



BONUS CHAPTER for readers of:
The Rabbit Saga

In *Conundrum*, the story ends with Lisa-Marie pregnant with Jersey's child. This is what happened a couple of months after *Conundrum* when Jersey finally told Lisa-Marie his secret.

4500 words (Approximately one chapter)
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Jersey tells Lisa-Marie his secret

Lisa-Marie carried the baby “up high,” which according to her friends meant they were having a girl. Tonight, as they strolled around the manicured pond at the north end of their estate, his now-wife pondered the best name for a female Noah Jerlinsky.

“Noah, I have never been as happy as I am right now,” she said when he had been quiet for her previous two statements. He exhaled when he realized she needed a response and gave her hand a gentle squeeze.

“I feel the same way,” he said low, and meant it.

If only... Lisa-Marie and he had wed a week ago and the baby was due in a month; if he was ever going to tell her about the Rakum, he needed to do it soon. Lisa-Marie stopped her forward movement and Jersey turned to meet her eye in the moonlight.

“Honey, what’s wrong? You’ve been too quiet,” she said, her eyes soft. “Can you tell me? Isn’t it important that we start out right? Communicating? As if this marriage will last forever?” Lisa-Marie’s voice broke on her last question and she averted her gaze to corral her emotions.

Jersey wanted to tell her so badly... Darcy had advised him to start with having her read *The Rabbit* by Beth Rider-Stone. Lucas suggested he take her in person to visit the Stones in Montgomery and let them tell her with him present. Jersey wondered what method would keep the woman’s affection for him as true and as deep as it was right now.

“Noah,” she said catching his eye and looking stronger, “just say it. I’m not going back into the house until we open that jar in your throat.”

Jersey made a small smile and asked God to help him. Brand new at asking the Maker for aid, he tossed some words together in his mind and took a deep breath.

“Baby, I have a huge secret and it has to do with my life before we met,” he said, holding her eye and hoping she read the depth of his love. “I think I know how to begin...” Jersey tugged her gently to an ornate bench. After he swished the surface with his hand, they sat facing one another. “It’s going to have a few parts, but the first part I can tell you tonight, beside the pond, at our home, the one we bought together to raise our children and grandchildren in.”

Lisa-Marie smiled. “I like the way you started. Now, go ahead. If it’s in the past, it’s forgotten. Our God forgives and you and I are His children. Tell me as if it’s a confession. I won’t hold any of it against you. I promise.”

Jersey managed a tiny shrug, not truly believing she could forgive him for tricking her into his bed. Then something

Lucas told him popped back to mind.

"If you pray for God to help you and you tell her in love, she will forgive you and love you all the more. If she doesn't, that only means God has more work to do."

Jersey went with a combination of ideas to open the conversation. "Baby, did you ever meet Canaan?" The name was familiar to her, but she shook her head. "Did you meet Beryl or Javier?" Her ex-husband had spent his free time with Beryl, which was how she was stolen away in the first place. Lisa-Marie shook her head, and a tiny spark of concern arose at the names of the men her ex spent the most time with.

"Do you know them?" she asked beginning to add something up about the way he questioned her. Jersey grinned; his wife was beauty-queen gorgeous, but smart enough to be accepted into Harvard Law—she would catch on quickly.

"I can't answer that one until I do this other part," he said with a sideways grin, hoping to charm her into being patient. Jersey worked on his next assertion. If she hadn't met any other Rakum... *wait*. "My friend Darcy. You've met him."

Lisa-Marie nodded slowly. "Yes, what about him?" she asked, chin lowered, and trying to guess what he might say.

"Darcy and I are brothers and..."

"Brothers," she repeated.

Jersey faltered. He needed help after all. He gave her a grin and dug out his cell phone. "Hang on, baby." He thumbed Darcy's number.

"I'm watching a movie, Jersey," his friend answered.

