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The Girl Who Drank the Moon

Karen Abbott

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Book Review

Title: The Girl Who Drank the Moon

Author: Kelly Barnhill

Reviewer: Karen Abbott

Publisher: Algonquin Young Readers

Year: 2016

ISBN: 9781616205676

Pages: 400

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding



Review

The people of the protectorate make an unbelievable sacrifice once a year to keep the 'wicked' witch at bay. Every year a sweet, loving witch saves the baby they leave in the forest, not knowing that the baby is an offering of an ideologically oppressed city. Each year, Xan finds the baby and feeds it goat milk and starlight until she finds it a loving home where it will be cherished. Then comes lovely little Luna with a moon-shaped birthmark on her forehead. Xan mistakenly feeds this beautiful baby moonlight, which activates her magic. Magic children are a particular challenge, so Xan decides to love and raise Luna herself. Luna grows, sheltered from even her own magic until her 13th birthday, when magic, myth, and truth collide to free the protectorate, reveal the star children to the families of their birth, and heal all those who have suffered from the delusions of a very, very wicked witch who has been hiding in their midst all along.

This is a touching, wonderful story saturated with themes of love and family. It begins, however, with harsh infant sacrifice that shocks the reader out of any kind of complacency. This is intentional and successfully amps up the themes previously mentioned, but some may object to this being part of a children's novel. There is a disfigured character that also provides an opportunity to discuss handicaps and kindness. Hints of Xan's origin, the misconstrued beginnings of the myths, and the occluded air of the protectorate tantalize readers but are never fully revealed, possibly for a future sequel. The mystery they evoke remains, even after so many misunderstandings and so many questions resolve, which lends to the credibility of the story overall. The primary problem faced by the characters is the lack of questioning about what is happening, even among the good people. This is the story of how the power of love and unity can overcome.

*Contains mild violence.