

ADVANCE READER COPY

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Lindsey Gray

Revisited

The Redemption Series, Book 2

The Writer's Coffee Shop 
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Prologue

The disheveled young man awoke with a start, realizing he was in his bedroom at his New York mansion. Sweat dripped from his temples as his heart pounded against his breastbone and his lungs attempted to expand. He tore the sheets back before setting his bare feet down on the cold hardwood floor.

He neglected to grab his robe and raced down the hall toward his study, gooseflesh rising across the expanse of his skin. Clad in just his boxer shorts, he entered his sanctuary and dove for the book he needed.

“Come on. Where is it?” he muttered, flipping through the pages.

He settled at his desk as his eyes roamed over each page. His nightmare had brought visions of demons in their truest form. He seldom had his visions while dreaming, but when he did, he knew they were the most important ones. This particular demon was one who taunted him for years, yet evaded him at every turn. If he could find the demon, it might very well force him back into the ranks several were so desperate for him to rejoin.

“Finally.” He settled on the entry he had read several times before.

Gideon: the destroyer. Source of power embedded in his forearm.

He sat back in his leather desk chair and let out a shaky breath. He’d just experienced a vision of Gideon with Becca and another man. Then he saw the terrifying scene of Gideon transferring his essence into another body, his hand and forearm melding into the new body.

“Fuck!” He swept the papers violently from his desk. It had been years since Gideon placed a black mark on his soul and determined to make his life a living hell. Day after day, night after night, he lived just that—a never ending cycle of pain and suffering.

“If I could just . . .” His mind wandered as he grasped at the remaining traces of the visions.

In his mind, he saw Gideon walking with a dark haired man into a cave. He saw their flesh and bone become one as the molten lava vibrated its blistering light off the cave walls. He saw the body he had feared for a decade thrown into the fire, but could not make out the new vessel's face.

He knew who he needed to call. The one man who might make sense of it all, and the only one in authority who might listen. He took the receiver from the cradle before dialing the number he knew by heart. After three rings, he heard a click on the line.

"Yes?" a strong female voice answered.

"Give me Eli Manchester now, please."

Another soft click and then a faint whirring sound followed. "Voice identified. Nathaniel Archer. Your call will now be completed as directed."

He let out the breath he had held in. He hadn't used the number in the last three years and was fearful he might not attain access to the only man who could help him.

"Eli Manchester. Go," the stern voice of his mentor answered.

"It's Nathaniel."

"Boy, what are you calling me at this hour for? It's three in the morning where you are." The edge of concern dripped from each word.

"I've had visions of Becca and . . ." Nathaniel took a deep shaky breath. "Of Becca and Gideon. Gideon has moved on to a new vessel. I'm not sure of the new identity other than the build and dark hair, but I am positive it was Gideon." He gulped and waited for a reply.

"Get to JFK as fast as you can. I'll have a jet fueled and waiting." The tremor in Eli's voice was well hidden, but not well enough from his own flesh and blood.

"Uncle, what am I missing?"

"The girls need you now. Pack for a long stay and don't forget your umbrella. It's been raining here for days."

“I won’t forget.” Nathaniel chuckled at the idea of an umbrella being of any real importance. “Are they okay?”

“They’ll be better once you’re here. Safe travel, my boy.”

The line went dead.

Nathaniel Archer sat in his late father’s chair in his ancestral home. He hadn’t left it in over three years. He knew the mess he was about to get involved with might never bring him home again, but for them he would do it. Lily and Becca had risked their existence for him. It was time for him to return the favor.

Chapter 1 Next

Lily opened her eyes when she heard the floorboards creak as Ryan walked into their room at Leatherby Manor.

“For you.” Ryan held out a large mug of her favorite crimson liquid.

“Thanks.” Lily sat up and accepted his offering while he sat down next to her on what they had now dubbed “their” bed.

“Feeling any better today?” Ryan threaded his fingers through hers before bringing them to his lips.

“I’m still in a fog.” She sipped from her mug. The taste was a combination of things along with something she had not expected. “What’s in this?”

Ryan gave her a sheepish smile. “Human blood. On Sam’s suggestion, Jefferson made you a concoction to wean you off it. Sam thought a gradual withdrawal was the best course. You still have quite a bit of Becca’s blood in your system.”

The fact she had willingly gave up her existence for Becca, her adoptive daughter, and in return her daughter gave life back to her made Lily uncomfortable. It was still a little too much for her to take in while she was still in such a weakened state. “I know. The real stuff has some interesting effects on me since I don’t drink it often.” Lily sat the mug off to the side on her nightstand, no longer thirsty.

