

the **TOAST**By **Katie Rose Guest Pryal** on March 23, 2016 in **PERSONAL STORIES**

# The Consequences of Resisting a Professor's Advances

133



517



Tweet



At the moment there is much debate about the sexual harassment of graduate students by university professors. You can read about [Jason Lieb](#), who just stepped down from the University of Chicago, and [Geoff Marcy](#), who did the same at the University of California at Berkeley. Both left their posts amid flurries of complaints by former graduate students and colleagues that the men had allegedly harassed, abused, and in one case, raped, graduate students. Few are defending these men.

But in other cases, the situation seems less clear-cut. The University of California-Riverside fired English professor Rob Latham in January of 2016, [according to Inside Higher Education](#), “over alleged violations of the university’s sexual harassment and drug and alcohol use policies.” Debates raged on the [American Association of University Professors “Academe” blog](#) and other websites that featured the story, often focusing on the propriety of student-professor relationships in the first place. On one side, folks have argued that policing relationships between graduate students and professors infantilizes graduate students. On the other, folks have argued that the power imbalance in such relationships can blur the lines of consent.

I have my own story to tell. You might call it a story of blurred lines, perhaps, but the lines weren’t blurry to me. I was terrified that I would be kicked out of my graduate program because a professor wanted a sexual relationship with me and I turned him down. After I turned him down, after his wife found out he was after me, after rumors started in the department that *I was trying to seduce him*—I thought for sure that my career was over.

I’m lucky. I managed to get help from outside of the department and graduate without anyone standing in my way. The professor quickly moved on from me to start sleeping with a former

undergraduate. Last I checked, he still had tenure.

I have one undergraduate degree and three graduate degrees. That makes me terminally educated. This is a story about one of those degrees. I will be vague on purpose to protect as many people as I can—including the professor's own family. This story takes place in a town with a university in it, one that I attended. The town could be Durham, Baltimore, Greensboro, or Chapel Hill.

The very worst part of this story is that it really *could* be any one of those towns: I have a similar story from all of them. In each of these towns, at each of these institutions, a professor I thought believed in me as a student, as a thinker, as a *human*, only wanted to get in my pants. Maybe he also thought I was smart—but he definitely wanted to get in my pants, too.

Each time it happened, I had the same terrible feeling when I realized I'd been duped. I had the same terrible feeling when I realized that my professors believed I only had one thing to contribute to the intellectual life of my community, and it had little to do with the intellectual life of my community.

All of the stories are terrible.

The worst of the stories is this one.

During the final months of my academic program, my serious boyfriend and I broke up. Newly single, I was dating, but not seriously. I was focusing on my work, not on anyone else's feelings.

Every Tuesday afternoon, the students in my program had a standing get-together at a cafe near campus. The cafe served coffee, of course, but it also served booze. Certain professors would often drop by. We graduate students all knew what *that* meant. They were looking to flirt, to feel young again, to get the student gossip.

I believed, hubristically, that I was above that sort of flirting. I believed I could see through these professors' nonsense. I was a very practical person, very direct, very plainspoken. Sometimes very bitchy. Usually, I was right.

But I had a weakness. I didn't want to be studying what I was studying. I wanted to be writing novels. I write novels now, but I

## MOST POPULAR



**1**

Everything What's Wrong Of Possums: It's All Of Them

**2**

If Tom Hiddleston Were Your Boyfriend



**3**

Underappreciated Actors Reappraised: Keanu Reeves

**4**

Every Track Listing From 1997's "Middle of Nowhere" And The Corresponding Beatles Song It Is Better Than

didn't know then that I could. I thought I needed a "real job." I thought there was such a thing as a "real job." So I'd chosen a track that was more practical. At the cafe on Tuesdays, the poets sat together. The novelists sat together. And I sat alone at the bar, writing my novel and drinking Wild Turkey.

One Tuesday, a professor sat down next to me at the bar. I didn't know that this professor, with his speciality in fiction writing, would be able to charm me. I still believed I was beyond being charmed.

He ordered, gesturing at my glass. "Whatever she's having."

The bartender poured the Turkey, neat.

"Well." He assessed the beverage with admiration. "She'll be having another one. On me."

