

Story for performance #839  
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So what do you think of Angelina Jolie?

It was the second time in a week that I had been asked this question. As though my opinion might tip the balance in a jury's deliberations or bring new light to perplexing astrological phenomena.

The realisation that Angelina Jolie had now become an open subject of discussion even amongst my own family and friends felt like some kind of defeat. Like horse flu, it now seemed inevitable. In the end no-one was immune, not even the great Makybe Diva and her seven-week old foal.

The first time I had been asked about Jolie that week was as I sat spliced between two nieces with opposite points of view at a 21st birthday celebration. The second was five days later over newspapers and cups of tea in my own home on a Saturday morning, where the query arose between questions one and two in the *Good Weekend* quiz: Mogadishu is the capital of which African country? (not Ethiopia or Eritrea, but Somalia of course); and Psittacosis is a disease of which creatures? (not fish or foxes, but parrots it seems).

It's not as though I had never thought about Angelina Jolie. I did have a silent interest in this woman who combined the risky sexual with the effortless maternal. I even had an undeclared point of view. But I wasn't prepared to show my cards immediately, if at all, as all eyes turned my way for adjudication.

It reminded me of a previous moment a couple of years before when my brother had implored one of his daughters for a convincing explanation of why kids from the suburbs of Adelaide would possibly want to emulate the style and gestures of the late Tupac Shakur. In the heat of interrogation, this niece, a great beauty with street smarts and IQ to match, deferred to me, saying, 'I don't know, ask Susan'. I was quite stunned into silence by her expectation that I might know. It was an incredible vote of pop cultural confidence and one of my finest moments in Auntydom, of which she and her sisters provide many.

It's not as though I had never thought about Tupac Shakur. I did have a silent interest in this man. I even had an undeclared point of view. But I wasn't prepared to show my cards immediately, if at all, as all eyes turned my way for adjudication.

There are so many conundrums without simple answers, whose solutions we may never know, or whose moment of truth has yet to come:

Has Noel Pearson betrayed his own people?

Now that Marion Jones has confessed, will Ian Thorpe have to?

Has John Howard left calling the federal election too late?

Can the Sydney Swans win another AFL grand final in the next three years?

Does the emergence of Bobby Flynn prove that 'Australian Idol' has been worthwhile after all?

Given the opportunity, could pedophiles recover with treatment like an alcoholic might?

Will Hillary Clinton inevitably have to turn against Barack Obama?

Does Bono wear prescription glasses?

What's the point of parsley?

Is it too late to save the Great Barrier Reef?

Is Kylie wrong to trust Olivier Martinez?

Does Bindi Irwin already have Attention Deficit Disorder?

Will Peter Garrett eventually come good?

Will Al Green ever tour Australia?

Does the West give a rats arse about Burma?

Has Jamie Oliver got one more good idea in him?

Will Jodi Foster ever pull off a romantic leading role?

Will the Pacific Highway ever be safe?

Who will inherit all of Nelson Mandela's shirts?

Is there any real correlation between the pattern of my overseas travel and the downfall of the Australian dollar?

It's not as though I have never thought about these questions. I do have a silent interest in these issues. I even had an undeclared point of view. But I'm not prepared to show my cards immediately, if at all, as all eyes turn my way for adjudication.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Susan Charlton.*