





Welcome to the Quest

Death/Wish begins two centuries after the earlier questing era. Sir Jacques Dawkins - the immortal wizard once known as Jackdaw - has outlived his companions and much of the world he knew. His routine is disrupted when Hubert Veldin, a young man dying of the hereditary Goblin Pox, invokes an old legal right: a death wish. Hubert asks for only one thing - to meet the family he never knew.

What follows is both a comic fantasy adventure and an unexpectedly tender family story. Sir Jacques escorts Hubert through a clockwork-saturated kingdom filled with bureaucracies, magical relics, singing soldiers, old grudges, and dangerous secrets. The jokes come quickly, but underneath them sit serious questions about what families pass down, what people owe one another, and what it means to use the time we have.

Best for: adult, teen, family, fantasy, and humor-focused book clubs. Familiarity with *A Wonderful Week for a Quest* adds context, but this novel is designed so readers can follow the new story on its own.

Reader note: the novel includes terminal illness, grief, family guilt, alcohol use, fantasy violence, and threatening magical situations, generally presented within a humorous adventure tone.

How to use this kit

Begin with the spoiler-light pages if some members are still reading. Once everyone has finished, move into the spoiler discussion, close-reading moments, creative activities, and facilitator pages. Most clubs can build a full meeting from 8-12 questions rather than trying to cover everything.

Conversation Lane	Good Starting Point
Character-driven	Sir Jacques and Hubert; the six older siblings; Philomina and Jacques
Theme-driven	Mortality, immortality, inherited burdens, family, regret, power, legacy
Fun / creative	Invent a death wish, rank Goblin Pox stages, design a relic, debate the K-dubs
Deep-dive	Use the spoiler questions and the final Excalibur cliffhanger



Character & Relationship Guide

Character	Role in the Story	Conversation Lens
Sir Jacques Dawkins	Immortal wizard and Wish Warden; cynical, capable, lonely, and dragged reluctantly back into questing.	What does endless life cost him? When does obligation become affection?
Hubert Veldin	The seventh child of Sir Roderick XIII, raised apart from his birth family; dying of Goblin Pox when the story begins.	Why does he choose connection over revenge? What changes because of his courage?
Philomina	Head librarian, longtime friend of Jacques, voracious reader, and a woman with deeper feelings for him than he is comfortable acknowledging.	How do mortality, secrecy, and love shape her choices?
Heebie	Jacques's cheerful ghost butler, helper, comic foil, and occasional accidental therapist.	How does humor make difficult truths easier to face?
JABB	Judas Arnold Benedict Brutus; theatrical captain of the King's Watch whose ambition becomes increasingly dangerous.	What makes performance useful as a form of power?
Ruprecht / Precht	Ancient enemy tied to the family curse and its magical origin; imprisoned, bitter, and still dangerous.	Can consequences ever outlive the original grievance?
The Lurker	The dark voice heard by bearers of Goblin Pox, preying on fear, guilt, and weakness.	Is its strongest weapon magic, or manipulation?

The emotional center: Hubert's limited time and Jacques's unlimited time make them natural opposites. Hubert is trying to gather a life of family connection into a few days; Jacques has spent centuries avoiding some of the attachments he most wants.



The Roderick Family: Burden, Legacy, Choice

Hubert's death wish takes him through the six older siblings who inherited both a famous family name and a poisonous family burden. Each sibling has responded differently to disappointment, expectation, and the curse.

Family Member	Where Hubert Finds Them	What Hubert Awakens
Rayden	Potion maker; once dreamed of becoming a knight.	A return to courage and the possibility that his old dream is not dead.
Eustace	Accountant / money manager; defensive and miserly.	An uncomfortable reckoning with greed, resentment, and family responsibility.
Phillip	Actor and performer; flamboyant, wounded by rejection.	A renewed willingness to keep pursuing a meaningful second act.
Zella (Professor Z)	Teacher and academic; controlled, ambitious, status-conscious.	Regret about distance from family and a challenge to rethink what counts as important work.
Regina (the Scarlet Lily)	Rebel, artist, outlaw, and woman of action.	Recognition of Hubert's moral courage and a reminder of what is worth fighting for.
Catherine	Mother of five; living with intense guilt over passing the pox to Hubert.	Forgiveness, gratitude, and a chance to choose her children without pretending the cost was painless.
Hubert	Youngest sibling; raised by Mildred away from the family.	He becomes the person who reunites everyone else.

The curse chain

The novel traces Goblin Pox down the family line until it reaches Hubert. The sequence of visits also reveals how grudges, fear, self-preservation, and incomplete information can push suffering from one person to the next.

