FABIO

THE WORLD'S GREATEST

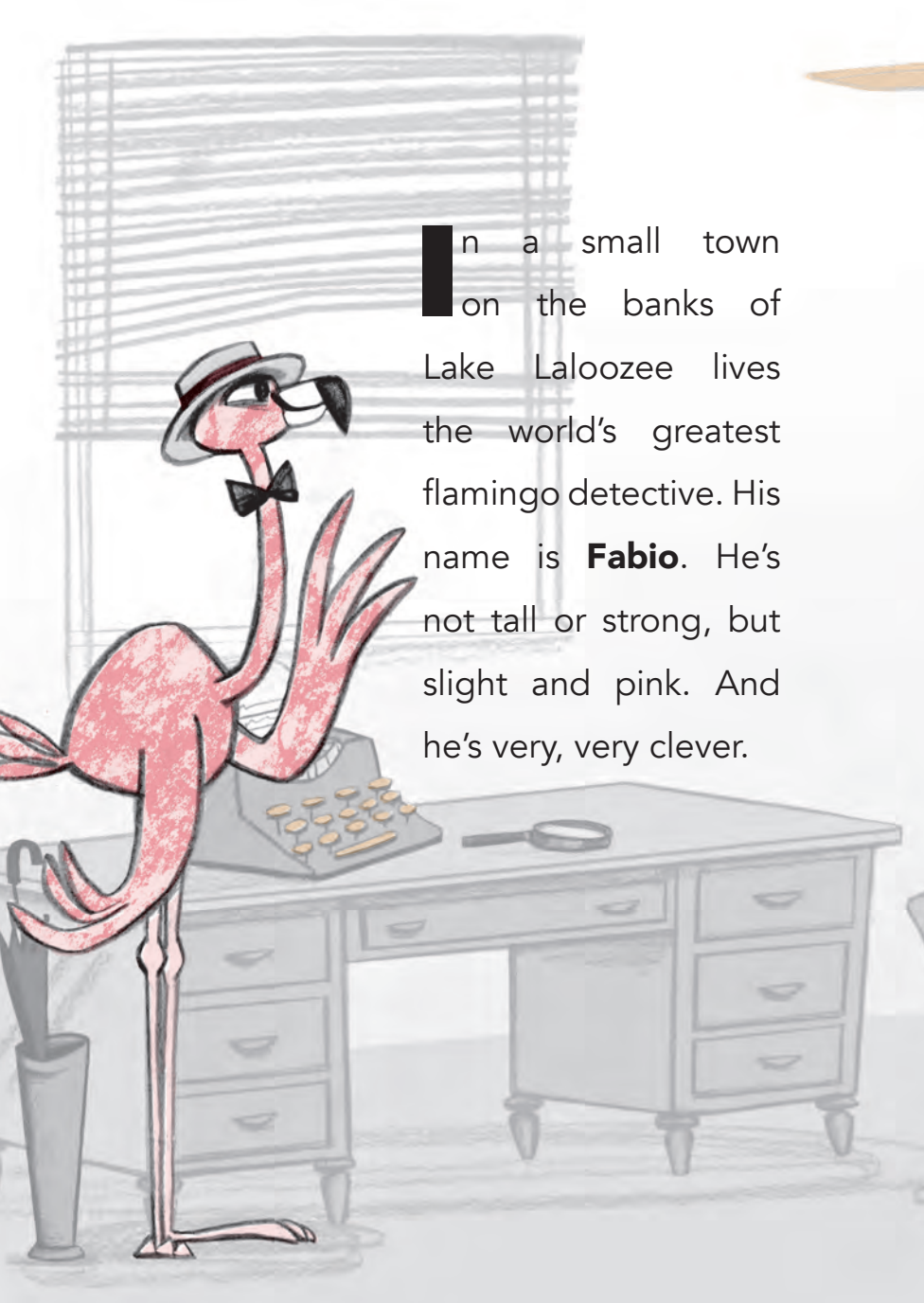
FLAMINGO DETECTIVE

MYSTERY ON THE OSTRICH EXPRESS

LAURA JAMES

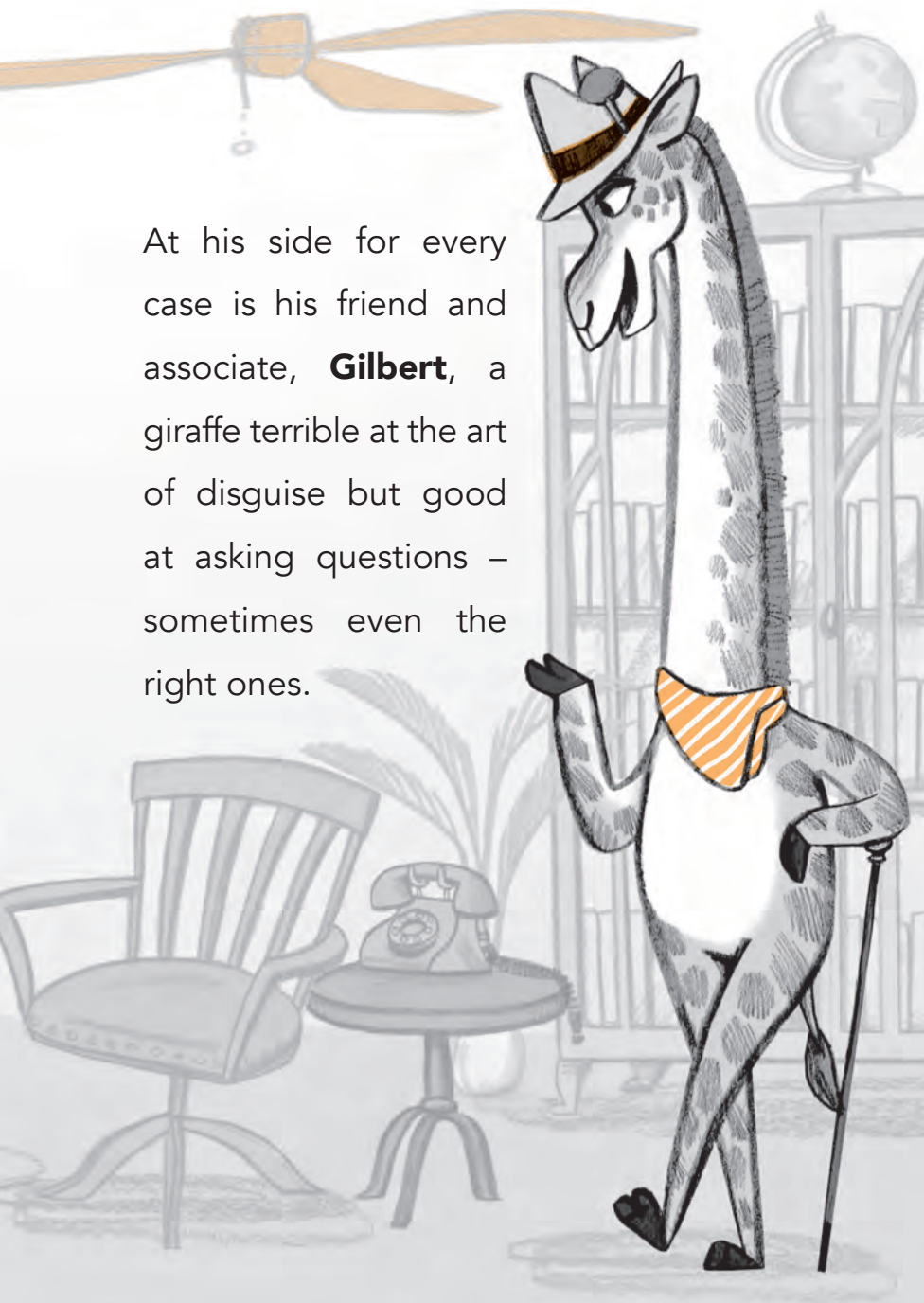
Illustrated by EMILY FOX

BLOOMSBURY
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In a small town on the banks of Lake Laloozee lives the world's greatest flamingo detective. His name is **Fabio**. He's not tall or strong, but slight and pink. And he's very, very clever.

At his side for every case is his friend and associate, **Gilbert**, a giraffe terrible at the art of disguise but good at asking questions – sometimes even the right ones.





Chapter 1

The bell rang as Fabio and Gilbert stepped into Alfonso's, the small and exclusive jeweller's shop. Alfonso's was as much part of the history of Laloozee as the Hotel Royale or Plume Street, where Fabio's detective agency was based.

'I'll be with you in one moment, gentlemen,' said Alfonso, who was an ageing tortoise

with an unhurried way of speaking.

Fabio tipped his hat and he and Gilbert browsed the expensive jewellery as Alfonso dealt with his customer, a stylish desert fox.

'Good luck, my dear,' he said, carefully handing her a package. **'If your mother could see you now ...'**

The fox smiled. 'Thank you, Mr Alfonso. It's a pleasure doing business with you.'

Fabio tipped his hat again as the fox sashayed out of the shop.

Alfonso turned his attention to Fabio and Gilbert. **'How may I be of service, gentlemen?'** he asked.



‘It’s my pocket watch, Alfonso,’ said Gilbert, lolloping towards him. ‘It seems to be on the blink.’ He gave the watch a shake and then rested it on the counter.

Alfonso delicately picked it up and examined it through his eyeglass.

