

CHAPTER ONE



Famous

IF you have to do a chore, you might as well set the table. That's my chore. It's better than cleaning your room, or scrubbing the toilet, or worse . . . changing your baby sister's diaper trash can! Yuck. Plus, when you set the table, you can practice being famous.

"Plaaaate! Everybody needs a plaaaate!" I sang as I skipped around our faded wooden table Sunday evening. That's how *famous* people

set the table. They sing and set at the same time. Singing is a very famous job.

“Fooork! Now everybody needs a fooork!”

My cat, Luna, joined in to help me. She likes to be famous, too. *“Meeeoow! Meow, meow, meeeoow,”* she sang along.

Luna has the softest brown fur you’ve ever seen. It makes me think of chocolate pudding. My hair is the same brown as Luna’s, except with curls and really long. Like chocolate pudding Slinkies. If I stretch my pudding Slinkies out, I can practically sit on them. I’m eight years old—and so are my curls. I’ve never cut my hair before. Next year, my curls will turn nine!

I whipped my eight-year-old pudding-Slinky curls from one side to the other, famous-style. Then I used a spoon for a microphone and sang

as loud as I could, “*Spoooooon, glorious spoooooon!*
Next to the knife youuu go!”

Down the hall, my baby sister started crying.

“Emma! What are you doing out there?” called my mom from the kitchen.

“I’m setting the table, Mom, like you told me to,” I called back.

“I don’t think I told you to wake up your sister,” she said, walking into the dining room. “Though I suppose she had to get up for dinner soon, anyway.”

Mom went to get Mia, and I continued setting the table.

“*Knife and napkin. Knife and napkin. Cut and wipe and make it happen!*” I sang in my extra-famous voice.



Then Papi yelled from the living room.

“¿Qué pasa aquí?” he asked.

That’s Spanish. It means, “What’s going on here?”

“¡Nada!” I yelled back. That means, “Nothing!”

My papi is from a whole other country called the Dominican Republic. They speak Spanish there. That’s why I call him Papi—it’s like saying “Daddy,” but in Spanish. You say it like this: “PAH-pee.”

“Dinner’s almost ready. Isn’t that right, Mia?” Mom said as she put baby Mia in her green high chair next to the table. My mom is not from the Dominican Republic. She’s from here—New York City. That’s where we live. Our neighborhood is called Washington Heights. It’s at the very tippy-top of Manhattan.

“GAGA BABA BOO,” Mia said in baby language.

Mom answered her in grown-up baby language. “Yes, I know you’re ready for dinner! Oh, you’re so cute . . . coo, coo, coo . . . look at that smile.”

Mia is pretty cute. But baby talk is for babies, and I’m eight, so I ignored them and kept singing and setting the table.

“Seriously, Emma,” said my dad. “I’m trying to watch the news; please pipe down a bit.”

The living room is right next to the dining room, so when Papi started watching the news on our TV, I could see it, too.

Ugh. The news. It’s just so boring. It’s horribly, ridiculously, terrifyingly boring!

“But, Papi, I haaaate the news!” I groaned. “It’s sooo boring.”

“Watching the news while you set the table won’t kill you,” Mom said.

On the TV, there was a man and a woman sitting at a big news desk. It was blue and yellow and looked like it glowed in the dark. They started talking about a boring man with a boring tie. And then they talked about a boring doctor, and he talked about a boring doctor thing.

Then I could feel it. I could feel the boredom kicking in. It tingled as it entered through my ears and eyes . . . and then the boredom started oozing through my whole body and I couldn’t make it stop! I really was going to be bored to death! I was about to tell my papi to call an ambulance when . . . I saw her.

Suddenly there was a woman on the TV. A fancy-looking newswoman. She was standing on

the street, and there were lots of police cars behind her. She had shiny brown hair, a fabulous red coat, and glossy pink lips. Her cheeks were rosy with blush, and her eyelashes were long and black. She was wearing a big white pearl necklace, and she was holding a microphone with a colorful cube on top. She was amazing.

“Police say the robber smashed the glass window,” she was explaining. “He grabbed ten gold watches and ran away down the street.”

She was not boring at all. She looked so . . . she just looked so . . . so *special*.

I placed the last cup on the table and raced over to the sofa where Papi was sitting.

“Papi, who was that?” I asked hurriedly.

“Oh, her? She’s a reporter. I forget her name,” he replied.

“A news reporter? Do you think she’s famous?”

“Well, I suppose,” Papi said.

“Aha! I knew it! I knew she was famous. I’m going to be just like her!” I declared.

“But, Emma, wait . . . that’s not why she—”

But I had already run out of the room. A news reporter. I knew right away this was how I was going to be famous! Besides, how hard could it be?