Sir Roderick XIII -> Rayden -> Eustace -> Phillip -> Zella -> Regina -> Catherine -> Hubert

Group prompt: Which sibling changes the most because of Hubert? Which sibling's earlier choice is easiest to understand, even if you do not approve of it?



Themes & Motifs to Watch

Mortality vs. immortality

Hubert has too little time; Jacques has more time than he knows how to bear. The contrast turns 'time' into an emotional resource rather than merely a plot device.

Inherited burdens

Goblin Pox is literal inheritance, but the family also inherits fame, expectations, grudges, relics, public myths, and old failures.

Family as choice

Biological connection starts the quest, but family becomes meaningful only when characters show up, listen, forgive, and accept responsibility.

Regret and second chances

Many characters discover that Hubert's approaching death makes their own unfinished lives harder to ignore.

Identity and public legend

Jacques has changed names and personas; Regina becomes the Scarlet Lily; JABB performs authority; family members struggle against what their surname is supposed to mean.

Power and institutions

Wish-Warden law, bureaucratic offices, the King's Watch, relics, charters, and succession rules repeatedly ask whether systems serve people or entangle them.

Humor beside grief

Puns, footnotes, songs, odd foods, absurd laws, and comic bureaucracy do not erase the darker material. They create contrast and keep the book emotionally buoyant.

Recurring motifs

- **Gears and clockwork:** progress, fashion, machinery, and a world obsessed with moving forward even as Jacques lives in the past.
- **Songs and performance:** Phillip's calling, the K-dubs' weaponized choreography, JABB's theatrical ego, and Jacques's own surprising use of song.
- **Food:** nachos, muffins, kumquats, fish and dips, and other comic meals often appear around moments of memory, comfort, or connection.
- **Relics and swords:** objects of power become arguments about inheritance, legitimacy, and who has the right to shape the future.
- **Wishes and paperwork:** a heartfelt human desire is repeatedly filtered through laws, forms, stamps, agencies, and obligations.



Discussion Questions - Spoiler-Light

Use these while the group is still protecting the ending. They focus mainly on the premise, early family visits, humor, and character dynamics.

1. The opening asks Sir Roderick XIII to choose between passing a curse to his son and risking the destruction of the kingdom. What makes this dilemma difficult rather than simply cruel?
2. Hubert's death wish is not wealth, adventure, revenge, or a cure. Why do you think meeting his family matters most to him?
3. How does Jacques change once Hubert stops feeling like a legal obligation and starts feeling like a person he cares about?
4. Jacques is immortal, but he often treats immortality as a burden. Which parts of his life make that perspective understandable?
5. What is the effect of pairing a terminal illness with deliberately ridiculous symptoms such as Squashfoot, Like-Like, and Rhymetime?
6. Which early sibling encounter tells you the most about the Roderick family's history: Rayden, Eustace, Phillip, or Zella?
7. Hubert generally responds to difficult relatives with curiosity rather than anger. Is that a sign of unusual maturity, limited time, personality, or something else?
8. The kingdom has modernized through clockwork technology while Jacques remains skeptical of 'progress.' When is he perceptive, and when is he merely nostalgic?
9. What does Philomina see in Jacques that he seems unable or unwilling to see in himself?
10. Why are the K-dubs funny and unsettling at the same time? What does the comedy reveal about institutional power?
11. The novel repeatedly turns bureaucracy into fantasy obstacles. Which office, rule, or legal complication made the strongest impression on you?
12. If you were granted one legally reasonable 'death wish' in the Beandom, what would you ask for - and why?



Discussion Questions - Full Spoiler Zone

STOP HERE UNTIL EVERYONE HAS FINISHED THE NOVEL.

