

# Holden Garbology Reflections

Bones by Erica Violet Lee

*The bones too. Eat the bones too.  
Eat the leaves of strawberries;  
do not bite the fruit off and throw the rest away  
as if the plant grew itself with the intention of being easier  
for human hands.  
Soft salmon vertebrae melting into my jaw like warm chalk,  
and taking bitter green with the sweet red  
shifts my perspective of creation entirely.  
This is a lesson in scarcity, abundance, and  
reclaiming relational nourishment  
from what civilization calls trash.*

by Rachael Meadors

Being the Holden Garbologist fills my soul.

I love spending time alone, jamming out to Brandi Carlile and Noname as I sift through endless piles of cardboard. I love making silly announcements at staff meeting and then hanging out and talking compost with the kiddos at Narnia. It's a simple delight to jump into the industrial compost bin, moving 3,000 lbs. of freshly made dirt with my own two hands and the help of many a maverick.

I'm sometimes met with a twinkle of the eye or a curl of the nose as someone discovers Garbo for the first time, and both are an opportunity to teach. I get to connect to every staff member here, doing dirty work and making conversation. It's hard to take myself too seriously when my job is garbage, and it's hard not to take garbage seriously when my hands touch each thing that has been thrown out in this village. I find myself holding a gentle balance of holding on (saving treasures) and letting go (simplifying our surroundings here).

I love this place and this job; so, I hope to let it go. As Garbo Gremlin, I so wish that my job was not enough to fill my time. I'd have extra time on my hands and I'd be forced to do neglected tasks such as scrubbing the walls near the dish pit or organizing electronic files, or cleaning up the costume closet (again and again).

Waste is both individual and corporate. The majority of environmental pollution (which disproportionately affects people of color) comes from big business. While I wholly believe each person makes a difference, I hope for a day when I can stop making announcements about napkins and glass because, as an entity, Holden has transformed its business and operational structure in a way that takes responsibility for the footprint we leave, and treads even more gently across the soft, pine-laden forest floor.

Until then I'll be in Garbo Central dancing it out with the cardboard.