



# Wordsmiths

LESBIAN BOOKS, ONCE RELEGATED TO BACK ROOMS AND TINY CLOSET-SIZED STORES, ARE HARD TO MISS THESE DAYS. BUT WHO ARE THESE AUTHORS DU JOUR? WHO ARE THESE WOMEN HOLED UP AT THEIR TYPEWRITERS (OK, COMPUTERS) CHURNING OUT THE WORDS THAT WE LIVE BY? HERE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVES, IN THEIR OWN WORDS.

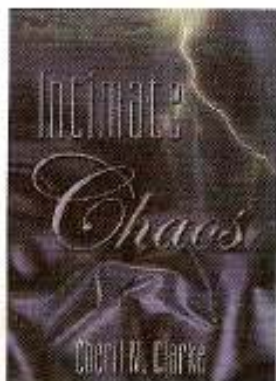
## Chick Lit for Dykes

A die-hard do-it-yourself publisher, Cheril N. Clarke writes and publishes her own brand of lesbian drama. By Malinda Lo

**DESPITE HER FULL-TIME JOB AS AN** engineering analyst in New York, African-American author (and lesbian) Cheril N. Clarke has carved out time to start her own publishing company, Dodi Press ([dodipress.com](http://dodipress.com)), and write three novels. Her latest, *Intimate Chaos*, brings us dyke drama in all its glory as it chronicles Sadira and Jessie's roller-coaster relationship. It's chick lit with a dyke twist — plus a bunch of naughty bits to spice up the journey.

**How much of you is part of your main character, Sadira?**

Sadira is based off who I was about two years ago. A lot of the emotions, pain and frustrations are real. The drama is mostly the product of my wild imagination.



**Do you feel African-American lesbians are adequately represented in literature?**

I think African-American lesbians are left out of the picture a lot. Most of the lesbian characters in literature are Caucasian. I just really want to show a presence. We have stories too.

**Why did you decide to go the self-publishing route?**

I decided to start my own publishing company because I love everything about writing ... even the business end of it. Also ... you have more creative control when you own your own company.

**What are the biggest challenges of self-publishing?**

The main challenge goes hand in hand with the greatest reward. I have the entire financial



burden, yet ... I make more money than I would with a commercial publisher.

**What's next for you?**

I expect to release [*Tainted Destiny*] sometime next year. I am also working with some other writers whom I hope to publish in the near future. ■