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Chapter 9

I'm thankful she doesn't scream. In fact, she doesn't do much of anything at first; she just raises her hand slightly as if to wave to us, which she most likely did to everyone else. Once she fully registers who it is, or rather, *doesn't* register who it is, she cocks her head in confusion.

I shut the door behind us and Amorie steps closer to her. Amy squints her eyes.

"Who-Amorie Fowell??" she asks in disbelief. She blinks her eyes a couple of times as if she wasn't seeing clearly. "Why on earth are you here?"

"I can explain myself," Amorie hurriedly replies, rushing to Amy's side. Amy looks a lot sicker than Amorie did when she came back; surely Amy isn't truly ill, but the grief of having lost such a major part of her is clearly taking its toll. I wouldn't be surprised if clumps of her hair started to fall out.

"Who is that girl with you? Why did my father let you in? Does he not realize you're practically strangers? God, what is with him?"

"I'm Alexis," I interrupt. She gazes at me with feigned interest. I'm certain my name could not have been worth less to her, as she quickly turns her attention back to Amorie as if I'm just a lost child without any opinions for myself, even though I'm an adult who told Amorie to come here in the first place.

But, being the stranger, I suppose it was to be expected.

All of a sudden, Amy narrows her eyes at Amorie. "Don't you have magic, Amorie? Electricity? Not much of it, I remember. You were worried about not getting any more."

Remembering what Amy's father said earlier about her not being too pleased with magic at the moment, I start to get nervous, but Amorie is not having it.

"Amy, please hear us out and I promise we'll have answers to all your questions."

Her green eyes shine with skepticism, but she says, "Alright. Explain yourselves."

"Well..." Amorie looks over at me, slightly pleading for me to take over. I sigh.

"So, you are correct about Amorie having magic, and you're also right about her having very little. Nevertheless, about a week ago she disappeared from her workplace and nobody had a clue where she went. Then, a little over a day later, she reappeared in her hour completely unharmed, but she had amnesia and-"

"Her, too?"

"Yes."

Amy's eyes widen, and the amount of empathy in the "I'm so sorry" she gives Amorie nearly breaks my heart. Two innocent people have fallen prey to one selfish boy's actions, and I'm going to make him pay.

"It's alright. It doesn't affect me nearly as much as it must affect you, since I didn't have much of it in the first place. Still," she sighs, "it's a shame."

"There's more," I interject, before Amy and Amorie spend all day sharing condolences with one another. "As you can probably imagine, you didn't spend the last few days being so reckless as to where you would both get amnesia and lose your magic. There's no way to just casually get rid of your mega dialoid."

"I know," Amy agrees. "I keep telling my family that, but nobody's doing anything."

"The same thing happened with Amorie, so I decided to take this into my own hands. We have a family friend who's in the newspaper business, and his boss practically rules most major news sources in the area. We figured we could get this friend of ours to write an article about Amorie to spread the word. But it was never published."

Amy looks genuinely intrigued now, like I'm telling the world's greatest story and not just a recollection of the past few days, though, granted, something this intense probably doesn't happen too often.

"I went to go see what the issue was, and our friend said his boss wouldn't publish his article. So, I spoke directly with the head of the company and got him to confess that someone came in and paid him not to publish it," I continue. "He goes by the name of Clovis Witt. Have you ever heard of him before?"

"No, never in my life."

"I figured as much. None of us know him either. I confronted Clovis briefly, and while nothing too interesting came out of our conversation, now I know what we're up against, and it's a cocky twenty-something who's in it for the power." I gesture to Amorie. "She doesn't have a lot of power, or at least, not enough to make it worth kidnapping her. If he wanted anything else out of Amorie, he most likely would've hurt her or not let her go or *something*, but he didn't. Clovis didn't want to hurt someone just for the sake of hurting someone, he wants magic. And once he realized he didn't get a lot of magic, he searched for more."

Amy looks a bit lost and a bit angry. I try to simplify my explanation.

"Basically, we think he was searching for someone with more magic this whole time, something that would be worth it to take. Something like three-thousand dialoids."

Amy winces at the mention of her specific dialoid amount, but remains silent.

"He kidnapped Amorie by mistake. He wanted you. And when we realized that, we tried to call you, but we were too late."

