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

***Themes and Characters:***

***Theme:***

***Family and Love:***

*The Girl Who Drank the Moon* follows a sorrowful city called the Protectorate, which every year sacrifices its youngest infant to a [**Witch**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch) who supposedly demands the child. In reality, the story of the evil, bloodthirsty Witch is nothing more than a story designed to subdue the populace—although, unbeknownst to the Elders (the governing body in the Protectorate), there *is* a witch named [**Xan**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/xan) who, though she has no idea why a parent abandons a baby every year, feels that it’s a horrible crime to leave the infants for the animals. She takes these abandoned children to the Free Cities, where they grow up in adoptive families that love them. In exploring the intense and unbreakable bonds between birth parents and the children who are taken from them, as well as the loving and equally as strong relationships among members of adoptive or chosen families, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* makes it clear that individuals don’t need to share blood to be family. Instead, it proposes that love, care, and positive regard are what makes a family, regardless of their official relationship status.

The very fact that the Elders use what’s effectively kidnapping to subdue the population speaks to the power of familial love, and the damage that can be done when someone or something destroys the bond between parents and their children. Everyone in the Protectorate knows someone who’s lost a baby to the sacrifice, and the entire town is damaged by the intense, collective grief that everyone experiences as a result of a child being kidnapped yearly for centuries. Even the unnamed, callous [**parent**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-parent), who tells a child the story of the Witch and the history of the Protectorate throughout the novel, takes a reflective tone when they talk about their grief at losing a baby 18 or 19 years ago. The visceral recollection of this loss, despite the overall angry and volatile demeanor of the parent, speaks to the power of the bond between parent and child that the novel presents as fact.

While the kidnapping in the Protectorate is understandably a solemn and horrific affair, the corresponding celebration in the Free Cities where Xan takes the abandoned baby—known as Star Child Day—speaks to the power of adoption and of love to make a family, whether or not families share blood ties. Xan carefully cares for each infant as she carries them through the forest and then goes to great lengths to find them an appropriate family in the Free Cities. For the rest of those children’s lives, Xan exists as a beloved auntie or grandmother, while their adoptive parents are fully and unequivocally parents to their adoptive children. However, the novel begins to question and expand on its suggestion of what families and love can look, as mothers in the Protectorate who lost babies begin to inexplicably experience memories or visions of their children walking, falling in love, or having children of their own. Similarly, the novel focuses an entire subplot on [**Luna**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/luna)’s mother, who’s known for most of the novel as the [**madwoman**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-madwoman-adara). She instinctively knows that Luna is alive, and writes “she is here” over and over again on enchanted paper. With this, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* makes it clear that while a child’s adoptive parents are absolutely their legitimate parents, this doesn’t mean that the inherent bond between birth parents and their children disappears.

Luna, the book’s protagonist, is a sacrificed child who, because Xan accidentally enmagicks her, must stay in the care of Xan, the bog monster **[Glerk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/glerk)**, and their adoptive dragonling, **[Fyrian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/fyrian)**. Luna is the character through which the reader can see firsthand that families can take all different forms, and that the most important thing in the making of a family is that there’s love involved. Xan makes it very clear that even before Luna came on the scene, she, Glerk, and Fyrian were a family, despite the fact that none of them share blood. Technically speaking, Glerk is Xan and Fyrian’s creator—per the creation story of the novel’s world, Glerk arose from the life-giving Bog and brought the rest of the world into being through poetry. But in terms of his day-to-day family life, Glerk takes on the role of a beloved (if crotchety and put-upon) uncle, while Xan is an auntie to Fyrian and a grandmother to Luna.

At the same time as the mothers in the Protectorate begin to “remember” their children, Luna’s magic begins to erupt out of her, and Luna and her mother finally reconnect. Meeting her mother, whose real name is Adara, is a bit of an odd experience for Luna, but she comes to an important conclusion: families can always get bigger. She has enough love in her heart to love both Adara and Xan, and she goes on to help the Star Children discover that they can love both their birth and adoptive parents once the evil organizations in charge of the Protectorate are thwarted. That Luna, Xan, and Adara put their magic together to save the Protectorate, the Free Cities, and everyone else they can from the volcano’s eruption stands as proof that familial love is one of the most powerful things in the world. Because of this, going forward, growing families in the Protectorate can stay together, while the larger familial networks created by the Star Children can connect and discover that their love truly is boundless.

