

ROCK BAND

Rockstars and Rebels



Just the Misfits



PRAISE FOR
ROCK BAND: MUSIC AND MISFITS

“This very relatable story covers familiar ground of friendship worries, sibling tension and the desire to be famous, but done in a fresh way.”

BOOKTRUST

“An upbeat and feel-good read, Osakwe’s *Rock Band* is perfect for any young musicians, songwriters and dreamers.”

PAPER LANTERNS

“Whip smart, funny, fast paced and with some thoughtful insights into the perennial friendship issues that are often centre stage for this age group.”

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

“A sharp, funny start to a new, edgy and contemporary series.”

SCHOOL READING LIST

**Longlisted for
THE BRANFORD BOASE AWARD**

For Kesiya

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ROCK
BAND

Rockstars and Rebels

LITTLE TIGER
LONDON



CHAPTER 1

Picking Up the Tempo

Galaxy's my best friend.

I've never had a best friend before, so it feels weird saying that, but it's true. We hang out a lot. We share funny videos with each other. And we make great music together as part of our band, Just the Misfits. Real, raw ROCK music.

It sucked that she didn't join our talent show performance a few weeks ago, all because I overheard her talking to her ex best friend about Zaya and Grace and me. I was so angry that my right eye twitched for days and my jaw ached from ragefully grinding my teeth. But eventually, I realised how much I missed her. We all did. And even though we completely *rocked* the talent show without her, I'm glad we're back together, exactly how we should be.

Plus, we're basically school celebs now. I guess I've always been one, but not for great reasons. I can be a hothead. I get into shouting matches with teachers. And I've been known to throw a thing or two. If I'm upset, it's like my temper grips me tight and wrings out any droplets of good mood, like dirty water from a dishcloth.

There are three things I don't like, three things that *really* set me off.

Number one: mean people. Just because I'm a little bit 'different', they think it's cool to laugh at me. So what if I come to school with electric-blue braids, wear black stocky boots and don't care about exams? Big deal.

Number two: authority. Being told what to do makes my blood boil. Teachers do it all the time. So does my mum. Her boyfriend Ian *thinks* he can, but I never listen to him. I'm convinced he's on a quest to make Mum think I'm the worst daughter in the world. Bravo to him – he's succeeded. Mum and I argue a lot, and it's no coincidence that our quarrels have got worse since *he* moved in.

And number three: school. It's no secret that me and school just don't gel. We're like pineapple on pizza. Or me and Ian. We. Do. Not. Work. But I have to come in because the band is there, and so is the electric guitar that Mr Clark got for us. It's all shiny and new and flawless, but because it's not technically ours, we can't take it off the premises. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't ever come to school. Ever, ever, ever. Why would I choose to be shouted at by teachers, or force myself to eat dry sandwiches from the canteen, when I could be at the skate park perfecting my spin stop on my roller skates, or lazing about in bed, inhaling family-sized packets of sweets?

Anyway, I can't leave school just yet. Mum would probably serve my head on a silver platter. But if Just the Misfits get famous enough, I'm dropping out of Kirkland School for Girls immediately. And until then, in an effort to cope with my hatred for school, I've been writing a

whole bunch of new songs for the band. We're in Music 1A at the moment, rehearsing one of our future hits. It's called 'Back Together', and it goes a little like:

*Back together, did you miss us?
Feel the volume, feel the rush.
Through the fire and the rain,
We're stronger now, together again.*

*Back together, better than before.
Turn it up, break down the door.
We're the storm and we're the sound.
You can't keep Just the Misfits down.*

Zaya smashes the drum like there's a winning lottery ticket locked inside, while the rest of us are struggling to be heard.

Galaxy stops singing and twists her neck to glare at her. "Not so *loud*, Zaya! You're drowning me out," she moans.

"Well, maybe you should sing louder, then!" Zaya retorts.

Grace and I look at each other and snigger. This happens sometimes, especially on our first try, but it never takes us long to get it right. Anyway, I know how to fix this.

"Yeah, maybe raise your voice a little, Galaxy. But I think she's right, Zaya. Bring it down just a tad," I say.

"I agree. Then it can sound a bit softer," Grace says.

Zaya looks down. "Sorry. StamPeed says you should

bang on the drums like there's no tomorrow."

"Except there *is* a tomorrow, and I still want my eardrums when it comes," Galaxy quips.

Zaya throws her a dirty look, and we get back to practice. We don't have anywhere to perform 'Back Together' just yet, but the plan is to post it on FlickShot for the world to see. Well ... our thirty-four followers. We've been giving them a proper performance every few days, posting songs left, right and centre. Last week, it was 'Can't Break Us'. A couple of days ago, it was 'Let Your Braids Down'. Thirty-four followers might not sound like much, but it's not bad, considering we just started out. And if we keep going, which we will, we'll soon reach *millions* of people at gigs, festivals and on our own tours!

After practice, Galaxy sighs loudly and folds her arms across her chest. "Guys, I've been thinking. I don't wanna be a party pooper or anything, but I'm, like, *really* tired of only being able to practise and perform in one place. Real rock stars don't do that!"

"Completely agree," I say, chewing on a strip of cola-flavoured bubblegum. "I feel like a prisoner. We need to break out of here, into the real world."

"How, though?" Zaya frowns. "We can only perform in the real world if we have our own electric guitar."

"Which we can't afford," Grace mumbles.

"And we can't take *this* guitar out of school. Mr Clark would kill us!" Zaya says.

