Oysters on the Half Shell at the Back of Benny’s Boat

From a bucketful my father took one still alive. Never use anything but an oyster knife, he said, gripping an oyster in his left hand, knife in his right. He worked the tip into its hinge, pushed down and rotated the blade slightly until he said he felt a small pop—at the separation of top from bottom. Pressing deeper still, he slid his knife along the length of the shell, slipped it well under the exposed oyster—grayish, wet and cold, jellylike—now shucked. Handing it to me, he said, Lift it to your mouth. Take a whiff. And slurp. No, I said. Yes, he said. No. I do remember saying it—twice, at least. Give it a chew, he said, laughing—his buddies surrounding us, goading him, laughing too.