

Mystic Mountains Excerpt:

Gracie now tapped Isabella beneath the chin and grinned again, showing the many gaps in her teeth. "You'll get a good master, don't fret, then all your troubles will be over."

Isabella had a feeling her troubles would never be over.

Dazedly she watched as the boat dropped off the last woman and turned to head back to the ship for the next load of human cargo. The haze caused by the swirling dust gave the scene a sense of unreality. Sweat seemed to seep from every pore in Isabella's skin, soaking her ragged clothing, but she'd grown used to almost every form of human discomfort. What was a bit of sweat? The wind raced across the wharf, the flying dust stinging her cheeks, bare arms, and ankles.

The harbour was a cauldron of activity. Longboats ferried cargo to and from the dozen or so ships bobbing at anchor in the cove, most bound for exotic and oriental ports. At first sight of it the startling scenery had lifted the convicts' flagged spirits after weeks of endless ocean, but that first sense of exhilaration had soon dispelled.

Gracie nudged her. "Buck up dearie, 'ere's the nobs."

Isabella tried to stop her fingers shaking as she wiped at her dry, cracked lips. Soldiers, lined up and armed, stared at the unkempt women as if they were no better than the rats that had swarmed below decks.

"Stand to one side," one of the soldiers ordered and another waved his truncheon.

"What do they think we are, a load of stupid sheep?" Isabella moaned.

"Ah well, we should be used to it by now." Gracie sighed as they all moved to where they'd been directed.

"They're looking at us as if we're creatures on display at the fair. You'd think they've never seen a female con before."

There were men everywhere, not just the soldiers. They lurked around corners and on rooftops, treating the arrival of a shipload of women as a spectacle.

"'Tis a fact that we've been brought here because they have a shortage of women in the colony, Bella. I s'pose that lot's waiting to find out which of us they're gonna own, eh?" Gracie jerked her head towards a motley group of men standing openly surveying them, eyes gleaming.

It took some time to bring all the prisoners to shore. Isabella was close to fainting with the heat before the final boatload was set down.

At a signal from one of the officials a gentleman came out of a building. Moving with stiff precision to the centre of the dockyard, he stopped, then wiped his face on a white kerchief as he cast his eyes along the row of women. Unsmiling, he announced, "On behalf of Governor Macquarie I welcome you to New South Wales."

"God bless me, if he don't sound like 'e's really glad to see us who've come from the other side of the world at the King's pleasure." Gracie chuckled. "Nice of Governor Macquarie to send one of 'is codgers to make sure we're all 'appy to be 'ere."

"Yes, happy as larks," Isabella retorted in a sharp whisper.

"As you know," the man went on, "you have been allocated quarters or assigned masters. These good men," he gave the officials a stiff smile, "have spent many hours taking your particulars to ensure that everyone goes to an appropriate place of employment. You will show your allegiance to these masters. If you work hard to prove you're of some worth to the new colony you will earn your freedom as many others have before you." Obviously bored, he ran his eyes along the row of sweltering women. "Many of you will be in far better positions

than you would ever have hoped to attain in England." He turned and strode back into the building.

Isabella blew upwards in an effort to cool herself. She'd only taken in half of what he'd said. She was a prisoner, for all his fancy words. Still, in the long run, better to work here, hopefully in some nob's kitchen, than to rot in a prison back home. Or face the hangman's noose.

Home? It was so far away and so far removed from where she stood now, that it seemed as if the years before she'd been arrested had been lived by another person. But for all their poverty she'd always known what it was to be a part of a close, loving family. Oh how she missed her ma, and her brothers and sisters.

Isabella ignored the leering looks they received from men scurrying to off-load cargo. Her legs felt as if they would give out on her at any moment. Her bad foot with its crooked toes was beginning to ache fiercely and she swayed.

At last they were herded to where a stern government clerk sat at a table, a ledger in front of him and a pen in his hand.

Gracie poked Isabella in the back. "I 'ope I get a strong 'ansome master," she said with a chuckle. "Like that one with the gold 'air over there. Look at 'im. Lord, 'e'd do me fine. E's been staring 'ard at us since we came ashore. Stands out from the other lot like a boil on yer nose, don't 'e? Rather a dandy, I don't mind saying so. I'll warm 'is bed any time 'e likes."

