

*I lived over three centuries as ish-mikhan and I loved everything about my life. Becoming mortal sucked, but I'm assimilating. The novel entitled **Conundrum** makes me sound really cool, so I'm sharing an excerpt by permission from the publisher.*

~ Jersey

TRIGGER WARNING: This excerpt may contain profanity, violence, and sex.

Rakum: an ancient godlike and bloodthirsty race descended from fallen angels.

Ish-Mikhan: a Rakum born with the propensity and skill to sexually service Elders. They are extremely rare and thus, coveted by all.

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Jersey Meets Javier

(found as a flashback event in chapter 7 of Conundrum)

Held at The Cave, the Rakum headquarters in Nevada (since destroyed), the first Assembly had been called. Jersey had arrived with Elder Brandon and his top soldiers. Once assigned a bunker, his three captains scurried off on errands while Brandon deposited Jersey and his lieutenant in his personal suite, instructing Jersey to stay put. Brandon assigned Igor the task of distracting Jersey from mischief, but before long, the lieutenant's card games and attempts to draw him into sparring fell flat. Jersey wanted to sneak out; he plied his chaperone with ish-mikhan chicanery in the hopes of swaying his military

allegiance, but like a good (and crafty) soldier, Igor took what was offered and refused to disobey Elder Brandon. Never one to fear coming under his master's reproof, Jersey struck out alone.

Within fifteen minutes, his nose led him to a half-open door where he picked up the aroma of human blood. The second hit to his nostrils was the scent of Elder Roman, an aloof master with whom he'd briefly traveled a century earlier. At Jersey's tap on the threshold, a young Rakum looked up from the sofa and grinned.

"You lost?" the guy asked with humor.

"Not anymore," Jersey replied and stepped inside. The Cow had been tapped hard and sat on the floor against the wall.

"Javier," the Rakum said with a thumb to his chest, his green-hazel eyes welcoming Jersey without prejudice. He didn't rise or straighten but flicked his chin to a closed door to his right. "Master Roman."

"Name's Jersey," Jersey replied, taking in the space. Out of respect, he sent a telepathic kazak to the kid's master. Roman returned a bored sigh and Jersey grinned at the young Rakum coming to his feet. He was Jersey's height, but with a sturdier build, black hair and a swarthy complexion. "I'm with Elder Brandon."

"Huh...I haven't met him," he said and crossed to the sleepy Cow to nudge him with the toe of his boot. "Get out," he said low and the young man on the dusty tile rolled to his knees. Javier looked back to Jersey. "Are you scheming some fun?"

"Always," Jersey replied, and the man grinned. He was young, evident by his demeanor. "When were you bred?"

"1877. You?"

Jersey chuckled. "You're a baby," he said and closed the distance between them. "I entered the world in 1699. That makes me your master."

Javier's smile went to the side. Then the youngster looked toward the bathroom door. "Elder Roman says you want to go exploring."

Jersey nodded and touched his middle. "I want to find a Cow."

"I know where they are," the youth said and took two steps for the exit. Then he stopped and put a hand to Jersey's arm. "My master says you're disobeying Elder Brandon."

Jersey's lips parted. Hyper-aware, his master only need *think* about him to divine his location. Before he contemplated further, Elder Roman sent a joint telepathic sentiment: "*Brandon is on the third level, try to avoid him,*" and closed out Javier to add, "*Jersey, keep your hands to yourself.*"

Jersey pursed his lips and with innocent eyes, listened as Javier discussed his adventures since arriving to Nevada.

He led them into the wide hallway and bumped Jersey's elbow. "Seems my master knows you."

Jersey offered a tiny huff; his memories of Roman allowed no favoring of grunts. But he *liked* this one. Why? What made him special?

As they walked across the main lobby, Jersey noted doors and passages, mapping the place in his mind. Because of his nature, he absently pictured Elder Roman from a hundred years ago and their brief but intense interaction returned vividly to his memory. In a thoughtful tone, he said, "I knew Roman before you were born. He likes you a lot."