"Oh my God," Amy finally says, stuttering slightly. "I can't believe- you mean to say that I was kidnapped by this Clovis person because he wanted my magic? And Amorie, too? I *knew* there was something off about everyone else's explanation. They just assumed I got into trouble."

"You didn't," Amorie pipes in. "But there's not too much we can do about Clovis as it is. He paid the head of multiple news outlets not to say anything about the kidnapping, so he can pay the police, too. Not to mention, we have absolutely no proof of this. But Alexis, she saw this guy. She knows that he's the one who did this, and we have to get justice."

"Yes, and that's where you come in. I'm so sorry to intrude on your personal gathering, and I'm sorry to dump all of this information on you, but we wouldn't do this unless it was urgent. I know you have amnesia, but do you have *any* recollection of anything before or during your disappearance?" I question, prepared for the worst. There's a very real possibility that Amorie and I have come here for nothing, that Amy has no information, and that we'll never be able to find proof that Clovis did this so we can somehow put him in jail.

And yet, Amy nods.

"Really?" Amorie exclaims, quite surprised. "I have no memory of anything."

"Of course you don't. When all dialoids are wiped from a person's system, mega dialoid included, memory loss occurs, especially in those with fewer dialoids. I had thousands of dialoids, and I can recall faint memories from my absence because of this. Except my family keeps trying to tell me that what I remember is just a hallucination or a nightmare or something of the sort, I think because they're in denial. Either way, I'm learning to distrust these memories, because they don't exactly line up with your Clovis story either."

"They don't?"

I can't tell if that's a good or a bad thing. I decide to remain quiet until she explains.

"I remember going to sleep and waking up in a dimly lit room, on a bed. The first thing I saw was the white wall, which had a very long list hung on it, filled with items I couldn't make out. I heard a woman's voice, whispering something about the rest of the 700 Club. I don't know what that means, but that's all she was talking about. And then I saw her." She takes a deep breath, as if trying to prepare herself. "She had dark brown skin, and she was average height, and though most of her finer details got lost in the low lighting, her hair was a brown-to-blond ombre."

"Holy shit," I whisper, under my breath, "you really do remember."

"I thought so, but everyone seems to think I just got really drunk and somehow lost my powers that way... When I tried to tell them this, they laughed it off. As much as getting drunk is something I do, I know that's not what happened. But if Clovis kidnapped Amorie, then why did this lady kidnap me? Unless I really am wrong?" Amy questions, and that's when it clicks into place.

"What did you say the woman was whispering?"

"I think she was on the phone. She was talking about a 700 Club. It might be a casino," Amy suggests. I shake my head.

"It's not."

"And what makes you so sure?" Amorie asks. My heart starts pumping faster as I ponder the implications of all of this.

"There are seven hundred Enchanteds," I state.

Amorie and Amy stare dumbly at one another for a minute, not understanding. Then, Amy's eyes suddenly spring open wider.

"Oh *shit*."

Chapter 10

Taking all of the magic from seven hundred Enchanteds is a little ambitious, and is a somewhat pointless goal. There's no way for a couple of people to steal everyone's magic before the Enchanteds start warning each other of what's happening, especially in Soulcrest, the town of over four hundred Enchanteds mixed in with some mortals. But it

would not be impossible to take the magic of Enchanteds in nearby towns without alerting anyone important of what you're doing, especially if you're as sneaky as Clovis and this other girl seem to be.

They most likely want this magic as a source of extra power, to rise slightly above the standards they're living in now to reach some sort of relative fame that naturally would come to an Enchanted with over twenty-thousand dialoids of magic, which would be possible if they took nearby Enchanted powers.

And the thought that this isn't personal and that this is just a ploy for some glory pisses me off even more. If you're going to force my sister and her friend through so much pain, at least have a better reason than fame. God, it makes me so sick to see what people are willing to do to rise above the average.

Natural-born Enchanteds are basically just average people with supernatural abilities. Likewise, some are good and some are...not so much. Of course an Enchanted has at some point tried to use their magic to force others into submission, but it never escalated much farther than a town and was quickly shut down by police who were receiving too many complaints about an annoying Enchanted who thought they could take over as mayor simply because they could ignite fire from their hands.

Fire is easily drenched by gunshots, it would seem, and from then on most Enchanteds knew that they are simply regular people with a few peculiarities. They are not treated differently by law, and are not treated differently by most people unless they have an exceptional amount of dialoids.

