



The Build-up Season

Megan Jacobson

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Seventeen-year-old Iliad Piper – Ily for short – is named after war and angry at the world. Growing up with a violent father and abused mother, she doesn't know how to do relationships, family or friends. Her love-hate friendship with Max turns into a prank war and she nearly destroys her first true friendship with misfit Mia. She takes off her armour for nobody, until she meets Jared, a local actor and someone who's as complicated as she is.

From the author of *Yellow* comes a powerful exploration of family and identity set against the humid build-up to the wet season in Darwin.

The Build-up Season Details

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From Reader Review The Build-up Season for online ebook

Maxine Robinson says

I can't even deal. This book is perfection. There are so many good elements that I want to comment on, but I'll do that tomorrow. For now I'm just going to bask in the glow of awesomeness that is this book!

OK so I've slept on it and i'll be honest, my dreams last night were angry and sad and very much a reflection of the book i had just read. The Build-up Season is a compelling read, i could not put it down. I finished it in one sitting.

The writing is superb. The vivid descriptions of Darwin made me miss it, the little touches of history throughout were a really nice touch, especially as i only found out about the bombing of Darwin several years ago. Its such a little known fact.

The dialogue is so well done and authentic. Combine that with characters that are so real they practically pop off the page and it will make your heart bleed for your teenage self. The characters are flawed, broken, trying their hardest and so fucking real that i found it impossible not to see myself in them. Especially Ily. She is a hard character to like, but her anger and hurt are so freaking understandable and so relatable. I was so angry all the time, i had no self worth and its amazing how quickly people can take advantage of you when you are like that. Much like Jared did with Ily. I wish my mum was as tuned in as Ily's mum was or even my dad. Maybe i would have been OK a lot earlier. Its funny the things this book has brought to the front of my thoughts. My dad has said on more than one occasion how he never had to worry about me as a teenager, how i would stand up for myself and would be ok. I don't think i ever felt more alone than i did in that moment. It was the realisation that he and my mum did not know me at all, they didn't see my pain, they didn't have a fucking clue. I'm honestly not a great actor, how the fuck did they miss everything. At least Ily's mum tried.

Anyways back on topic. The subject matter is tough and i think the author does a great job of maybe helping people understand how victims end up staying in a cycle of abuse. And its not just physical abuse, the mental abuse is what really destroys you.

There were so many truth-bombs dropped throughout this book, that i honestly can't choose my favourite.

I recommend this to all.

Kelly (Diva Booknerd) says

Spousal and family violence is predominant throughout our communities. Aggressors are habitually husbands and fathers, wives and children persecuted by noxious, patriarchal male dominance exasperated by alcohol or substance abuse.

The Build Up Season narrative accompanies seventeen year old Iliad Piper on her journey, a tormented and indignant young woman. Although Iliad was educated at boarding school after her mother and father separated, she now lives in Darwin with her surly grandmother and mother, a new age healer specialising in spiritual wellness. Iliad's narrative is one that resonates profoundly, confrontational and resembling my own childhood experiences.

Iliad is a family violence survivor. Family violence and abuse is a confronting narrative, Iliad is a young woman who harbours animosity towards her mother for raising her in a violent environment, her mother a woman who endured years of physical and emotional spousal abuse. Her husband is possessive, manipulating Iliad to degrade her mother with contempt.

Iliad's fear is palpable, the unease of her father pursuing them to Darwin where her mother is a small business owner specialising in spiritual health. The trepidation of leaving everything behind to begin a new life is daunting and while Iliad and her mother were fortunate to have the financial assistance of Iliad's grandmother, funding Iliad's private school education, many women escaping violence are placed in shared housing for family violence survivors, a haven for women and children who otherwise were not afforded the same assistance.

Jared is a character of contrasts. He appears to be a charismatic young man but underneath he's manipulative and noxious. He's easily angered, jealous and possessive of Iliad. It was reminiscent of the relationship between her parents and although often Iliad felt nervous of Jared's behaviour similar to many victims of violence, believed she was responsible for Jared's actions.

