

a few years ago, my grandparents staged a rescue. they **brought** my mother **and** David to Florida, where they all lived **among** the palm trees and strip malls. it was a strange world down there

David **got into** rapping, freestyling at MC battles **so he could** leave his mark on the Greater Palm Beach area hip-hop scene. he **made friends** with a producer, Germaine, who was not **exactly** a producer but a kid who met David at the Olive Garden and then **moved in with** him and my mom

at first I was **skeptical of** this **arrangement** until I realized that Germaine was the most responsible one of the **bunch. with** David **mostly jobless** and my mom still devising elaborate cover stories for morning trips to the liquor store

these were transparent to me but often **fooled** my grandparents who **devoted** their final years **to trying to manage** all this, posting bail, **taking care of rent**, paying for treatment plans and David's **\$3,000 cell phone bills**

I'd visit a few times a year and always felt **stunned at the way** they lived. I had to **remind myself** sometimes that these people were my **immediate family**. I didn't understand them and they played **little** role in my daily life. then one day last year they **took over** my life

it started **with** a phone call from David. **by this time**, my grandparents **had** both died and my mom and David lived in my grandfather's condo at Century Village, a retirement community in West Palm Beach

now David was calling because he **was about to** start a 30-day **jail sentence**. our mother, he said, **had been** so drunk she **hadn't moved** from the couch **in weeks**. he was sure she would die if he **left** her there

I **got** a neighbor **to go over**. she **took** one look at my mother and called an **ambulance**. when the **paramedics** brought her to **intensive care**, the attending physician called me **to ask** what the hell happened to her. I said I didn't know. the next morning I **got on a plane for** Florida