

Chapter 1 - Nick wants to be a grown up

Nick's eyes were looking downward as he passed the science room door. He was focused on his little sister who would not be quiet. Her face was a glow with anticipation and she beamed with excitement over the prospect of making new friends in this new school.

"Hurry Nick, I'm going to be late!" Olivier said anxiously. Nick nodded, but his pace remained the same. The walls of the buildings were close together and the walkways very narrow. He found it difficult to manoeuvre between them.

"Come on Nick, do you know where you're going? Everyone's in class already." She pointed to the narrow doors now closed with students inside. Not a good start for their first day at Y.A.R. Development School.

"I'll get you there Olly, please be quiet... it's just around this corner" said Nick. As they turned the corner, there was room 19 and Olivier's favourite class, Biology. The door was closed so Nick knocked and opened it. He stood still for a moment, looking around the classroom with his river blue eyes, then turned back to Olivier; "there's not enough room" he said, with disappointment in his voice.

"step aside and let me in" she protested. Not much could stop Olivier. When she was four she stole her brother's bike and rode from the house to the cow paddock 2km away. She thought she could talk to the cows. At 5 she was riding a pony and by the time she was 6 she was racing her dog and climbing trees to talk with the birds. Her love of animals was surpassed only by her enthusiasm for life.

Nick kneeled and looked her in the eyes, then took one hand from her wheelchair and said more solemnly; "There's not enough room". Undeterred, Olivier demanded "then carry me!" But Nick was not strong enough to lift her. "I'm too weak" he said and then turned and walked away. "I've got to get to class" he yelled back. Mrs Dorrington helped Olivier to her desk and the door closed behind them with her wheelchair sitting empty in the heat outside.

Nick was of small stature and rather frail looking. He was the boy with sand in his face at the beach, the boy at the end of the line in the canteen, he was the last to be picked for sports. Nick was that kind of boy. He found the southern heat stifling as he made his way back to class. His mind wandered in this heat and was haunted by a memory from the past. Olivier had taken his bike and ridden to the paddock on one of her quests to speak with the animals. She'd

Comment [DI1]: No interest in Science but it will play a role in what happened years earlier with his mother and the beast.

Comment [DI2]: Reflects the trees in the forest

Comment [DI3]: He will later get lost in the forest. Plus he doesn't really know what he is seeking

Comment [DI4]: Tie this in later to help her in the woods. Also contrasts with Nick's science class.

Comment [DI5]: Have to tie this in somehow at the arc point

Comment [DI6]: She will end up carrying him later

climbed the highest tree. It was marvellous to see her skill at jumping from branch to branch. Nick tried to chase her but his asthma prevented him. He was so angry he could hardly breathe. She was always taking his things. He thought to himself, "I saw her in the tree, I knew it was unsafe. I wanted her to fall." But he reasoned with himself; "It was so high, I couldn't do anything. What should I have done? I couldn't catch her. She shouldn't have taken my bike! It wasn't MY fault, she deserved what she got"

Nick reached his class and opened the door. Mr Bear was in full voice bellowing out something or other when he turned sharply toward Nick "Who are you?!" he demanded "and why are you late?!"

"That's the new boy from up north" called Peter Pine, the school bully "he and his sister arrived today, she's disabled"

Mr Bear with beads of sweat running from his forehead looked disapprovingly at Peter, who was a prickly character unafraid to voice any prejudice he may have. "she's in a wheelchair and he needs to look after her" said Peter referring to Nick.

"That's enough!" said Mr Bear whipping his forehead "What's your name boy?"

"It's Nick sir"

"Well Nick, don't ever be late for my class again. "

"I won't sir"

"Right then. Go and sit next to Peter"

Nobody ever willingly sat next to Peter. Apart from his BO in this heat, he had a way of stinging you if you got too close. Quite a few people had left Peter's presence with more than a few bruises. But Nick didn't care. He was used to being pushed around. As he began to sit Peter moved across the chair and Nick was pushed off balance. He fell on the floor and everyone laughed at his expense.

