

**Helen Margaret Waaka's** debut short story collection *Waitapu*, is like an exquisitely crafted crochet blanket, each story hooks a character from the story before, the characters, hooked and rehooked in vital interconnections. Holding the book is like holding the fabric of a place and that fabric is stitched in the joys and grief, the secrets and generosity, the groundings and escapes of humanity. What made this book matter so much to me is the loving attentiveness to a small interlocked community, *Waitapu*. Complicated, character rich, vignettes that shine so bright, ideas both subtle and insistent, (the position of women, mothers and daughters and what they bear, the authority of men, the resistance of women, the anchor and embrace of the marae, the way we care for the ill and the old, the way small towns become drained and replenished, the presence of books and reading, the power of story to shape and sustain). Near the start Rowena, a central character, is trying to control a beast of floor polisher – it felt like a metaphor for life - each character trying to control the unruly judders of living. This utterly marvellous book has stuck with me.

- Paula Green