

# Cherry

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## From Cherry:

"This next bit is like a scene in a book, but it really happened. At this stage, and after only a couple of months, my life was becoming more like a lurid novel every day. Things were turning upside down, a life that I thought would be so difficult to achieve was dropping into my lap. I was having the adventures I'd always wanted to live, and some I couldn't have guessed at.

I was up on the platform waiting for a train home and it was late. There was a woman standing maybe about twenty feet away from me. She was by herself, the first thing I noticed was that she had long hair, the second was that she was small. How old? I've no idea. I can't remember what she was wearing, something fashionable no doubt, maybe some kind of a skirt, a jacket; I don't remember. The overall impression I got was that she was tiny and neat.

She winked at me. I looked away automatically, a reflex for when something doesn't make sense. I looked back and she licked her lips. She nodded and I knew it was me at whom she was directing these things. She mouthed something, I'm terrible at lipreading and totally distracted by her pursed lips. She hooked her finger and called me over. I looked away again.

When I looked back, she was there right next to me; it made me jump.

"What's your name, babes?" she asked.

I looked away.

She grabbed my face and held it to hers, saying, "I asked you a question – what's your name?"

"Let me go," I answered through gritted teeth.

She released me, laughing. She said, "I'm just playing. I know what your name is – it's Ramona."

"Who are you?"

"A friend of Molex. I heard that you met her." She smirked. "Small world." She shrugged.

I tried to reassess this woman. I looked at her properly for the first time and said, "Why are you being so obnoxious?"

"It's just my way," she smiled, "I'm sorry." She changed the subject, brightening up, "Do you want to come and see something special?"

"Are you drunk?"

"Me? No, I never drink."

"Why should I come with you?"

"Why not?" she replied coquettishly.

"You're really weird."

"Yes, so? There are worse things to be."

"Where is this special something?"

"Down here, quick."

She jumped down on to the tracks and looked around edgily.

"What are you doing?" I was shocked, "I'm not going down there."

"Quick!" she hissed, "or they'll see us."

"Oh fuck!" I shimmied down inelegantly, twisting my ankle on the shingle. She grabbed me so that I fell sideways into a small cubbyhole down by the track.

"This is it? Your secret den?" I was incredulous.

"Wait, you have to wait," she said, her bright eyes glowing in the darkness.

I waited.

We were crammed up together; my knees were bent the wrong way; it was uncomfortable.

"Lean right back, Ramona – press yourself into the wall, tuck your legs and feet right in or you might lose them."

A rat ran across the track outside.

The metal made strange electrical sounds, like a hollow knock. I could see the tracks vibrating and rumbling.

"I'm Iris, by the way," said Iris. "It's not my real name," she babbled, "when I was younger I wanted to be like Jodie Foster in Taxi Driver. I've seen that film so many times. Most people want to be Travis Bickle," I nodded, "but I wanted to be Jodie, or Iris, so that's my name now."

We shook hands stiffly. "Pleased to meet you."

The thunderous sound was increasing.

"It's the express train," Iris said flatly.

"This is the special thing?"

"You'll see."

The noise was loud now, like a jumbo jet taking off. I could feel the rumble all the way through me, my fillings were dancing in my teeth.

The train flew by in a hurricane of wheels, sparks and dust. The air smelled of oil and grime, but the noise, that noise was the thing, I'll never forget it. It was like crashing a plane, like sticking your head in a speaker on full blast, like a dragster burning nitro, so big, like ground zero, like shutting your eyes against a nuclear bomb and still being able to see the bones in your hand X-rayed in front of you, like being exploded. I expected to be vapourised. It was so loud that I couldn't hear myself screaming.

The train was gone as fast as it came.

"Wow, thanks Iris – that was fucking ace!" I sounded like a geek.

"Want to stay for another? There's one due in two minutes."

We stayed and Iris kissed me hard as the 00.09 sped past, making her hair twirl and fly round my head.  
Of course I went home with her.”

## **From the Afterword, exclusive to this new edition!**

“I was subjected to a sort of low-level anxiety from other people about my respectability and virtue as a woman and as a writer, as though writing about queer sex sullied me in some way. This might not have arisen if I had been positioned as a literary rather than erotic author by the publisher. Throughout the Canada Customs seizure, I was referred to as “a good writer” and I’m not sure why. Getting the books released for their artistic merit was obviously important, but my goodness was continually referenced as though not to do so would reveal me as somehow bad, like a common pornographer. One reviewer opined: ‘Charlotte Cooper has such a way with words, such a take on life, such an irony...so why is she writing porn? Every time she writes about something without erotic intent, she scores a bullseye.’ Perhaps this reflected a belief that good women and good writers don’t write about sex, especially not dyke sex; we are not supposed to own or share this knowledge and experience. Cultural fantasies about the figure of the ‘woman writer’ as opposed to some idea of generic ‘writer’ are in there somewhere, let alone ‘queer’ or ‘dyke writer,’ class is surely in the mix too. Unfortunately, I took some of this on. In a weird parallel to the figure of the fallen woman, I felt that I had spoiled myself as a writer, I was “a wank book,” and for a long time I would refer to the work in self-deprecating ways, a tactic of working class feminine self-destruction.”

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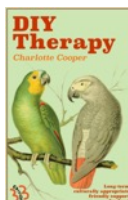
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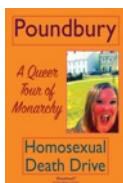
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