

# The Garbage Patch

By Alice 

The older members of the pod had always warned Myra about the garbage patches. Myra never listened. She had no need to. Now, she was jumping through the air, her powerful tail propelling her higher than the rest of the pod. Twisting perfectly, she landed and dived down in the Pacific ocean, and with one expert flick of her tail, she was heading up. When she reached the surface, she flicked her tail again and she was floating on her back, her blowhole just above the surface. She couldn't wait to tell her friend Tina that she had nailed the jump-dive trick. She turned around, hearing the splashes of other dolphins. Tina was in the front of the pod. Myra quickly swam over to her. With a couple of clicks, she told Tina all about her success. But Tina didn't seem to be paying attention. Myra clicked in annoyance. Tina told Myra about all the fish she had seen coming there. "Up north," Tina clicked to Myra. "There is no shortage of food." "Humph", Myra said. "My trick was better." "The water feels good on my fins", Tina told Myra. "It is so warm here." Just then, a breeze blew a plastic bag onto Myra's tail. She flicked her tail angrily, but the bag wouldn't come off. She dove down and jumped up. The bag came loose, flying off in the wind. Myra swam back to her friend, whose eyes were filled with fear. "Do you think this is one of the garbage patches?" Tina asked nervously. "Nah", Myra said, but she was unnerved too. "Those were just stories. How about something to eat?"

Myra and Tina swam quickly to catch up with the rest of the pod. Myra was starving from the long journey to this new place. She was eager to get something to eat. She swam forward excitedly. Then she felt a light bump on her left pectoral fin. She turned, expecting to see one of the members of the pod, or a fish, but there was a plastic blue bucket instead. Disgusted, she dove away from it. But under the water, it was no better. There were plastic bottles, bottlecaps, and plastic bags. Myra no longer thought that this place up north was such a good place. Then a flash of movement caught her eye. It was a small gray fish. Myra hoped that hunting would help get rid of her feeling of disgust. She raced after the fish, and with an expert flick of her rostrum, the fish was dead, cut open with its belly exposed. Myra was about to eat it when she noticed some red in its stomach. She swam closer to investigate. It was a bottle cap. Uhh! Myra definitely didn't want to eat that. She heard a cry of disgust from another dolphin. He must have found another plastic fish, she thought. Then Tina's clicks hit her. "I found a good fish", Tina called out. "We can share!" By the end of the day, the dolphins had found out that for every ten fish, only one was edible. They didn't get much to eat. Myra made a silent resolution that she was going to get the pod out of there, and leave this new place, the next day.

The next day, Myra woke up early. She looked around. None of the other pod members were awake. She decided to go practice her tricks alone before the pod left. She swam off. No one noticed. Once she was alone, she pushed with her tail as hard as she could, and came rocketing out of the water. Then she landed perfectly and dove down, but a fishing net got caught on her dorsal fin. She started heading up to the surface, but doing so only made it worse. Now the net was caught all over her. She swam in circles, but the net still wouldn't come loose. Calm down, she told herself. She tried to push with her tail so she could get to the pod, but her tail was just as tangled up as the rest of her body. Now Myra was panicking. There was no way the pod would be able to find her and there was no way she could hunt like this. She would starve to death! Oh why had she wanted to practice that trick so much? She clicked loudly, but she knew there was no way the pod would hear them. They would just assume the plastic had killed Myra. Myra was terrified. There was no way she could get out of this.

The swish of boat paddles cutting through water caught Myra's attention. Some canoes were moving through the water towards the garbage patch. She quickly tried to swim away, but she was still caught in the net. As the boats got closer, she struggled frantically. She wanted nothing more than to get away from these people. Even crabs knew that humans were the cause of plastic in the ocean. And after seeing the extent of the garbage patch, she really understood how horrible people were. She watched, helplessly, as the canoes approached. She could see that there were two to three people in each one. Myra expected them to dump loads and loads of trash into the water, but they did something even more surprising. They picked the trash up. Confused, Myra momentarily stopped struggling. What were they doing? she asked herself. Then the realization struck her. They must be moving the trash to a different part of the ocean, she told herself. She started thrashing wildly, hoping the net would break, but all it did was entangle itself more. Then she watched in horror as the fleet of canoes neared where she was caught.

One of the canoes came closer than the others. Still, Myra had a feeling they hadn't seen her yet. Inside the canoe, there were two older people, one male, and one female, both with white hair, and a calf of a person. Thanks to Myra's grandfather, who had been raised in captivity, she could tell that it was a girl that was about fourteen years old. Myra watched as the girl turned around and made eye contact with her. Myra looked away, hoping the girl hadn't seen her, but she had. "Look Grammy", she said to the older woman. "That poor dolphin is stuck!" "Oh dear", the woman said. "Henry, steer us over to the poor creature." The canoe turned towards Myra and drew closer. When it was next to her, the girl and the older woman leaned over the edge and started untangling the net. At first Myra tried to resist, but the girl's soothing words made her relax. After they untangled the net from her tail, she got the message. They weren't trying to hurt her, they were freeing her. She nudged her left pectoral fin up so they could untangle it too. As the people worked, Myra listened to what they were saying. "Grammy, taking me to this Earth Day garbage patch cleanup was a great idea. It's been super fun. Thank you", the girl said. "You're welcome, Lizzy", the woman replied. "We love having you." With that, they pulled the net off of Myra's head. Myra clicked appreciatively and dove down in the direction of the pod, flicking her tail to show how happy she was. She could hear the girl's peals of laughter ringing out behind her.

When Myra reached the pod, Tina swam up to her quickly and they fin-tapped. "I'm so glad you're all right", she told Myra. "Where were you?" Myra told her all about the adventure she had had. By the time she was done, the pod had started swimming south. "Come on", she told Tina. "I don't want to be left behind!" Then she swam forward, leaving the world of plastic behind her.