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## Little Pinch

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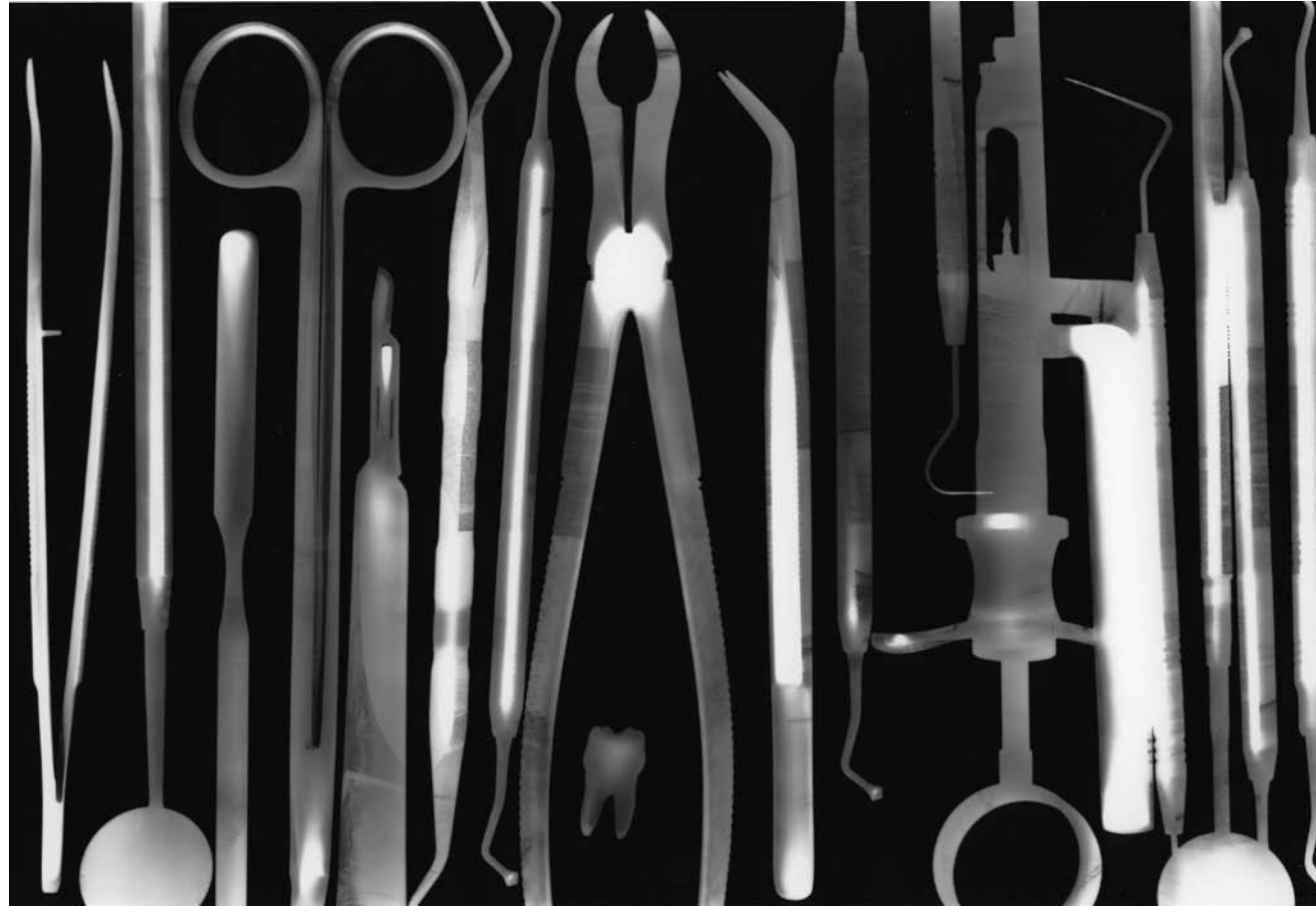
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LITTLE PINCH Toni Hubbard

## Ode to Normalcy and Routine : ODE 3

### Brian Shade

Century old oaks and greens mute the pain we feel  
 At the hospital. My pod in the basement is colorless,  
 A concentration camp.

Photos of lost friends and lovers pierce my heart with sorrow and anger.  
 Metal phones dangle on the wall.  
 Who can I call? Who can relate?

My room isolates further, the bed hard, my body asexual.  
 The north wind chills my nerves and cells relentlessly –  
 A cactus bombarded with thorn and pricks.

Oversleeping and ice-cream weaken the pain, but thorns penetrate my dreams creating  
 Impressionistic images.  
 Covered with five blankets and a mouthpiece to stop grinding teeth. Waking up takes  
 A couple of hours.

"Ha, ha," I chuckle sarcastically. "How much deeper can I go?"  
 "I'll descend deeper like a bird or gladiator soars!"  
 Then self-hatred erodes sadness, as waves on a powdery beach.

Weeks of surreal indecisiveness wane,  
 Suddenly I trudge out of bed and my room,  
 Reaching a new habitat called the ground floor.

Happiness begins  
 To engulf me in  
 Endless activity and colors:

Red roses, studly blue wranglers, and an army green windbreaker.  
 Photos and art projects regain significance.  
 Mom and Dad visit and we get fresh air by the oaks.

The new room is cozy, my attitude smoother, my appetite back.  
 Bubble baths, warm food and Butternut cocoa.  
 The basement and my thorns haunt me no more. "Now I'm stronger!"

Tomorrow's diversions make sleep an inconvenience.  
 Rest arrives with one blanket, no mouthpiece,  
 No toes pressed against the sheets like curled sausages.

Up at dawn, I have solutions for all: this patient needs Prozac,  
 This one just music. I, meanwhile, get pumped with neurotransmitters so  
 I'll stop flirting with nurses and chirping like a goofy cartoon.

Time, wisdom  
 And doctors begin  
 My road to normalcy.

Lithium, blood tests, more pills,  
 Job applications, movies, board games-  
 Ten some odd weeks later a routine emerges:

Breakfast, work, treadmill, Gatorade,  
 Lunch, dinner, bridge, TV, Slurpees and fries-  
 Perhaps even a book or a date.

Family and vocation save me.  
 Exercise, endorphins, music and sunsets invigorate.  
 Sports, gossip and the miscellaneous distract.

As bedtime approaches, I reflect  
 "Did I survive or thrive another day?"  
 My name is Jon Doe and I'm glad to be here.