


# Potion

## Terminal Moraine

by Derek White

from a whisper **grows** the movement... **expanding Out, and**  
**branching into a ( ((soothenfolding) )** sheet of **ice**. Passing down like **finger**  
tips **s p r e a d i n g . . . . .**




The siren sounds— scatters us in the **cardinal** directions around the house to gather **weeds**. *burning*  
from the trees. **4 brothers**, guided by an *instinct* disseminated from their *father's blood*. In a **legacy** of  
excavation, *distilled* by tradition: **Sunday**— **weed patrol** 

Autumn in a **Port<sub>land</sub> Oregon**

North, on the **edge** of the **glaciers** final retreat.


South. In a **ground** pregnant with **rain** the **weeds** will come by the **ROOTS**. I head  
straight for a **secret stash** I found earlier in the week when I lost a **water**-logged  
Nerf-ball. A cluster of **dandelions** behind a juniper **bush**.



East. *Dispersion* shows the **way** that leads to a *gathering* together, a **cocktail** parting on the  
fallow **battlefield** of a **Wounded Knee**. 

**Dad**. from the porch as we **f i l t e r** through the yard, his **hands** resting on the white **p i c**  
**k e t r a i l i n g**. It takes **eye**s to **witness** injustice to believe. Sets the airhorn down, closes  
the **s c r e e n** door behind him.

(**Mom is in aisle 6** tossing frozen peas into a cart.)

**Dad**. mechanically, his way to the **cupboard**. **Reaches** up to the top shelf  pulls down a  
glass (a **polished stone** left by the **headwaters** retreat). The **glass is half clear** and  
**half frosted with snow-flake designs**. Whistles as he walks to the **icebox**. His hand  
scoops 4 ice cubes and drops them 1 by 1 into the glass. Everything **IS** performing a **ritual**. A  
monk lighting candles..

(*Buoyant force is equal to the **weight** of the volume of the fluid displaced*)

A trade-off between quantity and quality. 1 by 1, dad will have us dump our weeds out onto the garbage can lid (turned upside-down). With the lid e x t e n d e d out in his **arms** and his **eyes** set forward, he will

bounce it up and down— judging the weight of the weeds.



Associated with this status comes a certain pride. Using the **mass** as a control subject, he **will** pick through the plants to assess (1) what kind we got, (2) whether they were even weeds and, most importantly, (3) *whether the roots were intact*. He will also, (4) make sure we weren't **sandbagging** the weight by adding excess **soil**.

These were the rules he laid down:...


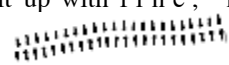
The *judge* goes into the living room, to the **liquor cabinet**. a family **heirloom** inherited from his father's **father**. The cabinet is made of dark, *lacquered* mahogany (containing a *biomorphological self-perpetuating pump*). Smells damp— a distant and mysterious country I've never been. It stands as tall as **dad's** nose. The upper compartment is cylindrical with shelved, swinging doors:



*The inside of this compartment is lined with green felt and there are circular slots in the doors for shot glasses and bottles*


Dad also keeps his **Liars Dice** cup in the rear of this **compartment**. ☐☐ All the |slots| in the doors are full, shot glasses on the left, bottles on the right.

There are four |**I**Dentical bottles of Chivas Regal. Everything is in order, though the shot glasses are covered with an even layering of **dust** {dead skin}. Lining the rear of the compartment is a *m i r r o r* that dad keeps *clean*.

**West**. The damp **earth** breaks into clumps as I pull weeds . It is a good feeling when they come by the **roots**. This is the art of picking weeds that the **dentist-dad** taught using **capillary action**. It is not always as simple as this. **Dandelions** are hard to get out by the **ROOTS**. Half the time they snap off at the base, a **frayed nerve**  a broken blood vessel. With a **compressed** tongue, I pick and pull at the *root* with a hollow *jaw* but it won't come, so I cover it up with **fine, non-sorted, non-stratified, silty glacier depositosis**.  the plants singing .....

