



OUT ON A LEASH

Actress Shirley MacLaine's new book is full of wisdom

She's an Oscar winning actress, but Shirley MacLaine is also an acclaimed author, who has inspired millions with stories of her own spiritual search. Books such as *Out on a Limb* and *Dancing in the Light* were groundbreaking explorations of her meetings with spirit guides, trance channellers, past life practitioners and native healers, and her discoveries of other dimensions of herself and the world. Through her down-to-earth studies she's brought credibility to a subject often maligned.

Her new book *Out on a Leash* details the lessons she learnt from her dog Terry. Hilarious in parts yet profoundly wise, it alternates Shirley's words with Terry's.

'Terry has taught me simplicity, she's completely changed my priorities. And she makes me laugh all the time. She makes me smile through my life now.'

'She doesn't have to have any plan, so I'm learning to live without one too.'

In the past Shirley learnt from travelling the world and meeting different people, but she is now enthralled by the lessons we can all learn from animals.

'They show us a whole different take on nature. The whole sensibility of what nature speaks about is what I'm learning because of Terry. I take her out for walks in the mountains and I hear her little heart, and it's so adorable,' Shirley says.

'My relationship with her is so wise, so revealing, so educational. She has this adorable, darling personality, full of wit and mischievousness and a kind of challenge to a straight line. She has an ability to make you look at the different corners of what you never look at.'

The phenomenon of 'hearing' animals is not new. Horse whisperers and psychics who communicate with animals to understand what they need to feel or perform better are gaining acceptance.

'People are becoming aware of animal wisdom – perhaps because they see what human beings do to each other, and animals don't do that,' Shirley says.

'Animals will kill for food, or if they are frightened, but they don't do it for money. They don't do it for corporate gain, or if they have different "isms" from each other. I'm becoming more outraged at killing yet less political. I don't trust any



Shirley's dogs teach her simplicity and laughter.

political leaders. They all have agendas. My agenda is what I've learnt from Terry, and that is to find balance and peace.'

So how exactly does she hear Terry?

'It's emotional concept. I'm very much in touch with her feelings and her mind and heart, so I feel what she's feeling then translate that into this very limited thing called English,' Shirley explains.

'I get a much more accurate reception from the feelings. And she insisted that I write it down. She wants to be heard.'

Terry is the first animal she's connected with in this way, despite a lifetime of having pets. Shirley has nine other dogs on her ranch – plus horses, ducks, deer, elk, bears, mountain lions and coyotes.

But it's this little rat terrier, who called her in to a pet store in Malibu, LA, and convinced her she wanted her, that has found a way in to her heart and head. It was Terry who made her want to leave her Hollywood life and move permanently to her ranch near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

'Perhaps it's that this is the first animal I've had with me all the time. She's the one I take with me everywhere, who goes on planes with me, who sits on the set with me, and lives in the house. It may be that we knew each other in the past too. And maybe now I'm ready to hear.'

Although Shirley has met fascinating people in her life – Hollywood royalty, spiritual teachers, dancers, politicians and heads of government – and had transforming relationships, she's never met anyone who has taught her as much about the world or herself as Terry has.

'There have been many people in my life, but the relationships we have with humans – family, lovers, friends, teachers



Shirley with Terry, her 'source of all knowledge'

– there's always a hidden agenda. I don't have an agenda with Terry. I have no expectations. I don't think I should protect her from anything, except traffic.

'She can take care of herself. I've seen her on the beach – these huge, vicious dogs come along, and she has a way of disarming them all. She wouldn't go near a really dangerous one – she's not stupid. She's not like us American humans.'

Whether or not you accept Shirley's dog speaks to her, the wisdom in her book is valid, and it's also a fascinating read.

'Terry's sophistication of simplicity is so profound that I've learnt to live more that way myself. And to live with less judgement of others,' Shirley says.

'There's no question that animals have wisdom we can learn from. They live with another understanding of reality. What can you say about an animal that can find its way home from 6000km away?

'And Terry can enter my dreams. If I'm having a really bad one, she will bark away the person giving me a hard time.'

Shirley has long taught others through her books, films, attitude and explorations, but what's the best advice she's been given?

'Terry says: "Don't make so many plans, just let life happen – because it's going to happen regardless of your plans."'

