



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



When the Angels Left the Old Country
 By Sacha Lamb
 Discussed September 2024

Characters

Primary Characters	Secondary Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Angel/Uriel (the angel) • Little Ash (the demon) • Rose (female main character who comes with Uriel and Little Ash to America) • Essie (the woman who was lost in America) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reb Fishl - the unscrupulous man who “helped” Essie get to America • Shulmans • Dinah Pearl - Rose’s initial love interest • Mendel and Penina Cohen - Rose’s parents • Menachem Pearl (Menachem ben Yakov), the Belzer Rebbe • Rivke, the grandmother on the boat • Malke Pearl/Shulman - the Belzer Rebbe’s daughter • Isaac Shulman - Malke’s husband • Freidy Shulman - Malke’s sister-in-law • Shuli • Mr. Boaz, the factory owner • Bluma, Rose’s cousin • Rabbi Wolf, the rabbi in the uptown synagogue • Mr. Sullivan - a gangster

Discussion Questions

1. Did you like *When the Angels Left the Old Country*? What did you think about the conversational narrative style the book uses?
2. What did you think about the parallel “love stories” here - was one more compelling than the other?
 - a) Rose and Essie are clearly romantically attracted to each other, while the nature of the relationship between Uriel and Little Ash reads more ambiguously. How do you feel about the way the author treated both relationships?
 - b) While Rose and Essie are human, Uriel and Little Ash are both something else. Does that affect your feelings on how the relationships are described?
3. What do you think about the treatment of Uriel as a nonbinary character, and the choice of pronouns?
4. What do you think of the ways that Uriel and Little Ash change as they come to America - including Uriel's acquisition of a name/identity and Little Ash's evolution into an actually helpful person?
5. Both Uriel and Little Ash could arguably be described as having disabilities (either physical in the case of Little Ash or cognitive in the case of Uriel). How do you feel about the author's treatment of those traits?
6. This book centers heavily on Jewish religion and folklore - if you were unfamiliar with Jewish folklore, how easy was this to follow? If you're familiar with it, how did it feel reading a story set in the 20th century that involved figures like dybbuks, Jewish demons, etc.?
 - a) Does the worldbuilding resonate?
 - b) Some people have called it a “Jewish Good Omens” - do you think that that description is warranted, or is it more like other stories you've read?
 - c) Despite the centrality of Jewish religion and folklore, G-d doesn't feature as a character (somewhat like Good Omens) - how do you feel about that narrative choice?
7. How did you respond to the way that the book treated the interaction among the main characters/plot, historical events, and tensions among Jewish and non-Jewish communities?
 - a) Was this more like “Fiddler on the Roof” or “American Tail?” Or some other story?