Dear Karen,

I wanted to tell you how grateful I am to have met you back at the beginning of grad school, and to still have you as one of my closest friends. I feel so lucky that we both ended up at Ohio State. And I wanted to thank you for all the ways you were such a wonderful friend to me back then, and still are.

When I think about why you are such a great friend, the first thing that comes to mind is how quick you are to help people when they need it, and how persistent you are in making sure they *are* helped. I really admire this quality about you and want to develop it more in myself. There were so many instances during grad school where I needed help with work I was doing, whether that was choosing a topic for a seminar paper, trying to interpret my data, working on a research talk, or practicing a job talk or that dumb introduction I had to give Michael Ross (Waterloooooooo, you remember). You were always willing to talk through things with me for as long as it took, and give me confidence in what I was doing, even if you also had a ton of work to do or deadlines to meet.

There are other instances in which you went out of your way to help me. Many of these involve dumb injuries that I acquired that wouldn’t be a big deal to most people. But you knew my issues with blood and injuries, and always were so sympathetic and helpful. I remember that gash on my shin that I accomplished by tripping over the cement disc golf marker, and how you treated my injury back at your apartment before I went home. I remember burning my finger with my flatiron one Friday morning when we were living together, and you insisting that you accompany me to the student health center because you knew I had a weird issue with finger injuries (and hopefully you still remember the huge bandage that I left the health center with, even though the burn was like less than half an inch long). And of course you were there when I came home from my thumb surgery, and nursed me back to health over a Dexter marathon. In general, one reason that living with you was great was because I knew that if I ever needed help, you would do whatever you could to provide it, and never make me feel ridiculous or like a nuisance.

It also meant so much to me that you drove with me from Ohio to Birmingham when I moved here. I was so nervous about doing that drive all by myself (well, with two cats, but that was partly the cause of the nervousness). Having you along was such a comfort, and having you in Birmingham while I unpacked, set up my apartment, and attempted to locate the leasing office made the transition so much easier. (Thanks, also, for getting the smoke detector back into the holder on the ceiling. That was a clutch move.)

You continue to be such a great person to talk to when I need to sort through any issue I am having. You always have good ideas for how to make things better, at times when I think that there are no good ideas left to try.

There are obviously many other amazing qualities you have that make you a wonderful friend (e.g., being funny as hell), and so many other experiences we had that I fondly remember, and think about often, and won’t discuss here in part because my students will have access to this letter (e.g., our early morning 100-mile walk to Panera the day after celebrating my birthday, a bad bad idea).

Before I close, I just want to say again how grateful I am to have you in my life. I hope the attempted humor in this letter doesn’t trivialize what I’m trying to say. I am fortunate to have met many great people wherever I’ve lived, but you are a definite stand out. Thanks, buddy. And thanks for being the guinea pig for my first ever gratitude letter.

Love,  
Greta

Ps. Thanks, also, for all those memorable birthday cards you made me, which of course I still have, and the cookie plate you painted for me, which is one of my prized possessions (right behind the actual physical creatures that inspired the plate).