

NICKY GOES TO COLLEGE

By Susan Hulbert



ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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Nicky goes to College

By Susan Hulbert.

A New Opportunity

“It's a wonderful opportunity, congratulations.” Nick could hear the booming voice of Professor Dean as he opened the door of the staff common room. He saw Angela, his supervisor, standing with the professor, receiving his congratulations. He knew she had applied for an important research post at a university at the other side of the country; now, it seemed she had gotten it.

Nick coughed as he entered, and they turned as he walked towards them.

“Nick,” said Angela, smiling at him, “you're the first to know, I got that job. The one I told you about. I shall be an assistant professor in five years, and have my own department in ten. Just you watch.”

Nick mumbled his congratulations with mixed feelings. He had followed Angela for the whole of his time at the University. She had just become a junior researcher when he entered as an undergraduate, and she had supervised his undergraduate research. When he became a graduate student, she was still his supervisor. Now that he was embarking upon his own academic research, she was on the point of leaving. His own project was so closely tied to her major specialty, that his immediate concern was how he would be able to carry on.

The subject they had both specialized in was an obscure one in the department of psychology. Basically, they were studying behavior in the context of changing work patterns, as women moved into more areas which had previously been male dominated. The shifts in gender behavior were increasingly relevant to both the design and management of the work environment and increasingly, to advertisers.

It had been a unusual specialty for a young male graduate student, but Nick thought he knew where the future of office politics lay; anyone who could explain it, could create his own academic sub-specialization. Angela had been his supervisor, confidant and colleague, as his work had expanded. She had argued his case at funding meetings, and had encouraged him to publish when he could, suggesting new lines of research when he thought he was running out of relevance. And now she was leaving.

The professor left, saying he would make the necessary arrangements and speak to her later in the week. Angela turned to Nick, as his mind spun away, concerned with how he could direct his research without her sympathetic criticism and protection.

“Don't look so worried, Nick,” she said, reading his thoughts, “you're a good researcher. Lots of departments could use you when your dissertation is completed and published. And I'm not going just yet anyway. After the next term ends, at Easter that

is, I go on sabbatical. We can work together then, and I will only be starting the new post in October.”

Nick felt a little better at this. He would be able to get a long way forward in the coming months, then perhaps he would be able to get a post of his own.

“Maybe you'll have a vacancy for a junior researcher when you get there?” he asked, half joking and trying to sound better than he felt.

“That's possible,” Angel replied thoughtfully. ‘Would you be willing to move with me? After all, it's the other side of the continent I'm going to.’

“Yes. I have no ties here, you know that,” Nick replied.

With that, they parted, each to their own tasks for the day. Nick thought of her last remarks. He had no ties *anywhere*, really. He lived and worked alone, and really socialized only when Angela invited him to a concert, a play or a party. She was always saying he was too isolated and serious, too wrapped up in his work for his own good. Now that she was leaving, even that would go. At once he knew that if the opportunity to go with her arose, he would grab it with both hands.

Angela thought about her suggestion, too. She went to her office and, as she worked through her day, resolved to find out if she was able to bring any staff with her. It *would* be useful to have someone like Nick in her office. He was increasingly finding interesting behavior patterns, and his research was starting to be lucrative to the department. Funding would be even more important in her new job, where she would be expected to have a much higher profile. But, she thought, Nick did not look the part of a desirable researcher.

Nick was thin, *very* thin and not as tall as her five foot eight in bare feet. He had a good complexion, and was always exceptionally clean. His hair had been allowed to grow since he was about sixteen years old, and now hung down his back, almost to his waist in a single dark blonde pony tail, always well washed and shiny. He had not shaved for some years either, but where his hair was luxuriously thick, his beard was ludicrously thin and sparse. It was not the kind of beard which would ever be tidy or attractive, she thought, but something could be done about that.