"We took the drums when we busked in town," I say. At least Zaya has her own mini drum set now. Her dad promised her one if he got a new job, which he did, so

that's one less thing to worry about.

"Yeah, but they're old and manky, so no one noticed. The guitar is brand new." Galaxy sighs again.

"Mr Clark should honestly just let us keep it. It's not like anyone else even uses it!" I say.

"Um ... maybe we should worry about this when we actually get a gig?" Grace suggests.

Galaxy scoffs. "If we *ever* get a gig."

"Galaxy!" I say. "We've got to be positive."

"Being positive isn't going to change anything. We need to take action!" she moans.

She's right.

We want a taste of the talent show, but BIGGER. We need a gig. I bet Nova Twins and Big Joanie didn't just settle for internet videos. I bet they worked their socks off, playing at all sorts of venues to make a name for themselves. We need to do the same if we ever want to get out of Park Cross. If we ever want to get out of Kirkland. And everyone knows *I* want to get out of here.

"We will," I say. "We'll figure something out. We always do."



After school, I go to Galaxy and Zaya's house. Or the Rose Residence, as I like to call it. It's practically my second home. Or maybe third. Music 1A is number two. Being here is *sick* because I don't have to be an unpaid babysitter to my little brothers Victor and Michael, or get yelled at to clean my room, or try to avoid Ian at all costs. I can just be.

Plus, Galaxy's parents are really nice. Her dad doesn't care that we sing at the top of our lungs around the house, and he actually likes to hear about Just the Misfits. Her mum is really friendly and asks me loads of questions. Galaxy rolls her eyes and protests, but I like it. I wish *my* mum would ask me questions, or at least *pretend* to be interested in the band.

I kick off my shoes and jump on to the sofa like I own the place.

"Oh my days, Sabrina. How many holes do you want in your socks?" Galaxy shrieks.

I look down at my scraggy socks, totally unashamed. That's how comfortable I am around Galaxy and Zaya. "Um ... twenty-eight?" I joke.

"Looks like you're nearly there!" Galaxy exclaims. "So on-brand for you."

"It'll be a trend soon – watch," I say.

Zaya squeals with laughter. "Yeah. You should start your own sock line called Sabrina's Socks, and they could all have holes in them."

Galaxy gawks at her as Zaya and I high-five. "You're mad, Zaya," she says.

"And proud!" Zaya beams. "Are you gonna put on the TV, or what?" She lightly kicks Galaxy in the thigh.

"Oi!" Galaxy shouts, grabbing Zaya's foot and squeezing it tight.

Zaya erupts into loud giggles, thrashing her legs about. "Owww! That hurts, Galaxy!"

"Good!" Galaxy grins, letting go. "You put the TV on! The remote is closer to you."

Watching Galaxy and Zaya reminds me of me and my brothers. Galaxy and I both know what it's like to have younger siblings who make you want to rip your hair out in frustration, and at the same time, protect them at all costs. We may play-fight (actually, my brothers *wrestle*) and make snarky remarks (my brothers' insults are usually limited to 'you smell like farts'), but we still love each other.

"So it is." Zaya smirks. She grabs the remote from the table beside her. "Shall we watch *Hidden Gems*?"

"Of course," Galaxy and I say in unison.

Hidden Gems is our favourite. I'd never watched it before I met Galaxy, but now I can't get enough of the world-famous talent contest. We usually spend hours critiquing the acts, groaning at their out-of-tune renditions, and cackling at their wardrobe choices. This episode starts off with auditions, which jogs my memory.

"Reminds me of—" I start.

"DON'T say it." Galaxy picks up a cushion, threatening to throw it at me.

I titter. She *hates* when I bring up the auditions we threw at school. I think it's funny, though, because look how everything turned out. It was meant to be.

"Ah, Sabrina!" Galaxy's mum says, entering the living room. "So nice to see you!"

"You too!" I sing back.

"How was school, girls? Band practice? Sabrina, how's your mum?"

Before Zaya or I can reply, Galaxy huffs loudly. "*Muuuum!*" she moans, seizing the remote from Zaya

and turning up the volume. “This girl is about to sing something by Magique!”

Galaxy’s mum makes a face at me and we both laugh. “Does anyone want a hot chocolate?”

“Yes, please,” I say.

“Can I have mine with whipped cream, please?” Zaya asks.

Galaxy grunts, her eyes fixed on the screen.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” Galaxy’s mum mutters, leaving the room.

I sink back into the sofa, wishing I could stay at the Rose Residence forever. I love being here.

CHAPTER 2

Dancing to the Beat of My Own Drum

In assembly the next day, I'm already halfway through my fifth daydream when a sixth former I recognise steps on to the stage.

It's the girl who organised the talent show. I wonder what she's about to say. Could there be another talent show coming up? If there is, Just the Misfits will win this one – hands down.

I sit up straighter while Mrs Fisher helps the sixth former adjust the mic. "Uh ... hi, everyone," she announces, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "I'm Lucy, I'm in Year Twelve. I, um, helped run the talent show. And we have a big announcement to make! We're running a piece for the school newspaper, and we'd love to interview all the talent show acts."

I quickly peer around the hall to lock eyes with Galaxy, Zaya or Grace. Just the Misfits, getting interviewed? Just the Misfits, getting *recognised*? The *Kirkland Digest* isn't exactly a national tabloid, but it's still a tiny step closer to something bigger. My heart drums a frenzied rhythm I can't control, and I zone out again, imagining all the questions we're going to be asked. I wonder if they'll take