He didn't introduce himself. Didn't need to. Even though he wasn't in my area of study, he was still a senior member of my department. I knew who he was. He wrote books for a living. His job was to do what I wanted to do more than anything.

I set down my pen and finished the first glass of whiskey, pulling the second one closer. He lifted



**5**

**The  
Holidays  
Sad  
Fictional  
Character  
s Deserve**

**6**

**If LeVar  
Burton  
and Yo-Yo  
Ma Were  
Your Dads**

his in a toast. “To Tuesdays. And new friends.”

“Isn’t that a little over the top?”

“Maybe.”

He wasn’t physically attractive. Not in the slightest. He probably thought he was cool. He was charming, though, and he was smart. He was also a good writer—I’d been to his readings. Most importantly, though, he wanted to hang out with me. Not with the fiction kids sitting at their table. With me.

I made an error that many a university woman makes when a male professor pays attention to her outside the classroom. I believed he wanted to talk to me because he found me smart and interesting.

After our toast, we talked about breakups. I realize, now, that this part of the conversation might have raised red flags for some people. But we’d been talking about writing and work, and we were surrounded by other students. There didn’t appear to be any danger. There didn’t seem to be any reason for me to look for flags, red or otherwise. We discussed my recent breakup with my former boyfriend, and he mentioned he just been through one, too—he’d separated from his wife. I didn’t examine his words closely, though, because I wasn’t

interested in him romantically. Who cared whether he was married. I certainly didn't. He was a professor, a novelist. I wanted to learn about the trade.

Starting that day, and over the course of some more afternoons, we became what I considered friends. We talked about writing, the novel I was laboring through with no guidance from anyone—from anyone besides him. We talked about his current projects. To me, we felt like *colleagues*.

I don't know what he thought we were.

At the time, I was living in a typical graduate school apartment with three other people. The apartment was little better than a flop-house, and we loved it. It was located walking distance from campus, which is all that really matters. The only thing more expensive than rent in a college town is parking. If this story were set in Baltimore, the area is Charles Village or Homewood; if this story were set in Durham, the area is Trinity Park; if this story were set in Greensboro, the area is College Park; if this story were set in Chapel Hill, the area is Westwood or Cameron-McCauley. You get the idea. Every college town has its just off-campus neighborhoods, its apartments where students cram themselves tight to save money on expenses and, perhaps, to stave off loneliness.

One night, after a departmental event, the professor invited himself back to the apartment. I didn't think anything of it. I had three roommates. I thought he wanted to hang out with us. It would be just like the Tuesday afternoon café gatherings. What was going to happen?

When we got to my apartment, though, no one else was home. So the professor and I sat in my living room and talked. We ate cheese.

After about twenty minutes, he jumped to his feet and ran to the far side of the room. "Oh my god," he whispered.

"What?"

"I think that's my wife outside."

Through the curtains, the professor had spied the headlights of his wife's car, parked on the street. "I thought you were separated?" I yelled. To myself, I thought: *Where are my roommates? Why is no one here with me?* I was distraught about my terrible luck.

"We're separated, but we're still living together." He sounded small. He looked small. And he looked like a coward.

"That means you are not separated, you idiot," I spat. Then I kicked him out of my apartment.

And then, once I'd locked the door, I started to worry about my future in my academic program.

The next day, a friend told me why the professor's wife ended up outside my apartment. One of the professor's students had seen him leave the school event with me. The student had called his wife at home and told her where he'd gone. The caller had speculated about why he'd gone to my apartment. The speculations had been inaccurate, but they'd been enough to send his wife after her husband.

She'd been watching us through the curtains in my living room. For a while. She'd seen nothing, of course, except two people talking. It didn't matter what she'd seen. His wife was really angry with me. Really, really angry.

The speculations had also started rumors. That I was breaking up a marriage. That I was a seducer of professors. That I was a slut. That I was a troublemaker. And it wasn't just students that heard these rumors. Other professors did too.

I still needed to graduate and get references for jobs. This man's colleagues were my gatekeepers. How many of them were friends with his wife? How many of them were angry enough with me to stand in my way?

At the time, I was not angry at the professor's wife for being mad at me. I would have been angry at me, too. She thought I was breaking up her marriage. I wasn't, but she didn't know that. I placed the blame on his shoulders completely—on his, and those of the rumormongers.