"I need you and Lucas to come over," he said and Lisa-Marie's eyes widened. "She is ready to hear the truth. I need you to help me explain it."

"*Oh,*" Darcy replied and after a few small noises he returned louder, as if he'd been on speaker earlier. "*Okay. Sure. Now?*"

"Yeah, and call Lucas for me. We'll meet you at the house." His friend said he would and disconnected. Lisa-Marie looked anxious *and* curious.

"Think of it like this," Jersey said standing and bringing

her up slowly in deference to her pregnant belly. “My past is so convoluted that I need witnesses to back me up. Will you hear it? I love you and I want you to know the whole truth.”

Lisa-Marie nodded, her eye serious. “Of course.”

Hoping that would be enough, Jersey cradled her arm in his and headed for the house.

Little Jessica was spending the weekend with Simon which meant the house sat quiet. Jersey left the inner door ajar and the storm door unlocked, so when his friends arrived, they’d walk in. He made Lisa-Marie comfortable on the sofa and pulled two heavy cushioned chairs forward from the formal dining room for their guests. Lisa-Marie watched him, grinning when he performed a little jig at the end.

“Lucas Poppa is also one of my brothers and you’ll understand what that means when we’re finished. Oh,” Jersey added and jogged to the study. After a short search, he found his copy of *The Rabbit* and brought it to the living room. He set it on the coffee table and when Lisa-Marie leaned forward he shook his head. “Not yet.” He gave her a no-no signal and she leaned back to cross her hands over her belly.

“This is very mysterious,” she said and her gaze flicked to the foyer. “I saw car lights.”

Jersey turned and waved his friends in moments later. Lucas led the way looking harmless and approachable in dark blue jeans and a black button-up shirt. When he came close enough to shake Jersey’s hand, Darcy rounded the pillar to the living room and gave him a wicked grin. The shit had worn a muscle shirt and workout pants. His wife would have to look at that the entire time they talked. Darcy read his countenance and laughed.

“Do you have to work hard to be such an ass or is it easy?” he asked in a low voice.

“It’s very easy,” he replied in his normal voice. “Of course, I learned how from you.”

“Just come inside,” Jersey said and punched his muscled

shoulder as hard as he could. Darcy didn't react. He nodded to Lisa-Marie and made a few pleasantries for them both.

"Happy to meet you, Lucas, and hi, Darcy. I'm *very* curious, guys," Lisa-Marie said. "All Noah told me so far is that you and Lucas are his brothers. He's making it sound like a cult." She watched Darcy make his way to the chair and when he sat, her eyes went to Jersey. "Honey? Now what?"

Jersey sat next to her and now the four faced inward. He looked at his friends when he began. "I need ya'll to back me up and help me tell it the best way possible. I want to tell her about the Rakum. The other stuff, the part about when I met her, let's leave for another time. Sound good?"

Lucas nodded with a serious expression.

Darcy grinned and leaned back to cross an ankle over the opposite knee. "Let me tell it, brother. I promise to make you sound awesome."

Darcy was being silly and Jersey shook his head. When he turned back to Lisa-Marie, she had been staring at Darcy. He was a sight to behold and Jersey chuckled when Lisa-Marie jerked her eyes to his as if she'd been busted.

"It's okay, baby," he told her. "Darcy is distracting, always has been." She didn't disagree and zipped her lips. "Okay. That novel was written by a woman we know. Have you read it?"

Lisa-Marie shook her head. "I read the back cover when I was arranging the shelves. It looks scary."

Jersey grinned. "The book says it's fiction, but it's actually true. It's about a race of men that were carefully bred over three thousand years by a spirit named Ta'avah. Do you follow me so far?"

Lisa-Marie had raised her eyebrows during his opener and they were still up. "The scary book is true," she stated and reached for it. Jersey handed it over so she wouldn't need to strain. She flipped to the back cover and Jersey asked her to read it aloud. After a pause and a glance to both guests, she did.

