



***Total Garbage*, Edward Humes, 2024.**

Review by K. D. Kragen, KaveDragen Ink.

Total Garbage is a real page turner, couldn't stop reading. Totally packed full of garbological wisdom, it is also filled with practical advice for taking action, for governments and for individuals.

Beginning with the Prologue, *Total Garbage* reads more like something in the sci-fi horror genre (like the sorts of stuff I write in *The KillWare Chronicles*). Yet, after a somewhat gruesome panegyric on how each one of us is “eating tons of plastic” and generating 1.5 tons of garbage each year, in chapter one

Humes opens with the heartening story of Ryan Metzger's Ridwell company's brilliant model for successful community recycling.

Storytelling is a big part of *Total Garbage*. Some are scary stories, like the 100 years of plastic pollution beginning with the invention of Bakelite in 1923, while others are filled with well-researched and practical information, such as the heroic exploits of nationally certified “Trash Genius” Jenna Jambeck (in chapter two), who has testified before Congress and influenced world leaders.

Many of us wondered about the effects of our recycling efforts in those earlier days back in the 1990s, and the China “recycling” connection. Humes recounts that story too. And the 100 year history of our addiction to plastic, the move from durable to single-use, creating our present “disposable economy.”

Total Garbage is an enlightening expose on both the present situation of our worldwide disposable economy and the strategies needed to change course – for nations, governments, big business, and for cities, smaller communities, neighborhoods, and individuals. While Congress needs to listen to people like Jenna Jambeck, especially her research on our planet-wide plastic waste problem, and take action at the national level, there is also a lot that can happen at the local level. “Acting at the end point of the waste [flowchart of plastic pollution] is the most obvious and perhaps the easiest strategy: litter cleanup and capture. This is an individual and community challenge: organizing street, beach, and river litter cleanups, and deploying filters, screens and other capture devices to snatch plastic debris out of rivers and storm drains before it gets away” (p. 35).

Total Garbage has invaluable and inspiring information for addressing both our planet-wide disposable waste problems and the energy crash tipping point we are facing. Yes, this book is a warning – in the tradition of Philip Wylie's *The End Of The Dream* and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. It is also a challenge, with clear and practical strategies, to take action to reverse our “disposable economy.”

Read *Total Garbage* together with your book reading group, share it with your community and city leaders, make it a part of your emergency preparedness neighborhood network. The call to practical environmentalism and eco-justice activism should be non-partisan. It should be the calling of all of us humans on earth, our planet tribe.

It's easy to say “It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.”

Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.

Fred Rogers (*Total Garbage*, p. VII)