And today, I'm certainly not angry at his wife for being angry at me. Since this incident occurred, I've gotten married and had two children. I know what lengths I would go to to protect my family.

At the time, though, I was scared of her, just like I was scared of him. I feared for my diploma. I worried that either he or his wife would stand in the way of my graduation and job prospects afterward. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what *they* would do to me.

The next day, while I was out of the apartment, I got a phone call from one of my roommates. "Something weird just happened. This woman came to the door with her kid."

I knew what she was going to say next. I just knew.

"She said, 'Are you Kate?' And I laughed, because, you know, we look nothing alike."

I tried to laugh too, and failed.

“I said no. But it’s like she didn’t believe me. She said, ‘I have children!’ And she pulled her kid in front of her and said, ‘This is my child!’ It was weird.”

I could barely breathe. “Then what?”

“She made me write down a note for you. I have it here. It has her name on it, and her phone number. I think she wants you to call her.”

I asked, “What kind of car was she driving?” I needed to know who was after me.

She didn’t know what I looked like, and I didn’t know what she looked like. It felt like she was an unknown assassin and I was her unknown target.

I was truly terrified—all of my hard work and all of my student loans, they would be for nothing. He had all of the power, and I had none. He wasn’t even in my field, but that didn’t matter—I knew that all of the negative consequences would fall on me. I was an expendable graduate student. He was a tenured professor.

When I should have been working on my thesis, I was worrying about whether I needed to protect myself legally.

When I couldn’t take the worry any more, I consulted an attorney.

The entire time I sat in the attorney's office, I felt humiliated. The man was very fatherly, and respectable, and kind. And there I was, telling him about this ugly fake-love-triangle that I was caught in the middle of. I was Hester Prynne. I was dirty. I cried. I couldn't help it. "Can he stop me from graduating?"

"No way." He sounded very certain.

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"I'm so embarrassed," I admitted.

He looked surprised. "Why? Do you honestly think you're the first student he's tried this on?"

No, I realized. I did not think I was the first student he'd tried this on.

For the first time since the headlights appeared outside my apartment that awful night, I started to relax.

The lawyer helped me make a plan. He gave me his mobile number, and he told me to call him if either the professor or his wife approached me again. "Let me handle it." I knew I was lucky that I had the means to consult a lawyer.

I've since found out that the professor slept with young female students on a regular basis. I know of two young women from that one year alone. One sexual relationship had ended right before he took aim at me, and one began right after me. The reason his marriage ended was because of an affair with a girl younger than I was. His wife had found suspicious credit card receipts.

But here's the deal, the worst part of it all: I had been afraid that I would get in trouble for *turning down* the advances of a tenured professor, for *false* rumors, as there were many of those. I was terrified, yet absolutely *nothing* had happened between him and me.

But what if I'd been a little more vulnerable, or a little attracted to him? What if I'd kissed him? What if I'd slept with him, believing him to be separated or divorced? Then what? Would that have made me? Would I have deserved the scorn and trouble? Would I have deserved censure by my department? Would I have deserved to have my own advisors turn their backs on me for hurting their friend, his wife? Would that have made me the seductress, the slut, like the rumor-mongers insisted?

Or was he a predator, like my lawyer said?

Of course he was. A predator with lifetime job security and easy access to prey.

**Tags:** higher education sexual harassment

\$ 1.00

LIKE THIS ARTICLE? TIP THE TOAST!

YOU MIGHT LIKE...



**On College Life**



**They're Building A Deep Springs For Women In Alaska And I Need A Minute**



**Space Babe Fantasies: On Geoff Marcy and Sexism in Science and Sci-Fi**



**Traces of Destruction: The Emotional Work of Studying Painful History**

*Katie is a writer and attorney living in Chapel Hill. She is the author of the Entanglement Series, novels about a group of women making new lives in Los Angeles.*



 **@krgpryal**

PROMOTED CONTENT

Recommended by

ADD A COMMENT

## Comments (132)

[Login](#)

Sort by: [Date](#) [Rating](#) [Last Activity](#)



**cesca** · 7 weeks ago

+35

Thank you for sharing, this story really hit home.