"Can't say I noticed him," Isabella lied.

"Oh no, suddenly you're blind, eh?"

"One member of the gentry's the same as the other. They can all rot in hell." Isabella shuddered. She detested them all, with their fine clothes, finicky manners, and hearts as cold as stone.

"You may sit on the ground, ladies." The officer in charge gave the order then smirked as he marched away.

"Cripes, why didn't they tell us that before?" Gracie sank with a huge sigh onto her well-padded bottom. The others followed her.

Tiger Carstairs removed his hat, then ran his fingers through his sweat-dampened hair. Smiling grimly he pushed the hat back on as he turned his back on the bedraggled lines of women.

What a bunch. They didn't get any better. Still, one female had caught his eye. She was a bit short on flesh to cover her bones, but there was a light of defiance in her eyes that the dreadful journey with all its degradation hadn't snuffed. She'd stared right at him from eyes as green as the sea as she'd limped past, her spine straight as a broomstick. He liked that.

Yes, she'd do perfectly.

She was young, if not very hearty, but Thelma had told him to keep his eye out for one who didn't look as if she'd be off in a flash with any man who showed up at the back door. This one hated men, if that glower she'd given him was anything to go by. So blatant was her scorn he'd fully expected her to spit in someone's eye. The sunshine had picked up glints in hair that would probably be reddish-brown after a good washing. But the wench had really taken his fancy, stirred some deep emotion. It was an unnerving sensation, peculiar in its uniqueness.

Reviews:

5 stars Janet Orosz-

I really loved this book (previously published as Blue Haze but re-published as Mystic Mountains). It was like Pride and Prejudice...oops, I mean Arrogance and Obstinacy, meets

the Thorn Birds in 1818 Australia. I love realistically flawed characters--perfect romance H/h's are such bores--and both of these were so realistically flawed, the way their life experiences from their past hard-scrabble youth carried over to lead to inappropriate and sometimes foolish judgments in their present was so well developed into the plot of this book. Now I shouldn't love it as much as I did. There were a few things in this book that I really hated, but I can't say without spoilers, that should have made me downgrade my rating--however, any book that keeps me up to 3:30 AM to finish, because I just can't put it down, definitely rates five-stars. This is also the kind of book that will make the next few books I read seem like they don't measure up.

5 stars **AN AMAZING READ** BY KC Booklover

"I love any books to do with people travelling to Australia in the 1800s, whether it be as emigrants or convicts, and this book doesn't disappoint. I was hooked within the first few pages and couldn't wait to finish it to see what happened. The story of Isabella who is transported to Australia after trying to kill the man who rapes her was a powerful one and one that was probably pretty common for the time. This is a fantastic read and I am so glad there is a sequel so I can find out what happens! Highly recommended."

B. Applng "Dragon Luvr" 5 stars **Adventure and love in the outback**

"Well written and the characters are well fleshed out. The good and the bad lovingly done. Shows the kind of spirit needed to settle a new land and find love."

They Deserved Each Other! SC'sLola 5 stars

"I really loved this book (previously published as Blue Haze but re-published as Mystic Mountains). It was like Pride and Prejudice...oops, I mean Arrogance and Obstinacy, meets the Thorn Birds in 1818 Australia. I love realistically flawed characters--perfect romance H/h's are such bores--and both of these were so realistically flawed, the way their life experiences from their past hard-scrabble youth carried over to lead to inappropriate and sometimes foolish judgments in their present was so well developed into the plot of this book. Now I shouldn't love it as much as I did. There were a few things in this book that I really hated, but I can't say without spoilers, that should have made me downgrade my rating--however, any book that keeps me up to 3:30 AM to finish, because I just can't put it down, definitely rates five-stars. This is also the kind of book that will make the next few books I read seem like they don't measure up."

5 STARS "**Love this book.**" by Melaine Hines

"Love this book.....kept me laughing and crying at the same time, just recommended it to both my sisters, we're all avid readers and we just found our new best author and tough heroine."

