

Ever since the flooding, Miami has never been the same, and yes it might be obvious with all of it being underwater, but the people's attitude changed too. Miami was once a place where people do as they please and believed that everything was possible and that whatever happens we can all come back from it, learn and improve, or so that's what I remember and it's what my grandma used to say. All of this changed as soon as the hurricane hit twenty-five years ago, a hurricane to which no one speaks of and to my own good have forgotten the name of. Although I have forgotten the name, I haven't forgotten all that Miami was and all its wonders in it. After the flooding, all of this disappeared and everything got flooded, the only things that were still in place and where we all survived with were the mangroves that have been planted thirty-five years ago from students who believed it would help keep Miami up and running even after a flood. Although they were right not much is left anyway since not many people believed it in and only a few were planted, and now we are stuck on what was once a piece of road and a small building to keep us warm and have shelter. Anyway, It's December and this neighborhood that I'm in is festive or is still getting into the festive spirit of the holidays. Everyone including my mother and I have found and added flowers and shiny objects to the mangroves in order to celebrate the holidays. Some of us got lucky and were able to find old Christmas ornaments and added some others not so much. To describe the place and its condition I would say that some of us build houses over a small building that was abandoned while others camp on what was once a piece of cement. For this Christmas my mom and I have a few presents for each other and so does my grandma although she isn't here to see our faces of joy as we open her presents. You see, when the flood hit she saved my mom and I but also tried to save items of the house and some items for us to survive with, and later she went back to get more items and as she tried a storm was on its way and this huge wave came out of nowhere and crashed into the house closing the entrance in and eventually she drowned. I am happy I was able to stay with her for some time when she stayed with my mother and I before the incident and was able to tell me stories about all of Miami and her life, I miss her. It wasn't until recently in mid-November when my mother wanted to go and search the house since the flood started to go down a bit and she wanted to search for any items that might still be in somewhat good conditions or maybe we can use for something in our house or even use for trading. As I go with my mother to the old house, we start looking around and get any shiny items like metals and silverware, but I became curious and find my way upstairs in the attic where I found this chest and at the top it seemed like it had words on it carved up saying "do not open until Christmas", which I found weird to I showed my mother. My mother then decides to bring it home and remembers that grandma said she was doing something special for us on Christmas before the flooding. Well it is now December and only a few days left and I'm really nervous and want to open the chest and open these rescued gifts from the old house. These ideas of what could be in the chest bring me joy and sadness as it reminds me of how my grandma died and the flood but although these might be hard times, I always think about the old days when Miami was all beautiful and fun and I also think about how my grandma used to talk about the places that were the best places for a person to visit. The one place in Miami that I would never forget, and my grandma always told me about, and always

think about when things go bad is a street, a street called a Lincoln road, but the street itself is not that beautiful but what my grandma described from it I loved it and it was that the place during December they would add all these Christmas decorations. I remember imagining all the lights hanging from the trees and crossing to buildings, and I remember imagining a huge Christmas tree in the middle filled with lights and decorations, this place always filled my grandma with joy when she talked about it, she said it would remind her of the times when everyone celebrated something and the city decorated as such to improve the holidays and the streets. Near Lincoln road, there was an ice cream shop where they had this ice-cream flavor called sky blue and my grandma would say it was the best thing in the world to eat. The thought of eating that ice cream always gets me hungry and wanting to eat it as I wanted to see how good something can taste, and she said it “felt like eating a cloud that had the taste of something so wonderful”. Sadly, all we get to eat is fish and at times iguanas, although iguanas are not that bad especially when combined with some orange juice from a tree that had started to grow near us. There is this one place where my grandma would talk about where she would go and have fun called Flamingo park. Flamingo park was this park that had so many things for people to do from a field to run in and play sports to a pool to go and swim in. My grandma would talk about how she would always go with some friends and would play sports and feel the grass as she sits on the field and eat a picnic, she would always have fun one way or another, that place was a place “that you would never be bored or feel alone” she would say. Too bad the flood gave it a bad hit as it filled with water and instead of people wondering around there are alligators and fish, but I can still imagine how beautiful it was before all this. The one place she said would have recommended people to go to would be the beach in front of ocean drive. She said that although it seems like nothing like a normal beach if you stay there long and watch the sunset with a friend or alone with some soft music it gives you the best feeling in the world, “I guess a person would describe this place as a hidden gem” at least that's what she would call it. I guess we could have prevented this situation if people would have paid more attention to climate change and saw that the sea level was rising at an alarming rate, and in this way, people could have planted more mangrove trees to support the ground and prevent tons of water from getting into our streets and flooding all of Miami. My grandma would tell me how people knew this was happening and would happen later in the future but instead rather not listen, my mother still believes this city can be saved as long as we clean the streets and help clean and not destroy the mangroves, I guess you can say that the mangroves have become our sanctuary and our most prized possession. Miami might be underwater but the spirit to live in this city remains, although not the same one from years ago. Maybe people from other countries can receive this note and understand the importance of mangroves trees and that it is needed to prevent these floods from damaging countries especially those who live near the water, I can tell from experience, and let me tell you hunting and gathering isn't all that easy or fun maybe sometimes but not all the time. I can say this as I was one of the only few who survived the flood by staying near the mangrove trees and the areas in which they prevented the water from running in and with this I want to say that everyone should prepare more or your cities will also disappear and only thing that will

remain are memories of the place. I might only remember a few things and things that my grandma would say but I know that slowly memories of lovely places will fade over time and eventually be gone and all will be underwater, please take care of mangroves and the environment, unless you want to end up like me and the ones here with me. Well now it's time for me to open up my present from my grandma's hidden chest, I know that anything in it from her will be wonderful and any memory in it will be too.