‘I don’t see these much any more,’ he said. **‘It’s nothing too serious. I’ll fix it now, if you don’t mind waiting a minute.’**

‘Not at all,’ said Gilbert, trying his best not to be impatient. He felt sure,



at Alfonso's pace, it was going to take more than a minute.



As Alfonso steadily made his way to his workshop, Fabio and Gilbert continued to look around. Gilbert tried a few things on.

'What do you think he meant when he said he doesn't see these much any more?' asked Gilbert. 'That's top of the range, that watch. Or at least it was.'

‘And now its time is up,’ murmured Fabio, who wasn’t properly listening. Something through the shop window had caught his eye. Maybe it was a trick of the light, or maybe …

‘What have you spotted now?’ asked Gilbert. ‘Don’t you ever relax?’

‘I may have spotted something, as you say,’ replied Fabio. ‘Or it may be nothing. A good brain, my dear friend, is always working, even when it knows it is going on holiday.’

Gilbert couldn’t think of anything clever to say to that, but was saved

by Alfonso returning from his workshop.

'Your watch is ready, sir,' he said.

'I say,' said Gilbert, removing a pair of pearl earrings, 'you were very trusting leaving us in the shop alone. What if we'd tried to make off with all this valuable jewellery?'

'Well,' said Alfonso, **'you have an honest face.'**

Gilbert beamed and picked up his pocket watch.

'Cripes, is that the time? Fabio,

we'd better hurry or we'll miss our train. How much do I owe you?'

'No charge,' replied Alfonso. **'I just need some advice from the world's greatest flamingo detective.'**

'He's going to the Coral Coast with me and he's going to be late!' exclaimed Gilbert.

'But I would be delighted to assist when I return …'

Alfonso looked crestfallen. **'That might be too late.'**