

# Plastic Poem, Plastic Plague

Sara Loosestrife

1986

## Plastic Poem

Yellow garbage bag ties  
pieces of ziplock bags  
whole ziplock bags and baggies  
tips of tiparello cigars  
orange bread bag ties, green ones  
juice bottle top  
milk bottle top  
camera lens cover  
pieces of pampers disposable diapers  
toy soldier  
toy truck wheel  
chapstick  
coffee stir  
pieces of bic pens  
bic pen top  
toy rudder  
piece of yellow comb  
orange elmer's glue cap  
black binocular lens cap  
many caps of many unidentified things  
many nondescript pieces of things in many colors  
pieces of fishing line, pieces of netting  
blue baby doll brush  
baby doll arm  
toothpaste tube cap  
nyquil cold medicine cup  
tampon applicators—everywhere  
bic cigarette lighters—everywhere  
cigarette filters—everywhere  
pieces of styrofoam cups and plates  
straws—red and white striped, blue and white striped  
pieces of forks and knives and spoons

six pack beer can yokes  
shotgun shells  
pieces of balloons—green ones, yellow, blue and red  
champagne cork.  
Let's celebrate.

The sand cannot cover this.  
The earth cannot bury this.  
The lake cannot swallow this.

—Sara Loosestrife, White Pine Beach, Point Pelee, Ontario, August 31, 1986

## **Plastic Plague**

—More than five million plastic containers are dumped into the ocean each day by the shipping crews of the 50,000+ ships that sail the seas.

—Commercial fishermen alone dump more than 50 million pounds of plastic packaging into the sea each year and lose some 300 million pounds of plastic nets, lines and buoys.

—Participants in an Oregon beach cleanup two years ago collected 26 tons of garbage in three hours.

—2,000,000 seabirds, several hundred thousand mammals and turtles die every year because of plastic ingestion.

—90% of albatross chicks on Laysan Island have some quantity of plastic in their digestive system.

—Plastic banana bags dumped from docks in Costa Rica are found in the digestive tracts of sea turtles which probably mistake the bags for jellyfish—one of their favorite foods.

—Lost fishing nets trap and entangle fish and other water wildlife. A single piece of netting, recovered in the North Pacific contained one hundred dead seabirds and two hundred dead salmon.

—Each night, Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean fishermen set out eight-mile long, twenty-six foot deep nets, stretching 20,000 miles of invisible netting. Each morning when the nets are retrieved, an average of ten miles of netting escapes detection, continuing to entrap and kill fish. Thousands of miles of old, deteriorated nets are consciously left behind or dumped overboard each year.

—Each year ten times as many fur seals killed by native Alaskans are killed when they become caught in plastic netting left out by commercial fishermen.

# fifth Estate

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