

## SUE ORR

AUTHOR

*Sue's most recent novel was **Loop Tracks**, which was released in June.*

This year has seen a flood of terrific New Zealand books borne out of the 2020 lockdowns – a silver lining around the black fog of pandemic. I loved *Unsheltered* by Clare Moleta, *She's a Killer* by Kirsten McDougall, *Devil's Trumpet* by Tracey Slaughter and *Where We Swim* by Ingrid Horrocks. Emma Neale's *The Pink Jumpsuit: Short Fictions, Tall Truths* took my breath away. Novels, poetry and now short stories – what can't she do?

I thought I didn't like speculative fiction until I read *Isobar Precinct* by Angelique Kasmará – a debut novel featuring time travel, the only travel possible right now. We take what we can get and this story will more than satisfy any longing for location dislocation.

Massey University's creative supercouple Laura Jean McKay and Tom Doig both published mind-blowing novels in 2020 (*The Animals in that Country* and *Hazelwood*), but I didn't read them until this year so they make the cut too. I can't even think about the ending of Laura's book without becoming tearful – vans roving the countryside offering vaccinations against a virus...

American Jo Ann Beard's essay and story collection *Festival Days* was addictive – one of those books you can't stop reading but want to last forever.

Some of the books I'll be giving for Christmas will be the same ones that are sitting on my to-read pile (not the actual ones, but copies) because I know they're going to be good. *A Good Winter* by Gigi

Window. *I Laugh Me Broken* by Bridget Van der Zipp. For the nonfiction fans in my family, there'll be copies of John Summers' gorgeous essay collection *The Commercial Hotel* and *The Goshen Years* by the late Bill Gosden.

Dear Santa, please bring me Megan Dunn's *Things I Learned at Art School*, Rebecca K Reilly's *Greta & Valdin* and Karl Maughan's beautiful *Karl Maughan*. I've bought two copies of it now, and gifted them to others; I want my own.

Oh, and *Best American Short Stories 2021* – an essential pleasure for my short fiction teaching at Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters next year.



# THE GIFT OF F