***Story Telling, Censorship and Control:***

*The Girl Who Drank the Moon* introduces the reader to a world in which storytelling of all sorts reigns supreme. In the universe the novel portrays, the world itself rose up out of a story told by its creator. Meanwhile, in the town known as the Protectorate, evil agents create and promote the narrative that there’s an evil witch who lives in the forest and demands a yearly sacrifice of an infant. This story allows them to influence society, control the population, and robs their subjects of the ability to think critically about the government. Through these different stories, and specifically through the censorship attempts of the Council of Elders and the Sisters of the Star, the novel parses out the various functions of both telling and censoring stories. *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* suggests through this that storytelling is both the root of all power and the most effective way of maintaining the power and control that a person already has.

*The Girl Who Drank the Moon* shows at various points how the same story can appear very different—with different heroes, villains, and outcomes—depending on who’s telling it. It does this first by introducing the reader to the story of the [**Witch**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch) who lives in the forest and demands a yearly sacrifice. In reality, this witch is fictitious, while the only real witch at the beginning of the novel, [**Xan**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/xan), isn’t evil at all. Through the contrast between the mythical witch and Xan, the real witch, the novel asks readers to engage with its different stories critically and consider the context of different purposes, intents, and storytellers, rather than accepting the narrator’s various stories as unadulterated fact. Indeed, the novel’s structure, which offers third-person narration focusing on several different characters all dealing with similar problems, encourages readers to do this as well. This enables readers to piece together a larger, more complete picture of what’s going on and what is most likely to be true, while also allowing insight into how different characters interpret information and stories incorrectly or incompletely, depending on who they are or how they get it.

While the reader is offered an omniscient view similar to the one the narrator has, individual characters within the novel are often at the mercy of intense censorship attempts and have a limited idea of what’s going on, if they have any idea at all. The Council of Elders’ promotion of the Day of Sacrifice, and the way that the Sisters of the Star hoard and protect the books contained in their library, creates a society that’s educated in the sense that young people attend school, but not a society that’s critical. Nobody learns to think for themselves; rather, students learn what the Elders want them to learn and nothing more.

Most telling in regards to the way that the Elders’ and the Sisters’ censorship creates a society run by fear, grief, and unthinking trust in the establishment are the chapters in which an unnamed [**parent**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-parent) in the Protectorate tells their child about the Witch. Though the text of the novel doesn’t actually include the child’s responses to the parent, it’s clear from the way the parent speaks that these stories are terrifying for the child. The parent threatens to send their child to the Witch if they don’t behave, and the parent also makes the case several times that there’s only one correct interpretation of the stories—proof of how intense the Elders’ grip is on the Protectorate. Later in the novel, [**Sister Ignatia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/sister-ignatia-the-sorrow-eater), one of the Sisters of the Star, admits in her own words that every story about the Witch that circulates in the Protectorate is something that she started, making it clear that all the stories the parent tells are Sister Ignatia’s work. While Sister Ignatia’s confession in her narration is damning in its own right, it nevertheless speaks to the success with which she obtained and maintains control over the town via storytelling and censorship—all while creating the illusion of a free society by offering students an education and allowing “information” and rumors to circulate.

Once the novel’s action (and specifically, Sister Ignatia) moves to the forest and away from the Protectorate, the town begins to be able to see through the years and years of censorship, control, and power grabs. Notably, once the Protectorate starts to feel hopeful and begins to realize that their government is wholly corrupt (and that the only real witches in the forest want to help protect them from the erupting volcano, not steal their babies), the people have little hesitance in imprisoning the Elders, abolishing the Sisters of the Star, and opening the Sisters’ library for general use. With this, the novel suggests that the best way to thwart censorship is, first of all, to acquire the knowledge that what those enforcing censorship promote isn’t true; and then, to begin telling new, truthful stories. The final chapter of the novel is another story from the parent in which they tell their child that the witch (presumably [**Luna**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/luna)) belongs to them, protects them, and champions free speech and knowledge. This offers hope that as life in the Protectorate goes on, the stories that circulate and get passed down through generations will be truthful, positive ones that teach children to think critically, not tools meant to subdue and control everyone.