For example, Cristeen Greer is a thirty-year-old woman who became pretty much an instant celebrity when she turned eighteen, which is when dialoid count is finalized. She has fifteen-thousand dialoids and so far has the highest dialoid count in history. She has the ability to levitate not only herself, but other objects, which can range from people to furniture, to trees her power has uprooted. Once she made a train float one hundred feet into the air.

Naturally, she became quite famous, and now has more money than most successful actors in her time.

If it were to somehow come out that there was a man or a woman even more powerful than Cristeen, they'd be legendary. They'd go down in magic history textbooks that I study, and the thought of it fills me with anger.

They're not going to achieve that goal. Not when my sister has to suffer.

But despite the usefulness of Amy's description of the woman who kidnapped her, it's still a bit too vague for me to figure out who she is. I'm determined to figure it out, however. Clovis may have been undeterred by my efforts at telling him to return the magic, but perhaps a woman might be more easily convinced.

And now that it's Saturday, I have all day to figure her out.

Amy gave me her number before we left, saying I could call her at any time if I found out information or needed to remember the woman's description. She said she'd call me if she remembered anything else, which is doubtful, but still a nice sentiment.

We decided that keeping her family in the dark would be the best thing for them, as they can't even seem to adjust to the idea that Amy didn't get extremely drunk and ruin her own life. Asking them to believe that there's a man and a woman who are trying to take a few Enchanteds' magic in order to gain power seems a bit too audacious of us.

Amorie, though she's still very concerned about what's going on, decided it would be best if she stayed out of the nitty gritty of the situation. After all, she doesn't entirely seem to believe my theory at the moment either; rather, I think she's running with my hunch as a way to satisfy my need for justice while she tries to cope with the loss of her magic.

Amorie doesn't have the sense of justice that I do, but Amy clearly wants to be avenged, and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

So, I've enlisted Gigi to help draw a rough sketch of what this mysterious woman may look like. Having a roommate who's an art major really is quite useful.

"Ok, so this mysterious woman of yours...give me the low down. What's she look like? And I need detail, Alexis," Gigi instructs, pulling out her large sketchpad and a small pad of paper for notes.

"An African American woman, aged somewhere in her late twenties to early thirties of average height. She's got brown-to-blond ombre hair, and it's straightened," I inform. "That's all Amy remembers."

"You're meaning to tell me you spent all of last night at some random chick's house and all you got was that incredibly vague description? I don't do this for a living, man. Chances are, this will look nothing like her," Gigi replies. "It's not like you could just walk around with this in the street, compare it to someone and automatically recognize them."

"No, but it'll be useful for asking around. Maybe I could pretend that she's missing, and post it somewhere. Someone who's seen her is sure to respond then," I say, but Gigi rolls her eyes.

"And I thought you were the rational one in this room. They're kidnappers, Alexis. You think they're not keeping tabs on who's being reported missing? You're wrong."

"I know," I say, with a small sigh. "I just don't know what else to do. This would be so much easier if I had her name."

"Maybe you could just ask Clovis," Gigi jokes. "He could call her up, invite her over for tea."

My dark humor's initial response is to laugh, but then it hits me.

"Call her up," I parrot. "Amy said the woman who kidnapped her was most likely on her phone when she was talking about the 700 Club."

"I thought we established that."

"Clovis was also on his phone. He was talking to some girl who at the time I just assumed was his girlfriend checking up on him or something. Dynah Heron."

It's amazing how Clovis's attempt at proving he's an asshole by talking to someone else while I was exploding beside him is actually backfiring. Justice is finally being served.

"I'll have to look up the name and see if it's actually the right person, but who else would it be? In order for this to go off without a hitch, he probably had to cut back a lot of contact with others, but not his partner in crime," I saw aloud, more to myself than Gigi. I turn to her and smile sheepishly. "You probably won't need to draw her anymore."

"Eh, I'm bored. Tell me how mine compares to the real thing once you see her, okay?"

"You got it," I reply, racing over to find my address book. Nothing else has gone from so useless to so useful to me in such a short amount of time, and it doesn't take me long at all to find and write down her address. I quickly say goodbye to Gigi, grab my coat, and race out to my car, calling Andrew. He picks up on the second ring.

