



## ***Middle School: just my rotten luck* by James Patterson and Chris Tebbetts, illustrated by Laura Park**

**Publisher: Young Arrow, Random House**

**RRP \$18.99**

Rafe Khatchadorian returns to Hills Village Middle School under the steely gaze of principal, Mrs Stricker, and her sister, Mrs Stonecase, the vice-principal. Both women have warned Rafe that this time they expect him to behave - or else...

Actually, Rafe isn't a bad kid. He just seems to attract trouble. Like the school bully, Miller the Killer, who has made Rafe his special target. To help him keep up with his studies, Rafe now has to attend some lessons with the Special Ed. group which makes him an additional mark for bullies.

Rafe is a solitary kid who is more interested in drawing than paying attention in class. However, he surprises himself by getting along well with the other students in Special Ed. He enjoys having friends, even though he still has a talent for getting into strife.

This seventh book in the Rafe series shows the young protagonist slowly beginning to mature and recognise that, with a little thought, he can improve his school and social life. He even discovers that learning can be useful and empowering.

The comic-style illustrations add humour and depth to Rafe's character. The clever sketches show him using his artistic talent to not only complete his art assignment, but take control of his life and defeat the school bullies.

Recommended series for intermediate-age students who are navigating the adolescent years and trying to find a way through the challenges.

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**Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett**



