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VIVA.CO.NZ  
DECEMBER 11, 2024

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& cover-ups  
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**NOVEL IDEAS**  
What to read  
by the beach

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BRIGHT!**  
The hottest  
summer fashion

## Culture

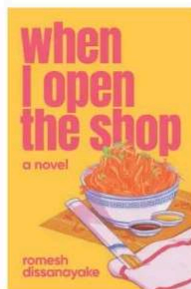
# Need something NOVEL?

These recent releases from writers in Aotearoa and award-winning authors abroad are essentials for beach bags or suitcases, writes Madeleine Crutchley

**W**hat defines a “beach read”? Is it a breeziness of writing style? A levity in themes? Or is it simply a book that makes its way, packed next to sunscreen, snacks and a towel, down on to the sand?

The final definition is preferable. Why limit the scope of summertime reading when the best releases of the year are so expansive? Scan library or bookshop shelves for stories that will absorb you into swoon-worthy, sugar-sweet romance, throw you into turbulent action and adventure and then project you into perplexing and meditative mystery.

This collection of books offers you that range — taking you from the quiet bedrooms of Te Whanganui-a-Tara to the overwhelming emptiness of space.



### 1 **WHEN I OPEN THE SHOP** by Romesh Dissanayake

*When I Open The Shop* is set in Te Whanganui-a-Tara and captures three distinct periods in the narrator’s young life, following the loss of his mother and the consequential opening of a noodle shop within Wellington’s centre city. It opens with a lifting of fog, as the narrator waves away a malaise of grief that has descended during a difficult time — the noodle shop venture is an attempt to find grounding in a sometimes unkind city.

The three periods capture different moods and different relationships in the narrator’s engagement with this place. When writer and poet Romesh Dissanayake spoke to *Viva* in June earlier this year, he pondered the role Wellington plays in the story.

“Sometimes, the frustration we project onto a city isn’t about the city itself, but something unresolved within us.” *When I Open The Shop* captures a different version of the Wellington you read about in headlines; one that should be supported and expressed in more local novels, we say.

Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press, RRP \$35.



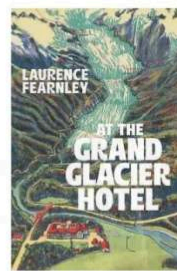
### 2 **DELIRIOUS** by Damien Wilkins

This New Zealand story follows a decision between 70-somethings Mary and Pete, who make the call that it is time to downsize. It’s time to clear out their long-term home on the Kāpiti Coast and move into a retirement community. What follows is an honest and unguarded unravelling. Through the highly emotive novel, the author tears apart this oft-labelled “common sense” decision and presents the experience with all the gravity it invites. The past is not compartmentalised neatly into labelled boxes. Its events and emotions burst through packing tape and demand rumination and reflection.

Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press, RRP \$38.

### 3 **AT THE GRAND GLACIER HOTEL** by Laurence Fearnley

While holidaying in an opulent and remote hotel on the West Coast of the South Island, Libby finds herself separated from her husband Curtis following a storm. In recovery from cancer treatments, she begins to explore the grand surrounds



while considering her condition and her emotional wellbeing. While the premise and setting of *At The Grand Glacier Hotel* might find comparisons to Kubrick’s isolationist horror *The Shining*, it’s not a scary or jumpy story. It is an introspective novel full of quiet but impactful realisations.

Author Laurence Fearnley, who was named the 2019 Arts Foundation Laureate, has discussed this story as part of a larger series, where she writes with a focus on one of the five senses. The echoes, creaks and kōkako birdsong that symphonise throughout *At The Grand Glacier Hotel* seek to provide a vivid exploration of the intruding and soothing nature of sound.

Published by Penguin Random House, RRP \$37.



### 4 **FROM HERE TO THE GREAT UNKNOWN: A MEMOIR** by Lisa Marie Presley & Riley Keough

This is one for the fans and the celeb memoir obsessives. This reflective

book by the late Lisa Marie Presley was completed by her daughter Riley Keough following Lisa’s passing in 2022. It spans Lisa’s life, from her childhood as Elvis’ only child to the behind-the-scenes happenings of various high-profile events in her later years.

As a celebrity memoir, it’s unique in its production, quietly imbued with the perspective of Riley Keough as she attempts to faithfully portray her mother’s life in all its complexity. There is also an audiobook, should you prefer to listen to this winding tale (Riley Keough and Julia Roberts narrate this version).

Published by Pan Macmillan and Penguin Random House, RRP \$40.



### 5 **CHLORINE** by Jade Song

This body horror and coming-of-age tale is a sickening debut from Jade Song, a writer based in New York. It follows Ren, a teenage competitive swimmer who is swept up by the demands of her sport. As a variety of factors contribute greater pressure on Ren’s wellbeing, her mindset begins to unspool — she adopts a belief she was born to be a mermaid. The content and gore within the book could be compared to *The Substance*. If dark, feminist horrors are your thing, you might like this. If you don’t like gore, then you should avert your eyes. (Either way, check the content warnings before you dive into this one.)

Published by Bonnier, RRP \$40.



