



Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood

Oliver Sacks

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Long before Oliver Sacks became a distinguished neurologist and bestselling writer, he was a small English boy fascinated by metals—also by chemical reactions (the louder and smellier the better), photography, squids and cuttlefish, H.G. Wells, and the periodic table. In this endlessly charming and eloquent memoir, the author of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* and *Awakenings* chronicles his love affair with science and the magnificently odd and sometimes harrowing childhood in which that love affair unfolded.

In **Uncle Tungsten** we meet Sacks' extraordinary family, from his surgeon mother (who introduces the fourteen-year-old Oliver to the art of human dissection) and his father, a family doctor who imbues in his son an early enthusiasm for housecalls, to his "Uncle Tungsten," whose factory produces tungsten-filament lightbulbs. We follow the young Oliver as he is exiled at the age of six to a grim, sadistic boarding school to escape the London Blitz, and later watch as he sets about passionately reliving the exploits of his chemical heroes—in his own home laboratory. **Uncle Tungsten** is a crystalline view of a brilliant young mind springing to life, a story of growing up which is by turns elegiac, comic, and wistful, full of the electrifying joy of discovery.

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