“What’s the matter? Is there something wrong?”

“Yes.” She sighed. “I can’t explain why I’m still here, or what is happening. So many thoughts are racing through my brain, but my body is moving like sludge stuck in a drainpipe. I’m not sure how to adjust.”

“I have an idea.” Ryan retrieved a box from underneath the bed. “Open it.”

Lily tugged on the lavender bow before removing the buttercup yellow paper from the rectangle box. She pulled the top off to find a leather bound book with gold lettering along the edges, accompanied with a black fountain pen.

“I’m not sure where you’ve purchased your journals in the past, but this looks similar to the one I saw at the cabin. I thought writing things down might give you a little perspective.”

Lily looked at him, then back down to the journal. It was exactly what she needed. If she hadn’t believed it before, in that moment she was positive. Ryan was her other half in every possible way. “I love you, Mr. Edwards.”

“And I love and adore you, Mrs. Edwards, even though some of your decisions, as of late, might have been better received if they’d been discussed beforehand.” He gave her a stern look before he leaned in to kiss her. “You write and drink. You need your strength for what comes next.”

“What’s next?” She wondered if he knew something she didn’t.

“I have no idea, but I plan on finding out.” Another kiss and he was out the door.

Lily removed the journal from the box and picked up the pen. With the book opened and the pen uncapped, she began to let what the new year had brought her bleed onto the pages in front of her.

January

The year started better than it had in a long time. I spent my birthday with my friends in the town that had become another home in Iceland. Then the next morning, everything changed.

I found Erik after he had died of a massive heart attack. Renee, his daughter, was devastated, and I did everything I could to keep it together for her. All the while, I wondered about the angel of death sent to carry Erik to the other side.

That was when the Archangel and pain in my ass, Peter, showed up. He’d been my friend and even my mentor for many years, but that didn’t mean he’d always on my good side. His visit left me with more questions than answers, but soon I knew my life would never be the same.

Oh, how right I was!

After Erik's funeral, I just needed to let loose for a while. I ran to the lake as I had many times before and sat in my favorite spot. That was when Ryan found me. My love, my life, my husband. He was right there in front of me. Everything I had done for over a hundred years was so I could be with him again. It was like forever and no time at all had passed. We were still the same young spirits who married on the beautiful spring morning all those years ago, but with so much more appreciation for every moment we spent together.

It took no time at all to embark on a second honeymoon in Rome. We reunited as husband and wife, somehow thinking the other shoe wouldn't drop.

Even though I told all of them not to follow me, my daughter, Becca, my boss, Sam, and my ex-boyfriend, Ian, set out to find me. They made it as far as Renee's pub before Liam, the last man of the Ahbmonite line, abducted them. Becca's ex, Abe, was just a tad late and didn't get to Liam before he took off with my friends. Abe and Renee found me in Rome and explained what had happened.

Liam wanted me, plain and simple, and he would use anything to get me. Becca was his ace in the hole. Anyone who knew what she meant to me knew I would die a thousand deaths to protect that girl. That was what Liam was counting on.

He wanted me to turn him into a vampire like so many of his ancestors before him. He wanted me to perform the ritual and then drink him dry, leaving my venom in its place. One problem was the chip The Manchester Group had implanted in my neck. It monitored how much human blood I drank, and gave off electrical pulses to simulate human bodily function, including a heartbeat. If the chip were to detect the intake of human blood in the amount it would take to change a human into a vampire, it would set off a kill switch. Once I found Liam with a knife held against Becca's throat, I didn't care what happened to me as long as she was safe. I performed the ritual, and as

expected, the kill switch activated and slowly destroyed the inside of my body.

The next thing I knew, I felt like I was having some sort of seizure. When I awoke, Becca and Ryan were with me in my bed at Leatherby Manor. Liam was now a vampire, according to Becca who had witnessed his transformation. Ian was still missing. Sam was safe but thoroughly confused. Becca was a Nephilim, which I never suspected for some odd reason. Then to put the cherry on the top of the gargantuan cake, they thought Gideon was behind it all.

So this year has had its ups and downs. Now I'm left with so many questions. Where is Ian? What will Becca do with her newfound heritage? Why is Gideon back? Will Ryan and I be able to stay together? Why am I even still here? Who saved me?

I'm in no state to answer anything right now. Since I was resurrected, I have had a depressing lack of energy. I think I know what is happening, but I can't be sure.

I guess I'll just have to wait and see what comes my way. I hope I'll be ready by then.

