

Back to the Past  
By Ana Maria Abisleiman

It is November 17, 2109, a week before Thanksgiving, in Coral City, Florida. My sister and I were patiently waiting for Grandpa to plop into his chair. Every 17<sup>th</sup> day of November he would tell us the story of the hurricanes that hit Miami Beach. But this time things seem different. He opens up a crinkled letter yellowed with age.

“Dear Family,

I am writing in hopes that one of my grandchildren will find this. I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you sooner. I used to work with NOAA and predict upcoming storms. The dwindling of Miami Beach was caused by increasing weather severity, the three hurricanes Tom, Ursa and Vinny. Nobody was made aware that 90 years ago, the schools in Miami-Dade County started planting mangroves. At the time, people were hopeful that the near future wouldn’t be so dark if we had those plants to help us. But we relied too heavily on them. Hurricane Tom hit us sooner than predicted and our trust in the mangroves grew thin. Mandatory evacuations immediately proceeded, and everyone fled Miami Beach. Hurricane Ursa tore down all of the buildings until there was only rubble. Vinny created new masses of land. Time wore at memories and slowly the failure was covered up. The media didn’t want anyone to know about the partial downfall of the mangroves that were believed to be a lifesaver. The land you’re living on in the future is because of Vinny. The earth we now live on is because of the mangroves that were planted 90 years ago. As they spread, they created land. They are our natural defense against storms and are able to survive in saltwater. I hope that you take this to heart and continue talking about our culture.”

With love,  
M.E.

Grandpa stops to let the letter sink in. “I believe that you guys are old enough to know the full truth about what happened.” He says solemnly. “This is why we have Miami Remembrance Day. Before the hurricanes you didn’t have to receive food by boat from New Jersey or Washington D.C. Miami mixed all sorts of cultures together. “People used to come here to celebrate art and tourism. Now they just come to mourn the place they did not think they would ever lose. The people like us living in Coral City are upholding the old traditions that Miami left behind.” Before we could form an answer, it was time for dinner.

Once we got to the table, I asked Grandpa, “Did Art Basel exist before the hurricane?”

“No, but we had Art Deco, it’s a modern style of art and architecture that was very common in Miami. The boats that bring supplies and medication every week are a homage to that art period.”

“That’s so cool! We did go see the Bonnie and Clyde movie at Q Cinema earlier, they said in the movie that there were laws against drinking, is that really true?”

“Yes, there really were laws that prohibited drinking. Actually, some buildings made in the Art Deco style had secret designs that would let you know if that was a place you could drink without being discovered by the law. Speakeasies, they were called. Some people went to the extremes of distilling liquor in their bathtubs.”

“Seriously? They must have been pretty addicted!”

Mom glared at the both of us until we stopped talking. “Help me and your sister clean up the table. You should be going to bed soon.”

“Okay Mom...” I couldn’t believe how fast dinner went by. As soon as she went back to cleaning, I stole a glance at Grandpa and we both laughed. Daydreams of mangrove hurricanes and old Miami occupied my mind as I washed the dishes.