

REDEMPTION NOVEL
BY JACKLYN A. LO

EXCERPT THREE

“Well, that was a most enjoyable vacation,” Ann said as she steered her car away from her apartment building. “Though I’m not entirely certain I could call it restful!”

Rob’s face appeared on the screen, smiling broadly. “Quite,” he said. “You sure managed to pack plenty into a couple of days!”

“To be honest, I’m relieved to be returning to work. It’s as though the craziness of the last two days is finally being replaced with some kind of normality.”

That being said, Ann’s sleep had been disturbed once again by one of her usual haunting dreams.

She had hoped her visit to the psychic would have dealt with all that, but she’d had that same vision; the infinite spiral holding her in its grasp as it stretched away through time and space.

The only difference was that, far in the distance, she felt that it connected her with Mi.

“Rob?” she said, as she pulled onto express tube and switched the car’s systems over to the tube’s SmartDrive server.

“Yes, my lady.”

“Did you find out a lot of information on the... spiritual stuff we were talking about the other day?”

“Of course.”

Ann paused, not sure what she wanted to ask, or at least what she wanted to ask *first*. “Do you believe in Evolution? Or in the whole Adam and Eve, God made everything in seven days... stuff?”

“I think you’ll find it was six days. And the answer is yes. I believe in them both.”

Ann frowned and, with the car now safely in the control of the SmartDrive, reclined her seat and turned to face Rob’s screen. “Come on! How can you believe *both*?”

“Because they appear to contradict each other? It’s quite simple. In fact many humans do it without thinking.”

“Really?”

“Sure. Take, for example, the fact that most people believe in Free Will, yet at the same time consider themselves to be in some way under the influence of a higher power such as fate or God. You make your own choices, but live out a specific purpose.”

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“I guess.” Ann turned her gaze back to the windshield, which was now displaying one of the many “environments” provided by the SmartDrive system. At present it was set to Ann’s favorite, sunlit waterfalls, which helped her to relax and concentrate. “So,” she continued, “what has your research turned up? What is God’s purpose for us humans?”

“It’s hidden for the blind, my lady. And yet open for those who can see.”

Ann rolled her eyes. “What is that supposed to mean? You sound like a fortune cookie!”

“Firstly,” said Rob, with a slightly mischievous smile, “We’re dealing with secret knowledge here, knowledge which is different for each person, and the only way to attain it is to earn it.”

“And secondly?”

“Secondly, a person must at least be interested in such knowledge.”

Ann frowned somewhat defensively. “I am interested!”

“You are *now*. But this wasn’t always the case, my lady, and this is sadly true for many people. They are too busy to think about the purpose of their existence, because they spend all their time focused on earning money, sorting out family problems, fighting with neighbors or any one of a thousand other things. Across the city people are sitting in traffic jams; the same is true of their lives. They are too caught up in the worries of their existence to really live!” Rob smiled suddenly. “We, however, seem to be moving quite freely.”

Ann glanced out of the window. He had a point. Sure the tunnel was pricey, but it was better than being snarled up on the streets with everyone else. *Why did freedom always seem to come at a cost?*

“This is fascinating, Rob. I’ve never heard anything like this, not in school or college... not anywhere.”

“That’s because you’ve been too busy, just like everyone else. But now you are on the way not only to discovering your purpose, but fulfilling it!”

“But I’m also still pretty busy. So how do I go about all this? Should I go to a church or something?”

Rob raised his eyebrows at the question. “Go to church? My research suggests that such organizations have mostly become infected by the same evil; they’re busy. They focus on quantity rather than quality. They tend not to serve individuals so much as expecting it to work the other way round. But...” He paused.

“But what?”

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“But you *have* already made some progress. You are exploring your truth by yourself.”

“I guess.”

Ann took hold of the wheel again as the waterfalls on the windshield were replaced by the sleek interior of the tunnel. She was approaching her exit.

“But these religious organizations must have something to say about the general purpose of our existence, no?”

“Certainly. And as you’d expect, there are many conflicting points of view, from those who believe humans exist to bring glory to God to those who believe people are nothing more than some cosmic accident, without purpose or meaning.”

Ann thought for a moment as she disconnected from the SmartDrive server and steered the car up the exit ramp towards the street.

“I guess, in a way, that’s what I’ve always assumed. Though when you put it in those terms, it sounds pretty bleak.”

As she emerged from the tunnel and merged with the Chicago traffic, another car nearly drove into the side of her and she beeped the horn crossly.

“Idiot!” she shouted.

“Almost another cosmic accident!” said Rob.

“Quite.” Ann tried to concentrate on what they had been discussing, wishing she still had the calming waterfalls to help. “So what about those who believe in God? What do they say about, what was it? Living for His glory?”

“That depends. Christianity teaches that such a life is based on a relationship with the Creator acknowledging His greatness, giving Him honor by praising and worshiping Him.

Their aim, most of them anyway, is to love God more and so live in a way that makes him look great. That is what they mean by ‘living for his glory’.”

“So, how is that supposed to work?” asked Ann, frowning with a mixture of confusion and frustration.

“And how long does it take to be changed in such a way?”

“It is supposed to work the same as any other relationship; though most do not involve people trying to love someone they can neither see nor touch. The process is said to take the whole of a person’s life.”

“One life?”

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“One life,” said Rob with a nod. “Their Holy Bible says, ‘it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment’”.

“Cometh?” Ann laughed. “Why can’t they speak English, like everyone else? So what about people who believe you live more than once?”

“Reincarnation? That is more of an Eastern concept, taught by the Hindus, Buddhists and suchlike.”

“Fine. So what do they teach about the meaning of life? Or rather the meaning of lives?”

“You’ve heard of Nirvana?”

Ann turned the car round the last corner towards the A.I.I. building. “The rock band?”

“Hardly. Those religions that believe a person has many lives teach that the goal of those lives is to achieve Nirvana, ultimate freedom from all that is evil. Becoming one, as it were, with everything, even with the God himself.”

“And how does one achieve this Nirvana?”

“By living increasingly pure and disciplined lives dedicated to spiritual pursuits. Each life, you see, is affected by the former lives. They call it karma.”

“I’ve heard of karma,” said Ann, pulling up in her usual space and cutting the engine. “So how many lives does it take? Would two be enough?”

“No one knows,” said Rob as Ann picked up her E-A device from the dash. “The cycle of birth and death has been continuous throughout time, but I suspect Nirvana cannot be achieved with only a couple of lives.”

“Interesting!”

Ann switched off the device and slipped it into her bag as she headed towards the elevator. And while she traveled up to the Sales and Marketing floor, she wondered to herself just how many other lives she had had. Were there other past existences she knew nothing about affecting her life here today?