yes, they do make underwear for gentlemen as well, but I could not trust Trap to be in any ways mature about it! I just know he'd call them knickers when they're men's briefs! It's not my fault they are sincerely more comfortable than anything I'd find at a normal clothing store and, well, I like my comfort. What's so wrong with that?

But my fears were thankfully just fears, because as my body kept growing, so too were my clothes. At least dignity was safe for now as I polished off the engine and much of the internal machinery, and while I had made good progress, I had become so much more of a heftier mouse. My prodigious belly was poking out underneath my undershirt and jacket, with the front and sides spilling out over the sides. I blushed intensely as I gave myself a prod, as my finger sunk in a bit deeper than I would have liked. My embarrassment was doubled as I could hear the chair creaking under the weight of my voluminous rear. Oh how embarrassing it was going to be when I was going to need to order a whole couch as my office chair just to support my ginormous derriere. I was such a tubby mouse, and, shamefully, clearly much fatter than my cousin who was eying me up smugly. "Jeez Jelly Belly, what do they feed you over at the Gazette?" he teased, giving my belly a firm slap.

There was a most fearful grumbling inside me, leading into my cheeks bulging as I unleashed the most fearsome burp I had ever made, even after that time I drank all that herbal tea. It had so much volume and force it loosened dust from the rafters of the roof! "Excuse me" I said bashfully, putting my paw on the car to keep it fresh.

"Looks like they've been feeding you hot air" Trap snorted. "But you've always been full of that, eh Gerrykins?" he giggled, finishing his own lame joke.

I gave Trap a nasty look, as my mouth was full of too much cheese to give him a witty retort. Thankfully the Sacred Cheese eased my fiery soul, bringing me back to bliss as I ate the entire front of the car, and both wheels for good measure. I was chewing away, blissfully ignoring how much my body continued to change. The gurgling and groaning was hardest to ignore, as I could feel the inner workings of my stomach chug away at turning all that cheese into Geronimo. I would eat, and eat, and eat. And I would grow, and grow, and grow. I was getting so large my belly was filling up my poor lap, which was wider than wide. It was crazy, but I wasn't just growing wider but taller too, so much so I had to lean in in order to reach the car. I've never thought about whether or not I've wanted to be taller, but given how much big people have pushed me around, maybe being able to "push back" wasn't the

worst thing? I couldn't really measure my growth without a mirror, but I wouldn't really want to see what I look like growing fatter and fatter while stuffing myself with cheese. It's just not dignified for a gentlemouse like myself! And, admittedly, neither was what happened next as I felt my ample rear rumble, and, well, a loud squeaky noise came out of it! Goodness gracious I was absolutely humiliated as a yellow cloud hung behind me, reeking faintly of mouldy cheese. "Oh pwoar Gerrykins! What a pong! Almost smells as bad as the rotten car!" Trap complained, squeezing his nose tightly.

My face was red enough that I looked like a stop sign, and I truly wish I could stop now, but with so much car left I knew I had to finish it, even if the Sacred Cheese may not always agree with me. So I did what I do a lot with Trap, and pretend that the stinky fart cloud wasn't there as I carried on eating. Maybe it was the volume of cheese, but I was starting to belch more often now, pausing mid-bite just to relieve some pressure. Too much cheese is definitely bad for my poor digestion, even if it was magic cheese. I was soon nibbling my way through the seats, my bites getting bigger as my face had become much fatter. Thea always said I had a big mouth, and it would seem I had proven her right as I ate the steering wheel in three big bites! Oh it was so good, and it was all for me! Even if it being all for me meant it was ALL for me. I was getting so bulging, I looked like a Sumo Mouse! A well-dressed Sumo Mouse but a Sumo Mouse all the same; I just needed the top knot they had and you could send me into the ring to wrestle the biggest Sumo Mouse there. And not to brag, but at the size I was getting there was a good chance I'd win too! With how much my behind was hanging over the sides of the chair, and with how much of my vision was obscured by my big fat belly, I might very well be the Largest Mouse on Mouse Island now. The chair below me was just so small and fragile I fear it was going to collapse under me, and yet I was afraid to stand up, only to see how much bigger I was. Did I mention I don't always like being the centre of attention? At least when I might be treated like a freak show? Well that fear shot through me as I imagined myself on some skeevy TV show like "My Life Weighing as Much as Seven Rats"! They always have such silly names like that, and a part of me almost wanted to stop. In fact I did so, which was a HUGE mistake. "BWWWWAAAAAARRRRRRPPPPPP!!!!!" I belched so loudly that the entire warehouse rumbled.

