



## Emma's Table

By Philip Galanes  
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### Introduction

From the moment Emma Sutton walks into the FitzCoopers auction house, the disgraced media darling knows exactly what she wants: an antique dining table. What she gets is a chance to set things right.

Fresh from a yearlong stretch in prison, Emma finds her life just as she left it—filled with glittering business successes, bruising personal defeats, rolling television cameras, and awkward Sunday dinners at home. She needs a clean slate—a second chance that might be provided by two unlikely saviors: Benjamin Blackman, a terminally charming social worker and Emma's part-time assistant, and one of Benjamin's most heartbreaking wards, an overweight little girl from Queens named Gracie.

### Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways is Cassy Sutton every bit her mother's daughter? How, on the other hand, has Cassy determined she'd like to be different from Emma—and how has this decision affected her course in life?
2. Benjamin doesn't believe that Gracie is sneaking snacks all on her own; what evidence does he have that Tina is complicit in her bad diet? How else might Gracie be getting her junk food?
3. How does Tina react to Benjamin's implication—as she sees it—that she's providing Gracie with junk food? Why does Tina decide to skip the Diet Club event with Gracie, after she finds Gracie sneaking cookies in her room?
4. Benjamin's mother shares some of Emma's personal characteristics; how does this affect Benjamin's desire to do well in Emma's eyes?
5. When Emma discovers Bobby's keys and visits his Upper West Side apartment, what is her first reaction? What are the implications of her inability to resist rearranging Bobby's furniture, and how do you think Bobby will react to her stop-over decorating job?
6. What lessons does Cassy stand to learn from keeping Rusty?—lessons that may be applicable to other areas of her life?
7. What does helping Mr. Tanaguchi get another Nakashima table symbolize for Emma? When did she make the decision to help, and why? Is it just to clear her conscience of her "double-cross" at the auction house?
8. Why does Emma eventually decide to move Bobby's "secret" possessions—among them his armchair and his landscape painting—into their shared apartment, alongside everything else she owns?

### About the Author

An entertainment lawyer in private practice and an award-winning interior designer, Philip Galanes is the author of the advice column Social Q's in the *New York Times* Sunday Styles section. He divides his time between New York City and East Hampton, New York.