



Emma, Smile and Say "Cupcake!" (Cupcake Diaries Book 11)

By Coco Simon

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Coco Simon always dreamed of opening a cupcake bakery, but she was afraid she would eat all the profits. When she's not daydreaming about cupcakes, Coco edits children's books and has written close to 100 books for children, tweens, and young adults, which is a lot less than the number of cupcakes she's eaten. Cupcake Diaries is the first time Coco has mixed her love of cupcakes with writing.

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Emma, Smile and Say "Cupcake!"



CHAPTER 1

On Pins and Needles

I woke up extra early this Saturday morning to frost the mini cupcakes I was delivering to our number-one client, Mona, at The Special Day bridal salon. Well, the truth was, frosting wouldn't take long, but I wanted to wash and set my hair in my mom's big rollers before I went to the bridal salon. I would be modeling today for Mona's clients, and I wanted to try a new hairstyle and see what everyone at the shop thought.

It's kind of crazy how I started modeling for Mona. One Saturday morning I was making a regular cupcake delivery to the store (my friends and I in the Cupcake Club have a cupcake business, and Mona buys cupcakes from us for her Saturday brides each week), and an important mystery client was there for an early showing of dresses. It turned out to be Romaine Ford, our only hometown celebrity, and I ended up modeling junior bridesmaid dresses for her because there was no one else available. Meeting Romaine Ford and everything that came after that was the most exciting part of my life yet.

Since then, I've been modeling for Mona about once or twice a month for trunk shows, which is when specialty designers bring in their line for the day. It's fun. I get to dress up and sometimes have my hair styled (no makeup, though! It could ruin the dresses!) and hang out in a totally girly environment for the morning, away from my three smelly brothers. Best of all, Mona pays me.

So this morning I showered, then put on my fancy jeans and a pretty turtleneck sweater, some tiny pearl stud earrings, and a belt. Then I rolled my hair and forgot all about it for a while as I finished up the cupcakes. Well, until my brother Matt walked into the kitchen and fell down on the floor laughing. I guess I looked pretty funny with my hair all in rollers, but there are times like these when I really wish I had a sister. Anyway, it only took about half an hour to frost and pack the cupcakes since they're minis, which are not much wider than a quarter. Mona loves them. Brides are always on diets, so they're hungry, which makes them cranky. These cupcakes are so tiny, no one can resist, and she says they make cranky brides friendlier. Isn't that funny?

Afterward, I ran the blow-dryer over my curlers to really set my hair, then I unpinned the rollers and swung my head from side to side. My hair is a very yellow blond on top, from the sun, but underneath it's a much

darker shade. The curls made the colors all swirly and mixed together, and the style gave me a lot of height. I looked two inches taller! I laughed at the sight of it. It might be too much, but who cared? It was just an experiment, anyway. Well, my mom might care. She's always concerned about being "age appropriate."

My mom called up from the kitchen that we had to go or I'd be late, so I flipped off the bathroom light and took the stairs down, two at a time. As I swung around the banister and into the kitchen, my mom turned around and then did a double take.

"Oh, Emma! Your hair looks gorgeous!" she said with a gasp.

I grinned. "Thanks! You don't think it's too much?"

My mom laughed. "Well, maybe for soccer practice or something, but under the circumstances, I think it will be a huge success!" She smoothed her own perky blond ponytail and laughed again, looking down at her Nike sweatpants and Under Armor top. "I am feeling very underdressed!"

"You look great, Mama," I said, calling her by my private baby name for her. "You're the prettiest mom in school." I grabbed my jacket off the hook in my locker in the mudroom, stepped over about five piles of sweaty boys' sporting goods, and headed out to the car.

"Thank you, lovebug, you do say the sweetest things, even if they're not always true!"



At The Special Day, Mona and her assistants were bustling around getting things set up for the day's trunk show.

