***The Girl Who Drank the Moon***

***Chapter 26***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary in brief:***

In Chapter 26, “In Which a Madwoman Learns a Skill and Puts It to Use,” the madwoman continues to develop her magic skills. She learns how to transform into small animals. She transforms into a beetle and scurries into Sister Ignatia’s office, where she is meeting with Grand Elder Gherland. The town has heard of Antain’s plan to kill the Witch and end her torment, which gives hope to the people. This reduces their sorrow, and Sister Ignatia appears to be starving from the lack of it. They do not want the people of the Protectorate to find out that there is no Witch in the forest, so they agree that Sister Ignatia will murder Antain while he is in the woods.

***Summary Part 1:***

When the [madwoman](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-madwoman-adara) was a girl, she drew pictures and listened to her mother tell her stories about the [Witch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch). Her mother said that the Witch ate sorrow, souls, volcanoes, babies, and brave wizards. She had Seven League Boots and rode on a dragon. In the Tower, the madwoman still draws. She conjures paper and then folds it into [paper birds](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/paper-birds) or draws maps. The Sisters have no idea where the paper comes from, but the madwoman thinks that it’s easy—madness and magic are linked, and now, she can find shiny magical things in the bends of the world. One day, she discovered feathers in her cell. She looked at the feathers until they looked like galaxies and then, paper. After this, she could turn anything into paper.

***Analysis Part 1:***

What the madwoman says about her mother suggests that the parent who tells stories to their child and to the reader might be the madwoman’s mother. However, the fact that the parent is unidentified also means that they can stand in for any parent in the Protectorate, as most of them recite the same stories and many have lost children. When the Sisters can’t figure out where the paper comes from, it suggests that the Sisters may have access to libraries, but they can’t yet expand their minds enough to consider magic or more than what Sister Ignatia allows.

***Summary Part 2:***

Nobody reads the [madwoman](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-madwoman-adara)’s maps. Following the discovery that she can turn things into paper, the madwoman experiments with transforming other things, including herself. Transforming herself is exhausting, but she hopes to one day escape as a bird. The madwoman becomes a beetle and accompanies the servant boy to [Sister Ignatia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/sister-ignatia-the-sorrow-eater). She hides under Sister Ignatia’s desk and stares at the visitor, [Gherland](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/grand-elder-gherland). The madwoman realizes that Sister Ignatia never seems to age as she listens to them discuss [Antain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/antain)’s intention to hunt the [Witch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch). Antain has told others about it, and now people are beginning to hope. Sister Ignatia paces and says that the forest will likely kill him, which will prevent questions. However, it’s possible that he’ll come back.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Remember that Sister Ignatia is also known as the Sorrow Eater—she very literally feeds on people’s sorrow, which means that Antain’s hope is very dangerous for her. This offers more explanation for why Sister Ignatia behaves and organizes the Protectorate as she does; all of it is to make sure that there’s enough sadness for her. Again, she also understands that it’s essential that Antain not return from his quest if they want to maintain their control over the population. The Witch must prove herself just as horrible and evil as she is in the parent’s stories.

***Summary Part 3:***

The [madwoman](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-madwoman-adara) notices tears in [Sister Ignatia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/sister-ignatia-the-sorrow-eater)’s eyes, and that Sister Ignatia looks unwell. Sister Ignatia says that if [Antain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/antain) returns having found nothing, others may decide to look—and soon, the Protectorate will have ideas. Gherland weakly says that one of the Sisters could deal with him, but Sister Ignatia says that the [Witch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch) must kill Antain. She flicks her tongue out to taste Gherland’s sorrow and her cheeks flush. Sister Ignatia says that she will kill Antain.