1. At Hubert's bedside, each sibling explains what his short life has stirred in them. Which tribute feels most earned? Which reveals the biggest change?
2. Catherine knowingly passed the curse to Hubert because she had children who depended on her. How should readers judge that choice? Does Hubert's forgiveness change your judgment?
3. Sir Roderick XIII did not actually die in the Titan War; he disappeared to search for a solution and protect the Lively Relics. Was keeping his children ignorant justified?
4. The amulet can hold Goblin Pox at bay but not cure it. What does that partial rescue do to the emotional meaning of Hubert's original death wish?
5. JABB's claim to the throne is rooted in real legal language, not pure invention. How does that make him more dangerous than a villain who simply seizes power?
6. Why does Jacques refuse the throne after winning the contest? What does his refusal say about the difference between being powerful and being suited to rule?
7. The final contest is a singing contest, and JABB loses because he unknowingly matches an out-of-tune accompaniment. Why is that an especially fitting defeat for him?
8. After JABB escapes, the party discovers that Ruprecht / the Lurker threat is not contained. How does ending one political crisis while opening another affect the book's sense of closure?
9. Jacques chooses to delay following Philomina into the past long enough to help the Roderick family confront the crisis at the castle. Was that the right priority?
10. Philomina learns the truth about Jacques's immortality and then uses forbidden time magic. How much of her decision is love, fear, desperation, curiosity, or refusal to accept his limits?
11. Jacques says history 'hates to be changed.' What expectations does that create before the final chapter?
12. The final image is Philomina pulling Excalibur from the stone and being hailed as queen. What has she changed simply by taking the sword?
13. What do you think Jacques fears most in that moment: losing his own past, losing Philomina, damaging history, or discovering that his old assumptions were wrong?
14. The book is titled *Death/Wish*. By the end, whose 'wish' has become most dangerous - Hubert's, Sir Roderick's, JABB's, Philomina's, or Jacques's unspoken wishes?



Key Moments for Close Reading

Rather than searching for exact quotations during the meeting, use these scene anchors. Ask one member to summarize the scene, then discuss what changes before and after it.

The inherited choice (Prologue)

Sir Roderick XIII chooses to pass Goblin Pox to Rayden so he can fight in the Titan War. Ask what 'selfless' means when the cost is imposed on one's own child.

A death wish with no spectacle (Chapter 1)

Hubert asks only to meet his family. Compare his modest request with the extraordinary legal and magical machinery that is activated to fulfill it.

The ten stages of Goblin Pox (Chapters 2-3)

A grotesque curse is explained through comic symptoms. Discuss how tone affects sympathy and tension.

Gobble Gears with Rayden (Chapter 5)

Hubert and Rayden connect through a game while Rayden admits what became of his knightly ambitions.

The Lurker episode (Chapter 6)

Hubert's body reacts to the dark voice. Consider how the Lurker weaponizes memory and fear rather than relying only on physical magic.

Professor Z's ambition (Chapter 13)

Zella measures herself against her family's past glory. Discuss status, meaningful work, and the pain of inherited expectations.

Lunamina revealed (Chapter 15)

Jacques meets another person displaced from ordinary time and learns why Hubert was hidden away.

The museum heist (Chapters 19-20)

Jacques cooperates with the Scarlet Lily while distrusting her goals; the Gripper's portal introduces a threat that will matter later.

Catherine's confession (Chapter 22)

Catherine explains why she passed the curse to Hubert. This is one of the novel's hardest moral conversations.

The bedside memorial (Chapter 24)

The siblings speak as though Hubert is about to die. Track how each tribute reveals more about the speaker than about Hubert.

The contest of kings (Chapter 28)

Law, swordplay, trivia, performance, and magical trickery collide. Ask why the climax fits the novel's comic world.

The sword in the stone (Epilogue)

Philomina pulls Excalibur and is immediately hailed as queen. Discuss the power of symbols, rules, and historical expectations.



Book Club Activities

1. Write a Death Wish

Give everyone two minutes to invent a wish that is meaningful, legal, and realistically fulfillable by a Wish Warden. Then ask: what does the wish reveal about the person who made it?

2. Family Burden Cards

Assign each person one sibling. In 60 seconds, summarize what that character inherited, what they passed on, and what they decide to change after meeting Hubert.

3. Goblin Pox Stage Draft

Rank the ten stages from 'annoying' to 'absolutely unbearable.' Bonus: invent an eleventh stage in the same comic style.

4. Design a Lively Relic

Create a magical heirloom for the Roderick family. Give it one great power, one ridiculous limitation, and one reason it could be dangerous in the wrong hands.

5. Bureaucracy Challenge

Invent a fantasy government office worse than the Bureau of Bureaus or Ministerium of Ministries. What impossible stamp, form, or rule would block the quest?

6. K-Dub Rewrite

Choose a serious public duty - tax collection, library fines, traffic control - and imagine how the K-dubs would turn it into a fully choreographed musical number.

7. Immortality Ledger

Make two columns: 'Gifts of immortality' and 'Costs of immortality.' Add evidence from Jacques's choices, relationships, habits, and memories.

8. Cliffhanger Predictions

Before discussing sequel knowledge, write three predictions about the consequences of Philomina pulling Excalibur. Compare them as a group.