The Special Day is just what you would imagine if you were trying to picture the most awesome, over-the-top, bridal store. It's like a magical castle, and someday that's where I want to buy my wedding dress. First of all, outside the store they have beautiful green trees, and topiaries in white wooden flower boxes, and a pretty white awning with white lanterns hanging on either side of the door. It looks like something from movies I've seen of Paris. Then, inside is white, white, white everywhere. A boy couldn't last one minute in there without ruining something, I tell you. There are thick white pile carpets, which make it really quiet; superplush white sofas and chairs that you sink into; low white marble coffee tables where tea is served in fine white china; and everywhere are white boxes of white Kleenex, because everyone cries when women try on wedding dresses. Once, I even saw Mona tear up when a young woman with cancer came in to try on her dress. She was bald from her treatment, but very brave and getting healthier, and Mona cried when she saw her in her beautiful dress.

Today, Mona's main assistant, Patricia, came striding over to help me with my cupcake carriers. "Oh, Emma! Your hair! You look incredible!" said Patricia.

I smiled. "Thanks. It was just an experiment."

"Well, it looks wonderful. Mona! Come see Emma's new hairstyle!"

Mona looked up from the rack of dresses she was arranging, and I saw her tilt her head and squint at me. "Emma!" she cried. (Mona is really dramatic, by the way. Did I mention that?) She raced across the store toward me, her arms outstretched. "Darling! You look divine! Simply divine!" She had her hands on my

arms, and now she pulled me in for a European-style two-cheek kiss. I laughed.

Mona said, “Oh, Patricia, isn’t she divine?”

Smiling, Patricia nodded and added, “Divine!”

(Did I mention that “divine” is Mona’s favorite word?) But now Mona stopped gushing over me and patted her severe black bun. “Patricia!” she snapped, all business now. “I have an idea!”

“Yes, Mona? What is it?” asked Patricia. Patricia is very patient, but I guess I don’t need to mention that either.

Mona circled me, looking at my new hair with her arms folded, tapping her chin, slightly bent at the waist. “Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yes. Yes!” After what felt like an eternity, she looked up at Patricia with a gleam in her eye. “Call Emma’s mother and ask if we can photograph her today, and if so, could we use it in the paper. Then if she says yes, call Joachim and get him over here on the double. I’d like to run another ad!”

I raised my eyebrows at Patricia and she raised hers back at me, and we smiled like coconspirators. An ad?! Holy smokes! Wait until I tell my friends, was all I could think! I prayed my mom said yes. Sometimes my parents can be funny about stuff like that—they always are nice when people tell them I’m pretty, like if we’re out to dinner or something, but they always tell me after that looks don’t last and that schoolwork and teamwork are more important than appearances. I know what they mean, but I still like it when people say I’m pretty. Especially because I don’t think I’m pretty all the time; only when I try a little and, like, wear something fancy or do my hair. Otherwise I think I just look normal.

I went with Patricia to sort through the dresses I’d wear today while she dialed my mom’s cell on the cordless phone. Today’s dresses were by Jaden Sacks, a famous designer from New York City. The line is superchic and exclusive. She usually only sells in her boutique on Madison Avenue. I know this because Mona told me the week before. She was very excited to be able to carry the dresses in the store. The junior bridesmaid dresses were gorgeous, made of incredible materials—thick, slippery satin that pooled in my hand and slid through my fingers like quicksilver; pleated sheer silk so light and thin, it was like cotton candy on my skin; and lace that was somehow detailed and fancy on one side but cotton soft on the underside so it buffered me from the scratchiness of the stitching. The designs were simple—fashion forward but not tacky or overdone. Jaden Sacks is famous for using the finest supplies and craftspeople. Mona also told me that, but I looked it up on the Internet, too. Her dresses for brides are not traditional puffy “wedding cakes” with lots of layers, but rather columns or sheaths or mermaids with trains. Very glamorous and understated. Her dresses for junior bridesmaids don’t really look like bridesmaids dresses. They aren’t too poufy or lacy or anything, and they don’t look like mini brides, but they still look what my mom would call “age appropriate.” Which is good, because when it comes to modeling, my mom is all over being age appropriate. Mona has to show Mom all the dresses I’ll wear beforehand, so she can okay them. It’s kind of crazy. I mean, how can a bridesmaid dress be too sexy? But Mona says you’d be surprised.

Patricia whispered to me as she waited for my mom to pick up the phone, telling me that Mona was hoping Jaden Sacks might consider letting her carry the dresses for good, selling the line as a regular attraction at the store. Mona had already run a number of ads in the local paper about today’s trunk show, and she was expecting a big crowd—not just brides but local fashionistas who were curious to see the exclusive line on their home turf. (I already knew that one of my best friends, Mia, and her mom, Mrs. Valdes, who were major fashionistas and were clients of Mona’s, were coming today to inspect the line and cheer on Mona. I couldn’t wait to tell Mia about the potential ad!)