Lily recapped her pen and closed the journal. After she placed them on the nightstand, she retrieved her mug. The combination of human and animal blood, along with what she swore to be nutmeg, settled in her stomach. Her eyes drifted closed and she welcomed any thoughts of her uncertain future.



Ryan wandered into the living room where Sam and Abe were seated.

"How is she this morning?" Sam asked.

"Still a bit weak, but better I think." Ryan sank into the couch with a sigh.

“I’m sure she’ll perk up soon.” Abe sipped his coffee and sat on the chair beside Ryan.

“I don’t have much experience to go by, but she seems . . . off.” Ryan rubbed his hands across his stubble-covered cheeks.

Abe snorted, which caused Ryan and Sam to turn and glare at him. “What? It’s not as if she’s always a ray of sunshine. She gets moody when she’s stressed.”

Ryan responded with a nod. The memory of the whirlwind they’d experienced in the weeks before their wedding and the frantically beautiful mess Lily had become filled his mind. He thought that now, since Lily was a vampire, stress would be the last thing to plague his wife. Still, he had so many questions, and to move forward he knew he would need answers. “I don’t know if it’s a Lily mood or a vampire mood. I don’t know much about her life. Would you two mind filling in some of the blanks?”

Sam shifted in his chair to rid himself of the slight unease of the conversation. “What do you want to know?”

Ryan took a deep breath, and hundreds of questions swirled in his mind. He picked through a few before narrowing it down to the most important ones. “First off, I’d like to know about Manchester. What is your agenda and what does it have to do with Lily?” He directed the question to Sam, but saw that Abe was deep in thought

Sam cleared his throat and sent a look to Abe, letting him know he would handle Ryan’s inquisition. “I should start by explaining what The Manchester Group is.”

Ryan nodded.

“Like you, the members of the group are a physical presence of God on earth. Abe and I both have transgressions in our pasts we’re determined to find redemption for. Sometimes even the mightiest of us fall, and that’s where Manchester steps in. We work together fighting the world’s evils to redeem ourselves and serve God’s will.”

“And Lily? How does a vampire fit in with God’s will?” Ryan asked.

Abe waved his arm in front of him when Sam turned to him. “This is your show. I’m just here for the coffee.” He sipped from his mug with a smirk on his lips.

“Even I don’t know how vampires came to be, but God has always held them in the same regard as anyone else. They are His children just as much as the rest of us. His belief is evil does not come from what you are, but who you are.” Sam smiled and shook his head as the next thought came to him. “You know, Martin and Lily were the first vampires I had ever met. I knew they existed, of course, but had never come face-to-face with one. They were a minority in the community of vampires as they mainly drank animal blood. They both had their humanity very much intact, and the thought of harming a human by drinking the blood from their veins, willing participant or not, just wasn’t . . . appetizing.”

Ryan and Abe both let out soft laughs at Sam’s word choice before he went on.

“Martin had been very religious while he was human, and had a strong faith that was not marred when he was changed into a vampire. I met them at a little chapel, if you can believe it. I went to meet with Peter when I was introduced to two of the newest members of The Manchester Group. I worked with both of them for many years. After Martin died, I took Lily under my wing, and we worked side by side in Boston. She’s always been like a daughter to me, not a vampire, just Lily.”

“So, nothing nefarious then?” Ryan asked.

Sam smiled. “No. She is a magnificent woman whose main motivation for decades was to make it back to you.”

“Me?” Ryan laughed as his head hit the back of the couch and he directed his gaze upward. “I don’t know what I am anymore.”

“You’re an earthbound angel, just like Abe and I, are you not?” Sam knew the answer to his question. Due to the good deeds he had performed in his life, Ryan had been gifted with a physical body to hold his spirit and powers while he carried out God’s will. Just as Abe and Sam, Ryan was the physical proof of God’s presence on earth.

“Yes, but what do I do now? Lily and I have spent so much time looking for each other and now that we’re together, where do we go from here?”

Sam smiled a fatherly smile. “I’m confident you’ll discover your path, together.”

“Just be grateful you are together,” Abe whispered as his own feelings came into focus.

Sam and Ryan both turned to Abe and saw the sadness that enveloped him.

“Have faith, Abaddon. Your time will come.” Sam picked up his own coffee and took a long, languid drink. “Maybe sooner than you think.”



Abe stood outside Becca’s bedroom door for over twenty minutes, contemplating his next move.

