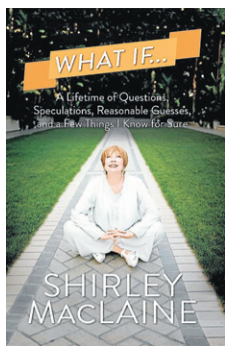


**WHAT IF . . .**  
A Lifetime of Questions, Speculations, Reasonable Guesses, and a Few Things I Know for Sure  
**Shirley Maclaine**  
Simon & Schuster



Shirley Maclaine strikes a serene pose on the cover of her latest book.

She is a woman ageing gracefully and sharing her wit and wisdom with the readers of over a dozen titles. She is part memoirist, part Delphic Oracle and part raconteur.

This time around, the 79-year-old actress who believes in reincarnation, frames each chapter around the question, 'What If . . .'. What if, for example, Stephen Hawking got up and walked?

What if the greatest act of love is to withdraw, allowing another soul to exist? 'And what if Carol Haney had not sprained her ankle, enabling me, her young understudy, to go on for her in Pyjama Game?'

Then came the clincher: 'What if I hadn't said yes to joining the cast of Downton Abbey?'

Here the consummate actress knows she has us spellbound. And she does not disappoint. Maclaine describes in delicious detail her reunion, after 40 years, with the incomparable Maggie Smith, who plays Violet, the Dowager Countess of Grantham, in the smash hit British TV series.

She recalls in vivid detail the many days the two legendary ladies of stage and screen spent, between takes, seated around the grand dining table at Highclere Castle, reminiscing about men, work, the world as it used to be.

'It was easy because neither of us likes to get up and walk around anymore,' she writes. A trademark Maclaine remark, one both funny and sad.

Downton Abbey has introduced Maclaine to another generation of admirers. She is gossipy and then tender, as when she writes the shoot was complicated by her missing her beloved dog Terry and because she had to face the realities of ageing without the comforts of home.

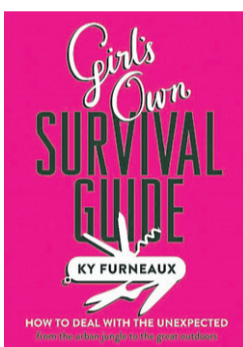
Shirley Maclaine is batty, charming, acerbic and wise.

BARBARA FARRELLY

**GIRL'S OWN SURVIVAL GUIDE**

Ky Furneaux  
Michael Joseph

Most survival guides are written for men living in the northern hemisphere and contain advice about how to make a fire with a couple of sticks or what to eat when you're in the Mojave Desert. This book is different. Written by Australian stunt woman and double to Hollywood's A-list stars, Ky Furneaux, it does contain instructions for surviving in the desert, but it does reference Australia, it is specifically written for women and girls



and it contains much more than practical advice.

For Furneaux attitude is important and she writes the main limiter of effort is our brain not our body. She advises holding a yoga pose for 10 seconds longer or taking a run break at the top of the hill instead of halfway up to see what your body is capable of. Elsewhere Furneaux advises women to avoid acting the victim, using superglue or duct tape to

repair broken heels and not to trust anyone they don't know. Every Australian teenage girl should read this.

FRANCES RAND

## When Anna was Andy

**THE DAYS OF ANNA MADRIGAL**  
Armistead Maupin  
Doubleday

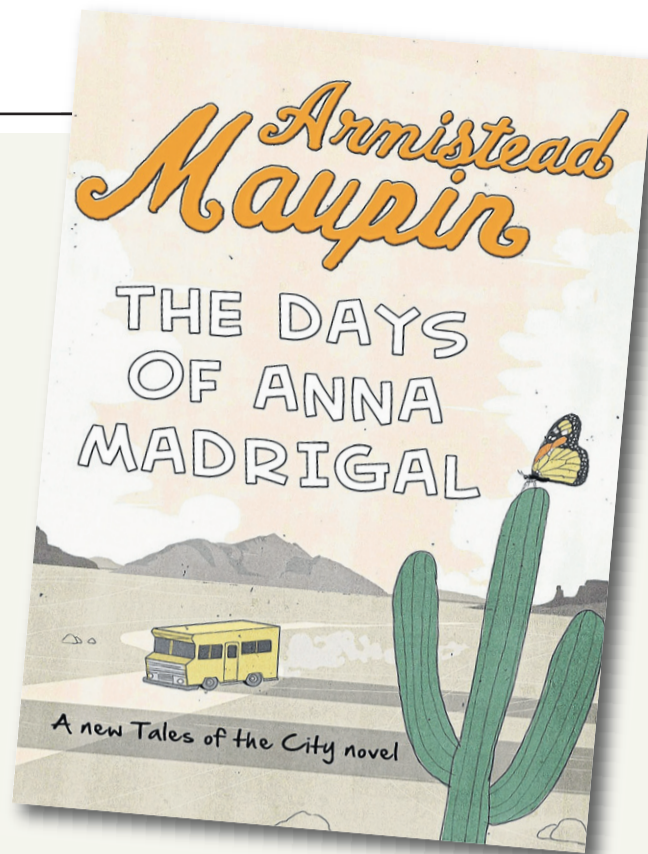
For camp followers of Armistead Maupin's cult series, *Tales of the City*, *The Days of Anna Madrigal* is a bittersweet tribute to the elderly transgender icon of the title.

