

MUTUAL ADMIRATION (!)

NIGHT ...

(I LIKE YOU. HEY I LIKE YOU TOO)

By

Paul Henry Lewellan

WHY I LIKE IT: Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes...

“Mutual Admiration Night,” by Paul Lewellan is as if Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? was left on a cliffhanger of consent – where the fun and games of playing with a newly married couple are gone and the agency of a broken couple is tossed upon the wife.

There are the age-old tropes of college professors and their dalliances strewn about, the conceptions of a neglected wife mixed in, just the slightest of hints 60’s and 70’s erotica littered throughout (I would go so far as to say some conceptual styles of Bukowski, Burroughs, or even Chuck Palahniuk (I recalled the ending of Invisible Monsters while reading...)), and certainly the demonstrable games that we play with each other to get to the ends to each other’s means.

This is a story both entertaining and worth reading. The depth, while somewhat in the shallows, is enough to get you thinking about the mindset of the main character, Meredith – who the author, rightfully, graced with the most agency among the bunch of degenerates.

Often, we talk about those in the intellectual community sitting in their ivory towers.

Here is a story that certainly has them rolling around in vices, cock-medicine, and mud.

Enjoy.

QUALITY QUOTABLE *(for the love of language...)*

When Donald taught at Nixon State, students and ex-students frequently stopped. Mutual Admiration Nights, Meredith called these visits. Her husband was classically trained, worldly, witty, and (in a bear-like way) handsome. Their liquor cabinet overflowed with small batch bourbons, premium gins, and row after row of single-malt scotch. According to legend, when Donald won the MacArthur Fellowship, he'd spent the \$625,000 grant on stocking his wine cellar. He'd actually invested in a big box liquor store close to campus and provided start-up money for a micro-distillery run by former students. He was never without spirits.

Mutual Admiration Night

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Meredith wanted to kick off her shoes, pour herself a Diet Coke, and nap until Donald returned from campus. Then she'd microwave leftover vegetarian lasagna from the freezer. After supper and a leisurely bubble bath, she planned to seduce him. They hadn't fucked since the move, and she was wound up tight.

On the way home from the office, stopped at the traffic light at Five Points, she got his text: *Michael E on campus. Invited for supper. Cheesy biscuits, please? D.*

Any chance for a romantic evening evaporated. She would bake biscuits and play the hostess. Her husband would entertain and pontificate as only he could. No sex tonight.

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"You remember Michael, don't you?" Donald asked when she walked into their kitchen. She shook her head, as if to suggest she didn't, but, yes, Meredith remembered Michael Evans. She remembered him well.

While Meredith pulled milk, butter, and shredded cheese from the refrigerator for the biscuits, her husband finished stuffing the pork loin, "Michael's interviewing for an adjunct position starting in January. I wanted to give him some tips."

"Naturally," she said indulgently as she combined the flour, salt, and baking soda.

As an undergrad at Nixon State, Meredith enrolled in Dr. Donald Morrisson's multi-section Introduction to World Literature course. His thin texts on literary criticism were already staples on college campuses. She joined his cadre of admirers when he held court at the campus coffee house, Buzzed on the Hill. Donald—early-thirties, urbane, and married—stood six feet tall with straight black hair and a commanding voice. She was a mousey freckle-faced full-figured freshman from Green Bay.

Michael arrived early, dressed in a pale blue oxford Polo shirt, Hilfiger Chinos, and Sperry Topsiders. When Donald introduced them, Meredith feigned ignorance. "I know we've met," Michael insisted. "A couple times."

"I would remember if we had," she assured him.

“At the Spring Poetry Slam my first year of grad school. You would have been a sophomore.”

She shook her head. “You don’t look familiar.”

“Michael served as the master of ceremonies,” Donald reminded her.

“No, he didn’t,” Meredith insisted. “The master of ceremonies had a flaming red Mohawk, tattooed arms, and yards of attitude. Everyone called him Magic Mike. He dealt drugs to pay for grad school.”

“Innocent until proven guilty.”

“You were Magic Mike?”

“Not if the interview committee asks.”

That amused Meredith. “I should put in the biscuits.”