"Hey, sis. What's up?" he asks, and this is probably the calmest I've heard him in a while. Ever since Amorie's kidnapping, he's been nothing but irritable and angry.

"I trust Amorie told you about what Amy said to her yesterday."

"Of course. She also told me not to spend all night trying to figure out who the lady is. But if she's working with Clovis, then, by God, she's being punished, too," Andrew says, his anger already coming back. Well, it was bound to happen eventually.

"I know who she is," I say. "I'm not going to talk to her, but I just want to quickly drive by her house to see if it's the right girl. I'm bringing my phone with me in case she's doing anything suspicious, so I can catch her in the act with a picture."

"What if nothing happens?" he asks.

"If that's the case, we keep checking up on her and Clovis. They're bound to want more magic. Three-thousand dialoids isn't enough if they're after fame. They're going to want more, and we're going to catch them when they do. With actual, solid proof, we can get those two in jail, and all of this chaos will have been worth it," I answer. I can practically hear Andrew nod through the phone.

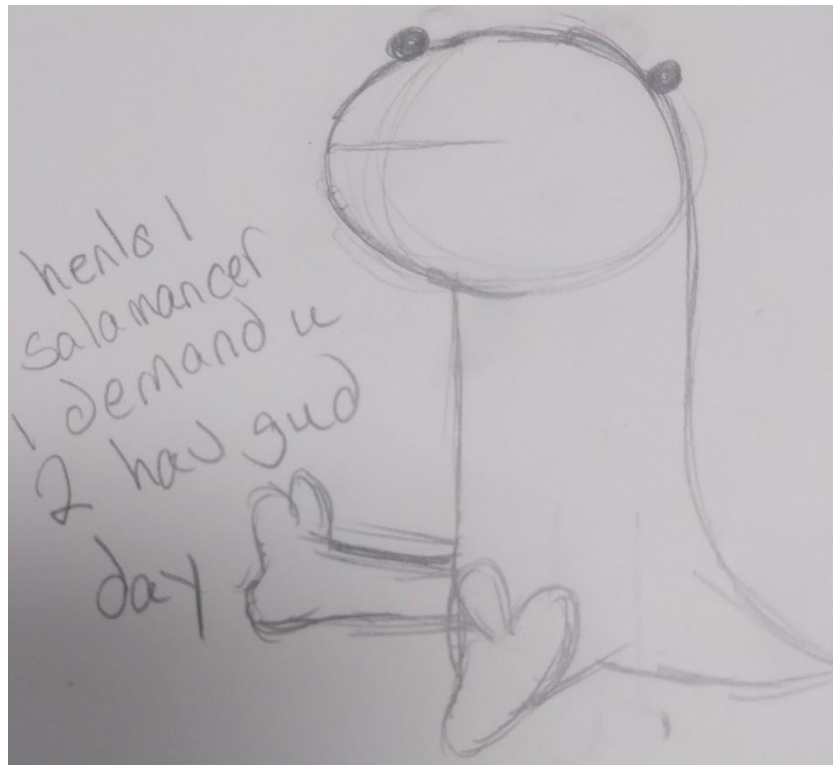
"Alright. Good luck. And don't do anything crazy, okay?"

"Okay."

