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THE LAST ARCHANGEL

→ BOOK CLUB & DISCUSSION KIT ←



Discussion questions • character guide • themes • meeting plan • printable activities

Welcome to the Discussion

This guide is designed for clubs that want to enjoy the novel on two levels: first as a fast-moving supernatural adventure, and then as a story about conscience, sacrifice, identity, and the cost of trying to control life and death.



A SIMPLE WAY TO USE IT

Start with the spoiler-light opening round. Move into one or two theme pages. Finish with the full-spoiler ending questions. The host does not need to use every prompt; choosing 8–12 usually creates a strong 60–90 minute conversation.



SPOILER GUIDE

Pages 3–7 are safe for readers who have finished most of the book but may want to avoid ending details. Pages 8–17 assume the entire novel has been read, including the identity reveal and epilogue.



CONTENT NOTE FOR HOSTS

The story includes domestic violence, suicidal ideation and an interrupted suicide attempt, demonic possession, pregnancy and childbirth, death and grief, and religious/apocalyptic imagery. If your group prefers advance notice, share this note before the meeting.



Host tip: This book rewards disagreement. Many of its biggest choices are intentionally tangled: Xandir can be compassionate and reckless in the same scene; prophecy can feel like guidance or a trap; sacrifice can be noble while still being unfair. Encourage members to defend competing readings with specific moments from the story.



SPOILER-LIGHT REFRESHER

Story at a Glance



THE PREMISE

Xandir is an ancient angel condemned to serve as a Destroying Angel until the End of Time. He has carried out catastrophic assignments for millennia, but the certainty that once made obedience easy has begun to crack. In modern New York, Eden Fortuna is trying to understand the horrifying transformation of her husband, Daren, while surviving events that seem to blur the boundary between illness, violence, possession, and prophecy.

When Xandir becomes Eden's guardian, their stories converge with a hidden conflict involving demons, Giants, a lost city poised above Hell, and forbidden attempts to manipulate mortality itself. Xandir's quest becomes increasingly personal, forcing him to decide how far he will go to reclaim what he has lost - and whether he can still tell the difference between love, guilt, duty, and temptation.

XANDIR

A seasoned supernatural enforcer whose sarcasm masks exhaustion, grief, and a deep unease with the moral simplicity of his orders.

EDEN

A human woman whose private crisis becomes a doorway into a much larger battle. Her persistence keeps the human stakes visible amid cosmic forces.

JAROM

A cherub apprentice who begins as comic relief and increasingly becomes a conscience, companion, and model of costly mercy.

What to watch for while reading

Every major supernatural device has a moral counterpart: two swords balance justice and mercy; Trees of Life and Death mirror creation and destruction; Sin Shrouds make hidden choices visible; pleasure pools turn desire into captivity; and the novel repeatedly asks whether knowing a prophecy changes the freedom of the people inside it.

Character Constellation



XANDIR

Destroying Angel, later guardian of Eden. Brilliant, irreverent, lethal, burdened by his past with the Giants and by the loss of Sempre.

EDEN FORTUNA

Human center of the modern storyline. Her search for the truth about Daren becomes inseparable from the supernatural conflict surrounding her.

JAROM

Cherub apprentice. Inexperienced on Earth, but increasingly willing to challenge Xandir, show mercy, and absorb consequences that are not his own.

JUDY

Eden's professor, friend, investigator, and protector. Her possession by Ashbreather makes her final choices especially costly.

DAREN / SPARKSLINGER

Eden's husband and the demon inhabiting him. Their entanglement complicates questions of guilt, responsibility, survival, and reconciliation.

GANOSH

A surviving Giant who tempts Xandir with a plan to hasten the End and reclaim what Xandir most wants.

SEMPRE

The mortal woman Xandir loved in ancient Italy. Her memory drives much of his grief, temptation, and moral vulnerability.

TOBIAS

Guide to the fallen city of Serche: useful, charismatic, opportunistic, and ultimately a warning about alliances built only on self-interest.



Relationship key: Xandir and Jarom form the central mentor/apprentice pair; Eden and Judy form the central human friendship. Both pairs repeatedly reverse expected roles, with the "junior" figure becoming the one who steadies, saves, or corrects the other.



