**Jesse’s Triumph Media Kit**

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**Tagline:** Author Amra Pajalić releases third book in her own voices young adult series

**Short tagline:** After Jesse’s debut novel is published while he’s a high school student, he contends with becoming popular.

**Medium tagline:** After Jesse’s debut novel is published while he’s a high school student, he's thrust into the spotlight. Can Jesse steer his way through his new-found triumph, be with his dream girl, and ride the high school popularity wave without losing sight of who he truly is?

**Blurb:**

**From award-winning young adult author Amra Pajalic comes a best friends love triangle, zero to hero makeover, found family, coming of age YA novel for fans of Melina Marchetta and John Green.**

Jesse's childhood took a backseat as he became his ailing mother's primary caregiver, patiently counting down the days until high school finished and his real life began. When a new student, Sabiha, arrives at his school he meets his dream girl, but she’s met his best friend first.

After Jesse’s debut novel is published while he’s a high school student, he's thrust into the spotlight. Can Jesse steer his way through his new-found triumph, be with his dream girl, and ride the high school popularity wave without losing sight of who he truly is?

‘Amra Pajalić writes with such honesty every young adult will empathise with her… While dealing with some ordinary “stuff” Pajalic’s observations are sincere and often hilarious.’ BENDIGO ADVERTISER

**Lead In Post**

**Why we need a book about young adult carers?**

With the recent resurgence of own voices stories (books about characters from marginalised groups in which the author shares the same identity) resonating with readers, author Amra Pajalić re-published her young adult novel as *Sabiha’s Dilemma, a*nd has repackaged it as the first book in the series. Her third book, *Jesse’s Triumph,* continues the story of six sassy teens coming of age in St Albans, as they navigate their sexual and cultural identity, and search for belonging.

In *Jesse’s Triumph*, Jesse's childhood took a backseat as he became his ailing mother's primary caregiver, patiently counting down the days until high school finished and his real life began. After Jesse’s debut novel is published while he’s a high school student, he contends with becoming popular. Delving into familiar themes of friendship, coming of age and dating, this novel also deals with themes of young adult carers with Jesse and his sister Sarah, being carers for their ailing mother. According to the Carers Australia report, there are an estimated 380,000 young carers across the country. These young people face unique challenges that impact their physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Exploring these young carers navigate the complex terrain of caregiving while striving to pursue their own dreams and aspirations. Pajalic says, ‘My mother was a bipolar sufferer and growing up my education was interrupted when I had to take a time out of school to stay home and care for her. This experience led to me experiencing social isolation and carrying a heavy emotional toll, but has also gifted me with incredible resilience and mental toughness in pursuing my creative aspirations. In the first book we are introduced to Jesse through Sabiha’s point of view, and initially she finds him nerdy and takes him for granted, and I wanted to explore Jesse’s internal story and his mental toughness. I also wanted to centre the love triangle and untangle and unravel it more and give my readers the joy of a best friends love triangle. ’

**Excerpt**

**Chapter 1**

I was walking down the corridor, fixating on the scene in my novel, when my protagonist was lost in the woods. The world around me was slightly hazy and out of focus. I knew I was in my high school corridor and saw the students milling at their lockers around me, but they were distant, ethereal, my body on autopilot as I floated in my make-believe world.

Ow! Pain in my shin and I fell forward, hitting the linoleum floor hard, my palms stinging and my knees burning. I looked up to find Joshua King standing above me. He attempted a concerned mask ruined by the smirk tilting his lips. ‘Sorry mate, didn’t see you there.’ He offered his hand under the guise of helping me up.

I knew better and ignored his proffered hand, standing up and wiping my jeans. His mates guffawed behind him. My cheeks burnt. I knew my milky skin showed all my emotions and, when I got embarrassed and red-faced, my blue eyes looked watery, like I was on the verge of tears. Sarah, my sister, teased me. I had a tragic face, and as a child I’d used it to sucker many an adult out of sweets. As I got older, it was a liability, especially in the cut-throat atmosphere of St Albans High.

I collected my books off the floor and walked around King and his idiot posse, staring at the floor. My rage built as I walked away. I was so sick of King and his bullshit. My mind turned to another scene, one of death and carnage. I ran to my safe space on the ground level of the three-storey building—the library. When I walked in, I saw Brian, my best friend, sitting at a table. I rushed over, dropping to my knees in front of his desk.

‘Joshua King,’ I said. ‘I’m putting him on my hit list.’ I took out my notebook and took Brian’s pen.

A girl was sitting next to Brian. I glanced at her and saw she was reading my page upside down. Her face blanched when she saw the heading, People to kill.

‘Why?’ Brian asked.

‘He tripped me in the hall,’ I said.

Brian read the next Maths answer from his notebook, but the girl beside him was stiff and unresponsive.

‘Sabiha, this is my best friend, Jesse,’ Brian introduced me.

I looked at the girl, recognising her as the new student who had begun a few weeks ago. She looked between me and Brian, obviously struggling to understand how we were best friends. Brian’s brown hair was slicked back perfectly, and he wore black pleated pants and a dazzlingly white crisp shirt. He looked like he was going to a job interview. I wore loose jeans and an even looser sweatshirt, and both had seen better days. I’d never cared about my appearance until I saw myself through her eyes.

‘We’re in Phys Ed together,’ I said, then regretted it as I saw the moment she remembered me, wincing as she flash-backed to our last lesson.

When our teacher, Mr Robinson, left the gym to go to his office, all the boys in class played dodgeball with me as the target. I'd flinched, trying to catch the balls, but I didn't have a chance in hell with multiple players targeting only me. Everyone laughed as the balls connected and bruised. I knew I’d become red-faced and watery-eyed again as rage worked through me, giving the bullies more hilarity as they revelled in thinking they’d made me cry.

When Mr Robinson returned and saw the balls on the floor around me, he’d asked me what happened. Mr Rob and I had a deal. I’d told him I couldn’t nark on the kids anymore. He’d tried to punish the bullies for their idiotic behaviour in the past, which only led to more of the same. When I said nothing, Mr Rob ordered me to put the balls away. When we began playing soccer, he subtly punished King and his crew by not giving them their favourite positions. Their team lost, and mine won. It was a minor victory as victories went, but it was enough.

I noticed the book she was holding, Tara Moss’ book Split. ‘That one’s great.’ I took the book.

‘You’ve read it too?’ Sabiha sounded surprised.

‘I can read.’ I threw the book on the table. Did she equate me with King and his neanderthal brethren, incapable of stringing together a legible thought?

She grabbed my hand. ‘I haven’t met many boys who read.’

Sabiha smiled at me and my heart lightened; her green eyes sparkled, and her golden hair framed her face. My heart sped up for another reason.

‘I was just surprised to find someone who shared my passion,’ she explained.

**Author Bio:**

Amra Pajalić is an award-winning author, an editor and teacher who draws on her Bosnian cultural heritage to write own voices stories for young people, who like her, are searching to mediate their identity and take pride in their diverse culture.

Amra Pajalić won the 2009 Melbourne Prize for Literature's Civic Choice Award for her debut novel *The Good Daughter,* now re-released as *Sabiha’s Dilemma*. The anthology she co-edited, G*rowing up Muslim in Australia* (Allen and Unwin, 2014, 2019), was shortlisted for the 2015 Children's Book Council of the year awards and her memoir *Things Nobody Knows But Me* (Transit Lounge, 2019) was shortlisted for the 2020 National Biography Award.

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