Throughout the narration, Iliad has a long running rivalry with Max. I adored Max. He's an intelligent and aspirational Indigenous young man of Bininj and Anmatyerre heritage from the Northern Territory. Max faces his own adversity and as the two call a truce, develop a wonderfully caring friendship. Iliad's friendship with Max was a positive experience, his family welcomed Iliad into their home with Max a testament to his loving and close knit family.

The essence of *The Build Up Season* is new beginnings and learning to forgive, reiterating the importance of holding perpetrators of violence accountable. The narrative although confrontational, are incredibly important for adolescents. If you haven't experienced family violence, it's likely you unknowingly know someone who has. *The Build Up Season* is the book I wish I'd had as a teen, an important discussion as a community in support of those family violence has touched.

For more information for help available to victims of family violence and domestic abuse in Australia

1800 Respect is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services to provide support for people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, sexual assault, domestic or family violence, their friends and family, workers and professionals supporting someone experiencing, or at risk of experiencing sexual assault, domestic or family violence. This is a confidential service available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

Lifeline Australia is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to twenty four hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Kids Helpline is Australia's only free, private and confidential twenty four hours, seven days a week phone and online counselling service for young people aged five to twenty five.

Lucy Hunter says

The 'Build-Up-Season' by Megan Jacobson, is fiction, and is about bildungsroman and love.

Seventeen-year-old Iliad Piper is named after war and she is angry at the world. Growing up with a violent father and abused mother, she doesn't know how about healthy relationships, family or friends. Iliad takes off her armour for nobody, until she meets Jared, someone who's as complicated as she is.

The main character is Iliad Piper, she is rebellious, has only one friend and loves nothing else but art. She had a tough up bringing with an abusive father and a hippie for a mother. Max goes to the same school as Iliad. Iliad's love-hate relationship with Max turns into a prank war. Max is into photography and his mum is fighting cancer. Jared wants to become a famous actor, however, his dramatic mood swings from nice to abusive make that very difficult for him. Jared only thinks about himself and he becomes abusive towards

Iliad just like her father did with her mother.

The story is set in Darwin. The setting doesn't have a major effect on the main character, nor does it make the story any more exiting. One of the life lessons the author is trying to explore is that abusive relationships are real and fairly common. I believe the author is trying to make people more aware of these kinds of situations. I also believe the author is trying to show love within a family and love in a relationship. She is also showing through the main character someone who has little experience with love and doesn't understand what a healthy relationship is. I think that this is very relatable for many teenagers. This story is about the importance of family and love, and this shown through Iliad's journey. The book opened my eyes and showed me how real and common abusive relationships are, and that they can go unnoticed.

I would recommend the 'Build-Up-Season' because it makes people aware of other people's situations, what they could be going through and what it may be like for them. The story was easy to follow and understand. The story was predictable, I knew that the father would find them when he was released from jail and I knew that Iliad and Max would form a relationship. The story was believable because abusive relationships are real and are a big problem in our society. At the beginning of the book Iliad didn't understand what love was, she didn't realise that she was in an unhealthy relationship. At the end of the book she understands what love is like in a relationship and with her mother.

Alexandra Reads says

4.5*

Just before I tell you the one hundred reasons I loved this book, I just want you to know that this novel does discuss some dark topics such as domestic violence and toxic relationships.

I can't believe how much I loved this novel. The Build-Up Season only took me a few days to read and I'm so happy I decided to pick this one off my shelf instead of ignoring it along with my other 217 unread books. *cries internally while still ignoring them* I really think Megan Jacobson covered the themes with respect and sensitivity, which can be a challenge.

When I first met Jacobson, she'd only just published her absolutely gorgeous novel Yellow, which follows a fourteen year old girl struggling with school, friendship and a little ghost problem. Sadly however, I just couldn't immerse myself into the world like some of my good friends could, my tiny feet didn't fit the shoes of a 14-year-old girl. AND THAT'S OK! Sometimes some worlds just can't coax you in, even though the home a brilliant story.

I WOULDN'T GIVE UP ON MEG, though, and decided to pick up The Build-Up Season one lazy Sunday, and could immediately see me walking a mile or two in Iliad's shoes. She's sassy and sarcastic and has a unique way of seeing things, and it just made her really easy to fall in step with. She feels like a friend I've known my whole life, and trust me, I've had a LOT of friends *eyes bookshelf* and by friends I mean real life people . . . obviously.