Dust and a few aged moths took flight as a nearby wine glass exploded. I flinched as the glass went everywhere, knowing with all that dust on the floor it was going to be quite a pain to clean up. "You alright there Tubbykins? Because if you wanna burp again maybe do it outside before you bring the whole dang warehouse down!" Trap snapped as he came out from cover and hovered next to me.

Or rather, below me as I looked down and my whiskers instantly curled. Even in my seated position I was at least a foot taller than Trap! Now despite our differences in width my cousin and I typically were around the same height, so the fact that I was taller than him

*while sitting* brought upon me a terrifying new reality. “Doesn’t that bother you?” I squeaked, suppressing another burp.

“The mess you’re making? Yes, it does!” my cousin snapped.

“I’m taller than you cheddarface!” I boomed.

“Oh, yeah that’s weird. Is this part of the blurse? Cause you’ve eaten half a car now” he said, acting like this was any other Tuesday.

“Yes!” I cried, unable to believe how this situation wasn’t affecting him. “Because of the blurse I can eat all the Sacred Cheese I want and I’ll just keep getting bigger and fatter forever!”

“Why is that a bad thing?” Trap asked, his grin widening. “If you get big enough then you’ll be able to scare all the cats away. Wouldn’t that be great? Any cat comes near New Mouse City and we’ll send out Gerzilla! And with your Atomic Belch you’ll blow them all away!” he snickered.

I chose instead to have some more cheese, as, well, sometimes I’ve very afraid of the thoughts that go on inside my cousin’s head. But maybe I should be more afraid of how much of a big and tubby mouse I was. Larger than large and rounder than round, and as I kept eating my way through the backseats every part of me was continuing to grow and jiggle. My jelly belly wobbled about as I packed it with more cheese, but even then it only seemed to grow fatter than it did fuller. All the padding I had put on it was incredible, and it was starting to weigh me down. My ENORMOUS ARMS were feeling sluggish, and I worried how much this chair could handle. My fears were answered by the metal pole crumpling, lowering me low enough to the floor that my GIANT BELLY was pressing against it. Goodness gracious! I never knew being so large could be so troublesome, especially as my rear was DANGEROUSLY CLOSE to also reaching the floor with the chair so bent. Terrified beyond belief I grunted hard, straining my big fat legs as I pushed myself up. I was sweating so hard even my whiskers were sweating as, somehow, I stood up on my tiny feet. My arms flailed about as I tried to get my balance, as I wasn’t very used to being so tall! I must have been over ten feet tall now, if not very close to that as I had to crane my head far over my round side in order to even see Trap, who only came up to my chest. “Nice airbags Gerrykins” Trap sniggered, eying my large chest.

"It's not funny!" I wailed, unfortunately letting loose another belch in my protests.

It was incredible really how my clothes were still holding strong, even as I clearly had become a one tonne rodent. I feared for any sidewalk my big fat steps would crash upon, not that I could see them with my enormous middle blocking the way. No doubt rodents the world over will beg to know who my tailor was, but how could I tell them that my suit still covering my heavysset body was a work of a literal miracle? In fact it was a miracle; a miracle that only the underside of my belly was visible between my jacket and pants, or that that jacket was holding together with the buttons only mildly tensed apart. Mercy I was such a gigantic rodent, able to see over the tops of all the shelves I could barely reach the top shelf on. Maybe this wouldn't be so bad after all? "What's the matter Gerry Berry, eyes too big for your stomach!" Trap joked, slapping me on my jelly-like behind.