World & Lore Guide

THE TWO SWORDS

Bright Advocate and Dark Judge embody mercy and justice. Their eventual relationship becomes one of the book's clearest symbols of moral maturity.

GUARDIAN BOND

When Xandir is assigned to Eden, danger to his charge becomes physically perceptible. Guardianship turns duty into a personal, embodied obligation.

GIANTS & ACHILLIANS

Ancient transgressions produced the Giants; surviving factions use prolonged life, secrecy, strength, and leverage to outlast ordinary human history.

SERCHE

The city behind the Atlantis legend hangs at the Jaws of Hell, suspended by a moral imbalance. It is both a location and a laboratory of corrupted desire.

LIFE / DEATH TREES

The Tree of Life sustains and prolongs; the Tree of Death is a grotesque counterfeit designed to strip life and even threaten angelic immortality.

SIN SHROUDS

In Serche, wrongdoing becomes visible as stains. The Pool of Divine Tears turns the question from hiding sin to paying, receiving, or transferring its cost.



Read the lore symbolically: nearly every supernatural mechanism externalizes an inner problem — mortality, guilt, temptation, conscience, mercy, or the desire to escape consequences.

Themes to Track

Justice + Mercy

Xandir learns that either principle becomes distorted when separated from the other.

Obedience + Conscience

When does following orders become faithfulness, and when does questioning them become moral growth?

Love + Possession

Several characters claim to act for love while also trying to control, reclaim, inhabit, or keep another person.

Mortality + Control

Fountains, fruit, resurrection, possession, and prophecy all become attempts to resist ordinary limits.

Sacrifice + Substitution

Jarom, Judy, Eden, and Xandir repeatedly face situations in which one person bears a cost for another.

Identity + Memory

Xandir's exile, Daren's possession, and the final identity reveal ask what remains when memory or agency is disrupted.

Pleasure + Illusion

Serche turns desire into a trap. The most dangerous temptation is often not pain, but a convincing counterfeit of fulfillment.

Ends + Beginnings

The "End" is reframed as a season of transition, making apocalypse simultaneously frightening and generative.



Only together do people get what they really deserve.

Opening Round

- 1 What first made Xandir interesting to you: his power, humor, weariness, rebellion, or something else? How does the Pompeii opening shape your trust in him?
- 2 Eden's story begins in an intensely domestic setting before widening into cosmic conflict. What does that structure accomplish?
- 3 How does the novel use humor - especially Xandir's sarcasm and Jarom's inexperience - to change the tone of darker material?
- 4 Which relationship pulled you through the first half most strongly: Xandir/Jarom, Eden/Judy, Eden/Daren, or Xandir's memory of Sempre? Why?
- 5 At what point did you begin to suspect that Daren's behavior had a supernatural explanation? Did that change how you judged his earlier actions?
- 6 Xandir is extraordinarily powerful, yet he often lacks information. How does the book use ignorance to limit a nearly immortal protagonist?
- 7 What is the effect of mixing biblical, mythic, historical, and modern elements rather than keeping the supernatural world tied to one tradition?
- 8 Which early supernatural rule or artifact did you find most memorable, and what human problem did it seem to symbolize?
- 9 How does Eden's vulnerability differ from helplessness? Where do you see her making active choices even when she has very little power?
- 10 Before the final third, what did you think the title *The Last Archangel* meant? What possibilities did the story seem to invite?

Deep Dive I

- 1 Xandir repeatedly argues that he is only a tool carrying out orders, yet his doubts keep resurfacing. When does his skepticism become conscience rather than mere resentment?
- 2 Ganosh tempts Xandir with two things: a way to hasten the End and the possibility of restoring Sempire. Which promise actually controls Xandir, and how can you tell?
- 3 Jarom shows mercy to Lucio even though it costs healing power and carries obvious risk. Why is that scene important to Jarom's later ability to bear Xandir's stains?
- 4 Serche makes moral corruption visible on a Sin Shroud. Would people behave better if guilt were visible to everyone, or would they simply become better at rationalizing it?
- 5 Why is the pleasure-pool illusion of Sempire more dangerous to Xandir than many of the physical enemies he fights?
- 6 Tobias proves useful, entertaining, and treacherous. What signs show that Xandir is compromising his judgment before the betrayal becomes explicit?
- 7 Xandir eventually says justice and mercy must work together. How much of that insight comes from theology, and how much comes from being personally desperate for mercy?
- 8 When Bright Advocate and Dark Judge fuse into the gray blade, what has changed in Xandir? Is the symbol evidence of growth, absolution, balance, or all three?