Then she remembered that his dress sense was not good either. This she considered was possibly because of his having to exist on such a low income for his student years, but she guessed that even if he was paid ten times more, he would not be much better dressed than he was now. He spent his days in denim—jeans, shirts, and jackets—with loose jackets, cotton in summer, waterproofs in winter. If he was to be introduced as a desirable research assistant to her new university, he would have to have a full make-over before she could get him past a selection panel.

This started a train of thought running through her mind as the day progressed. She found herself returning to the idea of taking him with her when she took up her new job. His abilities as a researcher were just blossoming, and his work under her supervision would reflect well upon her. She thought too, about how she could achieve this object, and there was her dilemma. She pushed it to the back of her mind, as she went to meet her graduate class students.

The remaining weeks of the term leading up to Easter passed quickly for Nick. He worked as quickly as he could, collating his final data, and writing the rough draft of his dissertation on displaced gender behavior in the environment of the modern office. The quality of the chapters he submitted to Angela impressed her tremendously. He was breaking new ground. His work rate was so great that it made Angela even more determined to take him to her new department. She began to make inquiries of her new employers as to what staff she could have, and was disappointed to know that there was funding only for one assistant. That was fine, but the appointment was reserved for a *female* assistant.

It was when she was thinking about how she was to spend her sabbatical, and transfer everything she owned to the other side of the continent, that Angela began to wonder if she really could take Nick with her. She had intended to travel during the free months available to her, and had arranged to give several lectures as she did so. Now the practicalities of the journey were forced upon her. She gave notice on her apartment, and one weekend she flew out to the small town just outside the new university campus, where she had decided to make her home. The leasing agents had arranged several visits for her, and she settled to take one of the apartments there on a temporary basis when she started work, until she could find a house to buy.

To travel during her sabbatical, she had decided to use a camper van to get around the country. Now she contacted the rental company and arranged to change her reservation from the modest one she had originally intended, to the largest available. She had thought of a way to take Nick with her, and she would need both space and time to accomplish the things she was planning. She would take him with her, and make sure that his academic promise was fulfilled in the department she intended to lead in the next phase of her career.

The idea forming in Angela's mind was both bold and radical. She wanted Nick to work for her when she moved. Nick wanted to work for her, and was prepared to move. She had only funding to employ a female assistant, therefore the answer was simple: Nick would have to become female. The more she thought about it, the more Angela realized that this was a simple and elegant solution to both their problems. She wondered briefly if Nick would agree, but then he *was* studying gender issues. It had been an unusual specialty for a male to choose; if he were to add a feminine perspective to it, he could achieve an even greater depth of study. The more Angela thought about this simple solution, the more convinced she became that it was both practical and viable. She knew she would have to get Nick to cooperate, but she *was* a psychologist after all. If she could not get him to go along with her, then she was wasted in her profession. She knew she was stronger than him, and set to work upon him, subtly feeding little bits of information and encouragement whenever her departure was mentioned.

“You'll have finished your dissertation before Easter,” Angela said one evening when she and Nick were walking across the campus together after a full day. “It will be ready for final submission quite early, and I want to send a copy to my new department, before it's officially published.”

“That's excellent,” Nick replied, “I really want to come with you. I've worked well with you over these past couple of years, there's so much we could do together.”

“Careful, don't get *too* enthusiastic,” Angela cautioned, “there are lots of people after this job. I don't know how much influence I will have in the choice of candidate.”

“I know,” said Nick, “but I'll be the best qualified. There aren't too many of us studying this area yet.”

“I know,” said Angela casually—although she had prepared carefully for this moment, “why don't you come with me when I go on sabbatical? We could put together a really good project for my assistant, one which would be *sure* to get you the job. You've nothing else to do after the dissertation is finished. You're really in limbo until it's graded.”

Nick thought about this. He knew that Angela had hired an enormous camper van for the trip, but was surprised by her invitation. It was true he had no commitments for some time, and had to find another job. Additionally, he had to get out of the small apartment he was renting, and could not afford another until he got a job. The possibility of living rent free, and traveling appealed to him.

“I'd like to come,” he heard himself saying, “but I'm absolutely broke. I can't afford to contribute anything to the trip, and if I don't get the job at the end, I'm *really* desperate.”

