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xx.

IN WHICH EMILY STEPS THROUGH
AND SEES SOMETHING BENT

Emily stepped through the door
and the old woman moved back with a rustle of cloth
and something else

on the floor lay a bent key
and as the old woman turned
Emily picked it up and looked at it
just for a second

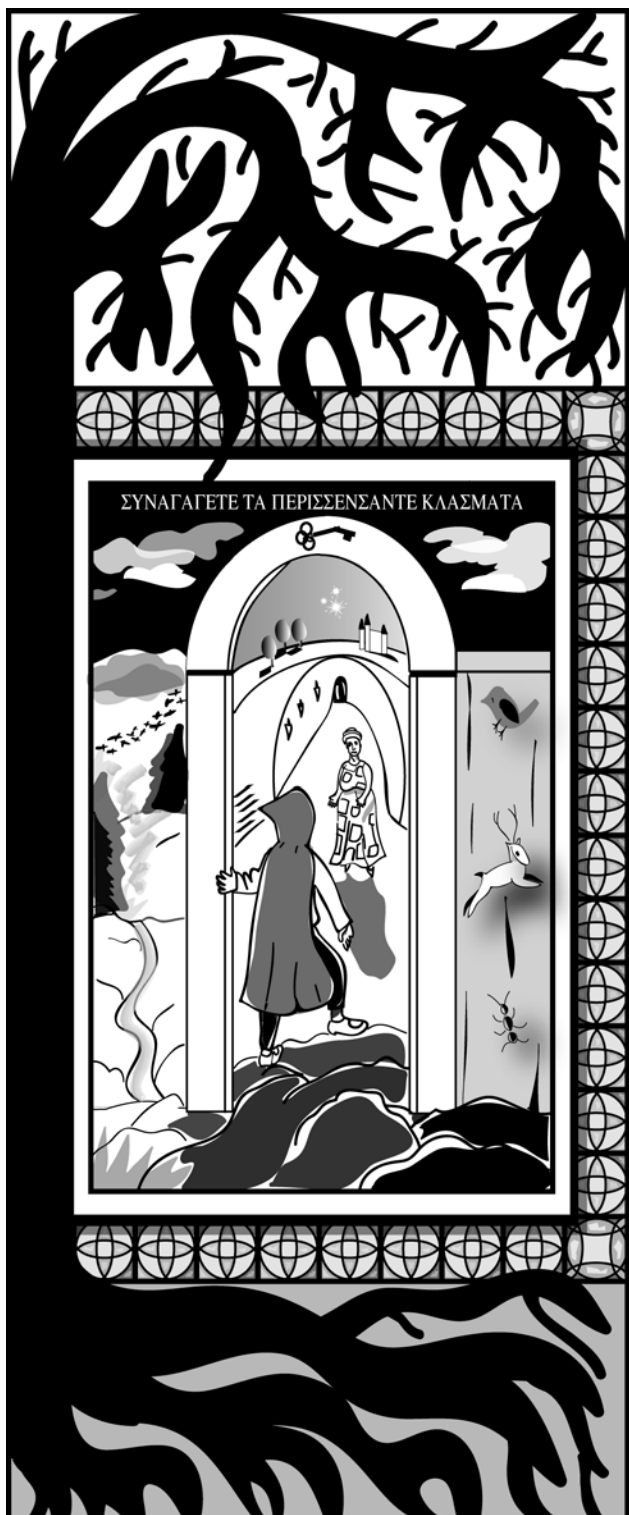
GLINT

the top of the key was carved with
 a deer
 a wren
 an ant
the bottom of the key was curled and bent
and soft to the touch
into her pocket it went

the chamber was a hallway
long narrow, a short ceiling
barely lit, in red
by candles ensconced on either side

the old woman walked down the hallway
swish swish swish
and Emily followed
breathing in a scent of dirt and mold
and lavender

*those children never did listen
to what their mothers told them*



xxi.

IN WHICH EMILY WALKS AND LISTENS AND TRIES
TO AVOID THE SMELL OF THE OLD WOMAN

in the hallway there was a gentle screaming
a high pitched wailing
that increased with the distance
from the center of the tree

the old woman continued
as though deaf to the noise
swish swish swish
and every once and awhile CLATTER
as her legs did not stay on well
and would sometimes fall off
and she'd have to stop and reattach one
or the other

(Emily stood back when this happened
if nothing else
the scent of lavender and death
was rather discouraging)

as they moved down the hall
the screaming grew louder
and more precise
shaping itself into consonants
and vowels

*move along move along here's a stitch
in time a needle a needle a heparinized
tube-full we just need a little blood
oops there goes the vein and
another and another
oh dear your arms are so thin
they cannot fit our pin
your legs so thin we can barely
abide them, my
my my drink this and we'll take a
nice nice nice
picture of your insides*

xxii.

IN WHICH EMILY AND THE OLD WOMAN REACH THE
DOOR AND THE OLD WOMAN MAKES HER STATEMENT
BEFORE DOING SOMETHING REMARKABLE

the far end of the hallway, a black ebony door
carved with the head of a deer

when the old woman touched this door
the voices stopped their screaming

what could be heard distantly was

Dr. Smith, Dr. Smith phone call on 9

the old woman turned and faced Emily saying
*this is the doctor take yourself inside
and he will do miracles
and it won't hurt a bit, really
but perhaps just a little bit but that is ok*

now kiss your auntie and away with you

the old woman reached her arms out to Emily
with fingernails and veins
and the swishing continued
and became loud
like blood in the ear
Emily was afraid but only just a bit
and she touched her key
as she leaned over to peck
the old woman on the cheek

at this, the swishing became even louder
and the old woman's dress billowed up over her head
and flew off through the wood walls
reds and greens and yellows flashing then gone
there was the smell of dying lavender on the fabric
and beneath the fabric the red feet
but also something that rustled
something made of skin and bone
rustling because of the insects crawling in

and around, arms and legs growing
as Emily watched
into whole human bodies
rustling rustling with insect lives
little, temporary worlds