



Cleanskin Cowgirls

Rachael Treasure

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The must-read new novel from Australia's no.1 rural fiction author.

On the surface Elsie Jones, country music superstar, has it all. But a brush with death forces her to re-evaluate her life.

Growing up a misfit in the dying wheatbelt town of Culvert, her only friend is chubby Tara Green. At sixteen the girls escape in a rust-bucket ute with a nearly-dead dog, a mop and bucket, a guitar and \$74.85. What could possibly go wrong?

While the road leads them to the outback scrub mustering cleanskin cattle, there's just one problem. Elsie and Tara have left their hearts in Culvert with their childhood sweethearts, eccentric inventor twins Zac and Amos Smith, who are hiding an incredible secret in their farm shed.

After a devastating betrayal, the girls are led on very different journeys. Can they find their way home again or is their friendship lost forever?

Cleanskin Cowgirls is a powerful story about taking risks, letting go, and learning that miracles don't just happen... they can be made.

Praise for Rachael Treasure:

'Treasure has a deft touch that enables her to evoke a rural setting with the quick flick of a stockwhip' *The Age*

'Treasure writes with true grit, wit and warmth' *Australian Women's Weekly*

Cleanskin Cowgirls Details

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Author : Rachael Treasure

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From Reader Review Cleanskin Cowgirls for online ebook

Maree Kenneally says

This review contains spoilers and revealing character information

Treasure is by far one of the best rural romance authors, and I've been a big fan of her work, especially Cattleman's Daughter. This new book however is a definite break away from the usual rural romance fare of plucky-cowgirl meets cowboy and lives happily ever after. That's a great thing- what a way to break out of the box.

Treasure's interest and passion towards environmentally sustainable practises such as alternative farming, biofuel, environmental conservation and such topics is really expressed here. She has shown glimpses of these interests in past novels, but this novel really brings it to a front. I really liked the message she was getting across- the message of the need to live a different way to protect and heal our environment.

However, I do have a massive fault with this novel, and that is that I felt very much that the actual storyline constantly got lost in endless discussions of farming techniques and biofuel production. Obviously Treasure wanted to get her wealth of knowledge across and inspire people- isn't that what authors do?- but as a non-farmer I got LOST in the endless discussions of techniques beyond my understanding, and found myself skipping pages. I really hope her novel does inspire people who are able to understand and appreciate those topics because I think Treasure has some really good ideas. Maybe I just am not the audience she was aiming for?

I wish I could have read more about the characters. I feel that we got lost in the farming/ biofuel talk, and the story sort of got left. I feel that some characters- in particular Tara who was probably the most interesting character- were not given the time and pages they deserved. I felt like Tara was a character that many women would identify with- she was a scarred, lonely, abused child and grew up to personally change her life through sheer hard work and determination so she became happy and successful. She was inspirational and could have/ should have had her own novel, and yet she played second fiddle to the thoroughly unlikable Elsie.

I didn't like Elsie. For almost the entire novel she was extremely selfish, treating her closest friends and her lover beyond terribly- beyond redemption really, I thought. Tara and the other significant characters (Amos and Zac) worked their asses off for years- decades even- on their dreams/ goals. Elsie did not- she spent the book sleeping with married/ taken men & breaking up their relationships, tried to sleep with Tara's boyfriend, and neglected her childhood sweetheart after he was disfigured in an accident and his entire family fell apart. The ONLY reason she had a happy ending is because she had a very cliché near-death experience and Tara and the other decent characters literally came and brought her home. I really really was hoping Elsie would come home of her own accord and be the one to make amends, but she didn't- Tara made the amends. I didn't think Elsie truly apologised for what she had done, yet everyone just forgave her in one sentence "we were just kids". I get that no-one wanted to hold a grudge and forgiveness was an attribute of many characters, but still; I found it unrealistic that someone could do the damage Elsie had done and just be forgiven in one simple sentence.

There's one other thing I wanted to mention, but before I do I want to stress that I highly respect Treasure for expressing her beliefs and passions so clearly in this novel. I'm not faulting her at all for it. I respect her for going a new direction in her novels, because it shows that she's willing to follow in her characters footsteps and live her life the way she wants—not the way others might expect. I expected a rural romance- that's not what I got. That's my problem as a reader, not her fault as an author- she can write whatever she likes.