Thomas Smith **Best convict book ever written** 5 stars

"I have read many, many book but this one would to be one of the ones at the top of my list. The descriptions not only had me visually transported to the past, I could also feel and smell the surroundings and the people.

Extremely well written AND without the use of miss used word "that" which many top writers use today. Congratulations Tricia , keep them coming as I will be looking for your efforts." Sandra

Colleen **Wong Fantastic!** 5 stars

"I thoroughly enjoyed this book not like all the other soppy love books out there Mystic Mountain held pain, love, and a touch of comedy. I couldn't put the book down cause I wanted to know what the fiery Bella and the beastly Tiger would be up to next. I can't wait to start reading more of Tricia McGill books."

5 stars chris cole

"A very good read, well rounded characters, great historical information, gripping love story and overall a damn good read. Recommended"

5 stars **An amazing read** By KC book lover

"I love any books to do with people travelling to Australia in the 1800s, whether it be as emigrants or convicts, and this book doesn't disappoint. I was hooked within the first few pages and couldn't wait to finish it to see what happened. The story of Isabella who is transported to Australia after trying to kill the man who rapes her was a powerful one and one that was probably pretty common for the time. This is a fantastic read and I am so glad there is a sequel so I can find out what happens! **Highly recommended.**"

5 stars **Another great read** Jeanon

"I love all these types of books. Having been out to Australia many times, and to Hobart and Tasmania, I just love the history of this country."

5 stars **good read** Amazon Customer

"Good story easy reading"

5 stars By F. Anderson

"Loved it, an easy read,"

5 stars **Interesting and well written** By Kathie

"Couldn't put this book down- a very good read and I shall certainly be reading more from this author."

Kate **Great book**, 5 stars

"I don't normally write reviews but just had to for this one, I couldn't put it down. I love a book that catch's your heart in the first few pages and sweeps you into the setting which is just what Mystic Mountains does. I will defiantly be looking for more of her books."

Karen 5 stars **fantastic read**

"I downloaded this book as it was free but I enjoyed it very much. The characters are great to read about. Bargain."

Violet **Great book** 5 stars

"I recommend this book. The journey taken by the main characters is enthralling. I've read many books by this author and look forward to her next offering. The hero and heroine annoyed me at times but I loved them at the same time because they had human failings. The historical facts were spot on and a reflection of the difficult lives endured by the early settlers."

Ginger Simpson "mizging" **Great Read** 5 stars

"Tricia McGill is an outstanding author who writes with passion and clarity. I've read many of her books and loved every one."

icebear s **a keeper for me** 5 stars

"This is a good book to read. Over time I read over 1000 books. Most Historical and Paranormal Romance books. Most are free from the Kindle store...sometimes it is hard for me to find a good book that will keep my attention. This book was good. The Author did a great job."

Jonie Kirchis **Good reading** 5 stars

"Lots of twists and turns that keeps you wanting to see the characters to the end. You wanted to say to the characters to get to the point. I really recommend this book. It is about finding out what is important to you."

Mary Richmond **Tricia McGill excels again** 5 stars

"It is always a pleasure to read a Tricia McGill novel. Her characters come alive before your eyes and her ability as a wordsmith paints a picture you can see. I am already looking forward to another book from her."

Bybloomin' boomer **Excellent story.** 5 stars

"Fast reading. Excellent story. Will look for books #2 and #3 in the series."

5 stars Bycp 56

"Loved it will read next one in series."

5 Stars By ETP

"A very gripping love story about a woman being convicted to 7 years transportation to Australia."

5 stars By Pat Heath

"If you enjoy stories about the early settlers - this is a Good read."

Five Stars By Brigitte Becker

"I just swallowed it!"

Five Stars By Chris phoenix

"Story line was great"

5 stars By mrs maggie on 20 April 2016

"Brilliant"

Five Stars By Bridget

"Good"

Joyce brand 5 stars

"Loved the story will get more of books by Tricia McGill I like how they travelled over the blue mountains to get to their settlement I enjoy the stories about the early settlers in Australia"

Bymarcia a curran 5 stars **I loved this book**

This book was a wonderful surprise to find. Full of adventure on how convicts from England sent to Australia helped to tame the wilderness. The writing was superb and the author didn't bore the reader with unnecessary passages. I ordered the second book before I finished Book 1. I loved the book.

