

Mr McElroy

Galvin Teague is the pseudonym of
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Mr McElroy is their debut novel.

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A novel by Galvin Teague



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Mr McElroy

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You know who you are.

The Blue Cow

The girls giggled and the chaps chuckled as Mr McElroy raised his spectacles a little with his right hand – of which the cuticles were male perfection. The other rested casually in the left pocket of his trousers. Behind him, the smartboard was showing the BBC website's home screen, though it didn't look like it had any further intention of being used at present.

Well done, he thought to himself as one of his remarks resulted in laughter from his group of Dutch first-year students. *You've got 'em in yer pocket*.

Still feeling completely at ease he flicked a lock of greying hair backwards, took the stance of a poet and addressed his class, acting genuinely:

“The thing is, you future teachers,” he paused and let his eyes move slowly from the left to the right, looking every student in the eye – if only for a split second. He smiled. “The thing is, you are going to teach the most beautiful subject; English. In four years' time, you may call yourselves ‘Teachers of the English Language’. You may enrich your pupils' minds with the brilliance of British culture, with syntax, with linguistics. Indeed, you shall put upon them the weight of the *lingua franca* of the earth.”

The class was all ears – even the two flies that had been buzzing around took a rest on the window and rubbed their feet in excitement.

Easy peasy.

“It's like an oil painting,” he declared, throwing his hands forward like a painter envisioning a titillating new project. “Now, let me think of a reason why it is...”

Bursting laughter from the group of students attending Nijmegen's university, in response to their Scottish teacher's silliness.

Ha-ha.

“I’ll tell you exactly why!” Mr McElroy’s monologue continued. “Over the course of the coming four years, you will become experts of the English language and merge all the aspects of it into a better you. You will become better persons by fully immersing yourself in this exquisite language. Let us learn!”

A well-improvised speech continued into a well-improvised lesson. Most of his lessons did. According to Stephen McElroy, one only had to open the BBC News website, converse with his students, discuss current affairs, and the whole process of his students’ intrinsic motivation would follow automatically.

In the coming weeks, ambitious students would ask him to provide them with advice as to what books they should add to their reading lists, some girls would chat him up and giggle at his jocularly. Silent students, though of little interest to him, would suddenly come with pieces of writing he would happily check and give feedback on. They’re all dogs; wagging tails when happy, whimpering during hardship and of course: loyal.

Then, months later, Mr Stephen McElroy would notice their improvement, compliment the class as a whole, and share his thoughts on the process and goals yet to be achieved.

“If you are going to be a teacher, you might as well act like one.

“Dress like one.

“Think like one.

“Indeed, as you proceed with your studies of English, you will come to notice that you will not only speak in English but also think in English. Then, finally, you will even dream in English. As you stand in front of the class, full of confidence, you will think about me and you’ll say to yourself, ‘That Mr M was right after all!’ But that’s alright. I am, as you know, a loving teacher. Just give me a bottle of Glenfiddich and we’re even.”

Again the class burst out in laughter and this time Mr McElroy couldn't restrain himself from doing the same. His perfect set of white teeth shone brightly and stars twinkled in the blue heavenly irises of his eyes. The girls melted. One the male side, opinions about him were split: a few of the lads were envious, some were disinterested, yet most were impressed by their teacher and wanted to be like him.

After another successful lesson, Stephen went to the teachers' room, plumped into his chair, had a look at his inbox and scrolled through it indifferently. Replying to the emails as he imagined he would have liked his teacher to reply if he were a student, he thought he managed to maintain his level of popularity.

His attention went to his phone then. The cancerous cuboid abruptly radiated the indifference out of him, making way for annoyance. Three missed calls from his wife, Sophie. Sighing, he stood up, and as he was marching out of the room he noticed a questioning look from his dear friend and colleague Aidan.

"Be right back," he said to the bald-headed Irishman. "The Hyena needs me."

"Ha!" Aidan whooped.

Stephen had found himself a quiet spot for these sorts of calls. Something born out of necessity since these calls had become a regularity over the past few weeks and their content was not to be heard by colleagues or students. Not that it included anything illicit; most of the times the reasons for her calling were rather unnecessary, sometimes even ridiculous. Then again, he also knew how gossip easily seeped its way through the corridors and he would not want to give any of his colleagues the opportunity to create bogus rumours. Aidan was a straight-shooter and Irish; he wouldn't understand.

