She wears a carapace like a clam,
tinted blue and green like the sea
whose ever-shifting tides and shores
her ancestors have called a humble home
for god knows how many millennia.
Crustaceans like her predate prehistory.
Her stalk eyes peer out of an armor
as smooth and streamlined as it can be,
eroded like a stone treading the currents
swirling through the waves of the Atlantic.
Evolution has been kind to her people.

She walks on seven finned legs,
tottering over bumpy terrain
with the steady pace of a seastar.
The barbs and knots of her claws
glistened white, blue, and gold
like a nostalgic beachside horizon.
At home, under the sun’s golden reflection
rippling atop the wilds of the great ocean,
her mighty claws might’ve contended with
the likewise jagged jaws of a ravenous eel.
At home, under the sand’s bronze surface
stretching below a tidal pool’s silence,
her wily claws would’ve caught and cut open
the similarly hardy helmet of a hapless oyster.
To us lumbering apes, she is just a crab—
an aquatic foodstuff, a simpleton shellfish—
but to the animal kingdom, she is victory;
like salmons fighting eagles, bears, and waterfalls;
like sea turtles fighting gulls, sharks, and the tide.
She is a triumph for our ecosystem.

I wonder what the journey was like;
the one that landed her here, under
the cold sunbeams of stark, polished,
bone-white fluorescent lights.
She finds herself buried in the chatter
tumbling around a shop’s seafood aisle—
a static noise sharper and rougher
than the soft rumbling roars of the sea.
She walks on shifting, writhing ground—
ground that waves claws and stalk eyes
back at her, as it tries not to dry out
in the ever-shifting, yet still stagnant, air.

Maybe she met a net, kicking up dust, debris
and trouble as it crawled along the seafloor.
Maybe she saw a crab pot, singing sweet
siren melodies, as it beckoned into its maw.
She was dragged up from the depths,
on her way to a hell on a boat’s cold, hard hull.
She was pulled down to rest in a crate,
on her way to sleepless travels on the bed of a truck.
Finally, light flooded in when the lid was thrown open
and she was thrown overboard into the drought
of a barren wasteland of a table, a plot
by creatures that stand eldritch to her.
Does she realize that the metallic spoonbill beak
that pecks at her dull, dirt-like carapace
is a pair of tongs, wielded by bored children
who laugh in the face of evolution’s handiwork?
They are beings desensitized to seeing the ocean’s treasures
dug up and displayed like a museum’s gift shop bounty.
It doesn’t matter that she’s been muddied by a lifetime of battles;
she has been felled not by fair fate, but by artificial folly.