*Methodically and deliberately*, **Dr.** Collins grabs the opened bottle of Chivas and empties it into the glass. It doesn't quite fill it. His whistling stops. Spits the **blood** into the suction **vacuum**. Sets the (half full) glass on top of the **cabinet** along with the empty bottle. **Reaches** for another bottle and twists the cap, breaking the seal. **Tops** off the glass.

*his teeth are the color of whiskey*


Places the freshly opened **bottle** into the front slot where the now empty bottle was. With deliberation, he leap **frogs** the other unopened bottles into the next adjacent slots queuing them up  He opens the larger bottom compartment and pulls out a fresh bottle. **Methodically**, he fills the slot at the end of the line. Then he takes a **sip** out of his drink and sets it back on top of the liquor cabinet, *gargling before*

*he swallows:*


*Glaciers, waves and drifting tides will sort pebbles according to a patriarchal stratified hierarchy.*



He grabs the **wounded** bottle by the **neck** and goes into the kitchen. Places it in the trash beneath the sink. He pulls the half-empty **trash** container out, unhooks the white **glad** bag from the rim and pulls the bag up. The contents shift into place around the bottle like water around a **buoy**. He throttles the bag while holding the neck then secures it shut with a clove-hitch

**knot.**  ..Sets the bag on the **linoleum**. Grabs a fresh bag, lines the **receptacle** & sticks it back under the **sink**.

He breathes without thinking as the coriolis force acts to rotate the water **clock-wise** in

the toilet bowl 

and the **ice** cubes are melting into spheres **wet** and blue

in a square **static** building 

n o o n e i s s l e e p i n g


in the kitchen he grabs a white glad bag and goes out the **sliding screen door**. Down the **steps** to the trash cans **underneath**. Matthew is there flossing the weeds out of the cracks in the **foundation**. Dad lifts up the lid, holds it like a **cymbal** waiting to crash, for the finale. Drops the glad bag in with no deliberate intent. Our weeds will get dumped on **top** of the **white** bag when we are through to *thump around the buoy*.



We are all **cannibals**. Dad manipulates the lid back on and brushes his hands together, inspects Matthew's work.

*"Make sure you get them out by the roots"* —he says.

"It's hard when they're **wedged** in the **concrete** like this" —says Matthew. I am **deep** in the **garden**, behind the *juniper bush*. Matthew is older than me, fears cavities, **flosses** before he **sleeps**.

The **tooth** fairy goes back up the stairs. Stops half-way to inspect the new paint job on the **house**. *Moisture has seeped under<sub>neath</sub> causing the white paint to blister*. He pokes at the bubble, squishes his finger around but **resists** popping it, clenching his **teeth** tight  Looks back down at Matthew who has stopped picking weeds to look back up at him.

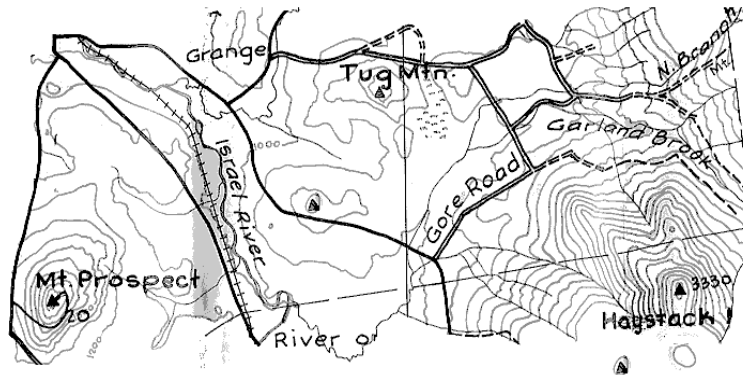
"Don't go popping these **blisters**, you hear? Tell your brothers."




When **dandelions** go to **seed**, they have a **stalk** topped with a *spherical cluster of feathery seeds* like a roman sparkler. I pick these and make a **wish**. Blow them like a BIRTHDAY CANDLE and





watch them disperse in the **wind**— wishing for the feeling of complacency associated with being rich and famous and having the most beautiful girl *in the world* as my wife when I grow up. The plants **sing west**. **Dispersion** and the blowing makes me **realize** I am thirsty. *Everything around me is wet and saturated*— the **weeds**, the house. Soon will come the horror **frost** and then we will only see the **lawn** when we roll **snowmen**. Dad sits in his Lay-**Z** boy chair and takes a sip. only the sound of his breathing and the **ice** tumbling in the glass. His right arm is resting on the arm of the chair, his bony **fingers** wrapped around the glass, delegating the course.