Reminds me of this thought-provoking piece:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/opinion/sunday/...](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/opinion/sunday/)

[Reply](#)

[1 reply](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



**CleverManka** · 7 weeks ago

+104

I am so relieved and glad for you that you were able to graduate and that you felt safe enough to write this story. Academia is rotten and the tenure system is a major cause of the corruption. I know that some of the professors I pass in the halls every day (perhaps even professors in my department) are guilty of this behavior. It's horrifying.

Thank you for sharing your story.

Reply

Report



**hammocknap** · 7 weeks ago

+48

Thank you for this. As you say, there have been a number of pieces on this issue recently, all of which are horrifying and worrying, but I appreciated hearing one person's experience described with breadth and consideration. As someone starting a PhD program next year, reading stories like this reminds me to be very, very careful in drawing my personal and professional boundaries, but also that, if I find myself in a situation like yours, I am, as your lawyer pointed out, almost certainly not the only one.

Reply

Report



**fakegeekgrrrl** · 7 weeks ago

+50

Thanks for sharing this. So shameful how common it is to hear stories like this (not to take away at all from the pain of yours).

I was very lucky that I didn't fall prey to the two professors, known for inappropriate behavior/relationships with students, who seemed to "ping" me for receptiveness. Mostly because I was dense at the time and didn't really realize what they were doing until I mentioned it to people who warned me off them.

One of those them once assigned us a book of Ted Hughes poems, specifically many of the ones

wherein he redirects the narrative of their relationship, commonly assumed to be abusive. I find that suspicious to this day. Grooming can be so awfully subtle.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

**mikewein** · 7 weeks ago

+30

I was never a professor, but I did attend two well regarded graduate schools (transferred to follow my sig other after one year). Both places had training for graduate student teachers, and both covered possible romantic relationships with students. I was amazed how different they were. The second school was "Never date undergrads, ever. They might not be in your class, but their roommate or friend might, just don't do it. EVER" The other one was "um, don't do it when they are in your class" I am not sure if the first was that much more sensitive, or more likely had come across a problem before and didn't want a repeat.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

JoelleVanDyne · 7 weeks ago

+170

He ordered, gesturing at my glass. "Whatever she's having."

Is it just me or did everyone else get to this line and immediately think "UGH" in utter disgust?

[Reply](#)

[13 replies](#) · active 6 weeks ago

[Report](#)

**CleverM**

[CleverManka](#)



+ Follow



Reply

I talk a lot. I spend a lot of time on the internet. I have opinions. I regret nothing.

[clevermanka.tumblr.com](http://clevermanka.tumblr.com)[clevermanka.livejournal.com](http://clevermanka.livejournal.com)

Blogs/Websites

- [On Tumblr](#)
- [On LiveJournal](#)

[View IntenseDebate profile](#)



**Goomaly** · 7 weeks ago

+22

I was more "UGH" at his approval for drinking whiskey served neat. But yeah.

Reply

[Report](#)



**arlette** · 7 weeks ago

+44

Neat whiskey is great.

The look on a guy's face who's not expecting you to be drinking whiskey neat is super funny and then immediately suuuuuper annoying.

Reply

[Report](#)



**Goomaly** · 7 weeks ago

+45

Exactly. And then the grand finale, "a woman after my own--"

DON'T YOU DARE FINISH THAT SENTENCE

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**arlette** · 7 weeks ago**+25**

UGH. I get this a lot. To the point where I don't actually want unchaperoned guys to see or hear me ordering, receiving or drinking my whiskey. If only they had an auxiliary bar in the women's restroom. :P

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**Swan Parade** · 7 weeks ago**+14**

Ahhh we need to bring back the snug. One of the historic uses was for ladies who wanted a quiet, private drink because GASP LADIES SHOULDN'T BE DRINKING. It would be so nice to just enjoy one's drink of choice in peace away from the everpresent Professor I'll Have What She's Having So I Can Condescendingly Approve Or Explain To Her Why Her Choice Is Bad.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**InadvertentEditor** · 7 weeks ago **+20**

"I like beer and whiskey. I also have a vagina. Your surprised delight at this juxtaposition is less of a compliment than you think it is."

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

Rocketship · 7 weeks ago

**+90**

Actually, for me it was the line just after that one that made my skin crawl:

“She’ll be having another one. On me.”

