

CHAPTER SAMPLER

A stylized illustration of a child with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt with a yellow and green stripe and orange pants, standing in a room with a solid orange background. Several light blue plastic chairs with orange slats are scattered around, some overturned. In the foreground, a large, dark, abstract shape resembling a giant hand or a pile of debris is visible. The title 'Lo Simpson starts a Revolution' is written in a large, white, handwritten font across the middle, and the author's name 'Melanie Florence' is at the bottom.

Lo Simpson starts a Revolution

Melanie Florence

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Summary: In this middle-grade novel, Lo's best friend, Jazz, is leaving her behind for the popular crowd, makeup and boys. But when Lo finds new friends who share her love of comics and *Doctor Who*, she also discovers her voice—and the confidence to speak up for what's right.

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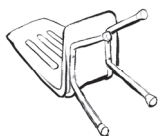
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*For all my fellow Whovians.
And for anyone who, like me, fought growing up.
Trust me—you're going to be just fine.*



ONE



Lo was wearing her brand-new *Doctor Who* cosplay for the very first time when her best friend, Jazz, announced that they should go shopping for bras together.

It was one of those spring days that smelled like summer in the backyard. Like coconut-scented sunscreen, strawberry lemonade and freshly mown grass.

And underneath all that, Lo thought she could smell a hint of the lemon juice that Jazz religiously drizzled in her hair because she absolutely insisted that it gave her natural highlights.

Lo thought it smelled like sunshine, if sunshine had a scent. It smelled like every single summer day that Lo had spent giggling and plotting with Jazz in her backyard since the second grade.

The sun was beating down relentlessly on her neck as she let herself through the gate and into Jazz's backyard. And there she was. Her best friend in the world. Lying in the sun,

crisping like a piece of bacon in a fire-engine-red bikini that Lo wouldn't be caught dead in. The last time *she* sunbathed, Lo had covered up in an old one-piece, faded gray from being washed and hung to dry in the sun so many times.

Lo cleared her throat until Jazz looked up.

"Well?" she asked, extending her arms and spinning around. She stopped and pulled out her sonic screwdriver and pointed it at Jazz dramatically, holding her pose until she got a response.

"Well what?" Jazz asked, adjusting her bikini bottom and reaching for the sunscreen.

Not *that* kind of response.

"What do you think?" Lo asked. Was Jazz serious? Lo had worked her butt off on her cosplay. She had nearly cried with joy when they announced that the new Doctor was going to be a woman, and she'd started working on her cosplay the second she saw the amazing outfit the new Doctor would be wearing on the show. She had ordered the suspenders in the exact color of mustard yellow that the Thirteenth Doctor wore. She had gone to every single shoe store in the city to find the right boots. She had spent every last dollar she'd earned babysitting on a custom-made jacket that was perfect right down to the rainbow piping that you couldn't even see from the outside but was absolutely vital to have if you were going to be the Doctor.

Jazz shrugged. "Your hair is the wrong color."

Lo touched the ends of her dark hair. She had talked her mom into letting her get Thirteen's awesomely cool bob, but

she wasn't about to bleach it blond, and she couldn't afford a decent wig. Not yet anyway. But other than her hair, her outfit was absolutely perfect!

"That's it?" Lo asked.

"Okay, the rest of it is good," Jazz said with a complete lack of enthusiasm.

"Good?"

"It's good, Lo. Jeez. I'm just not really into cosplay."

Was she serious? Since when? Last year Jazz had spent months perfecting every tiny detail of her Weeping Angels cosplay and made Lo watch every episode of *Doctor Who* featuring the creepy angel statues repeatedly so she could practice posing like them.

"Jazz, I worked hard on this. And I'll have a wig by the time we go to FanCon, so it'll be perfect."

"Whatever. It's great. Sorry. I've just had other stuff going on. You know?" Jazz said, rubbing sunscreen into her already brown legs and avoiding Lo's eyes. "Anyway. How do you expect to get a tan dressed like that?"

Lo rolled her eyes and took her jacket off, hanging it carefully over the back of a chair. She took off her boots and socks and sat down beside Jazz on a towel scratchy-stiff from hanging out on the laundry line in the sunshine.

"Happy now?" she asked, pouring herself some lemonade and smacking her lips at the tangy sweetness. Jazz shrugged and pulled her curly hair into a messy knot on the top of her head and secured it with a scrunchie printed with bright-blue butterflies.

Lo looked around the yard, sucking lazily on an ice cube, and watched a fat green caterpillar inching its way across a long blade of grass.

I'd rather be a caterpillar than a butterfly, she thought idly, glancing over at Jazz, who had lost interest in their conversation and was watching some beauty vlogger on her iPad. Jazz studied makeup tutorials and fashion advice single-mindedly, the way Lo pored through library books.

Jazz used to read library books too, Lo thought. And she used to love *Doctor Who* as much as Lo did.

Jazz looked up at her through pink, heart-shaped sunglasses that slipped down her nose when she tilted her head.

"We should go bra shopping," she said.



TWO



Lo choked on her ice cube until Jazz smacked her on the back.

“Why would we want to go bra shopping?” Lo sputtered.

“Because we’re, like, the only two girls in our grade who don’t wear a bra.”

Lo seriously doubted that.

The caterpillar had disappeared from its blade of grass. Obviously it was as horrified as Lo was by the direction this conversation had taken.

Lo hoped the caterpillar would form a chrysalis soon. She and Jazz put one in a jar every single year and watched it change inside the little cocoon it built around itself, metamorphosing until it hatched into an orange-and-black monarch. She loved that word. *Metamorphosing*. Changing into something new. Which Lo was all for, as long as that change didn’t involve wearing some medieval torture device wrapped around her rib cage!

