

I am your best friend's Ex.

We double-dated a few times, and that was fun. It was about the only time Greg let me be around anyone else. He wanted to know where I was all the time, and who I talked to. He would go through my texts and if I didn't respond to one of his right away, he'd just explode. At first, I thought it was because he loved me. Then I realized he was just trying to control me. I felt so trapped. You saw it too, I know. He told me you confronted him one night. Told him he needed to back off and treat me with respect or he'd lose me. As you know, he didn't and I did leave. I'm better now. I hope Greg didn't lose you as a friend. A man like that needs a friend like you.

I am an account manager in your office.

We work in different departments, but there's only one break room and we apparently share a love of coffee. Never much more than "How's it going?" and that kind of thing. You must have felt awkward when you overheard me pouring out my heart to a co-worker. My boss had just made another horribly inappropriate joke. And he was also pressuring me to have dinner with him. I was losing it. The next day, you made a point to tell me that the company was lucky to have me. And no one should have to put up with being harassed. That if I filed a complaint, you'd back me up. Instead of quitting a job I loved, you gave me the courage to speak up.

I WAS A RIDER ON A CITY BUS.

OR AT LEAST I USED TO BE ONE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.

I was on the bus heading home, and it was pretty late. This creep on the bus thought he was being really slick and started sneaking pictures of me from his phone. Maybe he thought I wouldn't notice, or maybe he didn't care if I did. He was probably twice my age. I felt paralyzed and just sick to my stomach. I guess you saw what was happening. You got out of your seat in the back and stood in front of me, facing this guy. You just started chatting him up about whatever. Sports or something. It gave me the chance to move away and collect myself. At the next stop, I got off without him noticing. I couldn't really thank you then. But what you did made a difference.

**I am a bartender
at that dive where you and
your buddies meet up every month.**

It pays the rent. As long as the tips are decent. That sometimes means putting up with guys who've had one too many and think they can say whatever they want. I usually just smile, even when I want to tell them to get lost. What's worse is when a guy hangs around outside the parking lot after we close, waiting for me. That's not rude. That's scary as hell. One night, I noticed you pulled my manager aside and told him a guy at the bar was way over the line. That he'd lose a customer if he didn't put an end to it. I have to admit, what you said made a difference, at least for a while. I wish more customers would speak up. It obviously means more coming from you than me.

I was on your daughter's soccer team.

I wasn't the best player on the team by a long shot. But I just needed to be on the field. Or on the travel bus. Or staying the night over at a friend's house. I needed to be any place but at my own home. You see, not every father is a decent guy like you. Kaitlyn told me one time that she felt like she could talk to you about almost anything. So when you pulled me aside to unload equipment and asked how I was doing, I knew you were trying to reach out. I was too scared to tell you what was going on between my parents and how it made me feel. But you noticed something wasn't right and you were looking out for me. It took a year, but I finally worked up the courage to talk to someone. Things are better now, I guess.

I was your lab partner in Bio-Chem class and living as a boy.

We weren't super close. I wasn't really close to many people. Back then, I was still trying to figure stuff out as I was transitioning. Things that nobody like you had to worry about. Like was it safe to use the restroom? Or what to say when people asked, "Is that your real name or did you change that too?" It got much harder than that. You were OK about choosing me as a lab partner. Not a lot of other kids were. You didn't even make a big deal about using the pronouns I identified as. But it was a big deal for me. And it still is. School is hard, especially when you don't feel accepted. I might have quit if it weren't for people like you. I thought you should know.