***Memory, Forgetting and Future:***

The world of the novel is one that’s about to reach a tipping point: as young **[enmagicked](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/terms/enmagic)** [**Luna**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/luna) approaches the age of 13, her magical power grows, while [**Xan**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/xan)’s power wanes; the sleeping volcano in the woods is about to erupt after 500 years of restless dormancy; and after 500 years of acceptance and complacency in the Protectorate, **[Antain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/antain)** decides that it’s time to confront the [**Witch**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch) who demands infants as sacrifice and save the Protectorate’s children. For Xan and **[Glerk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/glerk)**, these events are, to a degree, things that they’ve experienced before—but they begin to run into problems when they find that they’ve purposefully forgotten what happened last time. With this, the novel suggests that while forgetting may be a useful tool to protect oneself emotionally, it’s absolutely necessary to remember the past—distant and not so distant—in order to effectively plan and fight for a better future.

When the reader first meets Xan, she’s content and certainly not upset that she doesn’t remember her past (though she does remember that it wasn’t necessarily happy). This outlook on life changes, however, when Xan accidentally enmagicks the infant Luna by feeding her moonlight instead of starlight, making it so that at some point, Luna will be a witch capable of performing magic. At this point, Xan recognizes that she must remember her past, which contains important parallels: like Luna, Xan was enmagicked as a child, and she knows that she’ll need to remember what happened to her mentor **[Zosimos](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/zosimos)**, since this, she believes, is likely what’s going to happen to her as Luna’s mentor. These leaps in understanding make an important point: while it’s not necessary or healthy for a person to *dwell* on their past, it’s still important to *remember* past events. History will, no doubt, repeat itself, and a thorough understanding of the past means that a person will have a better chance of being prepared for the future.

Importantly, the novel suggests that when a person isn’t in a situation where they’re forced to live with past trauma day in and day out (as in the Protectorate), it’s a natural inclination to want to forget the past. The narrator notes that both Glerk and Xan—and to a degree, the dragonling **[Fyrian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/fyrian)**—were there for the volcano’s last eruption and the havoc and destruction it wrought. But within a year, Xan and Glerk happily chose to forget, and Fyrian inexplicably remains a dragonling and doesn’t remember the particulars of what happened. Remembering, this implies, is far more emotionally difficult than forgetting. The novel supports this by showing how, as they begin to remember, both Xan and Glerk experience moments of intense remorse and guilt for not keeping the past easily accessible in their minds. They understand that, had they done so, they would’ve been in a better place to protect everyone—themselves, Luna, and those in the Protectorate.

To make the importance of memory to the future even clearer, the novel plays close attention to the consequences of how Xan handles Luna’s volatile magic by placing a spell on five-year-old Luna, which traps Luna’s magic in a rice-grain-sized casing in her brain. The idea, according to Xan, is that with Luna’s magic contained, Luna will be able to learn how to appropriately use it and so be prepared when she turns 13 and her magic is unleashed—but Xan’s spell doesn’t work as planned. Rather than turn Luna into a safe and compliant student of magic, it makes it so that she cannot see, hear, or understand anything concerning magic, as mentioning it sends her into an odd trance that can last for days. In Luna’s case, being physiologically unable to remember magic or learn about it has dire consequences—Xan knows that she’s going to die not long after Luna turns 13, and therefore won’t be around to teach her. Because of the way that Luna and Xan’s respective magics are linked, this means that as Luna gets close to her birthday, Xan becomes increasingly ill as Luna begins to remember odd things and, finally, is able to read the word “magic.” Luna is effectively on her own to figure things out due to Xan’s failing health and the spell. While the narrator makes it very clear that Xan cast this spell on Luna for her own protection, the degree to which Luna struggles without assistance as her magic begins to break free makes it clear that interfering with a person’s memory—especially when that entails forcing someone to forget—is an inhumane and unsafe thing to do.