(Mr Maupin's moving denouement in the desert may have been inspired by our own Priscilla's tour de force in the Outback on the roof of a bus).

A generation of queers have grown up and grown middle-aged reading the nine novels that famously took snapshots of San Francisco as the earthquake that was AIDS shook the city to its core in the 1980 and '90s. The series has been a

contemporaneous record of the resilience of men, women and their children living at the epicentre of a plague. And doing it with craziness, style, and fun.

In this instalment of what started out as a newspaper serialisation, characters like Michael 'Mouse' Toliver, his husband Ben, Brian Hawkins, Mary Anne Singleton, transman Jake, and Shawna are herded, like cats, to the Festival of the Burning Man, the hyper-cool event in the Nevada Desert where hipsters let it



all hang out in a temporary city they build to burn.

The spire of the Temple of Juno appears out of the choking dust as Mrs Madrigal, now in her 90s, is speeding in a Winnebago towards Black Rock, via the Blue Moon warehouse, where she had lived as a boy.

Before Burning Man (and fire as a metaphor for cleansing), she must first make peace with Oliver Sudden, a man who holds the key to a dark secret in her old life when she was

Andy.

Anna's a bit psychic, or spooky as she calls it, and, still a sly old stoner, she reminds the reader that while 'some people drink to forget, personally I smoke to remember'.

This is a story about loss, forgiveness, and shifting identities. It is Anna Madrigal's story, and she is a gloriously purple-clad vortex at the heart of this vibrant community.

One for the True Believers.

BF

**DRONGO**  
**THE IMMORTAL LOSER**  
Bruce Walkley  
Slattery Media Group

Have you ever wondered where the word drongo comes from? It is Australian slang for a no-hoper – there are a few other colourful descriptions that can't be used here.

While a drongo is also a variety of bird, its real meaning came from a little known racehorse from the 1920s called Drongo.

Despite good breeding, Drongo couldn't win a race in 37 attempts – hence the saying.

It was also lampooned by cartoonist Sam Wells in the Melbourne Herald.

Foaled in 1921, it was retired in 1925 after 37 starts for no wins – but in a slightly different world Drongo would have been a champion.

People thought he was hopeless but he wasn't – far from it.

He only ran in races in the city, often against the best horses of the era.

He finished second in the 1923 Victorian Derby and the 1924 VRC St Ledger and was third in the 1924 AJC St Ledger – races for the best three year old stayers in the country.

He placed a dozen times, earning a substantial amount



of money – he just couldn't crack it for a win.

He also ran in two Melbourne Cups. Although he wasn't a bad horse it didn't take long for the punters to claim "a mug" was a "drongo".

And the term spread quickly.

If he was such a "dud" why did one of the greatest jockeys in Australian racing history, Bobby Lewis, choose to ride him in the Derby in 1923?

Lewis had in a long and distinguished career won the Victorian Derby eight times between 1900 and 1927, won four Melbourne Cups and more than 900 winners

before retiring in 1938 at age 60.

He also rode the legendary Phar Lap into third in the Melbourne Cup in 1929.

In 1923 he was so highly regarded he could have had his pick of most of the derby field, yet he chose Drongo.

In his memoirs he said Drongo was working "splendidly in the lead up to the race" and "had a great chance of winning".

He was beaten by just three quarters of a length.

But there are numerous stories like that about Drongo. Bruce Walkley takes us behind the scenes and gives us an insight into the horse and its connections.

ROBERT CRAWFORD

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