I could hear Patricia speaking to my mom.

“Oh, Mrs. Taylor! Hi! It’s Patricia at The Special Day! No, everything’s fine. She’s here. Everything is wonderful.” There was a pause. “No! The hair is divine! That’s actually why I’m calling you. Mona loved it so much that she had an idea to shoot photos of Emma today to run in an ad in the paper, and she wanted to know if that would be okay with you. We’d pay her extra, of course.” There was another pause. “Yes, I totally understand. No, it’s not a problem at all. Okay, talk soon. Bye!” Patricia clicked the off button on the phone and set the receiver on the bench in the large fitting room. I waited for Patricia to give me the scoop. When she didn’t immediately say anything, I had to ask.

“What did she say?!” I couldn’t contain my excitement any longer.

“She said it sounded like fun, but she wanted to talk it over with your father before she gave her permission.”

“What? That is such a bummer!” I complained. I knew it was babyish, but I didn’t care. How could my mom even think of saying no to an opportunity like this? My mom was protective, but oh boy, my dad was even more protective of me. There’s no way he’d say yes.

“Hey, modeling is a big deal,” Patricia reminded me gently. “You’re talking about putting your photo out there for all the world to see. It might seem like fun for you, but maybe your parents are worried it will give you an image that’s not consistent with what they want for you. I completely respect your mother’s response. Trust me”—Patricia rolled her eyes—“in the fashion business you get plenty of mothers who are just the opposite—pushing their very young daughters at you, willing to sell their souls to the devil just to make some money off their child’s looks before they change or get braces or whatever. It’s a tough business.”

“One ad doesn’t mean I’m in the modeling business!” I protested.

Patricia smiled a wry smile. “It might,” she said. “I’m calling Joachim, just in case, and telling him to stand by.” She grabbed my hand and squeezed, then handed me my first dress and motioned that she was leaving.

I beamed at Patricia and held up my crossed fingers as she left. Then I began to get ready. I hate changing in front of other people, so Mona got me a slip to wear under the dresses—it’s kind of like a long stretchy nude-colored camisole, and it makes me feel more comfortable, in case someone accidentally barges in. But Patricia always leaves me alone to get the slip on and get started, and she calls in to make sure I’m ready before she comes back. We have a good routine now, and we totally get each other. It’s kind of weird to think that one of my friends could be forty years older than me and working full-time in a bridal salon, but I’d have to say that’s the case with me and Patricia.

The first Jaden Sacks dress was just so gorgeous. It had a high square neckline and what Patricia called “tulip” sleeves, which were capped kind of midway down my upper arm with overlapping petals of fabric. Then a high plain waist with a pale blue ribbon to define it, and a floor-length skirt of satin that swished heavily as I walked. The best part was it had a very light tulle underskirt in a pale blue that matched the ribbon and peeked out only when I moved. I loved it.

I called Patricia, and she came back in, the phone pressed to her ear, nodding. Whoever she was talking to wouldn’t let her get a word in edgewise. I hoped it wasn’t my mom!

I watched her face in the mirror as she bent her knees and clutched the receiver between her shoulder and chin so she could tie my ribbon with both hands. Then she leaned to the side to look at me in the mirror and

gave me two thumbs-up and a wink. That meant I looked great. But who was on the phone?

“Uh-huh. Yes. Yes. Okay. Right.” Patricia was nodding again.

I knitted my eyebrows together and mouthed, My mom? I was on pins and needles waiting to hear. But Patricia shook her head and covered the receiver with her hand. Joachim, she mouthed, and she rolled her eyes for the second time today. “Right. Well, listen, Joachim, that’s all great. I think your vision sounds wonderful, and we will have all the snacks on hand that you requested, as well as a space roped off for your shoot, and total privacy. Yes. I understand it will be a Sunday rate because it is so last-minute. I will confirm as soon as I hear back from the model. Thank you.”

Patricia sighed a deep sigh and sat down heavily on the bench. “This is going to be a really long day,” she said.

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