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2019

**Author Bio**

Emily O'Hara is a Gettysburg College senior majoring in English with a writing concentration. She grew up in many places and is passionate about many forms of writing.

2019

EMILY C. O'HARA

I am in Bermuda feeling like  
my parents paid a lot of money to watch the world end.  
I run my fingers through the tranquil water and send microplastics scatter-  
ing. This doesn't sit right with me.  
I swallow down the feeling.

At night I watch waves crash against the beach  
as moonbeams reflect against chunks of white plastic.  
I wonder how many miles the fragments swam to get here,  
each piece arriving like a message in a bottle.  
I wonder how many more messages are on their way.

During the day I swim off the coast with the intention of collecting one or  
two beer cans.  
I find myself becoming a dot on the horizon,  
taking off my sun shirt and using it as a makeshift trash bag. Each day the  
men who work at the hotel go out in their boats to collect the Manawar  
jellyfish  
that are poisoning the ocean.  
Their boats race by and I go underwater so I don't smell the exhaust.

This was the year the fires happened. They burned through  
35 million acres in Australia.  
They lit 7,860 candles in California.  
Ocean temperatures  
reached record levels of heat, raising the bar for any other year wishing to  
claim the throne.  
Around 9 million metric tons of plastic dived into the ocean.

Every night while I eat dinner the wind twists my hair into small knots.  
It gets dark as I listen to the rhythmic sound of waves crashing against

hotel beach chairs.

When I was little  
I believed in the ocean the way some people believe in God.  
I would ask it for favors such as big waves or contentment.  
Now I avoid looking at it while I finish my meal knowing that if I do I will  
see moonlight reflect against yet another  
plastic bag.

I collect scraps under the sun for as long as I can,  
but eventually my legs cramp up and I swim back to shore.  
I take my collection of plastic to the nearest trashcan and wonder if the  
ocean forgives me.  
The tourists on the beach, sixty-five and finally here, piña colada number  
three in hand,  
keep telling me “You’re not going to fix it.” And I respond silently,  
adamantly,  
“At least I know something is wrong.”