I really appreciated the themes integrated into the novel, they carried on naturally throughout the story and didn't seemed forced. I love seeing important topics such as domestic violence in the novels I read, and we need more of it. I don't usually tab or highlight or underline my books, or fold the corners of the page, but every so often a quote or paragraph really stood out and caught my attention. I would have a small break from the novel while eating dinner, and a conversation between two characters would stay on my mind, it was just so real and authentic.

I also really loved the relationships throughout the novel, save for one, and the natural progress and development of them. I also adored the growth of the side characters, from not standing up for themselves to gradually standing tall and proud for what they believe in. Development like that just makes me so happy, smiley and warm on the inside.

All in all, I loved this gorgeous novel. I rated it a smashing four and a half well deserved stars on Goodreads, and am definitely going to grab a copy of Jacobson's novels in the future, as I'm sure there will be more, and who knows – maybe I'll even pick up Yellow sometime soon?

C.G. Drews says

This was a pretty serious and brutal book and...honestly hard to read. Like some books aren't here to be ENJOYED HAPPILY and that's not only ok, it's needed! This book is about domestic violence and like the ripple-effect it has on people who have escaped. You don't just get out of a domestic violence situation and go "righto life is good now" and this book highlights the PTSD from it. **So while I GOT where it was coming from, I think the character development of the protagonist came a little too late.** It's basically 200-pages of her being awful and 20 pages of her starting to grow.

So.

Hmm.

L I K E S

✓ I loved that it was set in Darwin!

I've been to Darwin before -- IN WINTER AND IT WAS FREAKING BOILING. There are also lots of crocodiles and like you could do ridiculous speed limits which was awesome. Except I was holidaying with my family so we were towing a caravan = aka we did not go ridiculous speed limits. I'm probably not living life right, I know. ANYWAY! **I really FELT like Darwin, with the description and the heat and just #yas.** I felt very much in the setting!

✓ I loved that there was Indigenous Australian representation!

I read a far amount of #LoveOzYA and...ya know? There are still not much Indigenous characters. Which is not ok. So I LOVED that we not only had them featuring, but the book uses lots of native words and culture.

✓ Plus Max is the freaking gift to the universe.

He and Iliad have a "prank war" going and "hate each other" (HAHA HAHAHA HAHA AH #shipit from page 1) and he's like dorky, cheeky, and super sweet underneath it all. He's also Indigenous and wants to be a nature documentary dude. Basically: freaking gift to the universe = Max.

✓ I think it handled the absolute devastation of domestic violence really well.

I mean it is NOT an easy topic. It's horrible and terrifying. Iliad's dad is in jail for the book, so they're living with the repercussions: but it's so brutal. Like the dad would beat up the mum and then use Iliad (just a little kid at the time) to verbally abuse the mum as well. It was really heartbreaking and horrible.

✓ Smol book is smol.

I just like smol books!!

✓ AND CAN WE APPRECIATE THAT COVER WOW.

It's an actual work of art.

✓ **And speaking of art...the book is really artsy.**

Which is awesome. I like art. I have the kind of skills like a 5 year old with a piece of chalk that's been slobbered on by a great dane but hey they're still drawing on the wall --> actually me. But I love that Iliad's mother was into new age healings and chakras (still not sure what they are tbh but ok) and crystals and just FINDING HEALING after everything she's been through. Iliad is a real brat about her mother's alternative lifestyle but hey, whatever works. And KINDA LAUGHED when the mother served up pasta that was actually vegetables...because my parents do that and I WILL NEVER STOP BEING UNIMPRESSED AND HURT IN MY SOUL.

DISLIKES:

✗ **OK so unlikeable characters...**

It's tough to analyse it in the story because I *understood* why Iliad was so "horrible". She is the direct result of a childhood of trauma and abuse, so of course she'll be mean, acidic, push people away, and gravitate towards horrible relationships. **But like I said...it left her character arc too late, I felt.** I think it's great to write unlikeable characters (especially so realistically!) but I would MUCH rather prefer shreds of good things in amongst that. There was basically no reason to root for Iliad when she treated her mother like crap, she was horrible to the only girl who befriended her, and she was cruel and rude.

