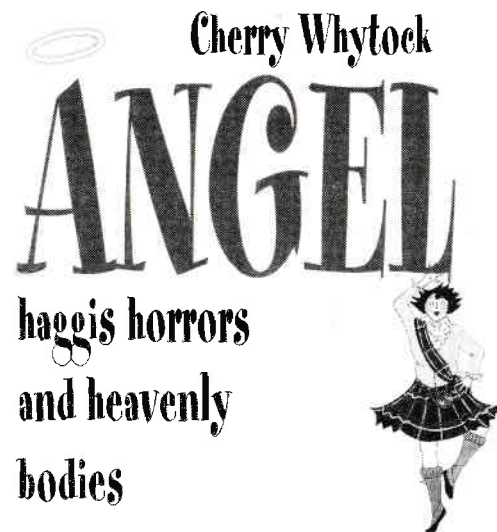


Cherry Whytock's shoe collection has increased dramatically since a recent trip to Morocco with her husband. When she's not rearranging her footwear or waiting for her two beautiful daughters to become fabulously famous she can be found upside-down in her Kentish flowerbeds, weeding. Sometimes Lily the boxer helps, but not often.

Cherry loves *Vogue* magazine, lacy underwear and face cream and would like to become a style icon when she grows up.



To the man in the Morris Minor, with love

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The recipes in this book were inspired by Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson
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chapter one

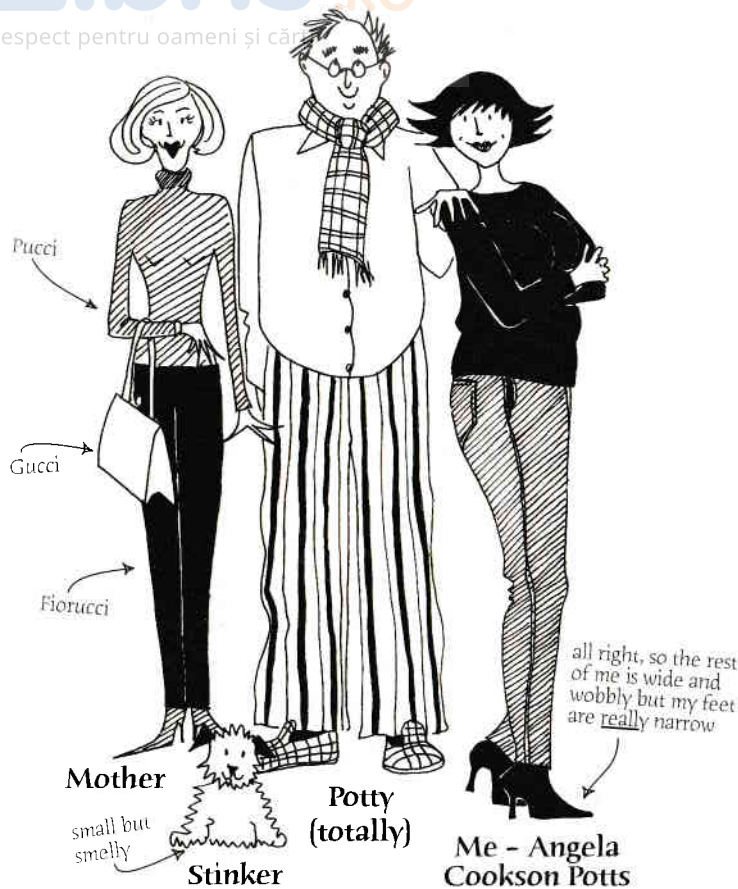
Fever, Friends and Family Freaks

I'VE BEEN DREAMING I was kissing Sydney . . . WHY? Am I
suffering from juvenile dementia? Did we have mad cow pie for
supper?

Obviously I'm being haunted by last night's end-of-term
Fashion Show when I had to wear that . . . that DRESS. It was
no bigger than Barbie's tank top and Slimeball From Hell
(Sydney) had to wobble me down the catwalk and kiss me in
front of all those parents and friends and PEOPLE. Even
Adam, ex-Love of My Life (and complete RAT) was there.
Honestly, as if that wasn't enough to make a girl hyperventi-
late, Sydney actually had the nerve to look really rather all right
and to taste just the weeniest bit scrumptious.

HELP! CALL A DOCTOR! I must be very feverish or delirious
or BOTH.