Mr Bear called

"Quiet! Not making a very good first impression. Who are you again, Nick... who?"

"Nicholas Waters sir, my mother's name is Emily, was Emily Vine. I believe she was in your class years ago"

"Emily Vine?" His face turned pale upon reflection. "Yes. Emily Vine." Then the bell rang for recess and everyone headed for the door. Well, almost everyone.

Comment [D17]: The bell rang for Mr Bear who knew the story of this boys mother and Mr Dargon. He was there as an Ally to watch out for her.

Peter and some other boys remained seated as Mr Bear collected his books and left the room. "So what's the plan Pete?" asked Larry the Lizard. Larry was so named after dropping his books and high tailing it away from Peter when he threatened to 'snap his neck' one day. He looked like a Dragon lizard running but with the fear of a drop tail.

"Are you going to thump him?" asked Larry.

"Not yet" said Peter. "Not yet"

The remainder of the day was uneventful for Nick and passed rather slowly. The summer sun was stifling. It penetrated his skin and clouded his mind. He couldn't wait to get home and change into his swimmers. But he had to collect his sister first.

Olivier's day had been very exciting. She had made a best friend. A girl called Cloe. Cloe had been at the school from Prep and knew everyone. She was a wizard at getting around and knew all the shortcuts to the various classrooms. It was like she'd been there forever. She really paid attention to Olivier and wanted to know all about her. They were together when Nick arrived.

"Is that your Brother?" asked Cloe

"Yes that's Nick"

"He's cute, but he looks a little bothered"

"He doesn't like the heat"

"Come on Olly, lets go" demanded Nick as he lifted her wheel chair and turned it round.

"This is Cloe, she's my friend."

"That's nice" he said "now lets go, come on" and he started rolling Olivier away. Cloe called out "I'll see you again" but Nick couldn't wait to get home and be rid of Olivier.

Nick's dog began barking long before he reached the porch but he had no time to stop and pat Connie, he was on a mission. Olivier wasn't too far behind (she was wheeling herself now) and she welcomed Connie's licks and kisses. Connie jumped onto her lap and she wheeled them both to the wire screened door, which Connie then opened with her nose. Inside Nick had already dumped his bag and stripped off to get into his swimmers. "Where do you think you're going?" asked his mother as she entered the living room. She had beads in one hand and her sandals in the other. She had died her natural blond hair a number

Comment [DI8]: *Hero given a warning.* (Establish Social Stage. Support Character voice theme) (page 3-5) Nick does not understand the role of parent to protect. Believes they get to do what they want. He wants to swim near the river but is not allowed. He must stay home with this sister and look after her. Without knowing it he is already being entrusted as an adult. "Now we want you to look after your sister while we ??? We will not be long and Mrs ? is right next door if you need anything" "But muuummm! I wanted to go for a swim. Why can't you take her with you?" etc. "You are NOT to go swimming anywhere near that swimming hole. It is dangerously close to the river." Sister says theme "Grow Up Nick" "you have to look after me"

Comment [DI9]: Cloe the Crane who will assist her in the forest. But is the fake ally/opponent. Knows the woods well and deceives them.

Comment [DI10]: This will help in the chase scene later in the woods.

Comment [DI11]: The dog will show parents (mother) where to go (river)

of shades, the most dominant of which was auburn. And she was wearing her best sarong.

"I'm going swimming" Nick replied.

"Oh Nick, have you forgotten? Your father and I are attending the festival of the moon tonight. We need you to look after your sister"

"But Muuuuum"

"No Nick, we discussed this. You want us to treat you as a grown up, you must behave like one"

"But I never get to do what I want!" Nick screamed out, stamping his foot. Then taking a puff of his inhaler he added "I wanted to go for a swim. Why can't you take her with you?"

His little sister interjected "*Grow Up Nick*" "you have to look after me"

"And just where were you going to swim?" his mother asked.

Nick replied "apparently there is a really good swimming hole down near Patterson's river". His mother was agast...

"You are NOT to go swimming anywhere near Patterson's river! It is dangerous."