“Not yet. Let’s retire to the back porch.” Donald herded her out of the kitchen.

“The pork loin has another half hour.” Donald was used to being in control. Usually Meredith accepted that. Tonight? It annoyed her.

Meredith’s sophomore year she abandoned her strict Baptist upbringing and hesitantly began dating. Jocks found her too cerebral. Frat boys called her The Ice Queen. Her new roommate, a lapsed Lutheran from Milwaukee, suggested she drink more beer “to loosen up.” Instead she acquired a taste for single barrel bourbon on the rocks.

Her junior year, she enrolled in English Romantic Poetry. Four weeks into the fall term, she got up the nerve to crash one of Donald’s legendary Friday night parties. She argued with him about Lord Byron’s bad boy image until 2 a.m. and matched him shot for shot of scotch. She refused to sleep with him because he was her professor, thirty-five, and still married to his second wife. Meredith was twenty-one and a virgin.

On the porch Donald opened the wine Michael brought, a Barossa Shiraz-Viognier. Meredith found it full-bodied, crisp and complex. “The second time we met,” Michael told Meredith, “was at Donald’s birthday party after he and Janis divorced. You crashed it. At least he didn’t remember inviting you. You wore a red leather micro skirt. He asked me to find out your name.”

“The Old Fart should have known my name. I’d been in his class for a month! And it wasn’t the first class that I’d taken from him.”

Her anger amused Donald. “The thigh-high boots got my attention, but it was your command of Byron that captured me.”

“Bullshit,” she said. “You thought I was a hooker your grad assistants hired for your birthday.” For the party, Meredith bought the tiny calfskin skirt from an on-line adult catalogue and borrowed the boots and a black tank top from her roommate. Suddenly, as if everything became clear, she pointed to Michael. “You were the guy in the buzz cut and the 501 jeans asking me all the questions.” Before he could answer, she added, “I thought you were hitting on me, but then you left the party early with an androgynous blonde with perfect teeth.”

“Antony. My lover at the time. I’ve always preferred women, but I’m not committed to a single sexual orientation.”

“How ecumenical of you.”

“Ecumenical. That’s good,” he laughed.

Donald interrupted them. “I’ll put the biscuits in.” He motioned for Meredith to stay seated. “You two can talk.” He chuckled. “You know, Michael, she still has that red leather skirt. Maybe she’ll model it for us?”

“Only in your dreams, Dr. Donald Morrisson.” She called out after he disappeared into the house. Still fuming, Meredith poured another glass of wine.

I'm saving that little number for my second husband, she thought.

Michael waited for her to make eye contact. “The Old Man tells me you’re a Corporate Writer for Modern Woodman.”

She didn’t sense the condescension she typically got from Donald’s colleagues when they found out she did technical writing. “Modern Woodman is a good company. The work is interesting.”

“Good business writing is like poetry,” Michael said, “clear, concise, nothing wasted, able to move the reader.”

“Exactly!” Meredith noted his blue eyes. Unlike Donald’s other prodigies, Michael was attentive without being cloying. “I understand the interview opportunity came unexpectedly.”

“It’s been scheduled for weeks.”

“My husband suggested otherwise.”

“I called Donald when I got the news. He started planning tonight immediately.”

“Planning...?”

Donald popped his head out the porch door. “The roast is done. I’ve decanted another wine, don’t dawdle.” His face was flushed.

He’s taken Cialis.

By the time they got into the kitchen, Donald had plated the pork. Meredith moved over to the cutting board and began slicing tomatoes.

“Michael, why don’t you help her toss the salad,” Donald suggested. He handed a cored red pepper to him along with a knife.

After the salad was tossed, Meredith herded the two men into the dining room and pulled out the hot biscuits. When she joined them, Michael motioned to the table spread with food. “Do you always eat like this?”

Meredith passed him biscuits, butter, and a small jug of local honey. “My husband has a healthy appetite.”

“How do you manage to keep your figure?” Michael seemed genuinely curious, though it might have been the wine talking.