Luna, Xan, and their friends aren’t able to effectively triumph until they are all able to remember who they are, who they were, and what they’re capable of doing. Because they are ultimately able to remember, Luna is able to save the Protectorate and the Free Cities from the volcano. She’s also able to help her mother, who long ago forgot her name and is known for most of the novel as the [**madwoman**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/the-madwoman-adara), remember who she is. With this, the novel shows that remembering is important for more than just securing the future and learning how to harness one’s power—it is, in many cases, essential to healing and discovering who a person truly is.

***Sorrow Vs Hope:***

One of the few things that [**Xan**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/xan) can infer from the past is that sorrow is dangerous, and that a person should hide their sorrow at all costs, though she can’t remember exactly why. The reader eventually comes to learn that this is because [**Sister Ignatia**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/sister-ignatia-the-sorrow-eater)—formerly known as the Sorrow Eater—feeds on other people’s sorrow, and does whatever she can to create and harvest it like someone might harvest crops. While Sister Ignatia’s ability to literally ingest sorrow is something wholly fantastical, the novel still makes the case that dwelling too much on sorrow can be a dangerous proposition, as sadness and grief can rob entire communities of critical thinking skills and the ability to recognize their own power. Hope, on the other hand, is something that the novel shows has the power to overcome sadness and restore the autonomy and wellbeing of individuals and communities alike.

The novel makes the connection between sorrow and a lack of agency early on by illustrating clearly how the Day of Sacrifice turns the horrific sacrifice of an infant into a respected tradition that no one has the power to question. When [**Grand Elder Gherland**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/grand-elder-gherland) and the Council come upon the selected mother (Adara) and child ([**Luna**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/luna)) who will be sacrificed for the year, the mother shocks them with her animalistic grief and her attempts to protect her child. Such a thing, the narrator explains, just isn’t done. In this way, the novel suggests that one of the best ways to foster sorrow is to normalize and codify it (in this case, by making it a holiday of sorts). This also means that the Elders have the power to insist that the mother, who is known for much of the novel simply as “the madwoman,” is indeed mad—rather than a parent who is understandably and justifiably enraged that her government is kidnapping her child. Importantly, the specifics of the ritual function to ensure that the grief and sorrow aren’t experienced only by the parents of the child in question. Forcing the entire town to line up and watch the Elders carry the child into the woods, and setting up a system in which any family could be the next to lose a child, creates a population collectively gripped by grief. Forcing people to dwell on grief in this way, the novel suggests, is a very effective method of keeping people from asking questions.

Through **[Antain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/antain)**’s journey through marriage, early fatherhood, and his quest to kill the [**Witch**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/symbols/the-witch), *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* suggests that there are a few things that have the power to give a person the tools to question sadness and develop hope: knowledge, love, and a personal stake in things. Because of Antain’s brief stint as a teenage Elder-in-Training, he’s witnessed firsthand what it’s like to leave a baby in the forest (which the Elders do in private after parading the baby through the streets)—and he found it absolutely horrifying. While this gives him the impetus to begin questioning and rejecting the Day of Sacrifice, it’s his love for his wife, [**Ethyne**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/ethyne), and **[Luken](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters)**, their newborn slated for sacrifice, that gives him the final push to attempt to put a stop to things more than a decade later.

After Antain goes into the forest to find and kill the Witch, Sister Ignatia goes in after him to kill him, knowing that “the Witch” must kill him in order to maintain the façade in the Protectorate. However, with Sister Ignatia out of the Protectorate and no longer actively stirring up sorrow at every turn, Ethyne is able to begin rallying people to her and Antain’s side, showing clearly that people who are forced to actively grieve every minute of every day can’t operate at their full potential and can’t experience what it’s like to feel hopeful or in control. Put another way, Sister Ignatia’s constant sorrowful presence and being consistently exposed to the trauma of losing children keeps people in the Protectorate from ever healing. More broadly, while people who experience loss of any kind can and should grieve for their loved ones, the novel makes the case that the issue arises when people never have the opportunity to move on and reorient themselves to more hopeful things.

