

Throughout my childhood, I devoured every book I could get my hands on. However, almost none of the literary heroes and heroines that I idolised had a disability or chronic illness. This representation is really important to me, because I have Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD), a condition which results in frequent joint dislocations, chronic pain, and brain fog. So when I started writing, I knew that I wanted disabled characters to always be at the centre of my stories — having adventures, making mistakes, and thwarting the baddies.

Cosima Unfortunate leapt into my mind fully formed — a whip-smart girl living in a Home for disabled children in late Victorian London. These homes, which institutionalised disabled and mentally ill children, were common during this era and reflected the way disabled people were treated at the time.



In *Cosima Unfortunate Steals a Star*, Cos and her mates uncover a mysterious society and long-buried family secrets as they plot to pull off the most audacious jewel heist of the century, all whilst struggling against a sinister villain and his dangerous beliefs about 'perfect' humans.

Found family is at the heart of Cos' story. Her caper requires teamwork, tenacity and the upmost trust in her friends. I really drew on my own friendships as I wrote the relationships between Cos, Diya, Mary, Pearl, and Myles, and it made me realise just how lucky I am to have people in my life who would do anything for me—even attempt to steal a diamond tiara.

I hope that in reading my book, you see that disabled people can be the heroes of their own stories, that friendship is one of life's greatest treasures, and that sometimes the impossible can become possible—all you need is belief in yourself, courage and dash of luck.

– LAURA NOAKES