He looked at his watch, a gift from better times. It told him that he had ten minutes until his next class. Again he looked at his phone.

Better get it over with.

She picked up immediately.

“Why are you ignoring my calls?”

Hello to you too...

“Hi dear, I was busy teaching. It’s kinda part of the job y’know,” he answered, unable to suppress a certain level of sarcasm. “What’s up?”

What could it be that caused this episode of the crazy bitch show?

“I just wanted to let you know that dinner plans have changed since our son won’t be joining us for dinner *again*. I mean, really Steve, you should have a talk with that boy.”

Deep fucking sigh.

“Oh for fuck’s sake,” Stephen exhaled. “Again? What is up with him lately? If we don’t get that boy in line, he’ll end up in some back alley. Really, I should have a talk with him.”

“I mean it, Steve.”

“Alright, but I really gotta go now Soph, I’ve got classes to teach. I’ll see you tonight. Love you.”

Are you bloody kidding me? Three missed calls and accusations of ignoring her over bloody changed dinner plans? And the boy, he’s a teenager, of course he’s going to cancel dinner! You should be glad if you see him a couple of times per week in the upcoming years.

Yet Stephen delighted in the game of the brain, inwardly admiring his jolly response to his cranky wife; the dopamine released merely by a play of words. Also, by thinking of his son, he found himself thinking back to the time when he too was young, in the prime of his life, roaming the streets of Glasgow with his mates, hormones pumping through every vein.

On his way back to the teachers’ room he bumped into Helga.

“Half past one Stephen, isn’t there a class to teach?” she asked.

“Just nipping into the teachers’ room to put away my phone, we wouldn’t want to set a bad example, would we Helga?” he jokingly remarked as he was already walking past her, hoping to avoid another

snide comment. He hated her. With this bitch you always had to watch out not to be stabbed in the back; everything about Helga was fake. Well, if only those breasts were, that might've saved those saggy bastards.

Stephen knew she was eyeing his job as Department Coordinator. He didn't even particularly like this part of the job and its unnecessary workload, but it paid nicely and he would do anything to prevent her from grabbing that position.

Arriving on the second floor, he walked towards the classroom. What subject was he about to teach again? Wednesday afternoon... Must be British Culture and class 1B then. Sitting on tables and window sills, it was indeed that class that was waiting for him. His memory rarely failed him, as far as he could remember. Most of his students were on their phone, some were talking, in Dutch of course. When would they finally realise that only actually *speaking* English would improve their English speaking abilities?

While he was greeting some of the lads of whom he was becoming less indifferent, an annoying high-pitched voice forced him to look back over his shoulder.

"Siiiiir, you're late!" the voice screeched.

Go fuck yourself, he thought at first, but then he noticed it was the attractive Turkish lass (*what's her name again?*) and changed tack.

"I know, I know," he said with a smile that could break hearts. The lads took their seats as he casually dropped his suitcase on his desk, took out a pile of papers, put his suitcase on the floor and sat on his desk in a gentlemanly manner. He adjusted his spectacles, looked around (a few girls were quickly applying make-up) and got the attention of the class.

Alright, big man. Improvise.

"You won't believe why it is I am late! ... Well, would you like to know?"

Silence. Then a blonde-haired fellow whose name Stephen did not know chuckled, "Yes."

Stephen smiled. Then he spoke passionately about how, last week, he had spent the whole of his free afternoon copying his schedule and his planning from his diary into his iPad. He had set an alarm one hour and fifteen minutes prior to his lessons so that he would always be in time, even if he had to leave from home, as it was a forty-five-minute journey to university. Now, what had he mistakenly done? Indeed, he had set his alarm just one-quarter of an hour before the lesson, at one fifteen that was, today. Luckily, overzealous as he was, he was already at university. Otherwise, he wouldn't even be here at all.

"Anyway," he concluded, clearing his throat, "I am here. You are here. But, most importantly... *I am here.*"

His spectacles were already perfectly in place but nevertheless, Mr McElroy adjusted them and started his lesson on British politics.

Stephen spoke ever more passionately. He pointed out numerous ways to immerse oneself in the intriguing world of the House of Lords, where to look on the BBC website, the pros and cons of the voting system, canvassing, and so forth.