“I joined the Y when we moved here. I took racquetball lessons and aerobics classes while I looked for a job.” Meredith had lost twenty-five pounds from the stress of moving. “Now that I’m working again, I had to quit the racquetball. I still do aerobics.”

“You look....” Michael searched for the right word. “Fit.”

“Fit? That’s the best you can do?”

“I just meant...,” he sputtered. “Never mind.” He shook his head. “The Old Man has let himself go.”

Meredith never called him The Old Man like the others did, and certainly not after she’d moved in with him. “He’s thrown himself into this new job, but he always has time to eat. He’s put on ten pounds since we got here. And he’s started smoking again.”

“The new diet begins tomorrow,” her husband said as he pushed away from the table. “Time for cognac, but first I have to find where we unpacked the glassware.”

After Donald left, Michael asked, “Is something wrong?”

“I’m worried about his cholesterol. He’s not taking care of himself.”

“Well, he wouldn’t make weight if the dual meet was tomorrow,” Michael joked. Donald wrestled at 184 in college. Now he topped the scales at 245.

“Were you a wrestler?” Michael looked like she imagined Donald must have looked as a young man.

“I wrestled at 165.” He slapped his stomach. “Put on a few pounds since then.”

“Well, you still look...fit,” she teased. Her face felt warm. Her heart rate elevated.

In July before her senior year, Meredith caught Donald in bed with a Tanzanian PhD candidate from the African Studies department. She switched her major from English to Business and told him they were done.

In October he convinced her to meet him at Buzzed on the Hill. After lattes he had his first heart attack. She rode in the ambulance and stayed beside him until they took him up to surgery. Doctors removed the blood clot and put in a stent. She visited every day.

“It’s warm in here,” Meredith observed. She removed her suit jacket and carefully draped it over the back of the chair as Michael watched. She unbuttoned the top buttons of her blouse.

“I found the glasses!” Donald called out from the other room.

Michael leaned across the table. “He’s trying to get us drunk.”

“Probably,” Meredith mused. “Would that be so bad?”

“Sometimes people do rash and impulsive things when they are drunk.”

“That’s the only way I do rash and impulsive things.”

“If you drink to do impulsive things, they’re not impulsive.”

“Now you’re fucking with me.”

“On the contrary,” he explained, “I’m trying to understand you.”

Meredith took a breath. “I got drunk before my first poetry slam and again when I crashed Donald’s party. I had a shot of whiskey before every one of his classes until mid-term when I realized I had the highest grade in course.”

That amused Michael. “What rash and impulsive thing have you planned tonight?”

Donald burst back in before she could answer. “I’ve decanted Cuvée Jean Godet in the living room where we can be more comfortable.” Meredith began clearing the table. “We can do that later,” he snapped, “after our guest has left.” By *we*, he meant, *her*.

In the living room the cognac and three crystal brandy snifters rested on the burlled oak coffee table in front of the burgundy leather couch. Donald had lit the fireplace. He motioned for Michael to sit on one end of the couch. He ushered Meredith uncomfortably into the center space.

The men talked about the power brokers in the English department. Their conversation drifted into a comfortable kind of drowsiness as the fire warmed them.

Meredith considered Michael’s unanswered question. *What impulsive act have I planned?* She slipped open another button on her blouse so that her lace bra peeked out. Neither man noticed.

“Donald,” she said, turning her back on him. “I need a rub.”

“Of course.” He gently massaged her shoulders, while he discussed the adjunct position. Michael watched as she leaned back into her husband and softly purred her appreciation. Donald’s right hand drifted to her breast.

“Your blouse,” her husband whispered, “it’s in the way.”

“Michael’s here....”

“All the more reason to remove it.” He reached around and she allowed him to unbutton the remaining buttons. She pulled the tails from the waist of her skirt. He positioned Meredith facing Michael. “Do you find my wife attractive?”

“You know I do.” His answer hung in the silent room for a moment.

Donald chuckled. “Well...?”

Michael leaned in to kiss her but hesitated—

“Please,” she urged. He kissed her, softly, and when she didn’t pull away, he kissed her again. “More,” she whispered.

