

Snowball

As *Bad Girls*' newest inmate, ex-porn star Snowball, she acts tough to survive in Larkhall prison. But in real life Nicole Faraday is an easy-going romantic who melts hearts. 'I'm a girly girl,' she tells Francine Cohen. Photographs: Giles Park

in hell

THIS IS HER FIRST professional photo shoot. In a studio in Shoreditch, London, there's the plethora of people that make these things happen: the photographer and his assistant, the *Saturday Express* picture editor, a stylist, a make-up artist, a PR, and her work experience lady and myself. Nicole Faraday, 25, and until now an unknown actress, is unfazed. She's posing and pouting and giggling over the clothes. In fact, she's taken to it like a duck to water. Which is just as well because this is bound to be the first of many photo shoots this stunning blonde, 5ft 8in ingénue will be asked to do.

Nicole, or Nicky as she says she prefers to be called, has landed not just one, but two plum roles in two of TV's top-rated shows. Next week she hurdes on to our screens as Snowball Merriman, an ex-porn star with a taste for Fifties glamour, in ITV's *Bad Girls*. Then, in September we'll see her as a new medico, Dr Heather Lincoln at Holby General in BBC's *Casualty*. For a girl who over a year ago was claiming the dole, it's heady stuff indeed.

"It's incredible really," she says, still shell-shocked by her sudden success, "I didn't think I had any chance of getting the role in *Bad Girls* because I was told Snowball was a sex bomb with curves and massive boobs. I found out just before Christmas I'd got the role so it was the best ever present."

She'd just finished filming *Bad Girls* and was about to go on holiday to Thailand with friends when her agent phoned and said, "Don't go to Thailand. *Casualty* want to see you."

"I definitely didn't think I stood a chance for *Casualty*. I know they'd been considering all sorts of actresses, you know, names. There were loads of people at the audition and I just thought 'I should have gone to Thailand'. A week later my agent phoned and said, 'Well Dr Lincoln?' I was amazed."

To be fair, although Nicky is extremely pretty with height and hair to match, it's hard to see initially what sets her apart from hundreds of other good-looking young blondes. I look at the test Polaroid shots Giles, the photographer has taken of her and

I can see why she's suddenly 'hot'. The camera loves her and transforms her into something special. Clearly she must have good acting ability as well to be cast in such diverse roles as a doctor and ex-porn star.

She's certainly confident. She's clear about what she wants to look like in her photographs and quite firm if we broach an area of talk that she doesn't want to go into. She's nobody's fool, young Nicky, even if she tells me, "I suppose I am quite romantic.

I go off into my own little dream world, 'Nicky world'. I'm a bit of girly girl really. Completely illogical. I also get confused with technical things and just go 'help!'"

She grew up in Dorset, the eldest of three children in, ironically, a medical family. "My dad's a doctor, my mum's a nurse and my sister, Abigail, is also a nurse. In fact, I'm the only non-medical person in the family. Actually to be honest, I'm a bit squeamish."

Her sister has now done some work experience as a unit nurse on the *Bad Girls* set and is thinking of switching from the National

"Snowball's not hard to get along with — until you find out what she's really like"





Health Service to TV nursing. "My brother Christopher, who's 21, keeps saying 'Get me a job too!' Mum and dad say, 'We've got you to blame for this!'"

It must have been handy to have a family on hand for research for her *Casualty* role. "Absolutely, I phone dad and ask him how to pronounce medical names and medication. My parents are really pleased about *Casualty* as they do think it is a good medical drama. I've always watched it and I was bit daunted on the first day sitting next to Charlie Fairbrother."

She was even more daunted on her first day on the *Bad Girls* set. "I went up to the canteen at lunchtime and I was shaking, I was so nervous. I thought I was going to drop my tray. All these famous people that I'd seen on TV were just sitting there. Thankfully they were all really friendly and made me feel welcome from day one."

On only her third day, she had a massive scene to do with all of the cast. Nicky freely admits she was petrified. "I dreaded it. I'd only done one tiny scene on the telephone on my own before. I hadn't even met most of the actors and I was so worried. It's a scene from episode 14 where I'm in the chapel and I have to do this big born-again Christian spiel about how God changed my life. I get down on my knees and pray and cry and sing a hymn. There were all these major characters that I'd only seen on the telly and I was preaching to them. It felt like I was really on show. It did go well and was lovely because people said that I did a good job. At least everyone got to know me."