Angel had suspected something like this, but the admission was more than she had dared to hope for. Not only was Nick keen to work for her, he was broke and homeless too. That would help her implement the plans she had for him. What had started out as a crazy thought was rapidly becoming a real possibility.

“That's all right,” she replied, “just share the driving, see I get to my lectures on time, and help me with a small research project, and I'll pay for everything. You can pay me back when you're working.”

And so it was agreed. Nick would clear out of his apartment and move into the camper as soon as it was delivered. He would store everything academic, throw away everything he could not specifically use, and bring just a few clothes with him. They would set off almost at once, and they planned to be on the road until Angela took up her job in October. If all went well, she assured him, Nick would get his job shortly after that.

The day finally arrived. They were to set off the next morning after a departmental party had been held in Angela's honor. With her slightly hung-over, and Nick at the wheel, the camper pulled away from the campus, and they were off on the road. And Nick *still* had no idea what was intended for him.

Nick Has To Change

The camper was so big that it had two separate bedrooms and a small study, as well as a sitting room, bathroom and galley kitchen. It was a masterpiece of planning to fit so much into such a small space. Despite this, it was easy to drive once out of the confines of small town streets. They intended to park in campgrounds where they could hook up to the electricity supply, but there was a generator to run the camper's heating or air conditioning if they parked elsewhere.

For the first few days, it was all a new adventure for them both. Angela watched Nick carefully, trying to read more about his personality than she knew before, judging when and how to start his journey into a different identity. Quickly, she realized that he was a little afraid of her, constantly seeking her approval for decisions. She noted this insecurity to use it for her advantage later if it became necessary.

They had been on the road for three days when she decided it was time to start on Nick's new experience. First, the beard would have to go.

“How long have you had that beard?” Angela asked him the next morning. “I've never seen you without it.”

“I started to grow it just before I came to the university. I was always teased about being baby-faced. I thought it added to my seriousness,” he replied.

“Well, it's served its purpose. It's got to come off today,” said Angela.

She gave him no reason for this demand. She noted that Nick did not argue with her, but meekly agreed, and when she told him where a safety razor was kept, he went obediently to get rid of the beard, returning half an hour later with a smooth, clean shaven face that showed his small features and full lips. It was a revelation that Angela found most promising, and she insisted that he should remain clean-shaven from then on. As the first week on the road turned into the second, Angela decided to put the next steps into motion. Whilst Nick was out of the camper, she went to his room and removed some of his clothing from the wardrobe, replacing it with some skirts, dresses and blouses. When he questioned her about this, she replied it was just that she had to hang more things and there was no space in her room. She told him that his clothes were stored in the luggage compartment. In reality, she had thrown them into the waste basket, but by the time he realized they were gone, it would be too late to recover them.

They had been on the road for almost two weeks, and were sitting outside the van late on a warm evening in spring. They had come south for the last few days and it was warmer here. Angela had made her first scheduled stop to pick up her mail from the local post office; one of the letters she received was an answer from her new employers. The letter told her that she could appoint one assistant of her choice, provided the assistant had the right qualifications. There were no other considerations, other than the absolute stipulation that the person had to be female.

It was when they were sitting quietly that she passed this letter to Nick. He read it, and she saw his face drop with profound disappointment. A tear came to his eye,

which he tried to conceal. He had been so certain he could get this job with her. Seizing the moment, Angela spoke. "I think we can still get you into that job if you're willing to take a chance," she said slowly.

"What do you mean?" Nick asked, looking up at her, his eyes still full with disappointment.

"Well, you've been studying gender behavior long enough, how would you like to study it from the other side?" she said, studying his reaction.

"I don't understand," he said.

"I'll spell it out. I want you to have that job, and I can give it to who ever I want. The person I appoint must be female, therefore it's simple. You become female for the duration of the job."

"I can't. It's impossible. It's just too ridiculous for words." Nick looked at her with increasing incredulity, then he laughed.