*The Girl Who Drank the Moon* offers an example of a healthier way of dealing with sorrow after the volcano’s explosion, when Xan declines and ultimately dies. While [**Luna**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-who-drank-the-moon/characters/luna) and her friends certainly grieve for Xan, they also have the skills to put a more positive spin on her death—she was more than 500 years old, lived a full life, and spent her life making those of others better. When Xan finally does die, Luna focuses on these aspects and on the future in order to handle her grief. While this is, of course, not a perfect parallel to the loss parents experienced on the Day of Sacrifice (which was senseless and pointless, while Xan’s death was natural and expected), it nevertheless encourages readers to consider that while sorrow may be an element of the normal range of human emotions, it shouldn’t be the dominant one. Rather, meeting sad experiences with hope allows individuals to frame those events in ways that allow them to heal and look to the future with curiosity and understanding.

Every person's life will be affected by sad events, but Barnhill's novel focuses on the importance of a person's resilience to their sad encounters and how they use their experiences to help or harm. The Protectorate is seen as the least resilient force in this novel. While it is made up of lots of people, the Protectorate operates as one character in many ways. The townspeople live together in the Bog, and they survive in the dark fog together. Likewise, the townspeople wake up and live in the fog together, in one simultaneous event. The Protectorate is established by Sister Ignatia, who claims that the city is for anyone who needs a safe place to live after the volcano eruption. This is a sad start to a city, and the Protectorate itself is not resilient at all. It is described as being "A dismal place—bad air, bad water, sorrow settling over the roofs of its houses like a cloud” (19-20). The town itself bends and breaks under the sorrow of its own creation. It lacks any resilience and it never fights for happiness, so it is easy to control and to manipulate and to harm.

Antain, Ethyne, and the madwoman are all residents of the Protectorate but they react very differently to the sorrow of their region. Antain and Ethyne both question the reasons for the sorrow in the Protectorate. Antain has a moment when he doubts the reasons behind the Day of Sacrifice, but he never takes his curiosity further. His curiosity is what takes him to the Tower to ask the madwoman questions, and his actions lead him to a deeply scarred face. This brings a huge change in Antain's character. Where he was once a hopeful and curious young man, a positive presence in the oppressive Council, he is now a depressed man who is too self-conscious to walk down the street without covering his face. After the attack, Antain feels as though, "The world was heavy, that the air, thick with sorrow, draped over his mind and body and vision, like a fog” (116-17). This proves that Antain crumbles under the weight of his own sorrow and has a hard time fighting against the force. Ethyne, on the other hand, maintains a positive attitude in spite of the fact that she learns the truth about the Protectorate. She remains hopeful because she knows, if timed right, she will be able to change the Protectorate for the better and save it from an evil Witch that has been controlling it. Unlike Antain, Ethyne never allows her curiosity to melt away. She remains strong and fights against the thick sorrow in the Protectorate. The final character in the Protectorate is the madwoman, who is forced to live a sad life locked away in the Tower. She battles with whether she will fight against her sorrow or fall victim to it. She wants so badly to be resilient against her own sorrow, but she finds it difficult to have the strength to overcome her depressing feelings. At one point, the madwoman “Pressed her hand to her chest and felt her sorrow—the merciless density of it, like a black hole in her heart, swallowing the light” (131). But it is soon after this that she finds her strength yet again. She finds hope with Antain's understanding of her forest map. This small sliver of hope is what provides her with enough resilience to fight the sorrow she feels and the madwoman is then empowered to change her own life and to fight the Sorrow Eater.

Xan does not find the ability to help the Protectorate until she remembers the past she has locked away in her memory. She found the strength to live for 500 years because she chose to forget the memories that made her feel sad. This is not a form of resilience because Xan never confronts her sorrow. Instead, she locks it away. As soon as she unlocks her memories through trips to the castle, Xan then finds the strength to fight against her sorrowful past and to confront Luna about her magic. The only problem is that Xan finds all of this strength too late and Luna's magic spreads uncontrollably across the entire forest. Sister Ignatia locks away her sorrow in the same way Xan does. Both characters choose to avoid their memories, and the Sister's choice to lock her sorrow away leads her to losing any life. This is why the Sister immediately falls to her deathbed upon the revelation that she lived through a traumatic event. She never learned resistance; the Sister only ever learned how to avoid her sadness.