As he spoke, the girls' hands took notes more rapidly than gossip permeated the hallways. Their faces were a concoction of fake devotion and fear of not keeping up with his monologue. Self-doubt filled their hearts; sometimes because the difficulty of the subject was disheartening, perhaps also because Mr McElroy was always observing them with those piercing blue eyes.

At any rate, they wrote voraciously; they were taking notes lengthier than his speech, with a variety of colours envied by the rainbow itself.

Every now and then, another high-pitched, "Siiiiiiir, not so fast please!" would interfere with his monologue. He would pause for a second, look at the lads and show a facial expression of, *I know exactly how you feel*. Which he did.

The best way to describe Mr McElroy when teaching British Culture was that he did so in a musing, semi-meditative state. Within the cultural

context, he could improvise in a relaxed manner, knowing that everything he said was gold to the fresh batch of students. On occasion he made a joke to keep their attention, at other times he challenged them with a difficult question.

A little less than ninety minutes had passed as the lads closed their course books with a thud and the girls finished their final notes.

It was ten past three when, cup of coffee in hand, Stephen McElroy made his way into the teachers' room. Startled by three faces staring at him he almost dropped his hot cup. Two female faces were smiling at him, his buddy Aidan had a highly serious expression; trouble.

Next to Helga's fake smile and Aidan's serious expression was Emily.

Emi-fucking-ly. She was approximately his age, had her hair styled like a youngster, dyed blonde, auburn lipstick-lips and a smile that was even worse than fake: sincere. This wasn't just ordinary hatred, he knew. This was pure loathing, genuine abhorrence. She was one of those women whom he liked to refer to as world-savers. And when she spoke... God Almighty, when she spoke... When Emily spoke it was like a chattering of chickens were begging for attention, a cacophony of bock-bock-bock-bock-bock.

Emily was still smiling sincerely when Helga addressed Stephen: "Come sit down with us Stephen, will you?"

With bewilderment in his eyes, he went over to the table, taking his time to put down his suitcase.

"Something the matter?" he asked. He sat down, took off his glasses and started wiping them.

"Just remember we're here to help you, Stephen," Emily spoke kindly.

"What are you even talking about?" Stephen asked, already becoming agitated.

“Rumour has it, Stephen, that you are acting a bit too informal around some of the female students. Do you recognise this behaviour in yourself?” Helga spoke solemnly.

“Rumour has it? Who are you, the editor of the Daily Mail?” Stephen’s blood temperature started to rise.

“We’ve actually heard it directly from students, Stephen,” Emily explained. “It occurs that they have the feeling that you are favouring some of the female students based on their looks.”

Stephen, slightly taken aback, took a moment to regain his composure.

“No, I actually do not recognise this behaviour of which you speak and I can’t but wonder why all of a sudden you are taking a bunch of students’ feelings for gospel,” Stephen snapped, his eyes fiery.

“Of course we aren’t,” Emily said with deer-like eyes.

“We just thought it would be best to voice our concerns directly to you. This way you know about it and you can still change things for the better,” Helga added, smiling.

“Listen, there is nothing wrong with the way I teach, alright? I’m the Department Coordinator for Christ’s sake!”

“We know and we understand if the workload is becoming a bit too heavy for you.”

That’s it... gotcha. At least Helga’s motive was clear to Stephen now. He would play along and leave her in the dark about his thoughts about her.

“Don’t you worry about that, dear Helga. You’ll be the first to know if that would be the case. I’ll evaluate my behaviour in the classroom and I’ll do my utmost to prevent such negative feelings from students ever to arise again.”

Emily’s face lit up like a Christmas tree; she had done another good thing. Helga’s had that dark smile chiselled into her face. She looked at her phone and stood up.

“Time for me to head home, enjoy the rest of your day everyone,” she said. Emily followed her like a dog on a leash. Normally Stephen was firmly against any surgical corrections regarding imperfections; our flaws make us human. In this case, however, he had to acknowledge that some implants could work wonders for the two bottoms leaving the room.

All this time, Aidan hadn’t said a word. He had simply sat down and watched Stephen like a hawk, observing every facial expression, taking mental notes of every tiny detail.