“Just knock.” Jefferson laughed and elbowed Abe in the back, which pushed him closer to the door. “It’s easy. Look.” Jefferson knocked on a door down the hall and within seconds, Renee answered. Jefferson winked in Abe’s direction before taking Renee’s hand and entering the bedroom.

As Abe heard the soft click of Renee’s door, he gathered his courage and lifted his fist to knock.

“Come in.” He heard softly called to him.

Abe opened the door and saw Becca curled up with the television remote in her hand as she watched BBC News flash pictures of Ian across the screen. “Hey.” He came over and sat at the end of the bed. Her pink colored toenails stuck out from beneath the blanket and as an unconscious movement, he began to massage her foot.

“Mm. That feels good.” Becca turned over to lie on her back. She closed her eyes as she took in the familiar sensation.

“That’s kind of the point.” Abe let a genuine grin sweep across his face and dug into her arch with his thumb. He felt the familiar stir in his gut like so many mornings before. He wanted it to be real and he knew she did too.

He turned his attention to the television when he heard Senator Holt’s voice. His head slumped and he stopped the massage. He had hit the brick wall: Ian Holt.

“What?” Becca asked, sitting up as her foot left his grasp.

“I suppose you want to get back to work on the investigation.”

She looked down at her hands resting in her lap. “I promised him I’d find him. I can’t just leave him out there when Gideon is behind this.”

“I know. I’ll help you however I can.” He would. He would do anything for her.

“You will?”

Abe crawled up to the head of the bed to sit beside her. He laced his fingers through her own, and he took a deep breath. “I know none of this is what you need to hear right now, but I love you. I love everything about you. If you care about him, then it’s important for me to help however I can. Gideon has taken so much away from me . . . I can’t let it go on any longer. With you and I working together, I’m positive we will destroy him this time.” He brought her hand up to kiss the back of it tenderly.

“We keep hurting each other, don’t we?” Becca attempted to giggle, but it came out more like a soft sob.

“You know, I took you to him because I so desperate. I wanted to protect you, but I ended up playing right into his hands.” Abe shut his eyes as the pain of the last three years filtered through every cell of his body.

“Hey.” Becca’s hand cupped his cheek. “I know you just wanted me safe. My fear is what has kept me away. If he could take over you, he could be anywhere.” She brought her hand down to rest on top of his. “If I’m going to be able to do this—move on with this investigation—I’m going to have to know what it was like. You have to tell me what happened to you while he possessed you.”

The pain in Abe's chest intensified. If he hadn't known it was impossible for him to have a heart attack, he could swear he was dying from a myocardial infarction. "I don't know how to explain it. I was there. I could see, hear, and feel everything, yet I couldn't control my body. I screamed the entire time for him to stop, but I think it just spurred him on."

Becca wiped a tear from Abe's cheek.

"Right before he left me, he looked in the mirror and talked right to me. He heard everything I had said. He knew every thought I had ever had. He brought forth memories of things only you and I knew. I couldn't keep anything from him, and he relished in the fact that when he went back to his own body, he would know yours as well as I did. That gave me the strength to get you away from him."

Becca let out a louder sob than she intended, and Abe brought her into his arms. "I'm sorry I pushed you away. I was so terrified. The only place I knew I would be safe was with Nathaniel."

Abe pulled back to look her in the eye. "That's where you went?"

She nodded with a sniffle, thinking of all the magic spells protecting Nathaniel's home. "His house can keep anything away."

"Nathaniel doesn't have a very good track record of keeping you safe, either." Abe was racked with concern. He knew Nathaniel would walk through fire for her, but her so-called brother had his own faults when his protection turned into tragedy.

"Rome was a long time ago. You know how close the two of us have always been. His house is fortified against evil. Kind of wish I was there right now."

"One thing at a time. We find Ian. If after that we can't find Gideon, I will take you to New York myself."

"You're going to do this, aren't you?" Becca looked deep into his glistening blue eyes.

Abe leaned in, pressed his forehead against hers, and whispered. "I'm going to do this . . . for you. I love you, Rebecca."

She let out a shuddered sob. "I love you, too." She brought her fingers up to the back of his neck and ran them through his hair. She pressed her lips to his in anything but a chaste way. While the feel of her tongue against his swept away his doubts, the way her breath mingled with his brought about the thrill their love always held. The years of pain and anguish disappeared for that one solitary moment when they became Becca and Abe again.

The moment passed and Becca slowly retreated, leaving one last soft kiss on his lips. "I don't know what's going to happen, and I can't tell you that we will be together again someday. Just know that a part of me will always belong to you."

"And I you." Abe cupped her cheek and let out a long breath. "Only for you."