NOOO DO NOT WANT

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

InadvertentEditor · 7 weeks ago

**+33**

Oh she will? Interesting.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

Hoolia · 7 weeks ago

**+37**

In my head, that second drink is going literally ON him. In his face. Abruptly.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

dakimel · 7 weeks ago

**+38**

In my head now, yes, absolutely.

In the head of my 22 year old self? Even without my own (age-appropriate) romantic entanglements, I'd probably have been flattered. Also, glad to not have to pay to get another drink. I was way oblivious to predator behavior in my

late teens / early 20s.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



**msbias** · 7 weeks ago

+20

Yep, absolutely. And after all, dudes like this were in charge of making all the films we saw as kids and teenagers, so we were all primed to see it as romantic.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



Hoolia · 7 weeks ago

+16

Oh, me too. I'm really lucky no one tried to prey on me, because as a youngin' I would have been completely oblivious to what they were doing and even when it became obvious would not have known how to thwart predatory advances.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



**stirringsofconsciousness** · 7 weeks ago

+18

This is so chilling, and so real. I'm so sorry that this happens.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



**clarescifi** · 7 weeks ago

+71

I'm a (female) lecturer and this horrifies but no longer surprises me. In the places I've worked at,

the female staff (and some of the better men) have kept an eye out for this behaviour from colleagues and I have obliquely/not-so-obliquely warned a fair number of students about that behaviour - but I don't know what else I can do without actual support from people higher up, because all of the evidence I have encountered is second-hand. Does anyone have any ideas?

ETA: I am so, so sorry this happened to you and I wish I could have prevented it, even if only by smacking a male colleague upside the head.

**Reply**

[4 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



Akivaria · 7 weeks ago

+43

Thank you for this, and for the lack of equivocation. A personal digression, I'm currently wondering whether or not I should stay in my field because someone in it took advantage of me when I thought he just wanted me to see him for friendship matters. I never want to see him again but if I stay in this field I'm going to have to, and I don't want to bring this matter to higher up people because it'll be a he said, she said situation and I don't want to have to argue about or talk about it. But there's no excuse for preying on vulnerable people, and it's always good to hear that and be reminded of that.

**Reply**

[8 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



thatjillgirl · 7 weeks ago

+156

You're much more gracious toward his wife than I feel like being as I read the story. Obviously, the

blame rests squarely on HIS shoulders, but I get so confused when a woman suspects her husband of cheating and reacts by raging against the "other woman." Like bringing her child to show you? As if you were involved with him just because you didn't realize he had children (I realize you weren't involved with him at all). This was a pattern. She must have suspected him before when he was involved with students before he met you. Why wasn't she wondering how it was that HE was so forgetful of the fact that he had a family?

I can see how it would be easier to construct a narrative in which your poor spouse was pulled away from you by some sneaky seductress with no respect for families rather than have to admit that your spouse who is supposed to love you and be loyal to you is not acting like a loving, loyal person. But still I always wonder why the anger gets so misdirected. Not that I blame her, exactly. I just get really frustrated by misdirected anger.

[Reply](#)[18 replies](#) · active 6 weeks ago[Report](#)**Anthrodiva** · 7 weeks ago**+34**

Excellent dissection of the grooming deployed by a serial predator!

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**scarletwitch** · 7 weeks ago**+40**

Thanks for writing this. I had a similar experience as an undergrad...messy, blurry, beyond confusing, resulting in pitchforks from all sides the semester

before I graduated. It's comforting to read your perspective. When the pursuer is 39 and a professor and the pursued is 21 and a student, the responsibility falls on the older professional. Not to mention that when you're 21 you don't know jack. Happened more than 10 years ago and I still wrestle with what happened.

**Reply** [1 reply](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



**BourneApprox** · 7 weeks ago

+251

Hey professors!  
 Don't date students!  
 DON'T DATE STUDENTS  
 DoN't DaTe StuDeNts  
 Dooooooooon't ddaaaaaaaate stuuuuuuuuuudents!  
 Don't! 🎵 🎵 🎵 Date! 🎵 🎵 🎵 Students! 🎵 🎵 🎵

**Reply** [11 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



praemunire · 7 weeks ago

+170

"I made an error that many a university woman makes when a male professor pays attention to her outside the classroom. I believed he wanted to talk to me because he found me smart and interesting."