5 stars **Definitely worth your time** verified Amazon customer

"I really liked this book! The author really developed her characters over the course of the story. Isabella was a strong and sexually confident woman. The tension between Tiger and Isabella was engrossing. Although I did not like the stupidity of Tiger in the beginning of the book, he did redeem himself at the end as he matured and learned some important life lessons. I think one of the book's lessons was that our actions can have long term effects when we don't act with love."

5 stars **Fantastic!** By Chino

"I thoroughly enjoyed this book not like all the other sappy love books out there Mystic Mountain held pain, love, and a touch of comedy. I couldn't put the book down cause I wanted to know what the fiery Bella and the beastly Tiger would be up to next. I can't wait to start reading more of Tricia McGill books."

S. Harrison **Compelling story** 4 stars

I really enjoyed this book. The writing flows, and the story is compelling. The protagonists in the story are, for the most part, newly-arrived convicts transported from England to New South Wales, Australia, in the early 1800s.

The author explains a great deal about the early history of Australia without being pedantic. The historical details are very nicely integrated into the story, and are never intrusive. The author clearly did a lot of research, and the historical accuracy adds to the richness of the tale. The author also points out how crucial New South Wales Governor Lachlan Macquarie was to the development of the democratic Australia that we know today. He insisted on fully integrating convicts into society after their sentences had been fulfilled, thus preventing the creation of a stratified settler society. His policies are crucial to this story, for it allowed former convicts to have dreams of someday owning their own land and having their own businesses. The hero of the story is Tiger Carstairs. Tiger has a prosperous farm, and dreams of land over the rugged Blue Mountains (the "mystic mountains" of the title), land that will be opened to settlement in the near future.

The heroine is Isabella O'Shea, transported for knifing a member of the nobility in England who attempted to rape her. She arrives in New South Wales scared to death that she will be assigned to serve her sentence in less than desirable circumstances. Nevertheless, in Australia she will have more hope for a decent life in the future than she would ever have had in the slums of London. Isabella is assigned to work for Tiger Carstairs, a man whom she resents because he seems to embody everything that she hates about the English aristocracy.

It really is difficult to describe the story without including too many spoilers. The tale does take unexpected twists and turns, and completely engages the reader.

Why four stars rather than five? Well, Tiger and Isabella were a bit too stubborn and childish a few too many times, in my estimation. But this is just my own opinion, and others may disagree. Their actions did not ruin the book. (I personally cannot stand the plot device of the silly "tragic misunderstanding" that could be cleared up with one short conversation, and thankfully the Hero and Heroine's misunderstandings did not fall into that category. Highly recommended. This is a memorable story, and a real keeper."

4 stars By Mary Hegarty

"Thoroughly enjoyed it"

4 stars **A story of extreme love and hate of one person** By Jimmywes

"Very exciting and quite intriguing. A story of extreme love and hate of one person. I found it a good read but it did drag in the last chapters. Facts included in the end chapters that really only extended the inevitable. However a good read."

Deborah Brent for Romantic Times bookclub

"Sometimes we in America forget that Australia is an equally young country, complete with tales of adventure about the settlement of the land. In this story of love adventure and hardship, we see a man and a woman work together to survive and overcome the harsh land that is Australia. A thoroughly enjoyable book, well-written and exciting."

Lani Roberts 5 stars *Affaire de Coeur*

"Tricia McGill has written a sweeping love story of two people fighting for their places in an unfair world among the wild, untamed vistas of Australia. The strong plot reveals much about the early settlement days of the continent of Australia and is a history lesson in itself besides a sizzling romance. A job well done by Ms. McGill."

Anita Hartsell **The Romance Studio** rating: 4 HEARTS

...Sparks fly from the beginning. Mutual attraction accompanies the fact she hates him being a wealthy Englishman.

Their passionate encounters, as well as the hurt and anger these two people share with each other, will have you crying along with them. An adventure you will not want to miss. I highly recommend reading this book."