The point is, I was occasionally overwhelmed with the positive/ white light/ psychic energy/ angel power/

spiritual realm kinda stuff that was a major part of the book. It's cute and I know a lot of people find it helpful and beneficial, but personally to me it made me feel quite alienated for not sharing those particular spiritual beliefs. Again, I understand that these beliefs were integral to several characters being able to grow and develop (particularly Tara), and were a reflection I imagine of Treasure's own beliefs; but I found it alienating. But again, Treasure doesn't have to cater to my needs- she only has to answer to herself and if that's what she wants to write, kudos to her.

Overall, I really respect Treasure for expressing her true self through her novels- it takes a lot of guts to pour your heart into a novel when readers may reject it (and the author by extension). But to be brutally honest; I'm not sure I'll read any future Treasure novels- she seems to be going in a direction that I'm not interested in following. The significant time spent discussing spiritual beliefs I don't share and farming/ environmental techniques and practices I don't understand was beyond my wish which was to read another book similar to Rouseabout or Cattleman's Daughter.

Mel says

It was good to see Treasure back to writing like she used to. Having read The Farmers Wife and really disliking it, I was very hesitant to read this new novel, in spite of LOVING her early books. However, The Cleanskin Cowgirls is a great read, back to the nice rural romance.

However, I do have some issues with the storyline, particularly in the fact that she likes to put her opinion across as an author (which of course she is allowed to do), but as a reader I felt alienated by the overwhelming discussion of angels and spirits and I got lost as a non farmer when it came to endless pages of discussion of biofuel (although I did learn a few things).

There was certainly room for less of this kind of discussion and more about the characters whom I loved. I found the big time leaps in the story leaving me with unanswered questions about Elsie and Tara.

Karen says

Cleanskin Cowgirls had me hooked very early on.

Who hasn't dreamt, at one point in their life, of running away to start fresh? And what better way to do it, than to run to the Australian outback?

I thoroughly enjoyed the development of the various characters throughout the story. Each turn of the page added another dimension to EJ, Tara, Zac, Amos, their families, neighbours and those encountered through their journeys.

The idea behind the story of the Smith's extra business activities was extremely interesting and thought provoking. Once the initial shock of the venture had passed, I found myself quite intrigued, and wondered if something like this could eventually make a difference in the world.

The idea of environmental issues, holistic solutions, love and friendship being strong enough to bind friends for eternity made Cleanskin Cowgirls a favourite for me.

The added bonus of a fabulous song by the Wolfe Bros. was a very welcome surprise.

Congratulations to Rachael Treasure on a fabulous novel.

Sizu80 says

Another great unable-to-put down novel. However the mentioning of either better farming techniques or vibrations, energies and angels on basically every third page made me cringe. I am all with Rachael Treasure on both topics, but it really got a bit much. I loved the characters and felt they could have had even more story added to them instead. Maybe it's time for Rachael to let her ideas of better farming flow into a different kind of work. Maybe non-fiction. So it could reach a bigger audience. Cause I don't think many Aussie blokes read novels. On the healing and energies stuff there is already heaps out there. Btw thanks to Rachael for including a further reading list at the end. Anyway I am nonetheless looking forward to reading future novels of Rachael, but with hopefully a bit less 'pointing out the right way a million times' and more of good old Aussie outback life.

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

*3.5 stars

Cleanskin Cowgirls, written by popular Australian author Rachael Treasure, is much more than a simple outback romance. The book goes that one step further by covering issues at the heart of rural farming communities. These include finding sustainable farming practices, dealing with the impacts of drought and the rising costs associated with running a farm equitably. Also compounded within the book are the themes of female friendship, class divisions, the country music scene, child abuse, obesity, spiritualism and a dash of romance. Cleanskin Cowgirls opens as the reader meets Elise, now a superstar in the country music world, who has suffered a drug overdose. The overdose opens her eyes to her need to reconnect with her Australian country roots and she makes her way back home. The book moves backwards 14 years, as we read about Elise as a young girl growing up in her small country town. The scenes of the past also introduce the reader to the other heroine of the book, Tara. Again the time period of the book moves ahead 4 years, looking at Elise and Tara as teens, as events culminate in the girls running away from home together. The best part of the book comes as the girls take a road trip and eventually end up as jillaroos on a large, mainly cleanskin, cattle station. The narrative then shifts back to the present, as Elise tries to make her way back home to the people and the place that mean the most to her.