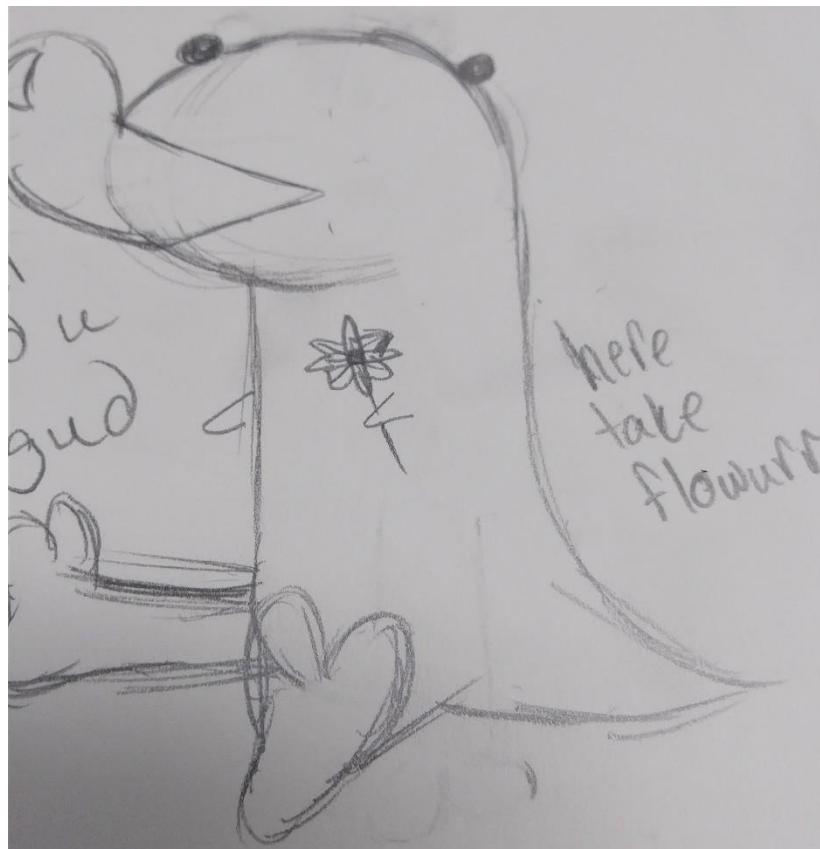
"Call me if you need help or you find out anything useful."

"Done."

And now I'm off to pay a little visit to an unsuspecting Heron.



SALAMANDER – by Hannah Bradley



Scars – by Olivia Schlossmann

He took me out one night
Under the stars
He rolled up his sleeves
Revealing his scars
Embarrassed he looked down at his shoe
Without making contact
He said no one knew
I reached up and touched his face
The emotion there
I could not place
It was as if he was dreaming of a faraway land
One without fear
He only had to stretch out his hand
He did so
And touched my face
So my slipping tears had nowhere to go
I once heard it takes seven years
For every cell to be replaced
So there will be a time
He hasn't touched my face
The scars on his arms
Are like the ones on my heart
The hurt and fear on an arc
Always floating above
Never to be shot down
They keep killing us
From the inside out
The pain is something we lust for ourselves
The cutting and pain are our own drugs
Making us put up the walls to our own cells
We are trapping ourselves in
Not allowing anyone to help
It's like we're waiting for a game to begin
One that already began
The one to see who will take away
The gun
In my hand
Pointed toward my head
But when people look at us
They only see
People who want fame
Not know they could be
The ones who are in pain
They think we are vain
But would we be hiding
Our scars
If we wanted you to know

And only show them under the stars
They couldn't care less about us
Not just me and him
But everyone else
Who is hurt
Dying
Dead
This is a cry out
For all who will listen
To my
To our diction
To the fission
In my heart
Beating loud
For all to hear
And what now
After listening to the fear
Will you say that we
Are vain
That we are not
In pain
But what is
The gain
To be hurting
To have blood
Rolling down your skin
There is none
Feeling that you're all alone
Pointed toward your head, a gun
Revealing skin
Ha, no
You're revealing bone
You could help us
The weak
The fearful
By dialing the phone
To the correct number
Some of us are cutting
Like beavers cutting lumber
Every other day
Another one of your kin falls
And the people who are "healthy"
Don't have the balls
To get help because they're wealthy
Living off great bread
Fantastic wine
It's a good life, everything is fine
Everything is so divine
And they choose to ignore us

Like if they acknowledge us
We'll suddenly become real
Like the unicorn or the Jabberwocky
This is such anarchy
So what is your deal
I don't want this to become a spiel
So tell me what is wrong with you
Maybe if you grew some common sense
You would understand that we are people too
We are not going to disappear in the blue
So you might as well help us
Don't make that big of a fuss
We want to fly
We want to touch the sky
But we can't because we are
Trapped
In the cells we put up around us
So help us
And maybe one day
We will help
You too



Anger – by Hannah Bradley



Kitty – by Hannah Bradley

Welcome to Netharre – by Hannah Bradley

Based off of the game Manual Samuel

Chapter 2: THE DEVIL

I looked around, hoping that it was all just a nightmare. Why wouldn't it be? I was probably just knocked unconscious by Biggi! Yeah, all I have to do is wait, and I'll wake up! I heard a voice behind me.

“*AUGGH!* Eww, a rich teenager! Haha!” It was obviously a girl. I looked around, and saw no one.

