

Emma could feel shaking itself into the corridor; past the large double room occupied by the Misses Wood, who were knitting silently and more rapidly than usual in their chairs before their two open windows.

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When she reached Mrs. Christianson's door, she was not surprised to find it closed. It bore no sign of any kind. It was simply a closed door. Emma Davis knew as certainly as though she had turned the knob that it was locked as well. She was aware also that her startled knowledge was shared by Miss Sophonisba Clark, by Mrs. Wilcox, by the Wood sisters, silent in their rooms; and it was that ominous and common knowledge there in the still, sun-swept corridor which left her motionless, and indeed suddenly mindless, in front of that locked door. Then, before she had time to search for her mind, she heard a key being slowly turned in the lock. The key made a high, querulous, ragged circle of sound, which, instead of terrifying Emma, had the odd result of bringing back her strayed senses to her, complete and unimpaired.

"Oil!" she said to herself in the brief moment before the door slowly opened. "All these pesky locks need oil." And the very image of the tiny spout of an oil can inserted in a lock,