Deep Dive II



- 1 Xandir chooses to deliver the Tree of Death fruit even after everything he learns about the plan. Is this faith in a larger "mosaic," fatalism, manipulation, or a failure of moral courage?
- 2 How does the novel complicate the idea that a good motive can excuse a dangerous action? Which character most clearly demonstrates the limits of good intentions?
- 3 Jubal offers to call Sempre's soul back after her second death. Why can Xandir refuse this offer when he could not resist the earlier promise to restore her?
- 4 Master Mahan is revealed as Cain, someone who has turned survival itself into a weapon. What does his immortality say about the difference between living longer and living well?
- 5 Tubal's fear returns when his immortality fails. What does that moment suggest about courage that depends on invulnerability?
- 6 Eden and Judy often act with less information and less power than the angels around them. Does that make their courage more morally significant?
- 7 Daren and Sparkslinger end the book in a disturbing mutual dependency. Is Eden's decision to bring them along prudent hope, dangerous denial, or the only humane option available?
- 8 By the end, several characters survive only because someone else accepts a cost. Does the story present substitution as the deepest form of mercy, or as a morally troubling necessity?

Character Questions



1

Xandir: Which single decision best proves that he has changed by the end? Which decision suggests he still has far to go?

2

Eden: How does her understanding of Daren change without erasing the harm she experienced? What would genuine repair require after the novel ends?

3

Jarom: When does he stop feeling like Xandir's apprentice and begin functioning as Xandir's moral equal?

4

Judy: Is her final choice with the antidote an extension of the person she has been all along, or a transformation forced by crisis?

5

Daren: How should readers assign responsibility when a person is influenced, inhabited, or controlled by another consciousness?

6

Sempre: She appears relatively little in page count but exerts enormous force on Xandir. Is she fully a character, a memory, a moral test, or all three?

7

Ganosh: Why is his temptation effective? What truths does he mix into his manipulation?

8

Tobias: What does he reveal about Xandir's tendency to trust competence and charm over character?

9

Jubal: Music can heal, manipulate, restore, and destroy. What does his power suggest about beauty detached from goodness?

10

Cain / Master Mahan: What makes him frightening beyond physical strength?

11

Clara: Why end one storyline with Jarom protecting Xandir's Giant daughter in darkness?

12

Uriel: How does the revelation of Xandir's original identity change your reading of his exile, punishment, and return?

Scenes Worth Revisiting



PROLOGUE

Xandir's sentencing

What accusations against him will continue to matter long after the scene ends?

CH. 1 - FAREWELL TO POMPEII The first destruction

Where do duty and reluctance coexist in Xandir?

CH. 12 - THE GUARDIAN OF EDEN A new assignment

How does guardianship change the meaning of Xandir's power?

CH. 21 - A COLD DAY IN HELL The descent

How does the literal journey downward mirror internal moral pressure?

CH. 25 - DROWNING IN PLEASURE The illusion

Why does Xandir almost choose a counterfeit happiness?

CH. 28 - GEARS AND ROOTS The Tree of Death

How does Xandir defeat a nearly unbeatable enemy by turning destructive systems against each other?

CH. 29 - THE FIRST OF THE LADY Judy's choice

What does the antidote force her to decide about the value of one life versus many?

CH. 30 - ALWAYS AND FOREVER Sempre and Clara

How do love, grief, parenthood, and manipulation collide in one sequence?

CH. 31 - THE LAST ARCHANGEL The identity reveal

What earlier details become newly meaningful once Xandir is named Uriel?

EPILOGUE

New guardians, new children

Which unresolved thread feels most like a promise for the future?