Like it's just a difficult line between understanding and excusing. If we say "oh that character is hurt, so of course they're awful" then that's how future problems develop.

Plus...I mean, Iliad gets caught up with an abusive boyfriend (LIKE LIFE IS A CIRCLE AND IT'S SO BAD AND SAD) and he's *obviously* been hit by his own brother multiple times at home. But we never excuse his asshole behaviour. He is Bad™ the whole time. (And he frikkin is.) And sure Iliad never hit anyone...but violence is throwing smashing plates near your mother's body. Violence is screaming obscenities at people. Violence is *not* just a physical slap. So I don't understand why we forgive Iliad and hate her boyfriend.

✗ **And while I really really liked experiencing Darwin (!!)** some of the bush expeditions were a bit dull. haha...I mean look at me. Do I look like I nature? I do not nature. I appreciate nature, preferably a photo of it on the wall.

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ALL IN ALL: Look this was a complex story and it was bittersweet and threaded with violence and also hope. It's not an easy/nice book to read, but I think it says some important things! I really wish Iliad had given us more to care for (or like...something before the last 20 pages...lmao I'm sorry...) because I am ALL for books that explore psychological reactions. This book did that A+ but I would've liked to see more balance.

And that cover, mate. I need it on my wall.

Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

3.5 out of 5 stars!

T/W- Domestic Violence, Abuse, Tensions in family relationships

This is a LoveOzYA novel that I discovered one day last year and received as a Christmas present. Set in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, the story follows a troubled seventeen year old girl called Iliad who has been expelled from multiple boarding schools in Melbourne and now is living again with her Mum and Nan. Iliad's parents were involved in an abusive relationship with Iliad's Dad being sent to prison for assault. Due to her personal experiences, Iliad struggles to create bonds with anyone: classmates and neighbours alike. When she does strike up two unlikely friendships, the first one with Max becomes a prank war and the other with Mia a confusing bond. It isn't until she meets Jared, the son of her high school's principal when everything starts to change.

I really liked the writing style and the way that such difficult topics were handled throughout. It was a quick read that had a good ending to it. Some of the scenes involving Iliad and her past family life were graphic and hard to read at various points. I wasn't keen on the connection between Iliad and Jared. I would like to read *Yellow* which is written by the same author. I'm happy I did read this one, the surroundings of Darwin were interesting to read about since I know very little about the Northern Territory. I liked that Iliad had an interest in art and still wanted to work for her dreams studying at a top art school in Sydney. This aspect reminded me of another YA novel *Starfish*, as the main character in that novel comes from a troubled family background but still has dreams of studying art. Overall, I would read this again but would bare in mind regarding the content noted in my trigger warnings.

Tamsien West (Babbling Books) says

A confronting but compelling exploration of domestic violence and the legacies of abuse set against the gathering storm clouds of Darwin's 'build up season'. Definitely one of the best Australian YA releases of 2017.

Following rebel teen Iliad during her final year in high school, the story charts a path through a new relationship which has dark clouds looming over it, and the breaking and rebuilding of family ties. It ends with lessons learnt, relationships with friends and family set right, and an overall feeling of empowerment in the face of great challenge.

Though not central to the plot, Jacobson deals frankly with sex. The notion of virginity is deconstructed, explained as both something of personal significance in the pathway to adulthood but also not something which someone can be lesser for having 'lost'. This was so refreshing to see in a YA novel, and is definitely a key reason I would recommend this book to teen readers.

This book is also a useful starting point for conversations about family violence, and respectful relationships between teens. Violence and the threat of it hovers over every page and shapes all of Iliad's interactions with others around her. The abuse is presented as categorically unacceptable, and the victims are not blamed for their plight. Iliad's shifting perceptions of her Mother's decisions is a really important way of showing common misconceptions about abuse and how harmful (and wrong) those are.

