

C R A B :

Marine Metamorphoses Encased Chitin

I. Nauplius

Egg of unknowing in ocean spew
tiny translucent pearl adrift,
suspended in immeasurable tides of blue,
throbbing in a rhythmic, unconscious twitch.

I float in the cold light,
serenely oblivious of
the ravenous mouths circling around me
day and night.

Here survival's a raffle with brutal odds:
the only winning move is to be unnoticed.

II. Protozoa

Now an opalescent spark of savage need,
I slash through the saltwater, frenzied with greed.
I move through this marine world in frantic gulps.
Moving with a clumsy speed, I ignore all hulks.

My universe unfolds an inch from my eye,
where phytoplankton fly multiply in the brine
a single command shapes my life:
I must consume more or soon die.

My universe is expressed by
a single command: eat or vanish.
Eat or evaporate, feast or fade fast—
the law of the ocean is steadfast.
a miniature gladiator preparing to claim
a kingdom among the rocks.

I've hammered my strength from scavenged spoils,
from morsels and fragments among the rocks.
As a small gladiator among salty crags
I have survived among crevices deep,
near to ancient stones where sturdy shellfish sleep.

III. *Zoea*

Bigger and bolder in this brutal brigade,
where size decides who is predator, prey, played.
The bulk of the food chain is a long cascade,
a moving eclipse, a menacing shade.

My zoea form fathoms an ancestral creed:
crouch in the currents, conceal the small seed.
Keep profile diminished, pray darkness proceed,
hide till the hungry hunt elsewhere to feed.

Kelp forests cradle me, cathedrals that grow—
sanctuaries swaying in rhythmic flows,
where kindred and cousins creep cautious and slow,
slipping past snapping jaws, dodging each foe.

IV. *Megalops*

Wrapped in a wafer-thin chitin cocoon,
wielding bulbous claws beneath blood-bright moon,
I arrive as an armored, calcified boon—
a miniature tank, no longer marooned.

No more at the mercy of mid-water's whim,
I patrol the periphery, rocky and grim,
the borderlands breathing where sand meets the rim,
where stone and sediment shimmer and swim.

I have honed strength from scavenged morsels,
a miniature gladiator preparing to claim
a kingdom among the rocks.

I've hammered my strength from scavenged spoils,
from morsels and fragments among the rocks.

As a small gladiator among salty crags
I have survived among crevices deep,
near to ancient stones where sturdy shellfish sleep.

– T Newfields

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