

FESTIVE FLOATING: SANDRA FAASE

The lid closed. The soft, red light dimmed. She was floating in the dark, humid pod. She had let them know she was claustrophobic and the woman that booked her in reassured her just gentle poke at the lid would release it, and there was an alarm button.

She fumbled to re-check the location of the rubbery button in the dark, careful not to press it and unleash mayhem. The ambient music trailed and faded. There was a gentle sloshing as she regained her position. The sloshing quietened with no sound in its place apart from her own heartbeat and breathing, which she tried to slow.

She did not know how long it was before she became unaware of her breathing and was visited by scenes of her childhood: her dog nuzzling her face as she woke from a dream; basking in the sunshine in a yellow bikini with her first boyfriend; plumes of condensation on a wintry evening building a snowman with her sister; walking hand-in-hand in the forest with her mother looking for brightly coloured mushrooms; her dad barbecuing in the backyard, humming along to his favourite music playing in the background.

Then small pin-prick lights broke into her consciousness. First a dim purple, then green, then pulses of red, orange and yellow. She would describe it later as channelling the birth of the universe to her amused friends.

Then came a state of blissful semi-sleep. The water suspending her as if in her mother's womb – safe and sustained. Linked to an infinite life-source. She lost all sense of time and space.

When the music slowly returned and the pod opened, she came to through a golden, gelatinous membrane. She felt a strange, slow high, the likes of which she had not experienced since smoking opium on a trip to a remote part of Thailand in her misspent youth.

What a way to spend Christmas morning, she thought, on her way to the obligatory family feast.

"You're in a relaxed mood," said her daughter, "not like your usual yuletide self at all."

As she drove past the blinking, coloured lights of the suburban streets on her way home that evening, she contemplated her next suspension.