“Up here, idiot!” Up? *UP?!* I look up and see a girl, couldn't have been any older than 15. Quite pretty, short brown hair, eyes kinda like David Bowie's. One light blue, the other a dark brown. The only problem, she was the Devil. No, that's not even a metaphor. I was in actual Hell, with the actual Devil floating above me, with my clothes on actual fire. “OH HOLY-” I fell backwards, putting out the fire on my shirt.

“... You're a special kind of stupid, aren't ya?” She looked down on me, still floating in midair. “Yea-Uh, NO! Uhm, why-”

“Yeah, yeah I know. Why the Hell am I in Hell?” I sat up, and groaned.

“ Well, my friend, I'm your new Asmodeus demon, here to guide you. The name's Mirikal. You are not in Hell, no. Instead, you're in a place called Netharre. “

“ Nnne- whaa-?” I was scared stupid.

“Yeah, you're a special one. Netharre is not a terrible, torturous place. It's not a great, wonderful place, if you couldn't tell by the fire. This is where I make my decisions. Heaven, Hell, or stuck in Netharre for eternity.” She said, floating down, so her feet touch the ground. “For you, It's hard to tell which way you're leaning towards. Here, take this.” She tosses me a die. I flinched, and it landed right in front of me. It landed on a six, then burst into a large mass of flames. The flames compressed themselves into a sphere-like shape. I stared at it in awe, waiting...

Poof.

Gone. Just like that. We looked at where there was once a die, which was now replaced by a smoldering pile of ash.

“...Well, screw my idea then. Here, take this paper.” She said, handing me a piece of paper that had the word ‘NAME’ Splayed across it.

“Any nicknames and surnames should also be written on there.” I wrote my name on it. ‘Finch ‘Flinch’ Fannie Franklin Fran Flynn’

“Ok good job, you’re in heaven now, have a great afterlife. Buh-bye.”

“That’s it? Just, poof, magically in Heaven?” I said, confused with everything that was happening.

“ Listen, I could NOT care less right now. I just wanna go home and have NOTHING go wrong the rest of the day.”

Suddenly, the ground shook. A red fog appeared out of nowhere. A figure rose from the fog.

“And, as always, I jinxed it.” She sighs.

“ Who is that..?”

“Oh her? That’s just my boss, Luci.”

“Luci? Like, *Lucifer*? As in the Devi-” I was stopped mid-sentence.

“Yes . . . as in the Devil . . .”

“ You’re a- a girl?!”

“ . . . See? Now this is like, just plain sexist! What do they teach kids nowadays?! Like, what a stereotype that all religious figures are men! Just because I’m a girl doesn’t mean I can’t like, rule an underworld or something, ok bae?!”

She wouldn’t stop talking. I was in absolute shock. The Devil . . . was . . . wearing Crocs. And a Slayer crop top. Drinking some kind of coffee labeled ‘Mochafrickauggbootchipotlefoundationeyeliner-spice latte’.

Mirikal tried to interrupt her rant. “Ey, boss. Why are you here?”

“Oh yeah, you’re like, sending too many people to Heaven, so I’m like gonna have to uh, banish you to the mortal world for a bit? Sorry but not sorry.” She answered.

“ You’re kidding me right? Like, with all the teens that have their pants halfway down their legs? No way, I’d rather stay here” Mirikal contended, giving an oddly accurate description of my generation.

“Don’t like, talk back to me and stuff!” Luci shrieked.

“Ooh, snap. Roasted.” I added.

“ That goes for you too, Finch. You’re going back to the surface”

“Yay!” I shouted.

“With Mirikal at your school.”

“ . . .Her? No! That isn’t fair!”

“ Well, what did you expect?”

“ A less torturous fate! She’s probably gonna be the girl who wears a hoodie everyday, never styles her hair, gets bad grades, that stuff.”

“ Too bad. You two gotta pay the price. I will make sure that you two are in the same classes, sit at the same tables, and... just for my entertainment, Flinch’s mother will allow Mirikal to *stay in your home!*” Luci sniggered.

At this point, Mirikal looked like she had just experienced the worst thing imaginable. And, I’d have to say, it was pretty close.



by Genevieve Poirier



Stupid Cupid – by Hannah Bradley



Collage – by Aubrey Balovich

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Please join us at our next meeting!

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