



# The Book of Rachael

*Leslie Cannold*

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**The Book of Rachael** Leslie Cannold

What if the man you loved betrayed your brother?

Two thousand years ago, while a young Jewish preacher from Nazareth was gathering followers among the people of Galilee, his sister swept floors and dreamed of learning to read.

In Leslie Cannold's story, it is the women of Nazareth who take centre stage: the rebellious, gifted Rachael, consigned by her sex to a life of drudgery; Bindy, the crone who teaches her the skills of the healer; Shona her sister, the victim of a harsh social code; and their mother Miriame, a woman seemingly unable to love.

When Rachael falls in love with her brother's dearest friend, the rebel Judah of Iscariot, it seems that at least one of the women of Nazareth may find happiness. Then a message comes from her brother in Jerusalem. And the events begin to unfold that will change not just Rachael's life, but the world-forever.

**Dr Leslie Cannold** is a an author, commentator, ethicist, researcher and social activist. Her non-fiction works include the award-winning *The Abortion Myth* and *What, No Baby?* She appears regularly in radio, television and print. Leslie is an adjunct Fellow at the School of Philosophy, Anthropology and Social Inquiry at the University of Melbourne, and senior lecturer at the Monash Institute of Health Services Research. She is President of Reproductive Choice Australia, a national coalition of pro-choice organisations that played a key role in removing the ban on the abortion drug RU486 in 2006, and of Pro Choice Victoria, which was instrumental in the decriminalisation of abortion in Victoria in 2008. She is also a Dying with Dignity ambassador for law reform. Leslie is the lead singer of the Melbourne-based rock cover band Speedy Fish.

'Passionate, eloquent and compelling, a terrific idea beautifully realised - I couldn't put it down.' Liz Byrski

'Cannold walks an interesting line between faith and history here, as she explores an alternative Virgin birth storyline (what happens to unmarried women in this society who fall pregnant means, inevitably, that they are keen to stress the intervention of a god).' Independent

'This retelling of the Jesus story will resonate with women of faith who wish to forge their own path and stay true to their values...This is a good pick for readers who enjoyed Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* or Alice Hoffman's *The Dovekeepers*.' *Library Journal*

'Cannold offers a thought-provoking, heartfelt, and tragic but redemptive tale about the difficulties of discovering and defining one's identity in a world that seeks unendingly to take that decision away.' *Publishers Weekly*

'There are dangers in attempting to fictionalise such a well-loved story as the life of Christ. First, the resulting account might offend. It might collapse into cliché. Or it might be filled with contemporary sensibilities, creating a world too familiar to our own. Though *The Book of Rachael* skirts each of these minefields, it is testament to the literary skills of Leslie Cannold that this debut novel avoids them.' *Courier Mail*

'The church has spent millenia writing women out of history. In the wonderful *Book of Rachael*, Leslie

Cannold returns them to their rightful place at the centre of one of our most powerful stories.' Sophie Cunningham

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