

Chapter One



It was the middle of the day, and Alberta was doing her keep-fit exercises in the living room. She was just touching her toes for the eleventh time when she heard a banging noise under the floor.

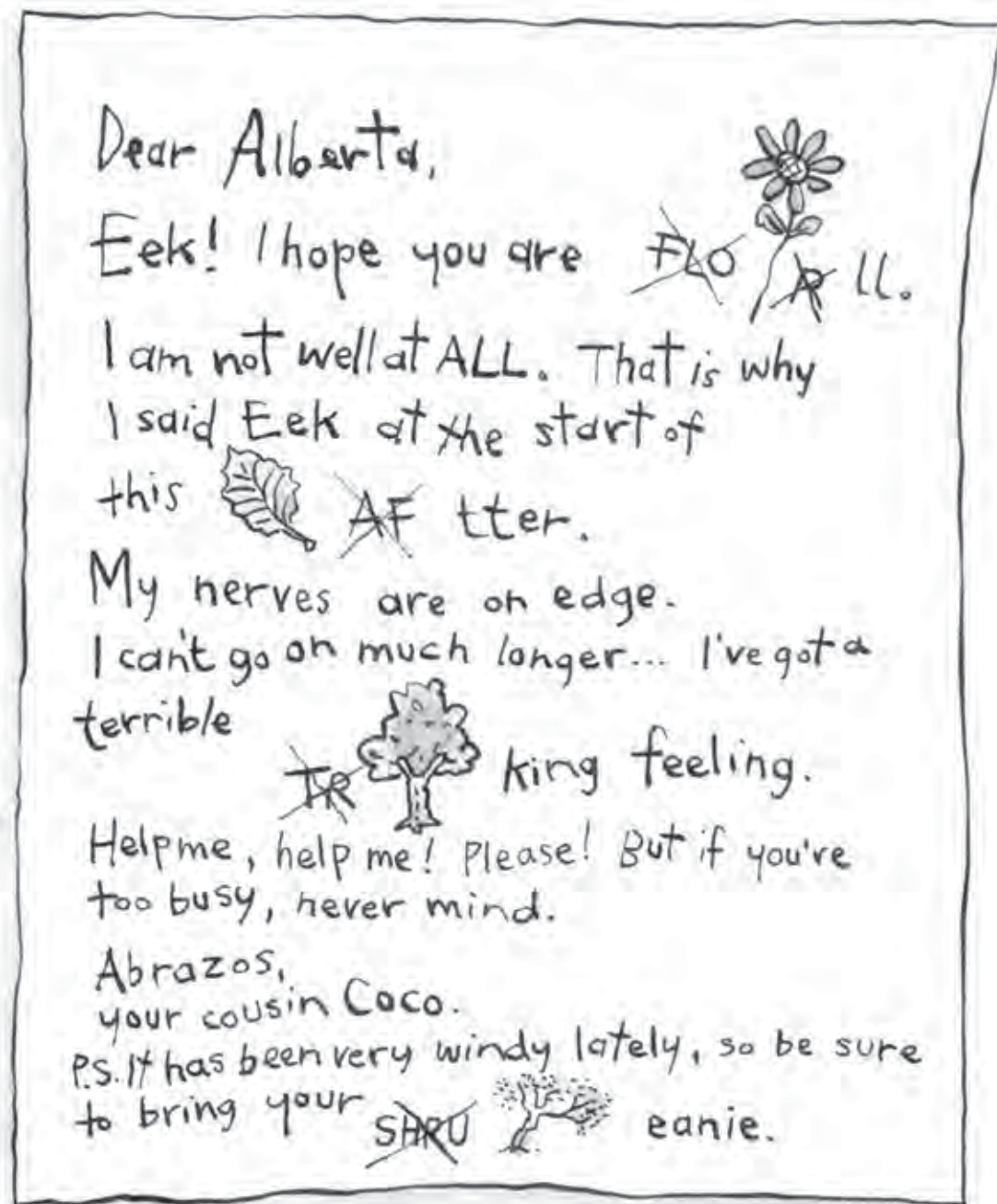
She bent down and pulled up the carpet. There was a letter!

‘Aha,’ she said, nodding her furry head. ‘The post!’ She looked at the handwriting on the envelope. ‘It’s from my cousin Coco. I haven’t heard from him in a while.’



Alberta’s cousin Coco was Chief of Police in the big city of Buenos Aires in Argentina. He led a very busy life, tracking down robbers and investigating crimes. From time to time he dropped a line to Alberta, particularly when he was having trouble with a case. She wondered what it could be this time.

Alberta sat on the sofa and opened the letter. This is what it said:



‘Pobre Coco!’ said Alberta. She read the letter a second time, thinking hard about what it could all mean. ‘He’s so sensitive. I wonder if it is as bad as he says?’

She stood up. She knew from experience that the only way to find out was to go to Buenos Aires and ask him herself. He was her favourite cousin, after all.

‘My exercises will just have to wait!’ she declared, secretly pleased. She found touching her toes quite boring.

Rapidly she packed some lettuce leaves and a pair of binoculars in her brown-paper bag and tucked her winter beanie tightly behind her ears.

Then she left some birdseed on the windowsill for the pigeons, slammed the door behind her, and headed off for South America.