Standing corrected, and blushing as my titanic tush squeaked out an ill-fated SBD, I felt like I had no recourse but to finish the job. Lumbering as quickly as my heavy body allowed, it took several tries to reach down and grab the remainder of the car. Oh my poor back was not made for this as I grabbed the rest of the car and held it up, my strength seemingly having increased alongside my weight. Well, an immoveable blursed would probably not be very good really, but with sluggish relish I ate and ate and ate the final parts of the car. And as the car disappeared in front of me, so did more of my vision as my middle obscured everything well beyond the reaches of my paws, and the less said about my rear the better. But at last, oh at long last I had consumed the last of the cheesemobile. It was done, I was free, I was- "UUUUUUURRRRRRPPPPP!!!" I belched again, unleashing a formidable shockwave powerful enough to break a nearby window.

Gasping hard from the powerful force and from how tired I was feeling, my legs gave out and I fell to the ground. Oh sweet soft dusty ground, how comfortable you were indeed. "Well, do you make a cheque out now, or later?" Trap spoke up.

"For what?" I asked, frowning.

"For the car you ate! It cost me a mint and it was an antique too! So maybe we can start at one million dollars and work from there?" Trap suggested.

One million- ONE MILLION DOLLARS?! "ARE YOU INSANE?!" I bellowed. "YOU MADE ME TOUCH THE CAR!"



"And you still ate it!" my cousin countered.

I was so annoyed and my glasses so steamy I grabbed them off my nose and began rubbing them with my handkerchief. All the while Trap was looking at me with a funny look on his face. "What? Do I have cheese on my face?" I asked him, still feeling grouching.

"How are you doing that?" he asked me.

"Doing what?" I sighed.

"Touching your glasses with your left paw. Shouldn't it be turning to cheese?" he pointed out.

"Well obviously my glasses won't turn to cheese because... because..." I paused, and that's when it hit me. Ever since I had been blursed, to avoiding cheesing people I had been STUFFING MY PAW IN MY JACKET! How did I not realize that?! "Trap you're a genius!" I declared for the first time in my entire life.

"Well, it's about time you noticed" Trap said smugly.

"This time I mean it! Don't you know what this means Trap?" I said excitedly.

"Yes, but you say it first" my cousin said quickly.

"Hammuratty was able to touch his clothes! That's how he sealed the curse away! They used his clothes *while he was still wearing them!*" I deduced.

"So that means we gotta use your jacket, and it'll seal away the Cheddar Touch?" Trap said, somehow following along. "So, if we do that I can't use you to get rid of some old junk I have lying around?" he asked, sounding disappointed.

"No" I answered coldly. "But what you can do is get me to the Mouseum of Natural History ON THE DOUBLE! I've got to tell Professor Blackbeard what we discovered so I can finally end my blurse!"

"Well lucky for you my truck is registered for several tonnes. Well, *was* registered but that doesn't matter. To the Mouseum!" Trap called.

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It had been a bumpy ride, not helped by how much I was jiggling and sloshing about during the whole ride. I was feeling a little green all the way, which just proves that travel doesn't agree with me as I was making myself motion sick! I was ever grateful once the ride was over and Trap was helping me out of the back of his truck, though I didn't appreciate the pinch he gave to my sides. But with no time to lose I lumbered as fast as I could into the Mouseum, my face red as I huffed and puffed to move my giant body about. I was already sweating as Trap and I made it to the front desk, where the rat I had seen earlier seemed very surprised to see me. "Umm, tickets for two Mista Stilton?" she said hesitatingly.

"I need to see," I panted, "Professor Blackbeard. I found... I found out, huff, how to seal the Cheddar Touch" I wheezed.

"The Cheddar Touch got out?!" the desk rat squealed, looking about cautiously.

"Please calm down. I need, pant, wheeze, to see Blackbeard pronto" I huffed.

"R-right away. Feel free to take the staff route" she said, pointing in the direction I had been earlier this day.

"Thank you" I said as I lumbered off.

No one ever told me it'd be so hard to move when you're this gigantic! Everything seems to want to move in its own direction, with waves running about the circumference of my middle and then clapping about when two waves meet. I was like a noise and sweat factory, and it wasn't even all that humid! It was so unfair as I barely squeezed through the staff passage, and nearly froze on the metal stands as they groaned beneath me, as if they were

going to break! If not for the urgency I would have turned back, but Trap was still behind me and he was pushing me down the steps. It was only at the bottom that I turned around and saw the many dents I had left in them. Gosh I hope they weren't going to charge me for that, because I was already set to lose a fortune on weight loss training so I may return to a more manageable size. "Come on Fat Face! We gotta see your Professor!" Trap teased.

