

untitled

By Ruth Ostrow

The sky was looking threatening leading up to a big outdoor party I had organised for my daughter. When I sent out invitations and planned the garden venue I never even considered rain. It didn't enter my head as I walked around the pristine gardens and imagined people among the trees.

Day after day as the time grew closer, the rain grew stronger. It was torrential, like sheets of glass pelting down, as other parts of the country sweltered in drought. It just didn't seem possible that a November day could be so wet and cold, and out of character. Lying in bed listening to winds so strong they had stripped our sand dunes bare and caused trees to topple, I realised that everything about the weather is now out of character. In fact, everything we know is being swept away by the winds of change.

Last month, two weeks before summer, on the same day it was snowing in Melbourne, bushfires were raging across parts of drought-ravaged NSW, while hailstones the size of golf balls pelted down on the Gold Coast and along the northern NSW coastline.

It felt almost apocalyptic as my garden turned white and we foraged for warm clothes and jackets to throw over bikinis.

Tsunamis, tornadoes, terrorism, climate change, the omnipresent and increasing risk of nuclear holocaust. Has the world always been this unsafe? I don't remember feeling this out of control.

In many ways the weather is a metaphor for so much of what has become unstable and unpredictable in our lives, as we turn to the heavens in trepidation.

A wise man once said: "Being able to live with uncertainty is the greatest gift there is." It's the gift of acceptance for a time in history where the adage "safe as houses" is proving to be the illusion it always was.

Buddhists have been telling us for eons that everything is impermanent; that all we have is the precious moment and we must grab it joyfully with both hands.

The day of the party arrives. Suddenly the weather is fine, perfect. Just like that! The sun beams down and we drink and celebrate as if each moment were our last.

Under the azure sky we dance and hug, we cherish our loved ones, we vow to live more wisely, more kindly, more passionately and to seize the day for tomorrow is not guaranteed. And over on the far horizon, dark storm clouds can be seen gathering again.

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