"What if your novel attracts the wrong kind of attention and an age-old evil turns out to be all too real?" Lisa-Marie peeked at Jersey.

“An age-old evil? Honey...”

“Baby, this is the most serious night of our lives—it’s not a joke. These two men are my witnesses. Look at them,” he said kindly. “None of us are laughing.”

Lisa-Marie continued reading, her voice quiet. “*Author Beth Rider’s vampire novel has bit number one, but her fictitious plot puts her in the crosshairs of an ancient... vampiric...*” Again, his wife raised her eyes to his and Jersey inclined his head with a sorrowful expression until she continued, now only whispering the text. “*...ancient vampiric race. Spreading evil among mankind for three millennia, the leadership of this bloodthirsty race must catch Beth Rider...*” Lisa-Marie paused, this time without looking up. “And you’re saying Beth Rider, the author, is a real woman that you know?”

“I’ve seen her; Lucas knows her in person,” Jersey answered quietly. “Keep reading and I can explain better. You’re doing great, baby...”

“*Facing the most terrifying trial of her life against creatures known only in fables, one simple woman will unintentionally threaten the very existence of a powerful and accursed people.*” Lisa-Marie huffed, set the book down with finality, and flicked her gaze to Lucas, who carried a sense of authority, which Jersey attributed to his advanced length of time on the planet. “Is my husband trying to tell me he’s one of these things? That you are? And Darcy?”

Her accusatory tone did not ruffle Lucas and Jersey allowed him to respond on his own. As the oldest living Rakum, he should know how to handle a tiny mortal woman.

“We are,” Lucas said flatly and leaned over his lap to rest both elbows on his thighs. “Before the time of Christ, an evil spirit began creating our people. He crossed his seed with that of mortal women and over time, built a race of man he called the Rakum.”

When he paused, Jersey turned to see how his wife took the news. She remained in Lucas’s gaze, her brow furrowed, obviously working up a reply. When she spoke, she only whispered.

“*This is insane...*”

“I was born in Europe in 1501. Jersey and Darcy—”

“Jersey?” Lisa-Marie said then and turned to face him.

“My brothers know me as Jersey,” he said, hoping she’d let Lucas continue. He was doing so well...

She stared at him a moment longer, frowned, and returned her attention to Poppa. “1501,” she deadpanned.

Lucas nodded, not offended. “Jersey was born in 1699 and Darcy a decade after that. We’re mortal now, but before November 13, of last year, all three of us were Rakum.”

Lisa-Marie pointed at the book as she held Lucas’s eye. “The vampires from that book?”

“Vampiric race,” Darcy said putting in his two cents, his deep voice rolling across the space. “We never considered ourselves as vampires. The Rakum are real, not fantasy.”

Lisa-Marie looked to Jersey. “Honey?”

Carefully, and watching for rejection he draped his arm across her shoulders. “On 11/13, the spirit Lucas told you about—Ta’avah—was cast out of us by Javier—one of our brethren.”

“Simon’s Javier?” she asked barely speaking.

Jersey gave a half-nod. “But he has been mortal longer than the three of us...” Jersey faltered.

Lucas picked it up. “Javier D’Millier became mortal voluntarily when he learned about God more than seven years ago. That book describes how all that came to pass.”

“Seven years,” she said low. “But you three... only last November?”

Jersey rolled in his lips when Lucas only replied with a sad nod. Lisa-Marie shook her head slowly and hugged her belly.

“I’ve known Simon five and a half years.” She swallowed hard, eyes down. “He told me Javier was an old friend. How are they... acquainted? Was Simon...” she stopped and looked to the other men.

“No, Simon has always been mortal,” Jersey said quietly.

“Lisa-Marie,” Lucas said taking over once more, “our people drank human blood for pleasure and power and we had volunteer blood donors all over the world. Simon let blood for Javier; willingly. Until Javier changed, that is.”

Lisa-Marie shrugged out from under Jersey's arm to stand. All three men stood as well.