I have been a big fan of Rachael Treasure's writing for some time, Jillaroo is a standout book for me. As with her last book, The Farmer's Wife, Cleanskin Cowgirls takes a slightly different slant on her earlier works. Treasure clearly writes from the heart and her personal passion for rural issues and the recognition of Australian country music is evident in her latest book. At its core, Cleanskin Cowgirls is a book about self belief and female friendship. There are also number of subplots within the book, mainly that of sustainable or renewable energy sources. This is where secondary characters and love interests, twins, Amos and Zac come in to the book. Much of the narrative is focussed on the boy's pet project to create energy for their farm and community using human waste. Treasure deals with this subplot in a light hearted manner. Treasure's characters are distinct and well described, but for the most part of the book I found it hard to like Elise or Tara. I found myself feeling dreadfully sorry for Tara's sad upbringing, but couldn't connect to the spiritualism element that seemed to define Tara's personality. I found myself frustrated with Elise for much of the book. Elise's treatment of friend Tara was appalling and self centred. It was hard to like the heroine of the book. Although I had a hard time with the characters, what I did love was the setting. The wonderful descriptions of the small country town and Elise's family farm, the road trip scenes and cattle station were wonderfully vivid.

In short, Cleanskin Cowgirls was definitely an escapist read that combines rural issues with life lessons. Fans of Treasure and the rural genre can expect a fairly good yarn.

Bree T says

Elsie Jones wants to be famous – the only thing is she's not entirely sure what for. She lives in the wheat-growing town of Culvert in New South Wales and feels the pressure to live up to her mother's lofty standards. Elsie has to fight to be allowed to ride her pony to school, or to hang out with her friend Tara and the new kids in town, Zac and Amos Smith. Looming is the threat of a posh Sydney boarding school, where Elsie will go to finish her education, become a proper young lady and the future bride of some farmer.

At sixteen, Elsie and Tara escape Culvert in a clapped out ute with only a small amount of cash and an elderly dog for company. They make their way north, joining a team mustering cleanskin cattle in the outback. From there a devastating betrayal tears them apart and sets them on very different paths – Elsie to America and a country singing career and Tara stays in Australia to set up her own business, having discovered something that she's very good at.

A decade down the track and their paths are about to meet again. Can get they get past everything that has happened and find their way home, back to each other and the boys they left behind?

This is the first Rachael Treasure book I've ever read and I'm really quite conflicted about it. To be honest, I almost gave up on it a dozen times in the first 100 pages, which deals with Elsie and Tara when they are quite young. If you don't find poo jokes funny, then this is perhaps not the book for you. I don't particularly find them funny and the constant mention and referencing of poo got on my nerves. But I persevered because I was curious and because this book had several good ratings on Goodreads and because people sing the praises of Rachael Treasure, who is often credited with the rise of the rural romance genre. I have to say that when Elsie and Tara leave Culvert, the book gets a lot better. For a while it's really pretty good and I was almost enjoying it but then towards the end, I found that I lost my way again with it.

Cleanskin Cowgirls makes a lot of referencing to sustainable agriculture and searching for alternative methods of fuel. Elsie lives on a farm that is slowly turning to dust and she thinks that there are much kinder, gentler ways of farming the land that would reap better rewards, not that her arrogant and pompous father would ever listen to her, or put them into practice should she suggest it. Also, the Smith twins, the intelligent but perhaps slightly socially backward Amos and Zac have been researching an alternative in fuel with their father. I don't know the ins and outs of the legitimacy of this particular method that they are researching and developing in a shed in their backyard (I'll give you a hint – it has much to do with the abundance of jokes mentioned above) but I do know that I did find it well, a bit hard to buy in the way in which it was presented. And I did find the way in which it dominated the story a bit tedious. I didn't really care about the ins and outs of the production and how it could basically be used to change the world from one tiny town in Australia, it all felt really easy and simple and if it is so easy, why hasn't this been done decades ago?

I feel as though too much of the story is devoted to this particular plot and not enough is really given to flesh out core characters, especially Elsie once she and Tara separate after the incident of betrayal (which is resolved later in a way that feels lazy and convenient). Such a lot happens to Elsie in the years after that and the reader barely gets a glimpse into it, other than to have Elsie's poor choices in men reiterated. At times Elsie was a very difficult character to read about, despite gaining her freedom in leaving Culvert she seemed to get less likable the further away from the property she went. Tara on the other hand, seemed to thrive but the jump forward in years means that you miss out on a large chunk of her life too and it might've been nice to experience her growth and journey.