Without turning, Javier asked, "So? Didn't he like you?"

Jersey chuckled and the sound caused the brother to slow and catch his eye. Jersey waved away his concern. "Look at me. Who doesn't love Jersey?" he laughed. "I only mean, I think he enjoys your company."

The kid grinned, his eye far off before he nodded once and resumed their trek. "I serve his will. The others are in our bunker."

Jersey humphed mostly to himself, already noting only Javier's aroma in the Elder's suite. The grunts slept six or eight to a room, and for his own reasons, Roman placed his other pups there and kept this one close. *So he's a really good valet*, Jersey mused, watching the back of Javier's head as he led the way. Very shortly, they reached an elevator.

"The Cows are two floors down. There are only forty and the Elders have first pick. The rest of us are supposed to fight over them." He raised his eyebrows in fun. Jersey liked the guy's personality and he said so as they entered the lift. Javier laughed. "That's good because I rub some of our brothers the wrong way."

"Don't rub me at all," Jersey said with a wink. "My master has a hands-off policy." Nothing crossed Javier's expression, as if he didn't comprehend Jersey's inference. It was to be expected, a Rakum so young and not in the business of servicing Elders, probably hadn't yet had intercourse.

They reached their floor without speaking and then the youth said as the doors opened, "Okay, what did I miss? Why the mysterious tone?"

They both stepped out of the elevator and Javier faced him with a small grin. "Hands off—you don't fight?"

Jersey chuckled; the youngster truly had no clue.

"It's not fighting," Javier said, his head to the side. "Tell me. I'm here to learn—a brother as old as you should know a lot of stuff I don't."

"Have you heard of the ish-mikhan?"

As before, nothing crossed Javier's face. What reasons could Elder Roman have for withholding the teaching?

"Oh..." the handsome youth said. His eyes flitted from Jersey's, to his upper body and even his lips before again meeting his gaze. "You're..." Javier's right hand lifted and he loosely gestured in Jersey's direction. "Ish-mikhan means repair man." His expression revealed much mental contemplation and he smiled with a wrinkle to his nose. "You fix what? Does

it have to do with sex?”

Jersey rolled in his bottom lip with a slow nod, letting him finish.

“And your master has a hands-off policy,” he added. “Oh! You fix Elder Brandon!” The youth grinned ear-to-ear. “Yes, I need to learn more about that. Do you fix just Elders?” he teased and Jersey matched his smile.

“*My job* is Elders. Anyone else, I fix for kicks.”

Javier laughed and covered his mouth. “You said you know my master.”

Jersey said nothing and resumed walking. “Let’s find those Cows.”

“*Shi-i-i-i-i-t!*” Javier said and jogged beside him. “No, I haven’t had a lesson on the ish-mikhan.” He allowed a few more chuckles and said softly, “I had sex once—I was twenty—it didn’t turn out too good.”

“Twenty?” Jersey asked truly curious as most Rakum did not develop a sex drive until the century mark. Javier grew silent and Jersey prodded. “What happened? Why so young?” If Javier’s experience at such an age had been negative or unplanned, that might explain Roman’s reticence to educate on the fix-it man’s role. Jersey waited another three steps and stopped Javier with a gentle hand to his shoulder. “Tell me what happened.”

“I’m not permitted,” he said low and shook his head. “Anyway, it’s not exciting. I got curious. I explored.” The youngster shrugged.

Jersey watched his eyes; he was withholding the details with great skill. Whatever he wasn’t supposed to share was locked down good. Jersey punched his shoulder and gave him a big smile. “Well, next time your dick is hard, call me. I’ll show you some good tricks.”

Javier’s face whipped to his, his eyes smiling. “I bet you’re the best.”

Jersey pointed in the direction they’d been walking. “Ask your master,” he said and jogged out of reach when Javier attempted to grasp his bicep. “Let’s get to those Cows.”

