

2015

Plastic Bag

Emily Bradford

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Recommended Citation

Bradford, Emily (2015) "Plastic Bag," *The Messenger*: Vol. 2015 : Iss. 1 , Article 25.

Available at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol2015/iss1/25>

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Plastic Bag // Emily Bradford

The bag is a boon to each harried, weary, or ecstatic customer whose arms, without the benefit of the plastic handles, would strain in an awkward cradle to keep purchases from crashing down. When called to serve, the bag sticks to its fellows, is extracted, billowed out with a jerk of the hands. Miscellaneous goods slide across a black belt into a wide and welcoming mouth. Holiday bags rustle like faintly jangling bells, whispers of Christmas. The bag stretches, sags, the thin handles cut into flesh as they strain, until the flimsy mule is led indoors, relieved of its load. The bag is disposed of, frequently into another plastic bag. Careless people ball the bag up and shove it, along with bones and softening cantaloupe, into a tall wastebasket lined with an even larger plastic bag. The kind-hearted who pity the earth's digestion scrunch the bag up next to others and put these into another bag and think no more of any of them. Where are they headed? Plastic bag Samsara? When they are no longer useful, some specimens become unsavory tumbleweeds, vagrancy dehumanized, polymer jellyfish that graze the concrete floor of an arid, smoggy sea. The bag was once manmade and sterile but is now filthy, inorganic and undomesticated. Unrestrained bags become lawless. Some will be guzzled by a long-billed bird with soft gray wings. The bag, last supper and death shroud, blows about in tatters around the poor mistaken creature whose eyes are still and neck contorted. The bag's red "Thank You" motif is not yet faded.