Michael ran his fingers through her hair, gripping the auburn curls and drawing her closer. He eased his other hand under her bra, curled the white lace cup back under her breast, and played with the exposed nipple. Meredith made soft mewling sounds.

“Now you have to stop,” she said finally, pushing him away.

He stopped, lowered his hands, and looked to her husband. He raised his eyebrows expectantly.

“I know the problem—” Donald eased the blouse off her shoulders, pulled the sleeves from her arms, and tossed it on the coffee table. “You’re overheated.” She adjusted her bra cup to cover her breast. “Feel better?”

“Definitely.” She read Michael’s face. “I’m not sure I can....”

“Can what, my dear? Kiss another man?” Donald chuckled. “You just did.”

“He wants more than a kiss.”

“Any sensible man would....”

“That would be cheating....”

“Your husband has cheated on every person who’s ever cared about him,” Michael offered, “including you, his first two wives, and me.”

“Oh, I know that.”

“You know...?”

“How naïve do you think I am?” She sat up straight. “My husband took this position in hopes of plowing new fields.”

Donald pushed the bra straps off her shoulders and began rubbing out the imprints in her skin. “Relax, dear. Let me work some of that tension out.” She crossed her arms protectively as she studied their guest.

“He underestimated the feminist climate here. Plus, he’s overweight, well past his prime, and can’t get it up without chemistry.”

“Harsh words.” Donald didn’t seem angry.

“My husband relies on sexual technique, tricks, and flattery, but young women these days are not as easily fooled.”

“You deserve better,” Michael agreed.

She reached behind her back, released the clasp, and peeled the bra from her breasts. “I do.” Michael leaned in to lick her nipple, then grasped her bare breast when she arched her back to push it against his tongue.

Her husband watched his protégée kiss, suck, and tease his wife’s breasts. She pulled him closer, kissing and stroking the top of his head. Michael moved to her neck, then to her open mouth, their tongues intertwined.

Donald sipped his cognac, excited by their hunger. He pushed the coffee table away to give them space. And when the time was right, he knelt down, unbuttoned the

waistband of her skirt, tugged it over her hips as she raised up, and pulled it down to her ankles. He removed her heels and set them aside with her skirt.

“You are being a very naughty woman tonight, my dear.” Before she could formulate a response, he added, “I like that.”

Michael’s mouth covered hers, while his hands played roughly with her breasts. Her husband licked her toes, then worked his way up her leg. When his hands stroked her inner thigh, she squealed in pleasure.

Michael’s hand moved between her legs, and she opened them for him. She was wet and breathing heavily. Donald ministered to her legs as their guest abused her pussy. She touched first one of the men and then the other. She moaned when Michael found her clitoris.

Donald nipped, bit, and clawed, impatiently ripping away the pantyhose. When he exposed her black lace panties, he roughly pulled them aside and plunged two fingers inside her.

“Oh!” Meredith yelped, excited, angry, and aroused. “Oh,” she said again, and again. “Oh-h-h-h-h-h.” The men paused to watch her release.

Michael’s fingers replaced her husband’s, and soon she came in a series of orgasms. Only then did the men pause to catch their breath.

“Are you sure you want me to do this,” Michael finally whispered. At first Meredith thought he was speaking to her, but then she realized he was staring at her husband. Out of the corner of her eye, Meredith saw Donald nod his consent. Michael stood up and removed his pants. She thought his penis was enormous, but maybe it was only because Donald’s was small.

“Would you like Michael to make love to you, my dear?”

“Yes,” she answered before she could think about it. “But what about you?” she finally thought to ask.

“It would be a generous act to share your body with our guest. I can wait my turn.”

Michael was naked by then. He held out his hand and helped her up from the couch and lowered her to the rug. He kissed her toes, working his way up her legs, slowly, passionately, patiently, until she tore away the remainder of her hose and panties, and he entered her. She reveled in his power and authority.

Donald’s voice commanded, “Roll over,” and she did, rising up from Michael, still impaled on his giant cock.

Now her husband was naked, too. He guided her into a sitting position, her knees drawn up to either side of Michael’s chest. Donald straddled him behind her and began kneading her breasts as she rode their guest like a drunken cowgirl. She came again, in waves, and fell forward, spent against the young man’s chest.

