

THE UNSWEPT

Broken bay leaf. Olive pit.
Crab leg. Claw. Crayfish armor.
Whelk shell. Mussel shell. Dogwinkle. Snail.
Wishbone tossed unwished on. Test
of sea urchin. Chicken foot.
Wrasse skeleton. Hen head,
eye shut, beak open as if
singing in the dark. Laid down in tiny
tiles, by the rhyparographer,
each scrap has a shadow—each shadow cast
by a different light. Permanently fresh
husks of the feast! When the guest has gone,
the morsels dropped on the floor are left
as food for the dead—O my characters,
my imagined, here are some fancies of crumbs
from under love's table.

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by Sharon Olds
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