

Deb Lewis-Bizley comes down to Earth

I am waiting on the front edge of a lowering cumulus cloud, at the front of a front, you could say.

I fantasise about dropping into a rainforest, to drip from verdant leaf to fern frond to tiny, but swelling meniscus in the luscious cup of a tropical flower. Or maybe to be the first drop in a parched landscape, to colour the sandy earth russet, and send an oh-so-welcome puff of petrichor into the nostrils of a frill-necked lizard. Don't we all dream of greatness?

As it happens, a stiff southerly pushes me abruptly into the air above the Sydney's Northern Beaches. So, where will I land? In the town, on someone's head? Or I might be pierced by a cactus spike in a garden. Please no. In the sea? I am reminded of the story of a raindrop which dropped just out from the breaking rollers. It fell for a bubble rising up from the tumbled foam. They met fizzily on the crest of a wave, only to be caught in flagrante by a passing tern which mistook the bubble and squeak for the fin-flap of a fish.

Anyway, here I am on my downward trajectory over the beach. Where I land depends on which way the wind blows, I guess. There's no bubble in sight but maybe I'll hitch up with another raindrop?

I land on the tanned fore-arm of a man who is walking along the beach with an attractive woman. It wasn't the travel experience I thought it would be, but I am instantly intrigued by their conversation.

He is working himself up to asking her to marry him. I can feel his tenseness through his skin. He talks of twilight dinners, of travel to Vietnam, to Paris, New York. When he suddenly drops to one knee I have to hang on for dear life to a sun-bleached hair. She is bemused, conflicted. She stares at the horizon, not sure if she likes what she imagines beyond it.

While we wait, shivering, in suspense for her answer, he pulls down his shirt sleeve. AARGH! No bubbly embrace, no tropical bed of flowers, no gratifying breaking of the drought for me. Just the existential reality: the ignominious dissolution in the warp and weft of a made-in-Bangladesh cotton shirt. Such is life!