Stephen stood up, threw his empty cup in the bin, and made himself a new cup of utterly mediocre coffee.

“The complete nonsense those two sometimes come up with, eh?” Stephen remarked to Aidan, facing away from him, stirring his coffee. “They even managed to drag you into it. These wooden coffee stirrers are bloody useless aren’t they, I mean—”

Stephen turned around and suddenly found himself inches away from Aidan’s face. His eyes were smouldering.

“Whoah, you startled me there Aidan,” Stephen said, putting his cup down on the counter next to him. “Have you by any chance bought a new cologne, pal?”

Aidan grabbed Stephen’s shoulder and pushed him forcefully against the wall.

“You may easily fool everyone here, but I see right through it all Stephen,” he said, bringing his face close to Stephen’s. “Emily told you a rumour but you don’t know half of the stories that surround your person. You’re my friend, but I know there’s something going on. If one of those more severe rumours turn out to be true, we, Stephen, *are* gonna have a problem indeed.”

“Christ Almighty, Aidan, you really ought to get l—”

He'd wanted to say *laid* but stopped himself midsentence as Aidan's eyes were literally on fire now, and he realised it wasn't the wisest thing to say in the context at present. He finished his sentence:

"lower work pressure! You work industriously and I can honestly say that I am proud of you. Now, let us stop this nonsense. You finish your work, I will do mine and we'll drink on the truth; first round is on me."

"Grand," Aidan said, still seeming wary.

Mildly worried, Stephen sat down at his desk in the teachers' room. He took his tablet and opened his email. When he saw the email at the top, his eyes bulged in shock, making him instantly press the standby button on top of his iPad. The screen turned black again. He looked around discreetly, ensuring no one could see either him or his tablet. Aidan, with a shiny, gilded nameplate saying 'A. O'Shea' perfectly placed on his desk, eyed him from the other side of the room. Stephen smiled and winked at him in return. Aidan continued working.

She had mailed him. The subject was 'Xx'. The mail had an attachment.

No one around.

Cursing himself for his stupidity he allowed the thrill of curiosity to conquer his conscience and opened the mail. There was no text. The attachment was a video.

Looking for his earplugs in his suitcase, he started a casual whistle, realised it was rather conspicuous and finished the song's lyric he had been whistling by softly singing the remainder of words. He triple-checked whether his earplugs were actually connected to the iPad, making sure that sound would only be audible to his ears. He started the video.

Oh my God.

He stopped the video after five seconds.

Fuck.

He restarted the video.

It was her. Of course, it was her. God Almighty, it was her.

Oh my fucking God.

An almost fiendish yet melodious sound entered his ears. In ecstasy, Stephen watched how she had managed to create something so incredibly sexy that he was incapable of thinking.

She had recorded a video of herself. The room was dark. She had tampered with the video so that a vague dark, reddish-black glow lessened the vividness.

On the high tunes of sexiness, she danced; her hips were moving more sensually and fluently than waves kissing the shores of Scotland. Her body out-undulated the seas. It screamed voluptuousness.

He watched as she sensually opened her robe, revealing the naked flesh of her crudely ripe body, yet, unfortunately, leaving anything over-eigheten to the imagination. Then the robe enclosed her body again as she clutched her own neck. The expression on her face was one of pure lust. Stephen's skin was singing ecstasy. She grasped her hair with the other hand and opened her mouth; she started moaning.

Suddenly the frame paused, then the same frame repeated itself. It was tantalising.

Realising he wasn't alone in the room he pressed the tablet's standby button again and looked up. Aidan was eyeing him again.

"Everything alright there, lad?"

Stephen knew his facial expression was still anything but casual, so, sighing, he said:

"Taxes, pal... Taxes."

"Ha!" Aidan whooped. "I know exactly how you feel!"

Ha! You wish.

On his train ride home, eyes closed, he went over the video again in his mind. Never had someone sent him something so arousing. He knew how to charm women and had definitely slept with plenty. Oh yes, life

had been kind to him, at least physically. But this succubus! This taunting desire... She was just so sexy... How old was she? Twenty-three? Twenty-four? He, almost fifty-one, living with the Hyena, seeing his dear son Lucas turn into a contemporary version of himself...

Jesus Christ... He was twice her age. It was wrong. It was wrong, wrong, wrong.

But he wanted her.