This is the part of these stories that always breaks my heart. I'm sure you *\*are\** smart and interesting. Some predatory asshole faking interest so he can maneuver you into an opportunity for sex does not invalidate that.

**Reply** [1 reply](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



**kjschapira** · 7 weeks ago

+11



Thanks for telling the truth about this, Katie.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



**Megano!** · 7 weeks ago

+28

I only ever had one prof who really wanted the students (undergrads) to hang out with him, and NONE OF US DID IT. Even though he sometimes whined in class about how no one wanted to hang out with him.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



**rosemarybush** · 7 weeks ago

+72

I honestly don't know a single woman in academia who, when this subject has come up, said "nope, nothing like this has ever happened to me. Can't think of a single instance. My entire career, all of the men above me have been 100% appropriate."  
#yesallwomen, amiright?

The apprenticeship structure of graduate degrees combined with the godlike power of recommendation letters plus tenure means that there's a whoooooole lot of room for abuse in academia, and a lot of incentive for professors to close ranks. And even if the other professors know that one their own is a sleazy dirtbag and shun him at parties? So what? That guy stays in a position that people these days would step over their mothers for, and the student, if she's strong and lucky, gets a permanent shadow in her thoughts to go with the degree.

In searching for something positive in this, I am heartened by how much coverage this is getting and that women are telling their stories. Don't let them make you doubt that you're smart and worthy! You ARE intelligent. You ARE interesting. You ARE worth more than your body. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE A GODDAMN PHD. (Insert "MFA", "MS/MA", "grad student or candidate" as fits.)

[Reply](#)[22 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)**MilleMme** · 7 weeks ago**+36**

As students we would always warn each other of profs who were sketchy in their interactions with students. So you knew who to avoid at social events.

Fun story. I was a brand new graduate student going to a meeting in another city with a bunch of professors and they were asking how I found the school compared to the others I'd attended before and bla-bla. I kinda got to talking about in small schools there tends to be more personal relationships that develop from professional relationships with power dynamics (or at least that these are more glaring in small universities where socializing between profs and students tends to be more casual) and that this was something that made me uncomfortable. And then this awkward silence settled in. I learned soon afterwards that my supervisor's girlfriend (and now wife) was a grad student of his and their relationship started while she was a student. How wonderful. I mean it's a bit different and he's not a bad guy but still ugh...

[Reply](#)[4 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)**Kelly Simmons** · 7 weeks ago**+10**

I relate to this more than I can tell you. I'm sure many, many other women will too. Thank you for writing it.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**RLovesRocks** · 7 weeks ago**+20**

I am so sorry that this happened to you. This is on my mind all the time. I consider myself super lucky that I've made it to assistant professor status with largely male but also appropriate mentors and advisors. However, lots and lots haven't. Another geoscientist has compiled an overview of documented cases that I find depressing and somewhat helpful because a lot of people have been fired at least:  
<https://geocognitionresearchlaboratory.wordpress...>  
though this obviously wouldn't include anything like this one written here or a lot of the other stories that people are stepping forward to share. I know there are a ton of different discussions going on about sexual harassment in academia (at least based on my twitter feed). I get driven to tears by the defenders of harassers losing their jobs because they were in "promising careers" because fuck their careers. How many careers did they derail and ruin along the way?  
In order to function in my field, I have to tell myself that these discussions and discussions in other fields with similar problems, like the NPS/Forest

Service thing from a few days ago, are going to do some good. That the hate and vitrol that people are throwing at victims are just the patriarchy in its death spasms.

[Reply](#)[2 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)**littleinfinity** · 7 weeks ago**+11**

That last line though. Right in the gut.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**sausagedog** · 7 weeks ago**+24**

Thanks for writing this. I'm heading to grad school in the fall and sadly this is a great reminder than men are not to be trusted-- I had a great undergrad experience (I consider myself massively lucky) and now I'm at a job where, even though harassment 100% does occur, there's enough risk of litigation that the company responds pretty well to it, so I've gotten out of practice.

