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AFF The narrator's relationship with Peter is a trying to outdo your sibling relationship with an attractive older man and he regards her as a relief from his problems in his current marriage. The narrator's sister married a weedy academic professor and the narrator is dating a muscular academic profession which between her and her sister is considered the better of the two academic professor types. The narrator eventually realizes that she does not have the "inordinate affection" she thought she had.

Peter is having difficulties with his wife and having a love affair with a young student is letting him have temporary breaks from his marriage. "It was a silly sad thing to do, in the first place, to confuse mere passing academic ambition with love: to try and outdo my sister Clare." The narrator stating this above shows the root of the reason she was in love with Peter because she wanted to outdo her sister's relationship with her professor. Peter being a muscular academic professor makes him attractive because "everything works well from the brain to the toes. This makes him good all around while her sister's weedy academic professor doesn't have "enough vital energy" left because the brain uses it all up. The narrator is attracted to Peter because he is better than her sister's husband making her even more attracted to him other than "his dexterity and patience." The narrator comes to her senses when the older and gentler looking waiter gave her a reproachful look wondering why she is with this old guy with plenty of young ones out there. This is demonstrated by the good looking waiter that makes her think in a world full of good looking guys what [am] I doing with this man with thinning hair?" That ended the love student professor love affair

because the narrator came to the realization this is not true love. Peter, being in a troubling relationship with his wife makes the narrator a relief from his worries and problems. " Peter liked to luxuriate in guilt and indecision" which is the main reason he had feelings for her as well. It was either between the narrators or his wife and Peter having that indecision show he is still loves his wife even if he doesn't realize it. There would be fearful personal and practical upheaval entailed if he decided to leave permanently and shack up as he put it with me. " Peter tells this to the narrator but if they were truly in love with each other then the " upheaval" wouldn't matter to him because he says he doesn't love his wife so he shouldn't care what other people think about his actions since he is out of love. The hesitation there, and the caring, and worrying of what others think still shows he has feelings for his wife or otherwise he wouldn't care if he " shacked up" with the narrator because he would have loved her more than his wife of 20 years.

The narrator loved her professor in order to outdo her sister with the " attractive muscular academic" and ends up falling out of love when an attractive young waiter makes her question her judgment on Peter. Peter loves her because she is the break he needs from his failing relationship even though he still loves his wife of 20 years deep down because he is undecided to leave his wife for her or not. This was a typical student-professor relationship in the end, no more, no less; just personal reasons tangled up between few people that created " inordinate affection" between Peter and the narrator.