"Listen," said Angela sternly, shutting him up, "we've four months to prepare for the day I take up my appointment—correction, *we* take up our appointments. That's plenty time for you to change your appearance, and get used to acting differently. Think of the book you can write afterwards."

"Yes, I can see the book easily, like the white student who turned his skin black to experience another life. He made a small fortune out of that research. But honestly Angela, I can see the book easier than the rest of it." Nick looked at her, searching her face to see if this was just one big joke.

"The 'rest of it', as you put it, is not so difficult if you want to come with me and take the job. I can deal with some of it, and we'll need some outside help, but that won't be too difficult either," Angela replied.

Nick still looked incredulously at her. "Go on," he said.

"Well, while we're on the road, there's no one going to be watching what we, or rather you, look like with any consistency. No one we see today will see us tomorrow, or in four weeks. So if the girl and boy in the camper van become two girls in the camper van along the way, no one will find anything remarkable in that," Angela said.

"Yes, I can see that, but there's more to it than that. I've spent twenty five years male, how do I get rid of that?" asked Nick.

Angela noted that he had gone from thinking it impossible, to thinking of the practical steps along the road. She was on the way to winning here. She had not really thought this out in any detail, yet if she were to keep the momentum going, she had to think quickly now. She had to take some positive action to get him on the road to change.

"Right, let's look at the practical things. You've no money, so I'll finance everything, provided you give me your absolute promise to go along with everything I say from the start. You can pay me back out of the book royalties, but I want that promise now. Once given, there's no turning back." Her voice reflected the seriousness of what she was asking him to do.

He was silent for a few moments. “No turning back at all, from this moment, *if* I give you my promise?” he asked.

“No, once decided, there's to be no argument, no doubts, just full commitment.” She paused, letting the gravity of what she was asking sink in fully, then added in a lighter voice, “after all what have you to lose, and you just might enjoy it.”

Nick thought for a moment. He knew she would hold him to the promise if he made it, and there was such a bond of trust between them, that he could not in good conscience let her down. What did he have to lose? he asked himself.

“All right, I'll do it, I promise.” Nick heard himself saying the words, almost from afar. What he was letting himself in for, he could not know. In reality, he had few other alternatives if he was to get the job he wanted.

“Good, that's settled. We'll start at once,” said Angela full of energy and enthusiasm, and with a confidence she hardly possessed. She could not let Nick know that, though. “From this moment there's to be no more Nicholas. You're not Nick, you're Nicky, it's short for Nichola. That way all your certificates will be easy to alter, or pass off as misprints. You'll have to get used to thinking of yourself in this new name, even though it's just a simple change of one letter, it's the start of your change of identity.”

“Right,” said Nicky, “I understand that. If only everything else can be so simple.”

“It will come easily, I'll see to that. All you have to do is remember your promise and do everything I say,” Angela spoke slowly, then fell silent.

They sat, as if allowing the enormity of what they had just agreed to sink in to both their minds. Each was self-contained in thoughts, plans and consequences. Nicky thought of becoming female, and became in turn excited, curious, then frightened. Angela, on the other hand, realized that she had accomplished more than she could have anticipated in just a few short sentences. Putting it all into operation would be a different matter. She had a lot of thinking to do. The evening began to chill, Angela shivered and broke the silence.

“Right,” she said, “we'll start now. In we go. We're going to bag up all your male clothing.” She saw him start to speak and, anticipating him, cautioned, “Remember, no argument, you do whatever I say.” Nicky smiled at this, and together they went into the van and closed all the blinds. He went into his room and looked into the wardrobe. Quite quickly, there were two black plastic bags full of clothes. He looked at them and realized how little he had. He had started with more than this. There were dresses hanging there. Did she know more than she was telling him? He intended to ask when he took his bags back into the sitting area, but there was no opportunity, and the moment was lost. Angela took the bags, heaved them out of the door, and then turned to him.

“There's just a few things left,” she said.