I see glimpses in this book, of things that I could've really enjoyed. Unfortunately the first section is far too

long and too bogged down in establishing a tenuous connection between Elsie, Tara, Amos and Zac that is far too reliant on making jokes about poo rather than just allowing the fact that they're all outcasts for various reasons, to really shine. The second section shows promise but again, doesn't dive in as deep as I'd like and the ending seems to focus with such zeal on the alternative farming that other important threads aren't given the attention they need.

If you're a passionate conservationist or really interested in alternative fuel sources then no doubt you'll enjoy this book much more than I did and I'm sure it has a large audience out there that will receive it well. I expected more romance and more relationship and character development and the constant skipping in time, which allowed the author to gloss over important life stories, didn't really work for me.

Mel says

I bought this for \$2 on a second-hand book stall. I thought it might be light and fun - and in parts it was. However - easy to read does not mean easy to believe. I don't know if the author had her editor and publisher on her case - but the ending was ridiculous and seemed rushed. I'm currently marking Year 8 English creative writing - and half of them can nail a better resolution than this author can.

Elissa Nunes says

fun easy read!

Megz says

The descriptive writing of rural locations and use of Aussie lingo with colorful characters - brilliant. Story of four children in a small rural community and how they cope with adults that influence their upbringings and real-life issues. They become childhood sweethearts where it all blows-apart splitting the foursome to the wind and the girls' experiences on a cattle-station.

However, the intense sub-plot on human excrement as bio-fuel & faecal cheap-shots of toilet humour - distracting. The author's depiction of this story's villains was the stereotyping of ALL farmers as fertilize-sniffing-land-rapers with grain husks for brains who specialize in the daily practices of animal cruelty!!! This POV was slammed home a few times within the books narrative on poor farming techniques & the lecture on biodiversity. For the record I'm all for self-sustainability & conservation and should I require to know more I'd research it or go to the further reading list provided by the author. I did not expect to be preached to in a fictional novel!

I got lost in the author's character name switching from their full-names, to nick-names, first names, then to only using surnames.

The last 50-70 pages could've been summarized into one neat paragraph, because it bored the crap (pun-intended) with the consistent overkill message (obvious personal passion of the author) of poo power and it killed the impact of the HEA. I'd've given this book a 5 star on her descriptive locale, voice, plot, character depths and more. Shame it went to sh*t!

Suzanne says

One of Treasure's best books - in my opinion. A unique plot with positive environmentally rich subplot that could find its way into any small council economy. Strong female characters, Tara is simply a remarkable young lady who channels life's challenges positively. EJ, vulnerable, naive and so self centered really doesn't appreciate what she has until it is all too late. Love the references to the music industry of Australia throughout the late 2000's. A book to savour over those lazy days by the beach or at the caravan.

Amy says

There were some good parts to this book but the breaking of bonds was pretty severe and i wasn't satisfied by the glossy ending.

Sallyann Van leeuwen says

3.5 stars. Enjoyed this new release from Rachael Treasure of childhood friends that need to find their way in the world. Elsie is caught up in the country music world, but it's the story of where she came from, and her friends that are at the heart of this book. Living a more sustainable life, not robbing the earth bare of its nutrients. This is a constant theme in Rachael's books, but is cleverly added with a Feng Shui twist in this book, and a holistic theme of 'you reap what you sow'.

Some of the storylines felt a little overdone, the constant poo jokes, the angels, the coincidences and out of body experiences are not subtle, but this author always has a strong message style and I was expecting it.

Kellie Hoffman says

This is not what I expected! For starters I didn't expect the girls to still be teens when they took off on their road trip. Had I known that I probably wouldn't have picked the book up, but I just wanted something light & easy to read. Cleanskin Cowgirls fits that brief.

In relation to the storyline, I became a bit bored & was disappointed that everything was so neatly taken care of by the end of the book. Some interesting topics covered including fame, the environment, healthy living & rural life but I wouldn't rush out to read another by this author in a hurry. There are just other books & writers I would prefer to devour first.

Erin Crossman says

from the start to finish I couldn't put the book down. This was my first Rachael Treasure book that I have read and I am seriously impressed. The passion and ease of being able to relate to everything written within made the book fantastic for all country enthusiasts. There are some awesome "green" farming techniques that taught me a lot that I didn't know already. Coming from the land and finding a book that I could relate to was difficult, until I found this book. An awesome read for anyone who has a passion for the country in any way, shape or form!

Jacqui says

Balling my eyes out

Five stars for another whirlwind book from Rachael Treasure. I didn't see it coming but the punches were thick and fast. Congrats on another truly worthy page-turner.