"But I'm not going in the river. The water hole isn't in the River"

"I don't care how close the water hole is to the river, it is dangerous" His mother's response was uncharacteristically serious. She actually sounded like a grown up herself.

Nick relented and promised his mother that he would not go. His parents soon departed for their festival.

Olivier called to Nick from the living room, "Niiick, I need a book from the top shelf, can you please get it for me?" Nick entered and approached the 5ft high bookshelf "which one?" he asked.

"The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, third from the left" she said

"Here, next time get it yourself" he threw the book in her lap and went and grabbed a towel.

"What's the towel for?" asked Olivier

"None of your business"

"You're going swimming! Aren't you?"

"So what if I am!"

"But you promised mum you wouldn't. You have to look after me."

"You'll be fine, you can look after yourself. It's only for a little while."

Comment [DI12]: Social Stage - Hippy

Comment [DI13]: Magical time

Comment [DI14]: Theme stated

Comment [DI15]: As in Patterson's Curse. hehehe

Comment [DI16]: Strangely, at this point Gabriella asked "Is she?"

“No Nick. I can’t look after myself. I’m only a child.” Olivier began to cry, more because her brother was going to leave her than because he was going swimming. “Take me with you?” she pleaded

“It’s hot and I need to go swimming now! You’ll only slow me down”

“I won’t Nick, I have an idea”

Before Olivier’s accident Nick had made a billy cart for the two of them. He’d drawn up the design with meticulous attention to detail. He’d purchased the wood from his pocket money and cut it to exact size and measurement. He assembled it with care and tested it before allowing Olivier to race in it. He’d spent a lot of time and effort to have it complete and operational just one day before her accident. It had never been used.

“I can ride in the billycart and you can pull me along” she said

“No way!” said Nick “I’m not going to pull you in this heat, I couldn’t if I wanted to”

“Then what about Connie?”

Nick knew there wasn’t much that could stop Olivier so he pulled out the billycart and made a harness from some rope in the shed. He loaded her in, took one last puff of his inhaler before placing it in the cart and the three of them set off for the water hole.

You could smell the soft tar of the quiet road melting in the sun. They rode fast but the breeze remained hot. As they turned onto the dirt path leading down to the river they passed Peter Pine and his boys. They were still in their uniform, sitting under a solitary tree, getting some shade from the sun. The dusty dirt flew from the wheels of the billy-cart as Olivier passed by them. Nick applied his brakes and slid the back wheel. Dust billowed toward the gang. His towel was wrapped around his face to protect him from the dust. “Going swimming.” He called out to them. “want to come?”

“Buz off!” replied Peter “I hate the water”

So Nick continued on. They made their way over ‘Seekers Hill’ and rolled toward the river flats. As they approached the edge of the river the temperature dropped a couple of degrees. Many trees grew along its edge. The air was still and quiet. They were a couple of kilometres from the road now. Connie was panting heavily. “She needs a drink of water” Olivier said to Nick, hoping he’d take Connie to the edge.

Comment [DI17]: Shows a skill Nick has that will be used to defeat the beast later in story

Comment [DI18]: The cart will overturn, losing his inhaler. This will cause trouble later

“Not now” replied Nick, looking for the water hole. But Connie was a dog and of course, she did what dogs do. She headed for the river water, with Olivier holding on whilst being towed behind her.

“Nick!” cried Olivier “Help!”

“Not now” he answered back

Connie came to a sudden stop at the edge of the water, much to Olivier’s relief. Nick turned to her “What do you want?”

“Nothing.” She replied despondently. An eerie feeling came over her and she turned to her dog “Do you feel that Connie?” she asked. Connie’s hair stood up and she growled. Olivier could feel a kind of electricity flowing through her body. A bird sat in the tree above them. It was a Crane. Connie barked and it flew away.

“This way” said Nick, “Come on Connie”

“Can you pull me there please Nick?” Connie was standing guard by the river, her hair still raised on her back.