He stood wondering what she meant, and was still standing when a peach-colored dressing gown was thrown at him. Then he realized that she meant the clothes he was standing in. Without a word, he stripped off all his clothes, put on the gown and packed the discarded garments into a third bag. He was about to close it, when he remembered something, opened the bag, and recovered his one decent pair of training

shoes. He put those on the floor, then sealed the bag and handed it to her, to be thrown out with the others.

She left him there while she went outside; he heard her lifting the bags and walking away from the van. He stood alone in the unfamiliar gown, smelling of her perfume, and wondered just what was to come next. He had not long to wonder, for she soon returned, empty-handed, and smiled at him. 'The hard part's over,' she said, smiling reassuringly at him. "We've deconstructed Nick, now we have to construct Nicky from the ground up. She can be whatever we want her to be, with your qualifications of course, so let's keep it simple for a few days, and we'll talk as we move. I'll give you a nightgown to wear tonight. Tomorrow, we'll have to start on your wardrobe. Your size isn't too different to mine, although you're not as tall, so I'll have something you can use. Your feet will be a different problem because they're nothing like mine, still we can always buy something somewhere along the road."

With that, Nicky went to his room. He looked in the empty drawers. Nothing was left. He looked in the wardrobe, and saw that all his things were gone; only Angela's clothes remained. He felt the material with a new curiosity, and then lifted out each hangar. Holding the draped clothes in front of his body before the mirror, he tried to imagine what it would be like to dress as a female. He felt his mind turning over in a slight panic, and put the clothes away before he got into bed.

Nicky's First Days

“This morning, if you'll shower and shave carefully, I'll sort out some clothes, and give you your first makeup lesson. Then we'll move on. We're going to the city for some serious shopping. There's a site for the van about thirty miles out, and I've arranged a rental car for the day after tomorrow, so we're going to be busy.”

Angela left, while Nicky did as he was told. He went to the bathroom and showered, washing his hair carefully as he always did, drying it, then tied it loosely back. He shaved so carefully. His beard was so light and soft that he had never needed to shave every day anyway. As he finished, he felt the smoothness of his cheeks and wondered why he had ever worn that beard for so long.

He returned to his bedroom and saw some clothes on the bed. There was a brassiere of a red material with a pattern of small roses printed on it. It was fanciful rather than sexy, but he smiled at the thought of wearing it. He had not yet had any real thoughts about the sexual content of the course he was following. He put the bra 'round his waist and fastened it at the front, then twisted it so that if he *had* any breasts the cups would be in the right place. Slipping his arms into the shoulder straps, he pulled it into position and looked in the mirror.

He watched himself as he pulled up the panties which matched the bra. They were cut high on his legs, and hugged his flat stomach. He felt the material, it was elasticized and tight, he had to adjust his male parts to lie comfortably inside. Carefully he pushed them back so that the shape between his legs was smoother, and he was surprised to feel how easily they lay there. He stood back and looked at his profile in the mirror; it was quite feminine already. He stood back and looked at himself in the unfamiliar underwear. He smiled to himself. They were much more exciting than the underpants he wore normally.

He looked at the reflection thoughtfully, then on impulse, he took the band from his hair and let it fall loosely, still slightly damp and heavy, across his shoulders, and down over his chest and back. He bent over forwards, and shook his head to make his hair fall more loosely. Then he stood up, flicking his hair back. In a loose cascade, it fell luxuriously across his shoulders and back again, more fully than before. He decided he liked it this way, as he saw the light reflected back from the shiny dark blonde strands falling at the side of his face.

Nicky turned and saw the remaining clothes on the bed. There were some white ankle socks, his own trainers, a deep green over-sized T-shirt with short baggy sleeves and some trousers made of a denim-like material, but soft and stretch fabric. They had a zip on the left hip, and elastic stirrups which went under his insteps to hold the trousers down. Thus dressed, he left his room and went into the sitting room where Angela was waiting.

“Well done,” she said, “that was much faster than I expected. I've some makeup here, and I want you to do the same as I do. It's just a simple bit for the day, and the sooner you get used to doing your own, the easier it will be.”

She opened a small bag and spread the contents over the table. There were small palettes of color and several pencils and tubes which he did not recognize.