The youngster walked beside him and jabbed his arm. “Is ish-mikhan a skill or a commission?”

“It’s a skill,” Jersey answered, as always enjoying discussing himself. “I was identified in group lair before I was eight.” By year nine, all Rakum were assigned a life-track based upon their strengths. Javier’s grin went to the side and Jersey asked, “What was eight-year-old Javier good at?”

“Languages,” he chortled. “I pretty much sucked at everything else.”

“Hah,” Jersey laughed. The kid was charming; maybe they could be companions during Assembly. As he toyed with the idea and scenarios to make it happen, Javier briefly touched his shoulder.

“So, *tu ese n securite avec moi*,”¹ he said and pushed open a double door into a large holding room. The space contained a dozen mortals of various ages, some male, some female, and Jersey didn’t immediately seek one out.

¹ “You’re safe with me.” (French)

“I don’t want to be safe from you, brother,” Jersey said and again, the kid showed no recognition of any euphemism. Only sheer goodwill shined back, something pure and so youthful—Jersey was impressed. Javier possessed none of the attributes their Elders appreciated, which meant Roman’s leniency had given birth to a sort of “sex-less ish-mikhan” personality. Jersey grinned—sex could be taught. He caught the kid’s eye. “I’m going to ask Brandon if I can stay with you during this Assembly.”

Javier’s brow lifted. “You want to teach me to be a fix-it man?”

“No,” Jersey laughed and shook his head. “Your master also has a hands-off policy.”

“Hah,” Javier laughed, pondering what Jersey meant.

“For now, you will teach me how to be young again.”

“I don’t know how to teach,” the youngster said and faced away to scan the Cows. “What do I do?”

“Be yourself and I’ll learn. I’ve picked up quite a lot already.”

Javier pointed to a woman in a poodle skirt, thirty-ish with black hair pulled into a bun. “Okay, old man,” he said with a peek backward to see Jersey’s eye. “Race me to that Cow and whoever gets there first throws the first punch.”

“You any good?” Jersey asked watching Javier prepare to bolt off.

“Naw,” he said honestly and took off. “Roman said I have to pick fights with everyone I meet this week. You’re number one.”

“I’ve been hearing that my entire life,” Jersey snarked and followed, purposefully remaining behind. Javier wasn’t fast and he didn’t look particularly strong. When they reached the woman, she startled but then stood still to watch them launch into a fist fight. It didn’t take long to bring Javier to the ground and Jersey held him in place, chest-to-chest, one forearm pressed into his throat.

“Now what?” he said with a chuckle, the youth suitably conquered. “Does this mean I get that Cow?”

Breathing hard and laughing to himself, Javier nodded. “Yes! Yes!” and when Jersey rolled off and helped him up, Javier leaned over his knees, still chuckling. “And please report to Elder Roman how incredible I was.”

“I will,” Jersey said and yanked the Cow close. With his knife he made a good wound in her throat. She was quiet and he drank while watching Javier recover. The kid was funny, fun to look at, and fun to fight. Now, if only Elder Brandon would loan him out. Surely, he would; he never said no to his favorite.

Javier met his eye. “You’re a good guy. I hope you get to stay.”

Jersey scrunched his nose. Roman wouldn’t mind another run-in with Kilmeade’s old fix-it man. It was going to be a fun week.

You can read more about Jersey & my brethren in the following novels:

- ***Blood Sex & Violence, a Vampire's Rebuttal*** by Emil Jersey (Run Rabbit Books 2019) www.emiljersey.com
- ***Conundrum: The Lost Rabbit*** by Ellen C Maze (Little Roni Publishers 2019) www.ellencmaze.com
- ***The Vestige: Last Chapter*** by Ellen C Maze (Little Roni Publishers 2020)
- ***Malcontent*** by Emil Jersey (Run Rabbit Books 2020)