"Blood donors," she repeated and took a step away from Jersey. "I'm going to my room," she said with a short glance to Jersey before setting her eyes to the floor. "I'll be back. Give me a minute."

Jersey nodded and did not reach for her, afraid she would shy away. When she had entered her sewing room at the end of the hallway, he exhaled noisily and turned to his friends. Lucas slipped his phone into his hand. Without a word to anyone, he dialed the phone and a man's voice answered. Lucas put the call on speaker.

"Kazak, Mike, got a second?" Lucas asked and Jersey met Darcy's eye.

"*Michael Stone,*" his friend mouthed and Jersey nodded. He'd met the man over the decades, but their paths had not crossed socially.

"*Sure, what's up?*"

"I'm here with Jersey and Darcy trying to explain to Jersey's wife about the Rakum. You're on speaker and she's gone out of the room a moment." Lucas paused for Mike's reaction.

"*Hey, fellas. How can I help?*"

"I would like your wife to speak to Lisa-Marie, maybe even on FaceTime so they can see each other. Is that possible?"

They all heard Stone call for his wife and then returned to the phone. "*Lucas, I'll put her on, but fellas?*" he said and Jersey acknowledged him with a noise. "*Ya'll come visit us next week. Bring Lisa-Marie's daughter, too. Lucas and Darcy, just come have a BBQ, we'll put you up at the house. Will you?*" Jersey looked at Darcy whose lips parted, as if to remind Mike of his oath to Canaan, but Mike somehow caught on in the silence.

"*Elder Canaan won't be there, I know about ya'll staying apart.*"

"Yeah, that's good," Jersey said leaning toward the phone. "If my wife doesn't hate me after tonight, we'll be there."

Lisa-Marie walked in and all three men looked to her face. She shuffled to her spot on the couch and sat against Jersey to

wrap around his bicep.

“We called the author’s husband, Michael Stone. He’s one of us,” Jersey whispered and she offered a sad nod.

“*Hon, it’s Lucas Poppa,*” Mike was overheard saying on his end. He told his wife all that Lucas told him and she spoke next.

“*Hi, guys. Hang up and I’ll call back on my phone. Want me to call Lucas?*” she asked and once confirmed she disconnected.

“Lucas thought Mrs. Stone’s input might help. Because of her faith, thousands of my brethren have come to know God. It’s pretty huge...”

Lisa-Marie nodded and met his eye. “It is really huge, honey. If God wanted to save your brethren, I shouldn’t shrivel up and drown in fear about it. I’m ready to hear more. I believe you. I know it’s true...”

Jersey pulled her close and kissed her cheek.

Lucas’s phone rang and he hit the FaceTime.

“I’ll prop you up over here,” he said to Beth Rider and set the phone facing Lisa-Marie, who wiped her eyes.

“*Hi, Lisa-Marie! I’m Beth. You’re simply beautiful! And congratulations! Do you guys want a boy or a girl?*” the woman asked as natural as could be, and Jersey watched his wife’s face.

“Hi, Beth, thank you for calling,” Lisa-Marie said sounding stronger. “Noah and I were hoping for a boy.” She looked to him and added, “Jersey and I.”

“No, I’m Noah, too,” he told her and kissed her hand. Then he spoke up for all to hear. “I am registered legally as Noah Jerlinksy. Only my brethren will ever call me Jersey. I’m the same man you know. I only wanted you to know about the Rakum so we would have this secret between us.”

“*Jersey, I could help you explain how you ended up meeting her,*” Beth Rider said and Jersey looked to the phone, suddenly filled with trepidation. It may have shown in his face because the woman continued in a tender tone. “*I’ll pray for all of us before. What do you say?*”

Jersey kissed Lisa-Marie’s hand, still looking into the phone and nodded.