The Wish Warden Ethics Table

Split the group into pairs or small teams. Each team takes one statement and argues both sides before deciding where it lands on the scale below.

- A Wish Warden should fulfill a legal final wish even when it exposes the dying person to painful family conflict.
- Sir Roderick XIII was justified in passing Goblin Pox to Rayden because the kingdom needed him alive.
- A parent is more justified in passing a burden onward if young children depend on that parent.
- Jacques has a moral duty to use every possible form of magic to save Hubert, even if the magic is dangerous.
- The Roderick family's Lively Relics belong to the family because of inheritance, not to the kingdom because of public safety.
- A person who is functionally immortal has a greater obligation to serve society than an ordinary citizen.
- Changing the past is morally acceptable when the original event caused lifelong suffering.

Decision scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Depends	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Facilitator tip: These work best when members are asked to distinguish between understanding a character's reasoning and approving of the character's choice.



Humor, Worldbuilding & the Refried Beandom

The novel's comedy is not separate from its worldbuilding. Many jokes establish how this society works, what it values, and how Jacques feels about the age in which he now lives.

Comic Device	Examples to Notice	What It Can Reveal
Language and puns	Bean-based expressions, invented sayings, job titles, place names.	A world that treats nonsense as ordinary; Jacques's voice and irritation.
Narrator footnotes	Definitions, corrections, historical asides, deadpan clarifications.	The Chronicler's personality and the gap between official history and lived history.
Clockwork satire	Mechanical spectacles, fashion gears, automated conveniences.	Anxiety about progress, trends, novelty, and replacing magic with machines.
Musical authority	K-dubs and JABB repeatedly sing in situations that should be threatening.	How spectacle can soften, disguise, or amplify coercive power.
Food absurdity	Mufmufs, nachos, fish and dips, kumquats, strange recipes.	Comfort, memory, family ritual, and comic relief.
Meta fantasy	Plot armor jokes, quest conventions, prophecy, relics, the sword in the stone.	The book knows the fantasy rules and enjoys bending them.

Discussion starter: Pick one joke that did more than make you laugh. What character, theme, or piece of worldbuilding did it quietly reinforce?

Optional mini-awards

- Best invented saying
- Worst possible Goblin Pox symptom
- Most ridiculous government institution
- Best use of a footnote
- Character most in need of a therapist
- Character you would actually invite on a quest



Facilitator Guide

A 75-minute meeting plan

Time	Segment	Suggested Focus
0-10 min	Opening round	One-word reaction; favorite comic detail; favorite character.
10-25 min	Premise and character	Hubert's death wish; Jacques's immortality; first sibling encounter that mattered.
25-45 min	Themes	Inherited burdens, regret, family responsibility, mortality vs. immortality.
45-60 min	Spoiler zone	Family reunion; Sir Roderick; JABB; Excalibur cliffhanger.
60-70 min	Activity	Ethics scale, relic design, or sequel predictions.
70-75 min	Close	Each member names one character choice they are still thinking about.

Questions that usually unlock deeper discussion

- What did Hubert give his family that a cure could not?
- What does Jacques avoid because he has too much time?
- Which character uses a public role or persona to hide a private fear?
- When does humor protect the characters - and when does it keep them from saying what they mean?
- What burden in the book is inherited, and what burden is chosen?

Facilitator stance

Several choices in the novel are intentionally morally tangled. Avoid turning the conversation into a hunt for the single 'correct' judgment. Ask members to separate motive, consequence, responsibility, and forgiveness. The strongest conversations will usually allow two conflicting truths to remain true at once.



Reader Reflection Worksheet

The character I understood differently by the end was...

The funniest scene was...

The hardest moral decision in the book was...

A burden one character should have stopped passing on was...

The relationship I most want to see develop in the trilogy is...

My prediction after the Excalibur ending is...



After the Meeting

One-sentence challenge: Describe *Death/Wish* without using the words *quest*, *family*, *wish*, *curse*, or *magic*.

Rate the book club conversation

Humor	Characters	Themes	Worldbuilding	Cliffhanger
____ / 5	____ / 5	____ / 5	____ / 5	____ / 5

Keep the conversation going: The final page promises that Sir Jacques will return in *Wish/Quest*. Before anyone reads ahead, save the group's predictions about Philomina, Excalibur, the altered past, the escaped Lurker threat, and the future of King Roderick's reunited family.

This discussion guide was created as a companion to *Death/Wish*, Book 1 in the Refried Trilogy, by Michael D. Young.

May we meet at MacGuffin's at our journey's end.