

Eggshell White Frigidaire

by John Wentworth Chapin

When he was seven, he and his four-year-old brother hunted raspberries in the ravine. They found an old abandoned refrigerator covered in brambles. He continued filling his coffee can with blood-red berries, maneuvering carefully around thorns, eating any over-ripe fruit. He called for Will but got no response; Will's can was perched on the old off-white refrigerator. Will was inside: warm, not breathing, limp as a wet towel. He pulled Will out and their jeans and skin caught on the brambles. He tried to drag his brother, but it was too much. He ran for home, screaming for help in the silent ravine. A hollow space opened inside him.

His mother gaped as he blabbered incoherently, dripping his own blood and vomiting bloody red raspberries onto the linoleum. He couldn't make her understand; he was hollow. He ran from the house with his mother on his heels screaming at him to stop and come inside.

When they got to the bottom of the ravine and she saw what had been Will, she ran to her boy, flaying herself on the brambles, shaking him and pounding his chest and kissing her baby. He threw up again. The hollow space engulfed from within, emptying him.

“What did you do to him?” she howled at him, at the brambles. But he was a blown egg now, fragile around nothing. He had no answer for his mother, then or decades later, long after she stopped asking.