“All we're going to do this morning is a bit of eye makeup,” said Angela. “This is a kohl pencil. Watch what I do, then you're going to do the same. It's very easy to smudge, but it's also easy to wipe, so don't worry.”

He watched as she carefully pulled at her eye lid, then drew a line inside the line of her lid. The pencil left a dark brown color there, emphasizing the depth of the eye itself. She repeated the process under the upper eyelid, then handed the pencil and mirror to him. He looked and saw that the mirror magnified his eye so that he could see clearly where he was to draw.

“Now it's your turn,” she said. “Don't worry, it will be easy to correct if you smudge. Just do it.”

He looked at her, then in the mirror and drew the line around his right eye. It seemed to mimic Angela quite well. To do the left eye was a different matter, he found himself changing hands, juggling with mirror and pencil, eventually settling on doing it left-handed. Working carefully, he managed to repeat the process, with little smudging. The smudges he wiped with a clean finger, and he was relieved to see them disappear easily. This finished, he looked to both eyes in the mirror, and was satisfied that he had done a rea-

sonable job. Next was mascara to be stroked with a wand and he watched Angela do this, looking up and down to cover each lash. Then it was his turn, and he worked carefully, recharging the wand several times and applying several coats until his eyelashes were thick and heavy with the mascara. They looked almost black in the mirror.

When he was satisfied that he had finished, he looked up at Angela for her approval, and saw her smiling at him. He *thought* he was finished, but she handed him a pale lipstick, little differ-



ent in color to his own lips, perhaps just a bit paler, and showed him how to cover his lips, so that they shone evenly, with no real change of colour. Now he was complete. This was Nicky's first day as a girl.

They got ready to move. Angela sent him out to pay at the office. He went with rising terror. He said nothing, remembering they had only arrived here two days before. He had seen no one on the first two days from the office, so no one could know anything about him. So he went and paid, speaking softly to the staff, just saying they were touring and moving on, giving nothing away. He almost ran to the van; once safely inside, hugged Angela until his terror subsided. Then he got behind the wheel and they moved off. Angela remained in the rear, using the phone in the office to arrange some things for his next steps towards being feminine.

As he drove, he kept catching sight of himself in the mirror. His eyes were dark and very unlike Nick's. They were very feminine, and he could see the way the mascara emphasized the lashes. He looked more than he should have, and in that drive, decided that wearing make up could be great fun. He saw how his hair, which he had always worn tied back since it was long enough to be in a pony tail, now hung loosely across his shoulders and shone as the sun came through the van windows.

The journey was leisurely and took most of the day. They arrived at the new park where Nicky was again sent to deal with the booking. This time he felt easier, although the way the middle-aged clerk looked him up and down as he walked into the office disconcerted him a little. He guessed he would have to get used to that in the next few months. He filled out the registration and took the van to the allocated space where he hooked up the electricity and water. It was already early evening.

The hire car which Angela had booked arrived just as Nicky was going back into the van. He took the papers from the delivery driver and felt surprised to see his new name, Nichola, on the documents as second driver. He signed the receipt in that name for the first time, trying to give a feminine flourish to his handwriting. The delivery driver seemed to linger, wanting to talk to Nicky. He guessed why; the long blonde hair was an instant attraction.

He went back into the van, handed the papers to Angela, and told her what had happened. She laughed.

“When I've finished with you, you'll be turning heads everywhere, and you'll love it, every minute of it,” Angela said. “The way men behave around a blonde is something you'll have to get used to. It's good we have this time for you to get used to things gradually. The academics are the worst.”

That evening, Angela showed him how to clean off his makeup, and apply a night cream to his face. They talked quietly into the darkness. Nicky thought they were just chatting casually, but Angela was gathering information steadily for the next phase of his development. She planned to build on things he had a liking for, colors and fabrics, scents and textures, so that his increasing femininity would seem natural and comfortable. She wanted to learn what excited him in women, so that she could include that as well, to build an all-encompassing new personality for the new Nicky.