The Ending & Epilogue



- 1 The High Seraph reveals that Xandir is actually Archangel Uriel and that his exile-name concealed a forgotten identity. Does this feel like restoration, revelation, or a new burden?
- 2 Uriel is sent into mortality as a child in Eden's family. Why might mortal limitation be the right next assignment for someone who spent millennia wielding enormous power?
- 3 Eden gives birth to two children positioned as leaders of opposing forces. How does prophecy affect the way adults begin treating the children before either has made a choice?
- 4 Judy gives the antidote to the child associated with evil rather than using it on herself. Why target that child rather than the "good" child, and what does the act say about prevention versus punishment?
- 5 Judy dies, then later becomes Eden's guardian angel. How does that continuation alter the emotional meaning of her sacrifice?
- 6 Jarom secretly protects Clara, Xandir's Giant daughter, in Nod. What does this say about the apprentice he has become and the kind of guardian Xandir taught him to be?
- 7 Eden's surviving child bears an X-shaped birthmark and is strongly implied to be the mortal Xandir/Uriel. How does that circularity connect Eden's human story to Xandir's cosmic story?
- 8 The End is described not as a day but a period. How does that definition change the novel's apocalypse from a finale into a beginning?
- 9 President Jennings's election suggests that the wider world is worsening even as the central characters gain moments of healing. Why end with both hope and looming catastrophe?
- 10 What do you think "always and forever" ultimately means in the novel: romantic permanence, moral continuity, memory, covenant, or something else?

SIX PROPOSITIONS WORTH ARGUING ABOUT

Debate Night



1

Xandir was right to deliver the Tree of Death seed because the larger plan required it.

VOTE BEFORE: AGREE / DISAGREE

VOTE AFTER: AGREE / DISAGREE

2

Jarom, not Xandir, is the moral center of the novel.

VOTE BEFORE: AGREE / DISAGREE

VOTE AFTER: AGREE / DISAGREE

3

A person under demonic possession can still bear meaningful responsibility for harm.

VOTE BEFORE: AGREE / DISAGREE

VOTE AFTER: AGREE / DISAGREE

4

Judy's final sacrifice is heroic even though prophecy and crisis drastically constrain her options.

VOTE BEFORE: AGREE / DISAGREE

VOTE AFTER: AGREE / DISAGREE

5

Mortality is a gift to Xandir/Uriel, not a punishment.

VOTE BEFORE: AGREE / DISAGREE

VOTE AFTER: AGREE / DISAGREE

6

The novel ultimately argues that mercy is more powerful than justice.

VOTE BEFORE: AGREE / DISAGREE

VOTE AFTER: AGREE / DISAGREE



Best format: pick two propositions. Let everyone vote silently, give each side three minutes to make its case, then vote again. The goal is not consensus; it is to discover what evidence changed someone's mind.

75-Minute Meeting Plan



0-10
min

ARRIVAL + FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- ★ One-word reactions, favorite scene, and a quick 1-5 rating. No defending the rating yet.

10-20
min

SPOILER-LIGHT WARM-UP

- ★ Choose 2 questions from page 7. Focus on voice, tone, opening expectations, and the two main storylines.

20-35
min

CHARACTER PAIRS

- ★ Compare Xandir/Jarom with Eden/Judy. Ask when the supposedly weaker person becomes the stronger moral guide.

35-52
min

CORE THEME

- ★ Use pages 8-9. Recommended anchor: justice and mercy, followed by the Tree of Death decision.

52-65
min

ENDING

- ★ Discuss Uriel, the twins, Judy's sacrifice, Clara, and the redefinition of the End.

65-72
min

DEBATE

- ★ Choose one proposition from page 13 and vote before/after.

72-75
min

CLOSE

- ★ Each reader names one unresolved question and one character they most want to follow next.

Creative Activities

THE GRAY-BLADE COMPASS

Draw a line with "justice" at one end and "mercy" at the other. Place five major choices from the novel on the line. Which choice lands closest to genuine balance?

PROPHECY BOARD

Make two columns: "foreseen" and "chosen." Sort the ending events between them, then debate which events belong in both columns.

SYMBOL MATCH

Assign each member one symbol - the swords, shroud, Tree of Life, Tree of Death, red moon, ambrosia, the X birthmark - and explain what inner conflict it externalizes.

ALTERNATE CHOICE

Rewrite one decision: Xandir refuses Ganosh, Judy drinks the antidote, Xandir accepts Jubal's offer, or Eden refuses to take Daren. Predict three consequences without changing the story's established rules.

CELESTIAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Invent a heavenly or infernal job title in the style of the novel. Give it one power, one limitation, one absurd bureaucratic rule, and one moral hazard.

SOUNDTRACK WITHOUT SONG TITLES

Pick three musical moods or instruments for the novel: one for Xandir, one for Eden, one for Serche. Explain why the sound fits without relying on existing song lyrics.



Low-prep favorite: The Gray-Blade Compass works especially well after the justice-and-mercy discussion because it forces the group to compare choices rather than judge them one at a time.

Reader Notes



* MY FAVORITE CHARACTER - AND WHY



* THE CHOICE I MOST DISAGREED WITH



* THE SYMBOL I KEPT THINKING ABOUT



* THE QUESTION I WANT THE GROUP TO ANSWER



QUICK RATINGS

Characters

①

②

③

④

⑤

Worldbuilding

①

②

③

④

⑤

Humor

①

②

③

④

⑤

Emotional impact

①

②

③

④

⑤



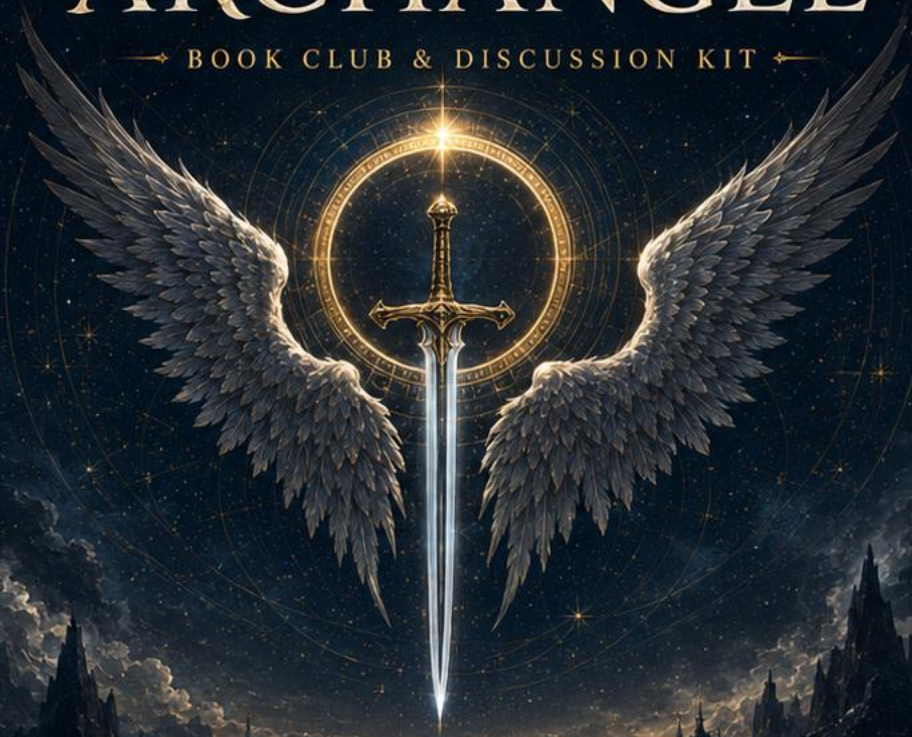
Host Quick Sheet

- 1 When does Xandir's questioning of orders become conscience rather than resentment?
- 2 What does Jarom understand about mercy that Xandir does not at the beginning?
- 3 Why is the illusion of Sempre in Serche more dangerous than a physical enemy?
- 4 Does delivering the Tree of Death seed show faith in a larger plan or failure to take moral responsibility?
- 5 How should we judge Daren when his body, agency, and survival are entangled with Sparkslinger?
- 6 What makes Judy's antidote choice heroic, tragic, unfair, or some combination of all three?
- 7 How does the Uriel reveal change your understanding of Xandir's exile and his new mortal life?
- 8 What does 'always and forever' mean by the final page: love, memory, covenant, continuity, or something else?

Justice and mercy. Ends and beginnings. The choice remains.

THE LAST ARCHANGEL

— BOOK CLUB & DISCUSSION KIT —



Prepared for readers of the novel by

— ♦ Michael D. Young ♦ —

Designed for personal and book-club discussion use