“No. See...you should have stayed home. This is why I didn’t want to bring you” Reluctantly, Nick took the harness from Connie and pulled Olivier to the water hole. He placed her under a cool tree and secured the billy-carts brake.

“Wow! This is great!” he said as he entered the pool of water heated slightly by the relentless sun.

Meanwhile, back by Seekers Hill, Peter Pine was talking to the boys.

“That was the new kid” he said referring to Nick. “What a nerve he’s got, coming to our school, sitting in my seat, using our water hole and what’s worse...taking that retard sister there.”

“Gee I don’t know Pete, it is kinda hot” said Larry, a little short on marbles. “Can we go too? I want to go for a swim.”

“Yesss Pete, me’s too” said Steven Sake, lying on his back soaking in the sun.

“mmm, maybe that’s not such a bad idea” said Pete “Grab your bikes boys, lets go” And off they went, :Pete’s spikey hair blowing in the breeze. Steven’s long arms stretched over the handle bars and Larry bulky but bringing up the rear. It wasn’t long till they arrived.

“Here he is” said Peter, “the new kid. And who’s this here? His sister?” “Hey boys, look at this, the retards in a billy cart.” And they all started laughing.

“What’s your problem?” said Olivier “have you never seen anyone like me before?”

Comment [DI19]: She is an Owl, wise enough to see through him. He is a Porcupine, sharp on the outside but soft underneath

Peter never had seen anyone like Olivier before and he felt threatened. "Grab her rope boys, tie it to my bike"

"What are you doing!?" exclaimed Nick, from the far end of the pool.

"I'm going to take your sister for a ride. Don't worry, I'll look after her" he called to Nick jokingly.

"I don't think so" protested Nick

"Are you going to stop me?"

"She doesn't want to go for a ride"

Olivier pleaded with Nick. "Nick! Don't let them do this. Nick!"

"Of course she does." Said Pete, "She doesn't want to just sit there watching the world go by; I'll have her flying"

Nick was too afraid to stop them, and he really wanted to fit in. He slowly started back toward them.

Olivier was scared and could not understand Nick's hesitancy.

"Don't you dare!" she said to Steven as he began to tie the rope to Pete's bike.

"So So Sorry, si si sis. Thissss iss what you want" Steven had both a stutter and a lisp, he mostly struggled with his esses.

"No, I don't want this!" she screamed. But it was too late, the rope was tied and Pete began to ride.

"Nick!?" called Olivier

He thought about how she was always complaining. She wanted this, she wanted that...

"Please stop!" Screamed Olivier.

"looks like fun" said Larry

"Nick! Please Nick? Please!"

Nick thought about the day she'd taken his bike...

"Nick! Please help me?" Olivier screamed one last time. Nick began to swim now as he raced to save her. The Crane that had been watching from above swooped down at Peter, causing him to swerve. The wheels of the billycart hit a rock and it tipped. Olivier was thrown from the cart and rolled toward the river. Connie barked after her. Nick could not see what was happening as he raced to the pools edge. Olivier slipped over the cliff to the river and was clutching the side dangling over the precipices. The Crane flew down as if to help but Connie barked and Olivier let go. She screamed!

Comment [DI20]: Like an Owl sitting and watching yet able to fly

Comment [DI21]: The Crane actually caused her to fall deliberately

Comment [DI22]: Twice now has he been unable to successfully save her in time

Nick felt the cold air as he exited the warm rock pool and ran to the cliff face. Peter Pine was standing at the edge looking over. "What have you done!" he shouted at Peter. "Olivier?!" he called out. But there was no reply. Nothing. He could not even see her. "What have I done?" he thought to himself. "It was an accident!" exclaimed Peter, looking Nick in the eye. "I hit a rock. I didn't mean to..., I wasn't supposed to..., she wasn't meant to..." Nick wanted to punch Peter but he pushed him instead. Peter lost his balance and slid over the ledge. He was now hanging just as Olivier had been, but Nick was there. "Help me?" Peter pleaded whilst trying to get a foot hold, his legs thrashing about

"Like you helped my sister?" responded Nick

"Help me, I can't hold on." Said Peter

"Then follow my sister" Nick said as he looked around. Connie was growling at the other boys. Something was happening to Steven. He was lying on the ground. Larry was running from the Crane.