I'm so mad that this happened to you, but I'm so happy to see in your biography that you are both an attorney and a writer-- I'm so glad that this dirtbag didn't turn you off of your dream of getting published, and I'm glad that someone with your perspective is practicing law, because we really need more of that in the world.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**aeryn\_sun** · 7 weeks ago**+19**

First off, I'm so, so sorry this happened to you. I also

wanted to say that a very similar scenario happened to a friend of mine at a law firm. A married partner (twice her age, of course) set his sights on her, she didn't get involved with him, but he basically let it be known that they were fucking in order to punish her for NOT sleeping with him. It effectively drove her from the firm.

[Reply](#)[5 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)**ScarlettHairdye** · 7 weeks ago**+113**

So I hope this guy eventually just falls in a hole and never climbs back out, but can I take a second to applaud younger you for this?

*"That means you are not separated, you idiot," I spat. Then I kicked him out of my apartment.*

Because that is a CHOICE reaction.

[Reply](#)[1 reply](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)**crystabrittany** · 7 weeks ago**+5**

There's a part of me that imagines a type of heaven where all of our versions of ourselves who do badass things when it was hard (or when we could've just as easily done something else) are all together drinking wine (or bev of choice) and laughing and high-fiving each other.

My 26-year-old Me who turned Evil Ex out of the house when he had driven many hours in the snow to "return a jewelry box" (read: harass me into forgiving him for being an ass) would be

there high-fiving the heck out of the author.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



Lily · 7 weeks ago

+30

I went to a small, prestigious women's college. Very dedicated to creating a safe and happy environment for all the attendees.

And my math professor had QUITE the habit of sleeping with lots of undergrads. Some of which were long-term, some of which were not. It was barely a secret, if you could even call it that. We all knew, all told each other to watch for it, not to go to his office hours alone, not to accept his offers of "tutoring."

At the time, it made 19yo me uncomfortable but I didn't necessarily see it as wrong. I figured these women who were sleeping with him were doing it because they wanted to, and that I shouldn't question what they did with their own bodies. These days, 27yo me recognizes him for the predator he was. That when I thought I shouldn't be questioning the decisions of these young women, I SHOULD have been questioning what would lead a mid-40s tenured professor to fairly exclusively sleep with 18-21yo women that were under his charge.

[Reply](#)

[4 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago

[Report](#)



swordsnspindles · 7 weeks ago

+14

I am so SO glad that any of this bullshit passed me by at university, by a huge margin. Not certain if I

was socially oblivious or simply not interesting to them - I only had pleasant interactions with my professors, usually related to academic topics. I was the one who bonded with my boss about comics, not get tangled up in relationship dramas.

My friend J., on the other hand, had to switch both her job in academia due to a colleague (who had "fallen in love with her" and accused her of leading him on) and her planned advisor for her master thesis (because the man approached her in a wholly unprofessional manner because he mistook her interest in his lectures for personal interest and she was afraid to set him right). We shared an office at this job, and we both attended the same lectures by her master thesis advisor, and for the life of me, I cannot say why she was, well, targeted and I wasn't. Maybe her undisguised intellect, enthusiasm and determination for an awesome career in academia marked her out? Maybe they didn't like my blue hair and deceptive "meh" attitude? I don't know. But I got serious chills when she told me what has been going on, especially the bits where she insisted she had no other choice but to "be friendly" to them to get an ok post-doc job later on in the department. It made me sick to hear an otherwise brilliant woman say such things.

And that was when I realized an university career wasn't the thing for me.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)



tiburga · 7 weeks ago

+4

This is truly awful, and truly unsurprising, and truly sad. Thank you for sharing it.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**salpiglossis** · 7 weeks ago**+15**

It's the mind-fuck aspect that is so disturbing, the implication that you, the young female grad student, have nothing of value to offer except your body. God, I want to cut off all of their nuts!

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**imjustherforthe** · 7 weeks ago**+13**

Hope Jahren (author of the NYT piece) is currently tweeting excerpts from emails she's received from men about her article. It's both highly amusing and extremely depressing. Eg "The most unreported "harassment" is females asking special favors from teaching assts' or mentors." Anyhow, follow it at #TearsofBlonde

[Reply](#)[1 reply](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)**PettyVengeanceFetish** · 7 weeks ago**+3**

This is such a well written and well thought out piece about something so difficult. Thank you for writing it and for sharing it.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)**mothmom** · 7 weeks ago**+13**

Thank you so much for writing this. I read this with a knot in my stomach. Last fall (so, y'know, seven months ago) I was the student who thought I was in total control of a situation that I'd choose to be in.