He takes another sip and sets the glass down on a matted **coaster**. *Condensation* rolls down the sides of the glass, soaking into the circular **weave**.

He **reaches** for the **remote** control and flips on the TV— news special about **tug** boats trying to haul an iceberg from the **Arctic** to California. To solve the drought problem in Los Angeles. They show an aerial view of the iceberg hopelessly melting and disseminating in the warmer waters  off the Oregon **coast**. A tampon commercial follows and **dad** flips the TV

off. Stands up & looks out the window at Luke pulling *weeds* along the front walkway while thinking about a **garpike**  he caught in the **Sacramento** river.

in the kitchen he dumps the **ice** out then rinses out the **glass**. Sets the glass down in the **sink**. 4. ice cubes are still in the **strainer**. melting. down the drain. 

Dad looks out the kitchen window and sees me, **still** behind the juniper bush— *blowing wishes from weeds*.

He quickly makes for the **s c r e e n** door. Exits out on the balcony and yells— "Don't blow those **seeds**! They'll only make more **weeds**." 

Mark echoes from the corner lawn...:





Don't blow the **seeds**, they'll only make more **weeds**!

Don't blow the **seeds**, they'll only make more **weeds**!

I brush off of my brown **corduroys**. There are two big wet stains on each of my wounded knees. Soaked to the **bone**.

**Resist! Resist!**


Dandelions lack a closure in the configuration of their **whorls**. My wishes are **weeds**. 

Dad shuts the **s c r e e n** door behind him. Grabs another **glass** out of the cupboard. The **glass** is **IDentical** to the last **1**, besides the  **Cascade** stains. He drops **4** ice cubes from the **icebox** into the glass. Goes into the *living* room and opens the *liquor* cabinet.

There is a **moth** clinging to the green **felt** on the inside of the door. Crawling up next to the bottle of **whiskey**.

Dad picks it up by the **wings** and takes it to the **s c r e e n** door. throws it **outside**.


The **moth** **dives** in a **helix** to the **astro**-turfed deck of the porch. Dad looks at the **iridescent** film on his fingers. Goes to the **sink** rinses his hands. out of the blue,


I happen across the **pile** of rocks where I **buried** my **guinea** pig. I buried it that spring in a **shoeb**ox mom gave me. A shoeb**ox** for her size **SIX** shoes. **Wishes** are sprouting between the rocks. I think of mom's toes, snug in the shoes.  White-knuckled in the **dairy aisle**. *What is below is decomposed to the benefit of what is above*. The **decaying** bones of the guinea pig in the shoe **box coffin**. The weeds outside are decreased to shift the *wealth* within. If it rains dad may sound the siren early. I continue around the vinyl **//siding** of the house, searching

for weeds. There are sandbags there to keep water from **puddling** up and soaking into the **base**ment. To re-inhabit the **flow**. (There once was a **bog** where the **house** now **stands**.)

**Dad** returns to the altar and fills the glass with Chivas. Takes a **sip** and sits down. Silence except for—

the clinking of ice in the glass

The whiskey fuels his ulcers  spawned by needless and incessant worrying over **erosion** and **flood control**. He looks down at his watch. Mom is picking out **iceberg** lettuce and **beef**

**bones**  for a **broth**. Dad takes another **sip** and sets the glass down. He knows we can never get rid of all the **weeds** [Heroes are rare]

**Winter** is coming maybe even the next **ice age**.

In another minute maybe he'll sound the **siren**.....

**Dad** checks the **driveway** to see if mom has come home. His car is in the **garage**. He looks at the **sky to see** if it will **rain**. The **clouds** are dispersing.

The whiskey in his glass is melting the ice to water.

