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## Keeping It Real

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## Keeping It Real

by Robin Tandongfor

“Oh, and once the PowerPoint is complete, make sure to tell him it is going to be a chaperoned school event. That way the chances of him saying yes are higher.”

“Okay, Mya. I will let you know what he says. Wish me luck.”

Ugh. The sad truth is, I already know what my father is going to say. He says it every time: “No!” This always makes me feel left out whenever my friends make plans because I never get the chance to go no matter how many PowerPoints I make.

Yes, I said PowerPoints. I have to make them to show that I am being “serious” about the places I want to go. I also have to mention that chaperones are going to be there so that I can attend. I can never seem to get out of the house. What makes matters worse is that while I am stuck at home, my brother is off at college having the time of his life. Man... I can’t wait to go to college.

To my surprise, my high school graduation came quicker than expected. Along with my diploma came an abundance of money and advice. I was told to focus on my studies, not to let my friends distract me, avoid gaining weight, and to be mindful of my surroundings. However, no one told me about the upperclassmen who would linger in the freshman halls looking for “fresh meat.” No one told me about the grown men at parties waiting for the girls to get drunk so

they could take them home for the night. Most importantly, no one told me how to avoid the story I am about to tell you.

Growing up in an African household where my father was one of the chiefs in my tribe, my parents always stressed the importance of representing myself. For example, I was taught how to greet everyone when walking into a room. I was taught to wear skirts or dresses that stopped at my knees and to collect dishes and clean after my whole family. But nobody taught me how to protect my body.

On a Wednesday afternoon during the first week of school, I was in the lab. I was walking up to my teacher so she could write my name down for attendance when a boy approached me. He tried to start a conversation with me, but I was so focused on speaking with my teacher that I did not give him much attention. As I was walking out of the class, I noticed he waited for me at the door. He asked me out on a date to Sweet Hut, and we agreed that he would pick me up outside of my dorm. The first mistake I made was accepting a date from a complete stranger, but I was so excited by the fact that I could go places without having to ask my parents that I was blindsided. Plus, I was hungry and free boba always sounds good.

Around 5' o'clock, he picked me up, and I quickly realized that we had nothing in common. He could not say a sentence without having to use profanity. He repeatedly disrespected our teacher because she was a woman, and to top it all off, he told me to shut up when I asked why he parked so far away.

This brings me to my second mistake: getting in the car. The date was very short because I felt uncomfortable, so I told him I had to go to my dorm and study. He dropped me off, but as I got out of the car, so did he. He wanted to walk me to my dorm, and I did not see anything wrong with that, so we walked.

As I opened the door to my room, he wanted to come inside, which brings me to my third mistake: letting him in. He walked around my dorm and asked me about my setup. While I was explaining it to him, he pulled my jeans by the belt and sat me on the bed. Then, he put his hand behind my neck and tried to force me to kiss him. I told him no because I just met him. He tried to reassure me that what we were doing did not mean anything. I was not falling for that, so I got off the bed and sat on the floor. As I was getting up, he got up as well and locked my door. I looked up, then stood up and asked him why he locked the door. He came up to me face-to-face and started telling me again that what we were doing meant nothing. Then, he tried to get me to kiss him again. I told him no and that I did not want to kiss him and started walking towards the door. As I was about to unlock the door, I grabbed my phone near my desk and asked him to leave. He jumped on my bed and told me no because he wanted to sleep over. So, I left my room and told my roommates what happened. I stayed with them until he left.

The moral of the story is that I realized college is not all rainbows and unicorns. I feel like I was not completely prepared for it. I was so focused on trying to get the full “college experience” that I put myself in danger. As a result, I learned a very important lesson: not to be so naive because not everybody has pure intentions. There are people out there who will take advantage of you. I also realized that I cannot blame my father for wanting to be so protective. My father always told me that as I grow older, I will slowly understand why he was so cautious when it came to raising his kids. And though I hate to admit it, I am slowly understanding.