Of course Mother, who used to be a model herself and is
still toothpick thin, never managed to say *anything* about how
gorgeous I looked. Although I did notice her clapping a lot . . .
Anyway, Mother thinks I'm a huge, over-stuffed jelly bag that



must have been swapped for her real, itty-bitsy, skinny baby at birth. I know she fantasises that one day a vast Mrs Blobby will arrive on the doorstep with a Kate Moss lookalike and claim that little Miss Perfect-Size-Eight-All-Over is Mother's daughter and that I'm the Blobby's long lost Blobbette. Mother didn't even manage to get her mouth around a compliment about all

the luscious food Flossie and I made for the Fashion Show, or my expert hostessing abilities.

A sudden bashing and crashing and a shout of 'Hoots mon, awhaaaa!' happily brings this train of thought to a standstill.

Uh-oh! Potty's gone into 'Scottish mode' already and I haven't even got my hair gel on yet. Potty has hauled me out of school a week early so that we can do our annual slog up to Scotland to visit his rellies. Ms Worhouse, who is my tutor and who *used* to be my friend, was not at *all* pleased, but Potty insisted that 'auld acquaintance should ne'er be forgot' *and* that it is a vital part of my education to trace my Scottish roots before the Easter rush. Potty is ancient and for some reason people seem to think that he must therefore be wise. Anyway, I like Ms Worhouse, but this time she's really let me down. I mean, I'd much rather spend the last week of term at school with my dear, gorgeous friends, Minnie, Mercedes and Portia, even if it does mean I risk seeing Sydney, than spend EXTRA time with my amazingly mad parents.

Besides, Mother hates everything about Scotland - the cold, the countryside, the porridge, Highland cow poo and the total lack of access to Harrods - just two minutes' walk from home - so she's going to be even more difficult than she normally is.

'Dahling,' she squawked just last week, 'it's quite impossible to find designer rubber boots with stiletto heels - what on earth shall I do?' I suggested that she tie bin bags over her Jimmy Choo mules. Brilliant, I thought, but Mother just sniffed.

I think I'll call Minnie. I need to talk to someone sensible before I face this.

'Hi babes,' I trill.

'Oh, Angel,' she sighs. 'You looked totally heavenly in that dress.'

Minnie is blonde and small and curvy and brilliant at making clothes and at imagining she's no good at anything *and* that

none of the boys she likes will ever like her. She's mad, obviously, but I still love her. She made loads of stuff for the Fashion Show and she was

the one who finally coaxed me into the Barbie dress last night.

I stand up straighter at the thought of the Fashion Show and pull in my stomach, even though no one's looking.

'And what about Sydney, eh?'

she says.

There's a sort of giggle in her voice that I'm not sure I like, so I tell her about my nightmare. All she does is giggle some more, so I decide to change the subject. 'Did you get a chance to talk to George yesterday?'

'Noooo . . .' she wails.

Minnie adores George. She, who could have the pick of the bunch at school, fancies *George* . . . Life is so strange. The problem is (and I don't dare mention this to Minnie) he told me he liked *me* last week. George is doing A-levels, for goodness' sake - you'd think he'd have more brains. I have now made it my mission to re-direct him towards Minnie as soon as possible.

'You're so lucky to have George there all the time,' sighs Minnie.

'He's only here because his parents live abroad and his



Minnie

school is in London. He's not here because I want him,' I reply quickly. I think of George as a brother. I mean, I've known him since he had scabby knees and head lice at primary school. He's three years older than me and all my friends seem to think he's wonderful.

I can't see it myself.

'Do you think George will be lonely while you're away?'

Minnie asks wistfully.

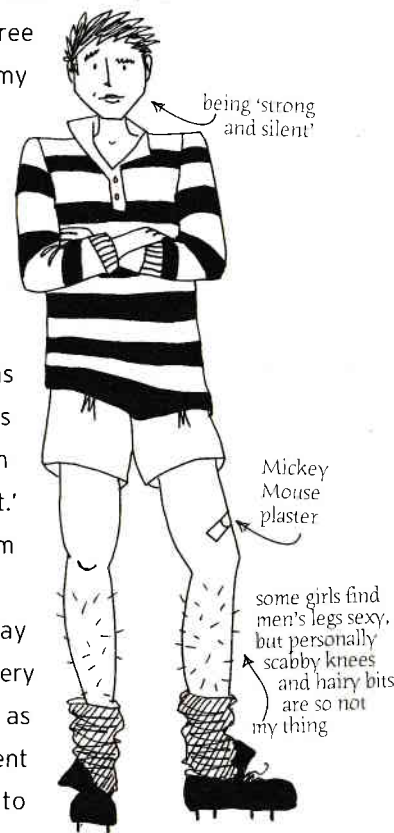
'Well, I think he said he was going to have one of his mates from school to stay and help him look after the house, so maybe not.'

'Perhaps I'll just pop in if I'm passing,' says Minnie.