He'd never been /my/ professor, we were in a social circle together, and he was teaching at a different college now. I tried so hard to convince myself that it was fun, and I was fine, and there wasn't any manipulation and his interest in me was in ME and who I was (even after he told me that he liked me because I made him feel young and I felt like an escape from his worries. And then told me he was worried I was only interested in him because of my poor relationship with my dad. Why the fuck was I so stupid.)

He tried to justify to me why it was okay for him to date students. He told me he'd been interested in me since he'd met me two years ago. I was 19 when we met! I'm 21 now and he's in his mid 30s.

[Reply](#)[3 replies](#) · active 7 weeks ago[Report](#)[writing lab rose](#) · 7 weeks ago**+5**

This was a powerful article.

When I was about 30 I got a job as a tutor in a university department via a female friend who, although she didn't work there, knew the department was seeking someone with my qualifications because her husband worked there and had told her they needed another tutor. I applied, got the job and worked there a year before finding a permanent job elsewhere on campus.

The husband occasionally turned up uninvited at my house and got angry when I wouldn't let him in. He also kept inviting me for coffee. I declined. Eventually her retired, but would still send me messages I interpreted as semi-seductive. They

made me very uncomfortable and also very angry. I never told his wife because she was a friend and I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I did however discover that he had a reputation for "flirting" with female students. The "flirtations" seemed to be unwelcome and the student flirtees I was aware of felt victimised.

The last time I heard from him he was careful to "remind" me that he had got me the tutoring job. The subtext seemed to be that he believed I owed him for this generosity. I did not respond and have not heard from him since. He had not got me the job. I had the right qualifications, could start at once and passed the interview. The interview was a panel interview. He wasn't on it that I recall. I earned the job and I did an excellent job, which is why the department was so sorry to see me go.

Reading this article I now feel I should have replied to him and made this clear. But at the time I just didn't want to have to engage with him or to have a distorted version of this get back to his wife.

[Reply](#)[Report](#)

Discord · 7 weeks ago

+2

I don't have a story about an actual affair, per se, but there was a prof in my department who I have no problem believing would do this stuff if his wife wasn't so constantly on his ass. He used to get very drunk and inappropriate with the female students at department parties and she would circle him like a hawk, very pointedly separating him from them when necessary. We all knew to steer clear when

he got drunk (and sometimes when he was sober)

One time, at a cast party (he was a drama prof) I was sitting with my boyfriend at the time and he had his arm around me. I was wearing a skirt above the knee. The prof came up to us, and ran a hand over my bare knee. "This skirt is very nice." He leaned over to my boyfriend, gave him a lecherous look, and very audibly said, "Nice work!"

I was so uncomfortable I had to leave the party.

[Reply](#)

[Report](#)

## Post a new comment

Enter text right here!

---

Comment as a Guest, or login: [Login to IntenseDebate](#)  
[Login to WordPress.com](#)

Name	Email	Website (optional)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Displayed next to your comments.	Not displayed publicly.	If you have a website, link to it here.
Subscribe to	<input type="text" value="None"/>	<input type="button" value="Submit Comment"/>



**A Recipe for  
Chocolate  
Cinnamon  
Pecan Babka**



**“When it  
comes down  
to it, this  
missing  
money is the  
reason that  
I’m not able to  
deliver  
printers”**



**Every Track  
Listing From  
1997’s  
“Middle Of  
Nowhere”  
And The  
Correspondin  
g Beatles  
Song It Is  
Better Than**



**If Tom  
Hiddleston  
Were Your  
Boyfriend**



**Everything  
What’s Wrong  
Of Possums:  
It’s All Of  
Them**



**Why We Must  
Burn Her At  
Once**



**The Holidays  
Sad Fictional  
Characters  
Deserve**



**“Remember  
My Forgotten  
Man”**



**Fresh Ice: A  
Cartoon  
About the  
National  
Women’s  
Hockey  
League**

[ABOUT](#)

[DONATE](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[SUBMIT](#)

[LEGAL](#)