He picks up his glass and downs it. Dumps the ice **cubes** into the sink next to the other **1's** that haven't **yet** melted.

i. round the side of the house and head for the **sidewalk** out front. My bucket is almost full. i. am stalling for the **siren** and my mouth is dry.

"*Get lost! The sidewalk is mine!*" —yells Luke.

The walkway is streaked with slimy slug trails. **NNE**. It is starting to dry in patches. **Wishes** are bulging out of the cracks. The **roots are prying and tearing** the **cement** sidewalk apart.

"I'm picking the **ONES** along the street."

"*Those are cheating. They have **graveL** in the roots.*"


"I don't need your crumby advice."

"*Get lost on the freeway.*"

Luke picks up a **bark** chip and throws it at me. It bounces off my **shoulder** lands in the water running **NNW** in the gutter along the **curb**, follow it's course as it bobs up and down like a buoy.



"*You waiting for a flood?*"

I look down at my cords.  Between the lower hem and my white sock is a gap where you can see my **skin**.

"As a matter of fact, **I am**."

I look back at the bark chip. It is a boat I am on.


It bounces . . . . .

South. down the rapids and swirls into a calm **puddle** in a **pothole**.  
At the bottom of the puddle are two earthworms **that are white** from drowning— too much **water**.



Dad told me once that earthworms have **12** hearts. I follow the **bark** chip down  
through the rapids and into the **swirls** of round **potholes**

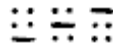
East. along the edge of the **driveWay**.


Then down the final rapids and through the **grating** of the **storm drain**. Disappearing into a  
rushing sound and a **moist**, pitch black. 

Dad grabs another glass out of the cupboard, still **IDentical** to the others. His jaw  
pulses as I kill ants on the **sidewalk** and watch the commotion as they struggle to find a  
new **path** around the old. Sets the glass down on the **formica**. Takes the aluminum tray out  
and cranks the lever arm that ruptures the cubes. Places four ice cubes in the glass. *Wipes up the chards of  
ice on the **formica***


fills it with Whiskey ...


He takes the drink into the bedroom. Opens the dresser drawer and pulls out a bag. There are **4** boxes in the  
bag 1st, 2nd, 3rd— and the **booby prize** The booby prize is the best prize Last week it was a  
**H<sub>2</sub>O**-powered rocket Dads shifts the bag from one hand to the other and takes a sip. Sets the bag  
down next to the **screen door**. He finishes the **drink**, dumps the ice out. Turns  
and grabs a **4th** glass out of the cupboard. **Fills it** with ice and Chivas Regal.



Once I asked dad what a weed was. He told me they were plants we don't like. "But I like  
dandelions" —I told him. "And I don't like lima beans.  Does that make it a weed?"

He modified his definition— it's a plant that sprouts up all over the place without us planting  
them A **Plant** that **sprouts** up everywhere *without us planting them*. They compete with the other  
plants for **sunlight** and nutrients."

My almost full bucket of wishes was resting on the **edge** of the **sidewalk**. I had forgotten about the weeds  
and was dropping more **bark** chips into the flow set by the **curb** and the accumulation of **graveL**.  
A **levy**, an **esker**.. *This was the last surge before the advance of the next ice age  
when the puddles would freeze over and the bog would harden to tundra* 

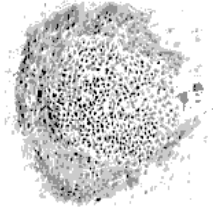
W. Washing in waves  up and down the */slant/* of the driveway.

The sun was shining hard now giving me a blue shadow. The water kept coming, NW. rain  
water seeping from the gardens and into the streets, the **battlefield**...

A **glacier floë** crumbling into the **sea**. An illness reaching its **crisis** in a dissolving sweat.

I'd forgotten about waiting for the siren. Forgot all about having our weeds weighed or my thirst.  
Didn't notice the **rain** bow arcing off the roof of the house, from <sup>be</sup>tween the chimney and the **gutter**.

The **cells** bursting at the seams,



unbuckling, rivets popping off unable to contain the **flood**.

*over and over and over and over ,*

i follow the water**COURSE**

to the **void** of the **drain** ☀