'Yes, why don't you,' I say encouragingly, knowing that it's very unlikely Minnie will be 'passing', as she lives in a completely different neighbourhood *and* she's got to make sure her adventurous little brother doesn't set fire to the house

or drown the neighbour's cat after school.

When it's time to go, I blow Minnie a kiss down the phone and 'gallumph' (Mother's word, not mine) downstairs from Heaven (my third-floor bedroom in our oh-so-chic, four storey Knightsbridge home). As I reach the ground floor, I trip over



George

Stinker, who is apparently trying to bury a bone in the hall floor, and this sends me crashing into what looks like a large cashmere chrysalis surrounded by suitcases next to the front door. The chrysalis moans slightly as I unknot my nightie from around my knees.

'Mother?' I say, wondering why my parents have to be so odd. I mean, couldn't she just wear a coat like any normal person?

It's no use trying to have a conversation, as the only bits of her that are showing are her eyes, and those are looking none too happy. Anyway, *she* should be talking to *me* and telling me what a star I was last night, not standing around being useless. So, I leave her swathed and swaying in the hall and head on down to the basement, my favourite part of the house because that's where to find the kitchen and Flossie.

'Yo, Flossie.' The 'Yo' thing usually makes her really grumpy. She usually says, 'Speak the Queen's English, young lady,' but today she's too busy.

Flossie is in charge - thank goodness, otherwise nothing would ever get done in this household. Her official title is Housekeeper, but actually she's more like a mum than Mother could ever be. She does everything for us. She's the one we go to with all our problems. She's the one who knows where the sticking plasters are kept. She taught me to cook and so far I haven't actually found anything else that I really feel is worth learning about. I mean, what could be more important than eating, noshing, guzzling, call it what you will? The world would be a much sadder place without it. And if there wasn't food, what exactly would Jamie Oliver, Naked Chef, Superstar



Flossie

and True and Enduring Love of My Life, do with his time?

Anyway, Flossie, who has already organised everyone's packing (except mine - panic), is busily stuffing supplies into two huge picnic hampers.

'Crumbs! Don't they have food north of Watford?'

'Don't be cheeky, young lady,' says Flossie as she squishes in an enormous fruit cake.

'Sorry, but honestly, Flossie, do we really need quite so many motorway munchies?'

Flossie shushes me. 'You can never pack too much food,' she states. 'A body never knows where the next meal's coming from or what might be round the next corner.' I think better of trying to explain to her that there will probably be a McDonald's round every corner on the M1. She's muttering on about Scotland



being 'most unsavoury - all those men in skirts with no draws on . . . they'll catch their deaths, if you ask me . . .'

I start to make porridge for breakfast, just to get me in the mood.

I'm bringing the whole yummy, gloopy, lumpy goo to the boil when there's a sound like a cow being sick and Flossie and I drop everything and beetle into the hall to see what's happening.

We find Potty with a tartan cushion under his arm and four of what look like Flossie's knitting needles sticking out of it.

'Bless my buttons! What have you got there, Mr Seepy?' (Which, translated, means, 'Mr C P - Cookson Potts, our surname and one of the many reasons Potty is known as Potty).

'Flossie!' he cries. 'Can't you see? Bagpipes! I'm having a wee practice afore we go.' Real bagpipes are actually made from some intimate part of a cow, I think, not a cushion and old knitting needles. But it's always the same. Every year, Potty 'goes native' and starts sprouting pseudo Scots. This morning he's put on his large heather-coloured hairy jersey, a tartan tam-o'-shanter, tartan trousers and, tied around his middle, my old, glittery (and SO last season) bumbag . . . slightly worrying . . . 'Tis m' sporran, Cherub,' he cries, catching my eye. 'Every jock knows he's no' a man wi'out a sporran.'

It's not that I don't love Potty to pieces, I do. It's just that he can be so alternative sometimes.

I go back to my porridge and Potty starts munching his toast next to me and reciting his favourite poem about the wonders of haggis. Once he's got to the bit about 'the wee sheep's cawl wi' the blood and the gall . . .' I realise I can't go on eating. Who knows why Potty loves haggis so much. He's always buying it from Harrods (still just a two minute walk away - or five minutes if you've eaten too much lunch) and complaining that it's not as good as it was when he was a boy, even though Harrods say it's the very best and from an authentic Highland croft.

I realise in a flash of horror that my porridge looks suspiciously like the bottled brain that they keep in the Science Lab at school. I have to leave the room.

I still need to pack, so I bound, gazelle-like . . . well, more horse-like (all right, carthorse-like) past Mother who is now lying like a roll of carpet on the sofa in the drawing room and take myself back up to Heaven.