“Roll over,” Donald ordered. Reluctantly, she did.

She lay back on the floor as Michael slowly began again, stroke after stroke, driving his cock into her. She wondered why he hadn’t come. Donald never lasted this long. She worried that she was a poor lover.

But her worries subsided as his pace increased, with long firm strokes, accelerating until he was pounding into her. But before she could come again, he stopped. Michael waited. “Now,” he finally said.

Meredith watched in fascination as her husband lowered himself onto Michael. She felt Donald's weight pressing down as he entered Michael from behind. And then the two men began moving in unison. As Donald stroked into Michael's ass, Michael stroked into her pussy. She realized what the evening was really about and began cursing, calling them *fuckers* and *bastards* and all the words she'd heard people speak but never uttered in her life. This further aroused the men and her. And they didn't stop until the three of them all came, and the men collapsed on top of her.

"Get off me!" she ordered when she caught her breath. And they did, laughing, and snorting, and wrestling each other. She pushed her husband back against the couch. He was having trouble catching his breath, and she was disgusted by his weakness.

"When were you going to tell me?"

"I was afraid if I said something, you'd say no," Donald whined.

"It's my right to say no!"

She turned to Michael. His face flushed. His nostrils flared. His eyes locked on hers. "What else don't I know about tonight?" And he told Meredith what he planned. And her eyes widened. And her pulse raced. She licked her lips.

"But I won't do anything you don't want to do."

"What about my husband?" she finally asked.

"Look at him, he's creaming himself thinking about watching us." Donald had begun stroking his cock, trying to bring back his erection. "If you agree, then you'll finally know."

"Know what?"

“Know whether your husband is worth the trouble.” He pulled her closer and kissed her. “And you’ll know if you want to see me again.”

“Well then,” she said urgently, “we should get started. It’s late, and I have to work in the morning.”

Hours later, she awoke, naked and alone, in her bedroom. The sun was up.

She moved painfully into the master bathroom and took stock in the mirror. Her vagina was bruised, and her anus swollen. There were rope burns on her arms, and her face was covered with dried cum. A cell phone number was written on her left breast with a red Sharpie.

She cautiously looked down the stairs. Donald was in the kitchen cooking pancakes. Michael was gone. *Pity*, she thought.

Meredith showered until the hot water ran out. In the mirror she looked at the faded number written on her breast. Still naked, she walked to the bedroom window, picking up her cell phone on the way. She threw aside the curtains. *Maybe I should call him*, she mused. *If he hasn’t left town, we could do lunch.* Then she remembered his job interview. She began softly humming as she dressed for work. *We could go out for drinks to celebrate.*

AUTHOR’S NOTE: *Decades ago my Master Thesis had the catchy title of “Power and Identity: Manifestations of Black and White Power” and drew heavily on the work of Michel Foucault. When accused of seeing power in everything, Foucault told people that was not true. He did not see it there; it was there. And, of course, that’s what “Mutual Admiration Night” is about, power in its many manifestations. Power is the ability to act. According to Foucault, it allows a person “to modify, use, consume, or destroy.” That, too, is what this story is about.*

As a craft beer aficionado I try to include beer in every piece of fiction. This story fails to do that. The characters preferred wine, so the reader has to make due with a Cuvée Jean Godet cognac. It was a tough call.

The earliest author to influence my writing was Harlan Ellison, especially his love stories like "A Boy and His Dog" and "Love Ain't Nothing But Sex Misspelled." My current favorite writer is Martha Wells with her Murderbot series. Sometimes when my wife Pamela reads my fiction she worries about her choice of husbands, but she's stayed with me for 41 years. I'm a lucky man

AUTHOR BIO: Paul Lewellan retired from education after fifty years of teaching. He lives and gardens in Davenport, Iowa, with his wife Pamela, his Shi Tzu Mannie, and their ginger tabby Sunny. He has recently published fiction in *Kennings Literary Journal*, *True Chili*, *Jupiter Review*, *Blood and Bourbon*, and *Holy Flea Lit*. Although he doesn't believe life begins at 70, it does get more interesting.