**Complication: Short Stories Media Kit**

**Title:** Complication: Short Stories

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**Tagline:** Fikret Pajalic celebrates the contribution of refugees to Australian society in his short story collection

**Short tagline:** In this gripping short story collection, Pajalic depicts working-class characters in all their gutsiness and glory.

**Medium tagline:** In this gripping short story collection, Pajalic depicts working-class characters in all their gutsiness and glory. Featuring animals in most stories as a motif for grief and hope, Pajalic alternates between tender stories of survival and the gritty underbelly of Melbourne’s Western suburbs.

**Blurb:**

In this gripping short story collection, Pajalic depicts working-class characters in all their gutsiness and glory. Featuring animals in most stories as a motif for grief and hope, Pajalic alternates between tender stories of survival and the gritty underbelly of Melbourne’s Western suburbs. Even when his characters are shady and flawed, morality and conscience shine through.

Drawing on his own experiences, Pajalic recreates first-hand the reality of coming to Australia as a refugee because of war and persecution. While many of the stories focus on the experience of Bosnian diaspora, it also tells the universal story of the refugee experience exploring homesickness, loss, grief, cultural shock, and making a new home in a landscape completely different to where you come from.

‘Raw, authentic and compelling, these stories of refugees' generational trauma and pain also honour the resilience and determination of the characters. Bracing and rewarding reading.' Paddy O'Reilly author of *Other Houses*

'Reminiscent of Carver, Pajalic’s stories are sharp, direct and austere. A fascinating read.' Ennis Cehic author of *Sadvertising*

'Like Chekhov who thinks that for a writer nothing should be unclean, Fikret takes us to murky places where English is broken and pit bulls are prized; bodies are ravaged by manual labour and generosity abounds as often as brutality. Humanity there is uncovered, revealing itself to be as instinctual and capable of ferocity and sacrifice as the many animals that populate Fikret’s stories. In Complication Fikret uncovers the origins of violence with unflinching insight and unwavering compassion.’ Lee Kofman author of *The Writer Laid Bare*

**Lead In Post**

**Why we need multicultural stories about the Western suburbs and refugee voices?**

In today’s political rhetoric it is too easy to buy into the view refugees are nothing but a burden to our country. This is too simplistic. In fact, they have contributed to the economy and to the cultural landscape of Australia.  
My refugee story in itself speaks to the opportunities Australia offers. I arrived here when I was 24 years old with one bag of belongings and was able to learn the language, completed a degree, become gainfully employed, start a family, and realised my dream of becoming a published writer.

While Bosnia will always be a part of me, I have lived now longer in Australia than I have overseas, and my roots are deeply embedded in Australian soil.  
I want to celebrate the contribution of refugees to Australian society. I believe the role of art is to create social capital and open up a new world to be explored. By exposing the wider society to these experiences, it would create less fear from the unknown and reduce xenophobia.  
This collection of refugee stories is written by someone who has actually experienced first-hand the reality of coming to Australia as a refugee because of war and persecution.

**Excerpt**

**Boonie**

A couple of weeks after I started my new job, a woman from the office took a shine to me. Her name was Wanda and she was the payroll lady. She had some Polish blood in her somewhere along the line and she understood a few words of my language. She had a nice, round, pleasant Slavic face. I liked faces like that.

This happened right after I went to live with my mate in his old weatherboard house in Tottenham, close to the train station. Train wheels screeched in my ears during the night, keeping me from sleep.

I got the warehouse job where Wanda worked because my mate quit. He was a truckie and he wanted to go and work up north, try mining, so I ended up minding his house. I didn’t have to pay rent, just utilities, and I had to take care of his dog Max.

'When I settle in, I’ll come and get Max,' my mate said.

Max chewed on an old cricket bat and glared at me.

I wasn’t keen on being a dog sitter. I could keep an eye on the house, all right. The house didn’t move.

'Max is old,' my mate said, 'he doesn’t need much these days.'

We shook hands. Before he left, he said he’d dropped my name with his ex-boss. So I went to this place on Sunshine Road where they used to make work pants and shirts, but now it was just a warehouse where all sorts of stuff from China arrived. Everything from picture frames to garden furniture.

I got a job as a forklift driver. It was a small operation. There were a dozen or so of us in the warehouse, our boss and two ladies up in the office.

I filled out the paperwork, and Wanda took me to the warehouse. When the boss introduced me to the blokes, he struggled to say my name properly.

He said, 'Sorry mate, I can’t bloody say it.'

I was going to say my name slowly and loudly to the group, I’m used to this shit, when some fatso with a face that looked like a bag of walnuts said, 'We’ll call you Frank.'

The boss looked at me and said, 'Is that all right, mate? It’s kind of similar sounding.'

I needed the job, so I nodded. Wanda’s lips formed into a line that stretched her round cheeks. After the introduction, she asked me to follow her, saying my name as my mother would. She issued me with steel-capped boots, a uniform and a forklift key.

After I gave her my signature, she put her hand on my shoulder and with a smile said, 'Good luck.'

I smiled back.

By the end of the day, I was Frank. One old codger called me Franklin. No one knew my real name.

As I was leaving work that day, Walnut Face stopped his green Falcon near me, wound down the window and said, 'Mate, you can’t expect us to remember that mouthful every time we call you.' He spat at my feet and drove off.

**Author Bio:**

Fikret Pajalic came to Melbourne as a refugee, learnt English in his mid-twenties and started writing years later. He has won and placed in competitions, published in anthologies and literary magazines. His fiction has appeared in *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Westerly*, *Etchings*, *Sleepers, Antipodes,* *The Big Issue*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Wisconsin Review*, *The Minnesota Review*, *Fjords Review*, *Sheepshead Review,* *Bop Dead City*, *Structo*, *Paper and Ink*, *JAAM* and elsewhere. In 2014 he was awarded a Creative Victoria grant, and in 2015 an Australia Council grant for the development of his literary manuscript ‘*Wanderings’*and in 2016 from Brimbank City Council for the development of chapbook. He is married to author [Amra Pajalic](http://www.amrapajalic.com/)and they live in Melbourne's western suburbs with their daughter.

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