If she calls her dad for explanation of medical terms, I wondered what sort of research she did for *Snowball*. "I didn't do any actual research to be a porn star," she jokes. "I did think maybe I should look up a few websites to see how they hold themselves, but a friend advised me against it. I don't think I really wanted to put myself through all that."

Snowball uses her acting ability and her looks to get what she needs. She's very clever and manipulative, using her sexuality and acting skills. She basically uses every trick in the book. "I love her glamour," says Nicky, "and the fact that although she's blonde and plays on her looks, she's actually very intelligent and clued up. I love that."

Snowball has a very definite dress sense – over-the-top Fifties, pure Hollywood. Nicky loves it. "I love her clothes. She's very influenced by Fifties' starlets so although her clothes are modern, they've all got that Fifties twist. It's very Kim Basinger in *LA Confidential*. Nearly all her clothes are labels because she made so much money in the porn industry that she can afford it. She aspires to be a rich glamorous movie star and that's how she dresses. Or, more accurately, how she thinks a movie star dresses!"

In reality, most of *Snowball's* costumes >



Left: Nicole as Snowball with wing governor Karen Betts (Claire King). Right: with *Bad Girls*' Al McKenzie (Pauline Campbell) and Jim Feaner (Jack Ellis)



"People say fame is a hassle — but you have to remember how much you wanted it"

come from the top posh shop, Harvey Nichols. "That was quite a fun shopping experience," says Nick. "She's got far more expensive tastes than me. Or perhaps if I had her money then I'd have more expensive tastes."

She thinks if she met Snowball she'd like her. "I think we'd probably get on very well. She's not hard to like, until you find out what she's really like. Also, I'm quite gullible so I'd be completely sucked in. If someone's nice to me then I tend to respond in the same way."

Her parents are delighted at her progress although they didn't really want her to become an actress. "It's fair to say they wanted me to go into some sort of profession where there wasn't such huge unemployment and depression. They wouldn't let me go to stage school, but by the time I'd done my A-Levels they knew it was what I wanted. I got a place at Guildford Drama College and since then they've been very supportive. I always wanted to act since I was little, I sing as well. In fact, I've done as much singing work as acting. I like to think of myself as an actress and singer. I sing all the time, whatever I'm doing, I sing. I make up little bits of songs and I play the guitar."

She initially got a few jobs — touring in *The Importance Of Being*



Earnest in Italy and some cable TV work, then the roles dried up. "I had nearly a year of doing nothing. My parents were sending me Open University prospectuses. But I never gave up hope, I suppose. I never wanted to take a full-time job because that was like accepting the fact that I wasn't going to be an actress. I took all sorts of jobs and, briefly, I went on the dole. I quickly realised I'd rather do any job than that. It's so soul-destroying and so difficult to live on. I used to go home to Dorset and wonder what it was all about. It's all fate and I assume I wasn't meant to be anywhere until now."

She now lives in Greenwich and has a boyfriend, an actor, who she's not keen to talk about. She goes home to Dorset as often as she can. "If it wasn't for work, I'd live there. I just love the sea and the countryside. Just going for a walk along the beach and feeling at peace with the world, that's marvellous."

She's so excited about all that's happening to her, I wondered if she'd considered what effects fame will have on her. "I always thought it would be great to be photographed when you're out somewhere but people say it's such a hassle," she says. "I think, though, you have to remember how much you wanted success before you got there. I don't know how I'll react to people recognising me and stuff. I think I'll enjoy it. I've always wanted to be respected and appreciated for acting and singing. So fame for doing something is nice. I wouldn't want to be an 'It Girl' who does very little."

There's not much danger of that. Nicole Faraday will begin appearing in *Bad Girls* on ITV1 from next Thursday, 9pm. **5**

PHOTOGRAPHS: GILES HEWIS; (LEFT) NICOLE FARADAY; (TOP) HARRIETT VOT; (RIGHT) STYLING: GAMBRIEL/DAVID LING; (PAGE 10) MICHELLE TILLY