

The Uncanny Condition

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*“The lobster’s body shrinks, the old shell splits open, and the animal’s twenty pairs of gills
stop beating.”*

—Trevor Corson *“Stalking the American Lobster”*

Those raw days. You were learning simple things
like how to hold an object. I had shrunk my body
and stopped my gills to crawl out of what I had been.

Perhaps you had learned to point. Perhaps we had already
begun tucking you between us at night, little lobster,
hidden in the gravel shore, ready to molt.

I kept filling my body with water to make a shell.
You drank it from me. What had been myself I dragged
scraping through the rooms on my back, deep scratches

on the floor and my thighs, until I ate some of it, buried
the rest. Of course you were already you, but to me
unrecognizable. I was in the slurry water of the near shore.

I couldn’t see far as I tried to wrench giant claws between
the narrow tract of my shell and body. You held
the gravity of the moon, pulling water back

and forth around me. A mouthful of pebbles,
a mouthful of shell. I read: A coastal state had
outlawed models predicting how the sea will rise,



and the coal smudged out the cities, and erosion
wore down the banks under airports and fuel tanks.
Beyond twenty years, the future goes dark. If you cannot

pull yourself free, you leave behind
a hand. In the parable of talents, you learn
not to bury the thing that most has value. I am

trying to make myself the thing that will harden me
into what you need. If it works, I will start out wet
and tender. I will shine on the shore.