Steeling myself I waddled onwards, only to stop at the small door to the Research Station. "I can't fit through there!" I moaned.

"Well you're certainly sweaty enough, so you'll just slide through! I'll even push you, because I'm nice like that" Trap offered.

Dubious as I was, I still made sure to knock on the door first. "YEAHWHADDYAWANT!?" the Professor grumbled.

"It's Stilton!" I explained, trying to stifle another belch.

"Already?" Blackbeard asked through the door.

"Yes sir!" I answered, feeling the creeping of Junior Year coming back. "I've figured out how they managed to seal the blurse!"

"**WE** figured it out, you mean" Trap interjected.

The door suddenly pulled open, and Professor Blackbeard was staring eye-level with my middle, before his eyes followed to stare into mine. My face was burning again as he cracked a wide smile. "Couldn't resist that boulder, eh Stilton?" he smirked.

"It was an accident with an antique car, I assure you" I blushed.

"Yeah, the clumsy mouse went and turned *MY* antique car into cheddar" Trap complained.

"**YOU PUSHED ME INTO IT!**" I shrieked indignantly.

"Enough the both of ya's! Well Stilton, if ye got the means I got the ink. So come on in, if ye can" Blackbeard said, diving back into the Research Station.

Swallowing hard I leaned down as far as a brobdingnagian mouse like me could, but I only managed to get my head in before my belly and chest were immediately stuck in the door. "Help I'm stuck!" I wailed as my squishy body was suckered by the frame.

Blackbeard sighed loudly as he sized me up. "Ye really are a pain in me tail, ye know that Stilton?" he growled as he pressed against me and pushed.

On the other side Trap had grabbed my chunky tail and was pulling hard. I grunted and groaned as the entire station trembled, but somehow I managed to become unstuck. "Can we not do that again?" I whined. "You don't even need a desk or materials, just the ink because the desk is here" I explained, pointing to my middle.

For the first time, Professor Blackbeard was actually the confused one here. "I don't follow Stilton" he grumbled.

"It's the clothes!" I exclaimed. "That's what they wrote on to seal the blurse. Hammuratty's clothes weren't affected by the blurse just like how my clothes aren't! Not even my glasses. The blurse only enchants clothes to fit the wearer, but it doesn't turn them into cheese!" I explained proudly.

The Professor's eyes lit up, and he slapped himself on the forehead. "Of course! How did I not even think of that?" he declared. "Of course the blursed's clothes wouldn't turn to cheese! Hammuratty'd look right silly wearing a cheese toga" he chuckled thoughtfully.

"So now can we *please* trap the Cheddar Curse already?" I begged. "I don't feel like getting any bigger than I already am! I'm already going to need to take out a wall for me to even fit in my mouse hole!" I complained.

"Alright, lemme just get some ink and some scissors. Yer lucky Stilton, as while ye were busy gorging yerself stupid, I managed to find out what the Mousepotamian equivalent to

“supreme” is. I’ll be able to seal the blurse easily” Professor Blackbeard boasted as he disappeared into the station, and reappeared with some ink, a brush, and some scissors.

“Will you really need to cut my lovely clothes?” I whimpered.

“Not unless ye wanna walk around with the instruction manual for the Cheddar Touch on ye clothes Stilton” Blackbeard muttered.

“Hey mind if I help?” Trap offered. “I’m pretty good at arts and crafts” he boasted.

“Who are ye?” Blackbeard grunted.

“That’s my cousin, Trap Stilton” I explained, unamused with Trap.

“Holy kraken they’re multiplying” the Professor exclaimed as he unscrewed an inkwell.

“Well then “Trap Stilton”, ye get to painting ye cousin’s paw with ink while I write down this ancient language” he instructed.

“Heh, he gets the east job huh” my cousin snorted as he took a brush and began painting my paw.