***Misunderstandings:***

This novel contains many stories that contradict one another, all of which are crafted from false assumptions and quick judgments that lead to generations of misery and terror. These misunderstandings reach far deeper than the story of the volcanic eruption. The tales that cause misunderstandings are also related to the three regions that rarely cross over into one another. To begin, everyone knows there was a volcanic eruption nearly 500 years ago. Everyone also knows that a man and a dragon flew inside the volcano, died, and stopped the destruction of the eruption. However, that is all people agree upon. The Protectorate believes that the Simply Enormous Dragon went to the volcano in order to battle against Zosimos, the kind sorcerer (58). On the other hand, Xan is able to remember that Zosimos took his dragon friend with him as a selfless sacrifice to save the people in the surrounding villages. Xan is unable to remember this even right away, so she never follows Zosimos' wish to be remembered for his sacrifice and bravery. The Protectorate knows, as everyone else does, that an evil Witch started the eruption out of rage. What the Protectorate does not know is that the evil Witch is living with them in their city while a kind and potentially helpful Witch is living in the forest. This misunderstanding leads the Protectorate to fear the unknown. They falsely assume that there is danger out in the forest, which then leads them to depend on Sister Ignatia's unnecessary protection. What is significant about the fact that the Protectorate fears the forest and its residents is that Xan actually fears the Protectorate. She has interacted with the Elders who own the road, and, although she does not know their social status, she views the owners of the road as rough and intimidating. In fact, Xan avoids the road because of the, “Gang of thugs and bullies from the Protectorate” (19) who charge high prices for traveling on a road they call their own. Each group of people is afraid of the other because they assume the worst, yet the Protectorate could have greatly benefitted from working with Xan all those years. One might argue that, if Xan's memory was better and she had communicated with the Protectorate, Sister Ignatia would never have gotten as powerful as she did. Additionally, the people of the Protectorate would have been far less likely to live in misery all those years.

Each of the three regions in the book--the Protectorate, the Free Cities, and the forest--all misunderstands the others' intents. The Protectorate never visits the Free Cities and only rare traders from the Free Cities come to their Bog. Despite the lack of interaction, the Protectorate thinks that, "The people on the other end of the Road were strange. Everyone knew it, though no one had met any” (117). Here again is an example of false assumptions that lead to pain and sorrow. A partnership with the Free Cities, an open line of communication and understanding between the two places, may very well have rescued the Protectorate from so many generations of oppression and control and sadness and sacrifices. But the Protectorate chooses to hide from the world. They are told that danger lurks in the forest and they choose to believe that information before trying to learn about it themselves. Xan is guilty of this false assumption as well. She views the Protectorate as a dismal place and comments that it has, "Bad air, bad water, sorrow settling over the roofs of its houses like a cloud” (19-20). Xan never enters the Protectorate. She never tries to work with the people of the Protectorate and instead focuses all of her help and healing powers on the people of the Free Cities because they are more welcoming to her. Towards the end of her life, Xan realizes how helpful she could have been if she had only given the Protectorate a chance and bravely entered with the intention to ease the sorrow cast over the city.

The false assumptions continue with regards to the Day of Sacrifice. True, the people of the Protectorate assume that this sacrifice is necessary, but this does not change the fact that it brings about deep depression for everyone in the area. This is not a holiday; this is a day of sorrow and mourning. However, the Free Cities see this event in an entirely different light. They call this holiday the Star Children Day and they relish in the delight of welcoming another child into their communities. The Free Cities never ask where Xan gets the children because they assume she takes them from families unwilling or unable to raise the children themselves. This misunderstanding leads to huge amounts of Star Children being delivered to happy families while forgetting about the tragic families back in the Protectorate.

The final example of prejudices that lead to hurtful false assumptions is when Antain approaches Xan in the forest for the first time. He believes he is going to the forest to reason with the Witch because Antain is doubtful that the Witch is really as evil as everyone says she is. However, the moment he sees Xan, Antain is overcome by his fear and pre-existing judgments. He attacks Xan, which frightens her and results in Antain being pushed to the ground. Much of the conflicts that take place after this event in Chapter 18, "In Which a Witch is Discovered" could have been avoided if Antain had remained calm and objective and talked to the Witch as he planned on doing. When Antain first comes across Xan, they both think the other is in the forest to harm the baby, which is why Xan attacks him with magic and flies away with the child.