

The List That Keeps On Giving

Come inside before the sun sets below the mountain.

Make sure I know where you are at all times.

Keep your brother with you.

Don't associate with him.

Don't talk to strangers.

Those are just a few of the lines that my mom has fed me for the entirety of my life. When I was younger, I would roll my eyes at her, agitated by her constant overbearingness. I didn't understand why she was so adamant that she knew where I was. I didn't understand what she was so afraid of.

I understand now.

How freely my mom was able to roam when she was my age will never fail to leave me equal parts fascinated and utterly infuriated.

When she recounts stories to me of late nights spent outside with her friends, when my Nanna had absolutely no clue as to where she was; when she tells me she didn't need to have a clue where she was, I have a hard time believing her.

There is nothing complex about her stories. She recounts her days spent in a small southern West Virginia town where the activities were few and far between, but her freedom was limitless. She was free to explore. Free to associate. Free to be a woman.

I often find myself so incredibly envious of her for being able to do just that.

I am not naïve enough to look past how far women have come since she was young. I am grateful that I am free to do things she was not able to when she was my age. I am free to dream. I am free to express those dreams. I am free to turn those dreams into my reality. Those are things she had to teach herself how to do.

I know I'm fortunate to be free to do those things, but I also understand that there is still a long way to go. Being able to dream freely as men do is not enough. Being able to work to achieve those dreams as men do is not enough.

I want to be able to walk down the street and not hold tightly to my keys. I don't want to feel the need to recite my mom's list of endless rules in my head anytime I am without her. I don't want to have to read the same list off to my daughter one day.

I think it is important to recognize how far women have come since my mom was my age. Women have made great strides, and the journey has been far from easy, but there is still so much work to be done. There is so much more that can be achieved and women aren't capable of doing all the work by themselves because they aren't the problem.

When I give my future daughter a list of do's and don'ts, I don't want to recount the terrifying list that my mom gave me.

Her world should be better than that.