“Heavenly Father, please put Your words in my mouth and open Lisa-Marie’s ears and heart to hear what You have to say. I pray all of us will do Your will tonight and every minute of our lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

The sound of quiet *amens* filled the room and Lisa-Marie took a deep breath.

“I’m scared. I don’t know why,” she said and hugged Jersey’s arm tighter.

“It’s because all of us fear the unknown. Let me lay out what happened last year and God will give you peace about it, I’m certain.”

Lisa-Marie nodded and Beth began.

“Jersey will fill in details that come up as time passes, but I am going to give the overview to get you over the hump...”

Jersey watched his wife nod again and prepared for the worst.

“On November 13th last year, the Rakum who didn’t know God were transformed into mortals without their doing. It was jarring and unpleasant to all of them because their entire lives, they had been taught that they themselves were the gods of this world. Their Fathers would not allow them religion of any sort so they didn’t know they had a Creator who loved them. I will generalize and he can fill you in later, but when Jersey went to sleep away the day on the 12th and woke up mortal on the 13th, he would have gone through a ton of unfamiliar emotions. The most powerful one was anger. Angry to be so powerless...” Beth took a sip of water and gave Lisa-Marie a kind smile.

“As Rakum, they had super-human strength, telepathy, telekinesis, and an insatiable lust for blood. Jersey can give you a clearer picture later, but he went to bed a god and woke up a bug.”

Lucas chuckled and nodded his head. He cleared his throat and spoke loud enough for Beth to hear on his end. “I was with one of my Cows when it happened,” he said and clarified for Lisa-Marie, “one of my blood donors. She was in my lap and I was taking her blood when I felt the spirit leave my body.” He chuckled with a wry grin. “The spirit also left her and she screamed and thrashed... it would have been funny if it wasn’t so frightening.”

Lisa-Marie listened with wide eyes and Darcy grinned.

“My story is R-Rated,” the big man said with a laugh, his eyes to Jersey. He squeezed Lisa-Marie’s hand that she should skip it, because his closest friend was right. Darcy had been in bed with a favorite lay and poor Lisa-Marie didn’t need the topic of the ish-mikhan opened along with everything else.

“What about you, honey?” she asked in a whisper. Beth Rider remained mum and waited to hear what he would answer.

Jersey sucked his teeth and sighed. Being ish-mikhan, he was also enjoying a sexual escapade when the jolt occurred. He glazed over it for the women present. “I was home with two of my brothers. We felt it at the same time. It was ugly.”

“This is incredible,” Lisa-Marie whispered and returned her gaze to the phone. “Okay, then what?” she asked Beth Rider.

“Jersey and his brethren were searching for ways to regain their supernaturalness,” Beth continued. *“I heard Michael call it their birthright, but either way, they didn’t know Jesus, they wanted desperately to return to the life they knew. Can you understand that mindset?”* she asked Lisa-Marie who nodded after a pause. *“Through a very complicated set of circumstances you can ask Jersey about later, a person came onto the scene who promised to make these guys Rakum again using science and magic.”*

“Science and magic,” Lisa-Marie repeated and looked at Jersey. “You learned about this magic and wanted to be like you were before,” she said as a statement and Jersey nodded.

“Keep in mind, the Rakum weren’t being evil for evil’s sake—they were simply being Rakum. But this scientist was being evil—he served demons and sought to use their power to bring a measure of power back for them all. Jersey was duped into helping the scientist. This is what he’s nervous about telling you. This part is what you’ll need to lean on Jesus for the most. Are you ready?”

Jersey watched Lisa-Marie’s profile and with a determined nod, she waited for Beth to continue.

“The scientist enlisted Jersey to help bring his plan to a conclusion. Jersey had a single task—he was supposed to woo you away from your husband.”

Beth Rider paused and the Jersey held his breath, still watching his wife's profile. When she didn't move or overtly react for five long seconds, he sighed for her to look over.

