Ideas

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The thin bars of the traps we let down
to catch gossiping lobsters, mere
table talk or the deep, ongoing
history of the sea’s long standing
affair with earth and where we stand on it
and how, all the clever cat’s cradles
we weave for ourselves shudder
at every passing fin. Each explanation
we invent shines fitfully
but proudly
against the reefs it grows from

and wants to make love to,
illuminate even those dark
seething carpets of other, wilder
hungrier scholars that seem almost
to swallow us. In rippling schools. Masses
of small bottom fish, corpuscules
like fire leaping across chasms
or slower, oozing into thick
crusted layers. The seep of cells
worm-like, secretly dividing
and then multiplying into live
clumped coral. Buzzing. With eager
electric hooks, pronged feet, tiny
red starfish hanging all over
the fringed eyehole we peer through, what
ceaseless activity! Would they tear us
apart?
No. They are too blind—
too random for that. But both kinds
of colonists urgently need
each other, every answer
comes caked with the prickly
slime of barnacles, the
cages we think we’ve erected
against sharks and other predators are frail
ghost crabs, their near see-through
slats sway in the hissing crackle
of the cold soup that created them.