The protagonist has a very poor record at school in all subjects except Art, falling behind because of anxiety and the upheaval of moving frequently. Having a lead character who is not academically successful, and yet still has talents and value is another subtle but validating thread to the story.

I really enjoyed the casual language and easy-to-read style. There were many Australian-isms and the role of local slang in shaping friendships is briefly explored, though I don't think it would be confusing for international readers.

Perfect for fans of Looking for Alabrandi, and suitable for mature readers aged 15 and up. Warnings for graphic physical violence.

Emily Mead says

I have kind of mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand I couldn't STAND the main character Iliad, and her bf Jared. Ily acts like a complete brat towards her family, and even though there are (obviously) reasons for that, I've never been able to relate to characters like her.

What I did like was the open discussion about sex, domestic violence and not feeling wanted. I loved Max, who is an Indigenous character and so soft and kind, while at the same time really excellent at pranks. I loved the setting of Darwin, which is where my mum grew up (and she was actually there during Cyclone Tracy, so there you go). Lots of things to like here :)

Tadashi Hamada says

This was definitely a step up from *Yellow*.

Regina says

[Iliad was insufferable, I do understand her anger and hostility towards everyone around her and

Taneika says

I'm tossing up between 3.5 stars and 4.

Also major trigger warnings for domestic violence (emotional, physical abuse)

I know I shouldn't compare but I can't help it. For me, The Build Up Season didn't quite live up to Megan Jacobson's debut, *Yellow*, however it was still an incredible novel, well written and beautifully done (as expected tbh). I don't know what it is about Megan Jacobson's writing, but like *Yellow*, I read this in just about one sitting.

I loved the way domestic violence was explored, both through family violence and intimate partner violence. It made me EXTREMELY emotional and it was honestly a little hard to get through as I saw so much of my own situation when I was 17, through Ily. I found myself really relating with Ily and her mother as I found their experiences with domestic violence were EERILY SIMILAR to my own. While Ily's relationship with Jared didn't last as long as my relationship did, so many of the same feelings and thoughts were there, and the way it developed echoed the way mine did too. I was in my final year of highschool when I first fell for my would-be abuser, and like Ily, it affected my final exams and little did I realise then, that is when my relationships with my family and friends slowly (very slowly) started disintegrating. If you're a survivor of domestic violence, this might not be your experience as each case can differ person to person, and while I

absolutely recommend this book, I do so ONLY if you are in a COMFORTABLE place with your healing and mental well being after your experience. I'm well past what happened to me, but this was still a pretty tough book to read, so just a warning <3

Okay, so while I related to Ily on some levels, I still found her very hard to like as a character and while I know that was the point - she was an unlikable character after all - I just couldn't get past how she treated her mother up until the last portion of the novel. (Her mother also reminds me of my own a tad with the crystals, incense, general hippiness etc etc).

Sorry for my non-sensical ramblings, but overall I loved what Megan Jacobson has done, I adore her writing and I appreciate how authentic the domestic violence in this book felt.

I didn't intend this to be a mini review (but I suppose it is now lol) but I might still write up full thoughts later at some point!

Ryan Buckby says

love, real love, comes with three conditions - respect, kindness and trust. It isn't, and should never be, unconditional.

This book was a very enjoyable read and i love Megan's writing style and i got through this book pretty quickly.

so many issues were presented and written extremely well and i am happy that an author can write a book with so many hard topic issues and write it so well.

Danielle says

This book mad me smile, it made me angry, it made me sad. Aka it gave me all the feels and I really enjoyed it despite finding it a little predictable.

Sprinkled Pages says

actual rating: 4.5 stars

one of the most glorious books i have ever read! so well written and engaging from page one. i loved how it tackled such important issues, the plot was fast paced and engaging and the characters were so masterfully created!

ily was such an incredible and complex character i loved how she had anti-hero elements to her because those are my favourite type of characters!

for more, read my no spoiler book review: <https://sprinkledpages.blogspot.com.a...>

Els (Tragic Romantic) says

4.5. I love the way Meg writes, and that was a big factor for me connecting to this book. Ily was a bit unlikeable but I like that in a protagonist, and though confronting the issues of DV that were prominent in the book were well addressed.