“But we don’t need bras,” she said firmly. She was willing to bet the Doctor never had to deal with such *embarrassing* things. Her face burned.

“Yes, we do,” Jazz insisted.

Jazz was always insisting on things, and Lo almost always went along with whatever she said because it was easier than arguing.

But a bra?

Lo was sure it would feel exactly like wearing a straitjacket. Like the Eleventh Doctor in “Day of the Moon.” If he were a girl. Like Thirteen.

“We’re not little kids anymore, Lo,” Jazz told her.

But that was exactly what Lo felt like. Twelve was too young for the things Jazz seemed to like now. Makeup and boys and expensive jeans and high heels and bras! Lo’s idea of fashion was a Spider-Man T-shirt and cut-off jean shorts. Or her new Thirteenth Doctor cosplay.

She liked Spider-Man and *Doctor Who*. She liked comic books and superheroes and her perfectly scuffed red Converse sneakers. She still slept with a stuffed animal! And if she was being really and truly honest, Lo secretly still sort of believed that alternate dimensions existed. She even kind of believed in magic. Just not the kind of magic that made girls giggle like idiots at boys like Jason Lieberman, who was so annoying she wanted to scream.

“We’re only twelve,” Lo reminded her.

“We’re nearly thirteen! Just come to the mall with me, Lo. Jeez. It’s no big deal.”

Lo stared at her. Jazz had been her best friend since she had pushed Bobby Zucker into the mud in second grade for telling Lo she looked like a horse. But sometimes Lo felt like she barely knew her anymore.

“Fine,” she said, sighing. “But I’m not getting changed.”

She’d come back outside and find a chrysalis later when she was by herself.



THREE



Lo wasn't sure she was ready to tell her mom she was going shopping for a bra. Her mom was actually pretty cool as far as moms went, but how cool could *any* mom really be? Her mom listened to the oldies station and sang along at the top of her lungs when one of her favorite David Bowie songs came on. And no one (except possibly David Bowie himself) looked cool screaming "CH-CH-CHANGES!" out the car window. But she was really big on talking through stuff, and Lo wasn't sure she was ready yet to talk about bras—and, by extension, breasts—with her mom. Maybe she'd keep this particular shopping trip to herself.

She had used all her babysitting money on her cosplay, so this called for birthday money.

In other words, it called for raiding the piggy bank she had painstakingly painted to look like Spider-Man and who she affectionately called Spider-Pig. She picked up the little ceramic pig and started dejectedly fishing out the cash she had

been saving for a wig to complete her cosplay. She couldn't believe she was wasting her wig money on a bra!

"God, Lo. Aren't you ready yet?" Jazz threw herself down on the bed dramatically.

Lo glanced at her, then did a double take. "What did you do to your face?"

Jazz raised an eyebrow. "It's just a little makeup," she said, frowning.

Lo should have stopped as soon as she saw Jazz's frown, but it was just so funny! Because it was like saying that her aunt Megan, who currently looked like she had swallowed a basketball, was "just a little pregnant."

"It looks like a paint store exploded all over your face." Lo laughed, expecting Jazz to laugh with her and wash the rainbow of colors off. Jazz wasn't just frowning anymore, though. She looked absolutely disgusted. But she shrugged and tossed her curls as if she couldn't be bothered to get angry.

"You're such a child," she sniffed. "If you're coming, let's go." She studied Lo for a second. "Don't you want to get changed?"

Lo glanced down at her outfit. "I said I wasn't going to," she said.

"I thought you were kidding. What if we run into someone?"

"Like who?" Lo wondered who they could possibly run into who would (a) be surprised by her outfit or (b) care what she was wearing.

"Like...I don't know." Jazz looked at herself in the mirror and twisted a curl around her finger. "Like Jason Lieberman."

Ugh. Why did everyone—including Jason Lieberman himself—think he was so great?

“Jason Lieberman is stuck-up,” Lo told her.

“No he’s not! Everyone at school except you thinks he’s nice.”

“Yeah, well...he doesn’t fool me,” Lo muttered.

“Whatever. You look like a little kid in that outfit.”

Jazz turned and stalked out of the room. Lo looked down at herself, then at Jazz’s retreating back. Next to Jazz, she *did* look like a kid. Next to Jazz, Lo *felt* like a kid. But I mean, come on! she said to herself. They weren’t even thirteen yet!

Lo sighed and grabbed a pen. “I’ll be there in a second,” she called to Jazz. She needed to write something down before she chased after her friend.

Just like she always did.

So before she ran after Jazz and went to the mall to try on bras—which she *really* didn’t want to spend her Saturday doing—Lo grabbed a binder she had been decorating with stickers and quotes for years and turned to a new blank page.

Dear Doctor, she wrote.



FOUR



Lo could still remember the very first time she laid eyes on the Doctor. She was ten years old and home sick with a raging case of mono—NOT kissing-related, she told everyone repeatedly when they teased her. She was lying on the couch, wrapped in a fleece blanket like a cozy-soft burrito, alternating between being bored out of her mind and sleeping several hours at a time. She was awake and channel surfing, figuring she had about forty-five minutes before she needed another nap, when she landed on a channel showing old episodes of British shows and saw the big blue box for the very first time in her life. The TARDIS. The TARDIS was hurtling through space—a phone box in space!—and landed in Central London, and out stepped the man who would change Lo's entire life.

The Tenth Doctor.

The absolute coolest person Lo had ever seen.

He was dressed in a bright-blue suit and red Converse sneakers that Lo immediately knew she had to own herself.

He was funny and clever and brave and adventurous and loyal. Everything Lo wasn't. And after that one episode, Lo knew she wanted to be just like him.

— CHAPTER SAMPLER —
LO SIMPSON STARTS A REVOLUTION

Dear Doctor,
I think I'm losing my best friend.
Sincerely,
Lo