Goodness me how large my paw was, possibly even as big as Hammuratty’s had been. The brush was just so tiny it was needing quite a bit of ink as Professor Blackbeard wrote down the ancient words on my jacket. And it was my favourite one too! I nearly cried at the thought of having to get it tailored once a great big chunk was going to get taken out of it. “Quit yer blubbering Stilton, ye only have yeself to blame for this” Blackbeard grumbled as he wrote on my jacket.

“Oh all the time. You should hear all the silly stuff he’s gotten himself into! He’s even written a whole load of books about it! Hey that’s an idea Gerrykins: You should write about your experience with the Cheddar Touch” Trap realized.

“No thank you” I snapped, though the thought had occurred to me too. Maybe.

“Oh ye Stiltons, yer a bunch of mad mice. I’m starting to think that Thea of yers might be the sanest one among ye” Blackbeard grumbled as he finished the ancient text. “Okay Stilton, ink the spot around the writing with ye big fat paw!”

It’s not that big and fat... is it? Still I did as he said and pressed down, letting the ink of my paw seep into my fabric. “Oh Cheddar Touch, Blessing and Curse of the Djinn. Seek now this vessel and grant it Your Cheese Supreme!” Professor Blackbeard intoned.

Nothing really happened after that, was something supposed to happen. I didn’t really know, although I yelped as the Professor sliced at my jacket, cutting the new makeshift scroll off of me. “Is it over?” I whimpered.

“It be over Stilton, it be over” Professor Blackbeard said in relief.

“Hey, but if the blurse was the one thing making Gerry Berry’s clothes fit, what happens if you remove it?” Trap pointed out.

Oh, I really, REALLY wish he hadn’t said that, because I gasped suddenly, like my air was being cut off. My clothes were suddenly shrinking like they had gone through the wash wrong, and very soon everything was starting to tear as all that me was poking through the holes. My buttons exploded off of my jackets like marbles, scattering everywhere as my middle exploded out of it, my undershirt riding up towards my chest as a literal boulder hung off of me. And below my legs burst out of my pants, the seams coming under faster than Thea on a motorbike. My poor pants were in tatters, as was my precious jacket and undershirt. All my hideous blubber was out in the opening and jiggling from their violent evacuation. I didn’t even know what to cover up, or what I could even cover up as I was standing in the Mouseum storehouse completely naked! Well, almost completely naked. “Ooh la la Gerrykins, Squeaktoria Secret?” Trap teased, spying the name brand of the underwear clinging to my behind tighter than my dignity was being stretched.

“Trap please” I begged as I chose to cover up my enormous, puffy nipples.

“”Trap please” what? “Trap please” don’t tell Thea you enjoy wearing Squeaktoria Secret knickers Gerrykins?” my cousin teased as he grabbed the waistband and pulled up with all his might.

Oh I wish he hadn't done that, for getting wedgied so hard broke the last of my precious control, and a big stinky yellow cloud erupted out behind me. I just knew Trap had taken a full blast as I heard a sizeable THUD behind me. Poor Professor Blackbeard was grabbing his nose tightly as I had literally stunk up his research station. "Y-you wouldn't mind giving me a lift home, would you?" I asked nervously. "Only see my cousin was my ride and he's-"

I couldn't say much else as Professor Blackbeard turned red in the face and screamed at me to "GET OUT!"

I left as quickly as I could, dragging my comatose cousin with me. Boy, that Professor Blackbeard was even scarier than the Cheddar Touch ever was. Now, what on earth was I going to do in just my underwear and my cousin unconscious? Oh why do these awful things only ever happen to me?

**Author's Note:** In hindsight, after finishing this draft I realize that, maybe, this is one adventure that should probably remain lost to history. It is simply too embarrassing and quite frankly I put a little too much detail into my physical appearance than I should have, even as I type this out on a computer keyboard resting atop my prodigious middle. Professor Blackbeard probably wouldn't want me divulging the exact nature of the Cheddar Touch either, and I agree that it'd be best that nobody learns the horrors of that most dreadful blurse. No, this is one Geronimo Stilton adventure that'd be best go untold, for everyone's sake. I think it best I lock this manuscript away, and just pretend that this was all a bad dream.

-Geronimo Stilton