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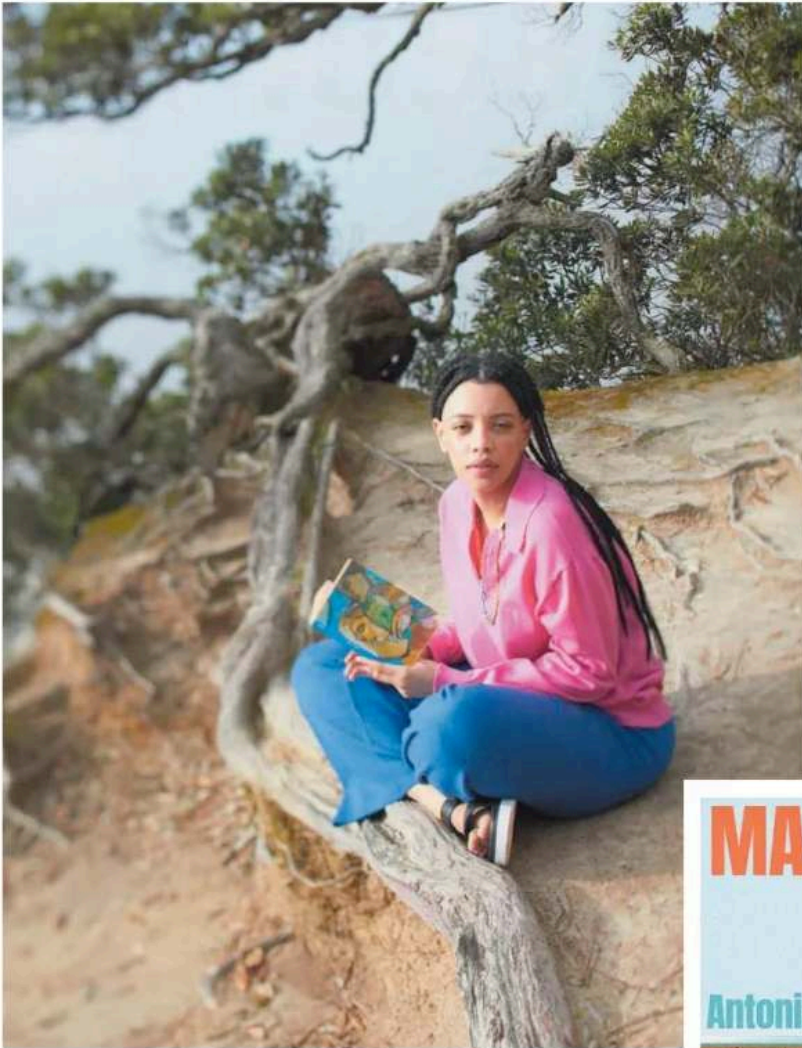
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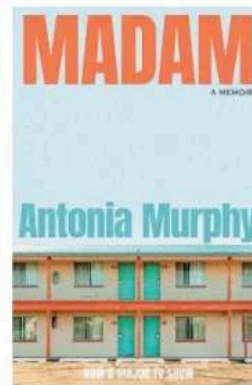
Sunnier weather invites you into the great outdoors. Take these excellent books as company. Photo / Mara Sommer

script. It's written by Antonia Murphy, who launched an agency called The Bach in Whangārei. In the book, she catalogues her experience as the owner-operator from her years at the helm. If you are a fan of the *Madam* TV show, this book will offer a deeper dive. *Simon & Schuster Australia, RRP \$39.*

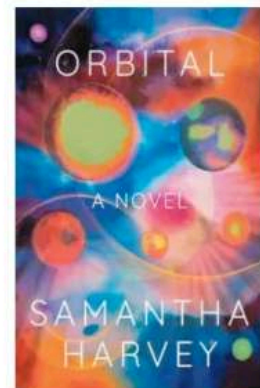


**6 WHAEA BLUE by Talia Marshall**  
Within this debut book, Talia Marshall (Ngāti Kuia, Rangitāne o Wairau, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Takihiku) tours memory, shared and individual, across Aotearoa. It's not a memoir — the author has refused this categorisation. *Whaea Blue* draws on non-fiction events and experiences, blurring time and space and restrictive genre rules through a road trip across the country. From her essays to her reviews, the writer's empathetic and frank observations have garnered much attention across Aotearoa's literary scene. This book is an opportunity to engage, uninterrupted, in her distinct perspective.

*Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press, RRP \$40.*



**7 MADAM by Antonia Murphy**  
The story of *Madam* — which catalogues the launch of a brothel in a small New Zealand town — might already feel familiar. That's because an adaptation of the story graced the silver screen earlier this year with a cast that includes Rima Te Wiata, Rachel Griffiths and Kura Forrester (and comment from the NZPC: Aotearoa New Zealand Sex Workers' Collective). While the show takes plenty of liberty with the events, this is the memoir that informed the



**8 ORBITAL by Samantha Harvey**  
This philosophical science-fiction novel was awarded the 2024 Booker Prize, with judges praising its beauty and ambition. *Orbital* follows six astronauts, as they rotate the Earth in the International Space Station. Author Samantha Harvey enters their perspectives to muse on our relationship to the Earth and each other, basking in the joy and terror of the fragility of both. Despite its otherworldly setting, the author has shared an ambition to write a "space pastoral" — a story that aims to engage with the wide open galaxy in a grounded manner. Science-fiction fans will find this a refreshing alternative to epic and speculative plots. Contemporary fiction readers will be surprised to engage with familiar themes in the unbound cosmos. *Published by Penguin Random House, RRP \$26.*