

## THE SONG OF STYRENE

Oh time, suspend your bowl, oh plastic form  
Where do you come from? Who are you? What is the story  
Behind your unique features? What are you made of?  
Perhaps a review of your ancestry is enough.  
We begin the adventure in reverse! Observe the mold  
A mysterious prototype...it makes untold  
Varieties of objects, like bowls or what-have-you.  
The mold is the important part of a huge  
Press that injects the paste to shape the piece,  
With its remarkable advantage being  
That it creates a thing in one fell scoop.  
The mold is costly and must be put to good use.  
Vacuum shaping is another way  
Of fashioning objects with a hint or two of grace.  
Long before that however, the warmed  
Material needs to lie gently on a board.  
To enter the nozzle, it required a piston  
And a special kind of heating system  
In which the lively, quick and turbulent  
Polystyrene hurried without relent.  
The granules swarm across the vibrant sieve  
Bounding with marvelous colors, ever since  
Becoming a wide variety of straws  
Of every imaginable tint, shade and nuance  
Set to speed along through narrow tubes  
Linked together by a single screw.  
And so from this gelatinous mass, with time,  
The rainbow-esque beads and pearls emerge to find  
The pigments they uniformly mingle with  
Before they tumble and rotate to dry and stiffen.  
There it is born, the famous polystyrene,  
A compound derived from simpler forms of styrene.  
Polymerization describes the act  
Of all the molecules combining in that  
Dark elementary electric machine

Specially built by an engineering team.  
The molecules begin to cling together  
And pearls begin to form, as if for a necklace.  
The styrene itself began as a colorless liquid.  
Somewhat explosive, it smells stronger than you think.  
Closer inspection reveals the substance to be  
An obscure and most peculiar entity.  
Styrene gets produced most often *en masse*  
From ethylbenzene overheating in vats.  
It used to also come from benzoin,  
A tree of Indonesian origin.  
And so from tube to tube, onwards we go  
Through a desert of channels where the substance flows  
Towards the raw beginning, the primal abstract  
Circulating without end on its track,  
Cleaning, distilling, and re-distilling for miles.  
It's more than just an exercise in style!  
So long as the temperature is high and holds  
Ethylbenzene will combust on its own.  
But exactly how is it derived? It's no sweat—  
In fact, it's a vaporous ethylene mess  
With liquid benzene. Petrol and coal perform  
The task of helping the gases combust and transform.  
We continue along these hallowed paths to discover  
How one exists in harmony with the other.  
Does petroleum come from masses of fish?  
Coal is equally mysterious.  
Perhaps petroleum comes from tiny planktons?  
These questions have controversial origins.  
Petroleum and coal were all up in smoke  
Before the chemist arrived with passion and hope  
To render gases solid, and reach the goal  
Of harnessing Nature's awesome powers in the home.  
And yet there are other materials waiting still  
For sciences' effort to help them transform, until...  
Eureka! New and improved by compound mutation:  
A product to purchase at your nearby location.