"I felt something move inside of me when we first met. I hadn't ever been in love—Rakum don't feel love or sentimentalism—it's beaten out of us in our youths. I went to the hospital and watched you read to the children and I was entranced." Jersey flicked his eyes to his friends. "It was the first time a mortal mesmerized *me*. *Me*, who mesmerized them for centuries..." His voice trailed off and he hoped the wonder of it translated to his speechless wife.

"*He's right, Lisa-Marie,*" Beth piped in, backing him up. "*Another thing the Rakum were capable of was hypnotism, and at a glance, many of them could control weaker-minded humans, male and female. Look at their faces—even now...*"

Lisa-Marie's gaze went to Darcy and Jersey stifled a grin. His brother wasn't better looking, but he was definitely an equal.

"*In hindsight, what did you think of Jersey's appearance when you first saw him?*"

Lisa-Marie peeked to Jersey again and blushed. "I couldn't look at him more than a few moments." Her gaze softened and she squeezed his arm to her body. "You took my breath away. You still do..."

"*So in essence, your husband met you under false pretenses to work a nefarious scheme, but over time, he fell in love with you, subverted the scientist, and helped our friends win victory over evil.*"

"And now, he has repented to God for doing everything evil as a Rakum," Lucas added, his smooth voice reminding Jersey suddenly of the Elders of Old.

"I want you to know that even though I started out as an evil monster, I'm not anymore. I am a man, and I love you," Jersey told her in her ear, but the others heard as well. "I'm sorry for lying to you, but I'm thankful God worked it out that we could be together forever. And I promise, every day of your life, I will make you happy. I will be the best husband I can be and I will love you until the day I die."

“*Lisa-Marie?*” Beth said and his wife turned teary eyes to the phone. “*Keep my phone number and call me any time, day or night. I am your friend and confidant and will always be available.*”

With a few more small words, Beth Rider was gone and the room fell still. A minute later, Lucas got his feet and Darcy followed.

“Well? Ma’am?” Lucas said to Lisa-Marie with a half-grin. “What are you going to do? Accept Jersey or reject him?” Lucas sent Jersey a wink and added, “Tick-tock.”

Lisa-Marie looked to Jersey as if for an explanation.

“One of the details Beth spoke of,” he said softly. “The three of us held great affection for a now-deceased Elder—one of our leaders—named Kilmeade. He was notoriously impatient. *Tick-tock* is his...”

Lisa-Marie didn’t understand the depth of such a thing, but she nodded. “I forgive you, Noah, and I believe you love me. I believe Jesus moved your heart during the time you thought you were deceiving me. I believe Jesus was working it all—using you like a puppet to make this right here come to pass.” She set her hand to their unborn child.

Jersey’s head went to the side as he pondered her assertion.

“Our God works all things for the good of those who love Him. I love Him... He worked this out for me, and now for you, since you trust in Him, too. See?”

Jersey nodded as a slow grin reached his mouth. He had been played by the Creator.

Darcy huffed loudly. “Well, shit,” he said with a chuckle. “Now, ya’ll gotta help me find a wife. I can’t keep all this deliciousness to myself.” He saluted Lisa-Marie and gave Jersey a nod before turning for the door.

“Another detail—Rakum are rude,” Lucas said apologetically to Lisa-Marie. “Good luck changing this one into a gentleman.” He gestured to Jersey and followed Darcy to the foyer.

“Thank you,” Jersey called after them and they waved over their heads and left the house. He took a deep breath and

faced his bride. “That was rough.”

She suppressed a tiny grin. “So, in truth, Moshe didn’t go away to boarding school with his cousins?”

Jersey grinned.

“At the zoo—who was that boy?”

Jersey had hired an excellent child actor to portray his son during his scheming and he gave her his name.

Lisa-Marie put her hands on her round tummy. “Well, this one is real. Let’s call her Jersey.”

Jersey shook his head and laughed. “I love you.”



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1. Blood, Sex & Violence: A Vampire's Rebuttal (Jersey's Memoir)
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