**The Cuckoo’s Song Media Kit**

**Title:** The Cuckoo’s Song

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**Tagline:** Gritty, poignant and bruising short stories

**Short tagline:** Award-winning author Amra Pajalić showcases her eclectic short story book of previously published and prize-winning stories.

**Medium tagline:** Award-winning author Amra Pajalić showcases her gritty, poignant and sometimes bruising voice in this eclectic short story book of previously published and prize-winning stories.

**Blurb:**

Award-winning author Amra Pajalić showcases her gritty, poignant and sometimes bruising voice in this eclectic short story book of previously published and prize-winning stories. Featuring powerful and moving stories of family dissolution, deprivation of war, tenderness of family and the heart-rending experiences of mental illness. As well as suspenseful new thriller stories with a twist of vindictiveness and retribution, and love stories that make the heart sing, Pajalić will delight and entertain.

*The Cuckoo’s Song*—Francesca is ten when a gypsy fortune-teller told her the day and the hour of her death and she has been waiting since.

F*ragments*—Seka and her brother forage for books in a bombed-out school in Srebrenica during the Balkan war.

F*riends Forever*—Two lifelong friends share a room at a nursing home, as well as a secret or two.

*School of Hardknocks*—Amina is a new high school student after migrating from Bosnia and struggles to acclimate to the Aussie way of life.

*Woman on Fire*—A young girl lives with her mother’s boyfriend when her mentally ill mother is admitted into hospital.

**Lead In Post**

**Eclectic short stories**

I’ve dreamed about publishing a short story collection featuring my previously published and unpublished stories for a long time and this seemed like the perfect project to learn about self publishing. It’s also a great promotional opportunity as readers will have the opportunity to see my range of writing styles and learn about my other books as I have had extracts of chapters published as short stories.

My short story collections deal with themes that represent who I am. As I was parented by a mother who was a Bipolar sufferer I find myself coming back to themes that deal with mental health, especially within the context of Non-English-Speaking Communities as this places particular pressure on a sufferer and family due to stigma and lack of awareness.

Growing up I did not see myself represented in fiction and I write own voices stories exploring my Bosnian heritage and culture so that young people who have an ethnic cultural background feel validated in seeing their lives represented in fiction.

I love reading stories that explore the real life effects of being in a war and providing a slice of history. As a writer I love the process of immersing myself in real life research to write stories set during the Balkan War of 1992-1995 when Bosnia became an independent country.

Growing up raised by a single mother for most of my childhood, and then becoming a nuclear family when my mother married my stepfather, I am fascinated by the notions of family ties and family loyalty. I am also an advocate of LGBTQI rights and write characters who are part of this community.

**Excerpt**

I was ten years old when the gypsy fortune-teller told me the day and the hour of my death and I have been waiting since. As the hour draws nearer peace descends upon me. A lifetime of waiting has its own price to pay.

The gypsies followed the fair that came to my hometown every year. When the gypsies came we locked our belongings away. We called them the plague, but at least we only had to endure them for the week of the fair.

I went with my older sister, Cosima, and her husband, Lorenzo, to the fair. As we got closer the noise got louder. There was shouting, a band playing loudly and the noise from the rides and the screams of those riding them. On the street were many stalls with people selling jewellery, knitting, preserves. I looked at everything with wide eyes, my hand in my pocket as I smoothed the coin my father had given me. In the spaces between the tables beggars sat on the ground, their eyes on the ground as they pleaded for money. We passed a gypsy woman with a young girl on her lap, the child’s arm burnt and twisted.

'They do that to their children,' Lorenzo told me. 'It’s how they get pity and earn a few lires.'

I gasped, my eyes glued to the child’s arm.

The gypsy woman heard him, her face hardened and her eyes flashed her ire. Lorenzo met her gaze and hurriedly walked away. I followed Cosima and Lorenzo, still thinking about the gypsy woman and her child. They had looked hungry and tired.

I ran back to the gypsy woman. 'Here.' I thrust out my coin.

'Thank you my child,' she said, taking it. 'You have done a great deed for me and my child.'

I tried not to stare at her daughter but was helpless not to.

'I too will do you a great deed.' She gripped my hand and pulled me to her. Her hot breath tickled my ear as she whispered against it.

I stood and looked into her eyes. They were blacker than coal and bitterer than pepper. I tore away and ran, terror making me fleet-footed and nimble as I weaved through the crowd, the gypsy’s whispers echoing in my head.

**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*. 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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