

Jazz Davies Skips a Beat: Lo and Jazz: Book 2

Melanie Florence

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A popular middle school student navigates family betrayal and a crush on another girl in Melanie Florence's heartfelt novel *Jazz Davies Skips a Beat*.

Jazz struggles with feelings of abandonment and loneliness after her mother leaves her father for a yoga instructor. Though she enjoys celebrity-level treatment at school, she dislikes how the other popular girls focus on boys. She also regrets ditching her unpopular best friend, Lo.

As Jazz and Lo repair their damaged friendship, Jazz struggles with her friends' expectations around dating. She also harbors anger and resentment toward her mother. With the help of her supportive therapist, Jazz begins to wonder if she really wants to be popular after all.

The novel, with its short chapters, is propulsive. Jazz's narration is assertive and witty, and she goes in-depth when it comes to her own complicated emotions. In particular, she both misses her mother and feels abandoned by her; this is captured in her diary entries, which appear between chapters, wherein she addresses her mother.

Despite feeling lost, Jazz has high self-esteem and sets firm boundaries. She calls out some of her friends' nasty behavior; in a memorable scene in the school cafeteria, she encourages their "minions" to eat carbohydrates while the head of the group watches in horror. But Jazz is also dynamic because of her interesting flaws—for example, her loneliness was the primary reason she wanted to be popular, but once in, she wrestles with the consequences of her choices. She wonders how to move forward, whether she wants to ignore her mother's calls forever, and whether fitting in is worth repressing her true self for.

A girl summons the courage to overcome her anger and fear in *Jazz Davies Skips a Beat*, a complex novel about preadolescent emotions and relationships.

LEAH BLOCK (May / June 2026)

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