"I'm changing" called Peter

Nick turned back and saw Peter's hair become hard like thorns. His nose grew long and hairy.

"What's happening to you?"

But before Peter could answer, and right before Nick's eyes, he turned into a Porcupine and fell to the river below.

Connie yelped and Nick spun around. Steven had turned into a snake and bitten her.

"Ssstop right there" he said to Nick. "Ssssave him or ssssurender"

Nick could not believe his eyes or his ears. He wanted to run. But he could not run home. He could not return without Olivier. "What are you?" he asked Steven, "What is going on?"

I am the Ssssurlpent of thissss ssstory. Your sssstory. Your ssssurpent. Dare to passsssss? Dare to sssstay? Sssswim!"

Nick just wanted everything to be as it had been. Now, like a nightmare, everything had changed. EVERYTHING

Nick turned and jumped after his sister.

Day turned into night as he fell toward the water below. Then night into day and as the surface approached it became night once more. He dreamed of his mother "You are NOT to go swimming anywhere near Patterson's river!" she had

said. "It is dangerous" she had said. If only she knew! Perhaps she had. "Wake up" he heard her say "Wake up!"
Her voice was not the same, "wake up". Something was not right.

Nick opened his eyes to the sound of a man calling him to awaken. At first he thought it was his stepfather as they shared the same intellectual look with glasses and a beard. They were roughly the same height and body shape too. "Who are you? Nick asked, jumping to his feet. He then realised his clothes were not wet and asked, "Where am I?"

The man replied in a rather peculiar voice, "My name is Dargon and you are between two places..." He did not sound quite human. "...Between day and night, past and present, near and far, the beginning and the end."

Nick looked up. He was by the side of the river. To his right was a cliff face ascending so high it hurt his neck to look up. To his left a dark forest with tall trees and a path disappearing within.

"You are here for a reason" said Dargon "or for no reason at all"

"I need to find my sister." Replied Nick

"Are you prepared?" asked Dargon

"Prepared for what?"

"Magic!"

"Magic?"

"For the forest and its magical powers!" Mr Dargon continued..."The forest has the power to transform humans into animals. There was once a female animal that came to this same spot we stand on now. As she approached the water she transformed into a little girl. The winds blew strongly and she began to rise from the ground. She may have made it to the other side had the winds not died down."

"That's not possible" said Nick.

Dargon ignored his comment..."She had not come alone and the thing she longed for had turned against her. It could not carry her home and it never returned to get her. So she made the woods her home and the animals her family. She ruled them as she waited, waited for the return of that one who'd left her imprisoned here".

"Could this be Olivier?" Nick thought to himself. "She only just fell but it might still be her. This man is a bit whacky and this place is quite strange. Why am I not wet?"

Dargon added, "Legend has it that one will come who has the power to travel between both worlds. A human on the other side, capable of remaining human in the jungle

Comment [DI23]: He is talking about himself and the day Nick's mother left him

here. It is said that the animal girl longs for that day when she will have the opportunity to steal her way back home”

“I’m only interested in finding my sister” said Nick

“Your desire is strong” replied Dargon, “I can see myself in you”

You must let me help you in your quest”

“I don’t need your help. I’m not some kid who needs help. I can do this on my own.”

“Forgive me, you do seem grown up. I did not mean to undermine you. Rather I hoped with your help I may also find that which I seek. At the very least, I can offer you a guide to the dark forest.”

Nick wanted to appear strong, “I’m sure I’ll be fine” he said.

“The forest is full of hazards and dangers. You will need a guide.” Replied Dargon as he waved his arm.

Nick could just make out the shape of a bird descending from above. As it landed he could see the bird was the Crane he believed had tried to help Olivier.

“This is Cloe” said Dargon. “She will guide you.”

Comment [DI24]: Because he is his father