

CHAPTER ONE



Festival News

READY, Sophia?”

“Yup, ready, Emma!”

“One, two, THREE! Woo-hoo!!!” Sophia and I screamed and laughed as we slid head-first into a huge pile of leaves in the school yard.

“Ha-ha! That was so fun!” shouted Sophia. She stood up and began brushing all the red, orange, and yellow leaves off her coat. I was still buried under the pile.

“Emma?” Sophia called out as she looked around. I waited silently as Sophia searched for me.

“Emma?” she asked again. “Where are you?”

Then I leapt out of the leaf pile!

“Roar!” I yelled like a lion.

“Ahhh!” she screamed as leaves flew everywhere around us. Then we both fell back down laughing.

“Emma, your hair!” Sophia pointed. “You look like a wicked autumn witch!”

I felt the top of my head and realized I had leaves stuck in between all my long chocolate-pudding Slinkies. You know, my curly hair.

“That’s because I *am* a wicked autumn witch!” I giggled. Then I held up my arms like a zombie and pretended I was going to stomp on Sophia. She ran away, screaming so loud a bunch



of other kids in the school yard heard and ran over to play with us.

“Look out below!” called Javier as he dove into the leaf pile like a cannonball. Leaves were flying everywhere.

We bounced and ran and danced in the leaves until Carmen the yard monitor said it was time to come inside.

“Okay, class, settle down,” said Miss Thompson as we walked into our classroom. “Take out your Spanish workbooks and turn to page thirty-one.”

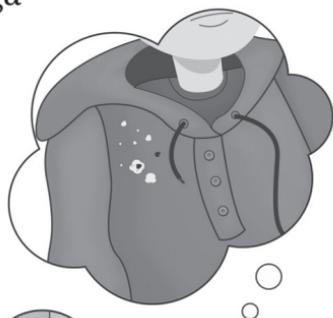
I love doing Spanish in school. I know lots of the answers because we speak Spanish at home. Spanish is a very famous language, you know. I feel extra famous showing off my Spanish speaking skills!

I have lots of reasons to feel famous these days. After I solved the mystery of Javier’s

wormburger at school last month, everyone started coming to me for help. They wanted me to do news reports on them, too.

Like when my friend Shakira lost her sister's gold heart necklace, I did an investigation and discovered it fell behind the couch in her living room. After I did my news report, Shakira's mom looked behind the sofa and found the necklace! She found an old magazine, too! Bonus.

And at school, my friend David only had two cookies at lunch one day even though his mom always packs four. I used my camera phone to shoot video of cookie crumbs on Adrian's hoodie sweatshirt. I



showed Adrian the evidence and he sang like a canary! (That means he admitted to stealing the cookies, in detective language.)

“¿*Quién quiere leer?*” asked Miss Thompson in *Spanish* language. “Who wants to read . . . ?” Then she paused when she saw my hair. “Emma, what happened to your hair? Leaves are stuck everywhere,” she said with a concerned smile.

“I know!” I smiled back. “I like it this way. I’m a wicked autumn witch!”

“Oh, I see. Actually, that reminds me,” she added, turning to the rest of the class. “Before we begin our Spanish lesson, I have an important announcement to make. As you know, Halloween is coming up soon . . .”

We all started oohing and giggling with excitement.

“Yes, yes,” Miss Thompson continued, “and as you also know, the Washington Heights

Halloween Festival will be held at our school next Saturday. But this year, in addition to games, a bounce house, and the Halloween dance . . . there's also going to be a costume contest!"

The whole class started oohing and aahing even louder. This was big news.

"Yes, it will be lots of fun," she went on. "Students from all the neighborhood schools will be competing in different categories, like most original costume. Or best group costume. Funniest costume! We want to show our P.S. 387 pride! Principal Lee says the class that wins the most categories will get a pizza party the following week!"

We all screamed and shouted!!

"Okay, okay, settle down. There are some rules you need to know about. First, you have to try to *make* your costume yourself. Your friends

and family can help. And second, all costumes should be based on a literary character.”

“Ooooh!” we all shrieked.

“Miss Thompson, what’s a literary character?” asked Javier.

“I’m glad you asked that, Javier. A literary character is a character from a book. So I want you to think hard about the characters in your favorite books and pick which one you want to dress up as for the Halloween costume contest.”

Ooh. Yes! A great costume idea popped right into my brain. But I was gonna need some help.