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## I Gave My Uncle Seashells for Ashtrays // Take a Lover Who Looks at You Like Maybe You are Magic

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# I Gave My Uncle Seashells for Ashtrays

Everyone has one  
gay uncle  
who has been neatly tucked  
away.

Mine took me out for lobster—  
smoothed a white cloth napkin across my thighs,  
taught me how to snap my wrists

so the whole claw fell  
clean into my lap. How to clench  
nutcrackers until my knuckles burned

bright as Orion's belt. I pucker a thin leg as he fingers  
his cigarette. Blow fake smoke. How to get to the good meat: split the tail  
open by cracking sideways. *One day you will realize you are different*

*like me.* The words spread as butter. A gulp of bread  
at the bottom of my throat: my make-believe Adam's apple  
stoppering my speech. He orders my first

drink: Shirley temple, extra cherries. I suck it down  
without thinking. *Don't let Uncle Johnny take you*  
*to the bathroom.* I cross my legs and squirm

like the bottom-feeders orgying  
in the restaurant tank—he let me choose my own

red heart, to be boiled alive in clear heat,  
to be cannibalized by no one other than myself.

JOSEPH O'CONNOR

# Take a Lover Who Looks at You Like Maybe You are Magic

—*Marty McConnell*

We fucked like alchemists  
teasing taboos underneath the planets. Experimentation  
between two boys in a field testing warheads—a dipping sun transmutes  
their curiosity: makeshift sundials pointing  
no where in particular. He kissed  
my mouths, kissed the inside  
of my forearm. Doctors stick me  
intravenous (he knows). Still searching for tonsils  
floating in far-off pickle jars. Watch muscles convex  
like when he carries in groceries.  
Infinity is moon-crescent fingernails burning figure-eights  
into my breast—he brands my obsession.  
Like magicada, we sleep seventeen years in darkness. Wake,

sing brazen through the night. Then fuck. Then die.

Our research hangs in the air, like spiders  
crafting invisible silver in the night.

Pluck a shiny pube from his teeth and blow,  
like dandelion seeds, like birthday candles.

Years of looking for the needle in my stack. And then you  
torch it all to kingdom come, leaving nothing but a glowing  
metal slice. It flies towards your magnetism.