

Stirred Up

ISABEL MORIN

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Cheryl Munro sat in her little red Miata, breathing deeply as she tried to get up the nerve to enter Henderson High. If the girls at the club could see her now, they'd keel over with amazement, or maybe laughter.

She was a stripper, for God's sake. She wasn't afraid to take her clothes off and dance in front of hundreds of people, so surely teaching a bunch of high school students wasn't beyond her?

At this point it didn't matter whether she was ready or not. She needed to get out of the car before she was late. Checking her reflection one last time in the visor mirror, she grabbed her messenger bag and headed for the front doors of the ugly stucco building.

It was too early for any students, but a few other adults were heading to the door as well. Cheryl smiled at them and hoped she didn't look as conspicuous as she felt. Could they tell by looking at her that she was new to all this?

Get a grip, Munro, she ordered herself. You can do this.

The trick was not to let on how nervous she was, or how lacking in confidence. That would just make others question her competence.

She pulled open one of the heavy glass doors and held it for the person behind her, a smiling woman in her mid-fifties with warm eyes.

"Are you a new substitute?" the woman asked as they both passed into the foyer.

"I'm doing my field hours here this semester," Cheryl explained.

"Oh, how wonderful," the teacher exclaimed. "I've had a number of Nevada State students in my classes over the years and I've always enjoyed it. Who are you partnered with?"

"Jason Shaw."

"You're in luck then. He's one of our best. Lots of energy, too. Not like us old folks."

"That's really good to hear, since I'm pretty much at his mercy for the semester. Can you tell me where his room is?"

"Head up that staircase and turn right. His room is just a few doors down on the left. Number two-twelve."

Cheryl thanked her with perhaps too much enthusiasm and then followed the woman's directions, her feet slowing as she neared the classroom. The door was open, the light on, and she could hear the unmistakable sounds of someone writing on a chalkboard.

God, she loved that sound. When she was a kid, she'd sat through every class hoping the teacher would let her write on the board. For her ninth birthday she'd received a child-sized chalkboard they sold at the local toy store. But the chalk wasn't the same. Instead of the silky smooth writing of the school chalk, the toy chalk had hard bits that made it move haltingly over the board.

Whenever she'd played school, using her teacher voice as she lectured one of her friends, the chalk always reminded her it wasn't the real thing.

She smiled at the thought of how much money it was costing her in tuition just to get the good chalk. Then she got a look at Jason Shaw through the doorway and all thoughts of childish frustrations evaporated.

This was the teacher she was partnered with? Since when did hotties become high school teachers?

She stared at him as he stood in front of the blackboard, frowning down at a piece of paper in his hand. He looked to be around thirty, tall and lean, his blue button-down short-sleeve shirt revealing strong forearms, his khaki pants displaying long legs and a fine ass.

For some reason it had never occurred to her that her supervising teacher might be this young, not to mention unmarried, if his ringless finger was any indication. Probably most women would be thrilled, but not her. Even men who should know better ended up hitting on her, and her stomach sank at the thought of having to deal with that on top of everything else this semester.

The object of her disappointment looked up as she took a few steps into the room, surprise and then pleasure showing on his face. Wiping the chalk on his pants, he walked toward her with an easy stride.

"Cheryl Munro?"

His eyes were a warm brown, and they crinkled at the corners as he smiled at her.

The unforced charm took her by surprise.

She cleared her throat. “Yes, that’s me. It’s good to meet you,” she said, shaking his hand firmly in an effort to telegraph that she was all business and not to be trifled with.

“Come on in and we’ll get started.”

Jason tried to cover his amazement as he showed Cheryl around. It was a bit harder to do once he’d pulled a chair next to his desk and they were sitting down.

“So this is your second semester in a school, is that right?” he asked.

He knew for a fact it was, but it seemed easier for the moment to start off with the simple stuff. She seemed pretty nervous, and he was a little taken aback himself.

He didn’t know what he’d been expecting, but it wasn’t someone who looked like her. What were the students going to make of having such a beautiful woman in the classroom?

“Yes, that’s right,” she replied, seeming to relax a bit. “But the last semester was purely observational, so I’m looking forward to the hands-on experience.”

“You’ll definitely have plenty of that. Our classes keep ballooning in size, so it’ll be a big help to have you around.”

He grabbed a folder off the desk.

“You speak Spanish, right?” he asked.

“Yes. I’m not completely fluent yet but I’m comfortable with native speakers.”

“Great. I have a few Spanish-speaking kids, so you’ll be a big help with them. I can’t always tell when they don’t understand me and most of them don’t speak up when they’re confused.”

She leaned forward, her green eyes, which tilted up just a bit, holding him in her gaze.

“That’s exactly why I decided to keep up with my Spanish,” she said. “No one wants to pay for special classes for these kids, but that only sets them up to fail in English-only classes.”

Her cautious demeanor was gone now, replaced by obvious passion. In fact, she radiated it. Then she seemed to realize how forceful she’d been, and she blushed and sat back, subsiding into a more reserved pose.

According to the file he had, she was twenty-six, though she was so small – no more than five foot two – it would have been easy to mistake her for younger. She wore a simple black skirt and royal blue blouse, the kind of thing any teacher might wear. Her red hair was pulled back into a low ponytail, and if she were wearing make-up, it wasn't noticeable. He got the sense she was trying to tone her looks down, but even so everything about her was startling, begging notice.

Unlike many redheads, she had fair skin with only the lightest smattering of gold freckles across her nose and cheekbones. Her cheekbones followed the line of her eyes, making her look faintly exotic, like one of those troublesome faeries in Scottish stories. And she was Scottish. She had to be with hair that red and a name like Munro.

He felt the slightest stirring in his groin and immediately turned back to the file, though he wasn't really seeing it.

"I couldn't agree more," he said, though in truth he'd forgotten exactly what they were talking about.

He opened his lesson plan and pulled it close so that she could see it as well, trying not to think about how good she smelled, or how inviting her wide, lush mouth looked, especially when she nibbled on it.

She crossed her legs and leaned forward, her arm brushing his.

"So you'll be here Tuesdays through Fridays?"

Cheryl nodded. "I need to get as many hours in as possible, because I graduate this semester. I'm hoping I can teach in the spring, if I pass the Praxis exam."

"In that case we'll make sure you get lots of time in front of the students. We'll start this week with you observing, but we'll discuss the lesson planning together and you can help me grade. Next week you can start teaching a few classes, and after a month we'll have you teach at least one class a day. How does that sound?"

"That sounds perfect," she said, and he couldn't help smiling at her excitement.

It was nearly seven-thirty, and the usual din began in the hallways. Locker doors slammed, kids shouted, and soon they began filing into the room and slouching into their seats. Most of them

had their phones out and were busy surfing or texting. He let them do it in homeroom, but he had a no-tolerance policy during class.

The bell rang and he closed the door. Kids were talking amongst themselves, but a number of them were looking at Cheryl and whispering. Before he could explain who she was, Kevin, a good-natured loudmouth, called out.

“Hey Mr. Shaw, who’s that? Your girlfriend?”

The whole class erupted in laughter and all eyes were on him and Cheryl. Well, he’d blown that one. He ought to have quieted them down and explained immediately.

“This is Ms. Munro. She’ll be here every Tuesday through Friday for the rest of the semester. She’ll be helping students one on one as well as teaching. Everyone settle down now so I can take attendance.”

They were a decent bunch of kids and quieted down quickly enough, though they kept looking over at her and whispering to each other. He’d have to do a better job the rest of the day so the students weren’t so distracted. Even so, it would probably take a few days of having her around for them to get accustomed to her presence.

As for how long it would take him, he had no idea.