

One Night Stand with Ex's Uncle - Chapter 7 Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Jack's POV

I stormed out of Rosa Villa, my blood still boiling. The steering wheel creaked under my white-knuckled grip as I navigated through evening traffic. The call from Calvin came just in time – I needed a drink.

The usual crowd at Murphy's Bar parted before me like the Red Sea. One look at my face and they knew to keep their distance. Calvin and Luke had already secured our regular booth, and mercifully, they'd cleared out the usual hangers-on.

"Rough day?" Calvin pushed a glass of whiskey toward me.

I downed it in one go. "You could say that."

Luke leaned forward, lowering his voice. "So... is it true? About Anna and that guy from Olympus Club?"

The glass slammed onto the table harder than I intended. "You want to repeat that?"

"Easy," Calvin raised his hands. "We're just concerned. The whole city's talking about it."

"The whole city needs to shut their damn mouths," I growled. "She's still my—" I caught myself, but not fast enough.

"Your what?" Luke's eyebrows shot up. "Your ex-wife? The one you cheated on?"

"It's not that simple," I muttered, signaling for another drink.

"Oh?" Calvin's voice dripped with sarcasm. "Seems pretty simple to me. You screwed up, she divorced you, and now you're mad because she's moving on."

"I'm not mad because—" I stopped, frustrated. "Look, even if we're divorced, she's still Anna. She shouldn't be... with someone like that."

"Someone like what?" Luke pressed. "Young? Attractive? Not married to someone else?"

I shot him a warning glare, but he just shrugged. "Face it, Jack. You're jealous."

"That's ridiculous," I scoffed, but the words tasted hollow. "I'm with Lucy now. I'm happy."

"Sure," Calvin nodded, not even trying to hide his skepticism. "That's why you're sitting here brooding about who Anna's sleeping with."

My phone's buzz interrupted the conversation. My mother's name flashed across the screen.

"Jack," her voice was pitched higher than usual – a sure sign of excitement. "Your Uncle Marcus is back from Europe! He just called your father. We're having a family dinner tomorrow at the Murphy Estate."

My stomach dropped. Marcus Murphy, my mother's youngest brother, the golden child of the Murphy family. Harvard Ph.D. in Economics *and* Business Administration by twenty-eight. By the time he was 30, he had expanded his family's holdings in Europe more than tenfold. Athletic, brilliant, and perpetually single – the standard against which all other Murphy men were measured and found wanting.

"Tomorrow?" I managed to keep my voice steady. "I'll be there."

"You'd better be," she warned. "And Jack? Try to... well, you know how your uncle is. Maybe don't mention the divorce. Or Lucy..."

"Thanks, Mom," I cut her off, already feeling a headache building. "I got it."

I hung up and stared into my drink. Every family gathering was the same – Marcus's latest achievements held up as an example of what a *real* Murphy could accomplish.

"Uncle Marcus is back?" Calvin asked, noting my expression.

"Yeah." I gestured for another drink. "Tomorrow's going to be hell."

"The famous Marcus Murphy," Luke whistled. "Didn't he set some kind of record at Harvard? Perfect GPA while captaining three varsity teams?"

"Four," I corrected automatically, the statistics burned into my brain from years of family dinners. "Economics, Business, perfect GMAT, runs marathons, speaks six languages..." I trailed off, remembering all the times I'd been compared to him. "And now he's back just in time to witness the mess I've made of everything."

"Any idea who bought that mansion at the auction?" Calvin asked, mercifully changing the subject.

"No," I welcomed the distraction. "Some mystery bidder in the VIP box. Two hundred million, just like that." I thought of Anna's face when she lost it, that flicker of genuine

pain she'd tried to hide. "It was her mother's family home. I should have remembered that."

"There's a lot of things you should have remembered about Anna," Luke muttered.

I didn't argue. He was right.

I ordered another drink. Tomorrow was going to be a very long day.

Sean's POV

My jaw throbbed where Jack's fist had connected, but the pain felt distant, overshadowed by the memory of Anna standing between us, her voice sharp with anger as she defended me. Me – the man who had just lied about sleeping with her.

"Let me take you to the hospital," she insisted, her brow furrowed with concern. "That needs to be looked at."

I shook my head, keeping my eyes fixed on the ground. I couldn't trust myself to look directly at her, not when she was being so kind, not when her presence made my heart race in ways I had no right to feel. "It's nothing serious, Ms. Shaw. Just bruising."

"Sean." The way she said my name made my chest tighten. "Don't be stubborn. We should at least have a doctor check—"

"Please," I managed, still avoiding her gaze. "I'm fine, really." *I don't deserve your concern. Not after what I just did.*

She sighed, and I could feel her studying me. If I looked up now, I'd see those eyes – intelligent, penetrating, beautiful. The eyes that had first caught my attention at Olympus Club, before I understood who she was, before I knew I'd be living in her villa, before I'd told that lie to her ex-husband.

I hadn't planned to say it. When Jack confronted me, something inside me snapped. Maybe it was the way he acted like he still owned her, or maybe it was just my own buried feelings surfacing in a moment of madness. Whatever the reason, I'd looked him in the eye and confirmed his suspicions, practically bragging about something that had never happened.

And then she'd defended me. Not because she knew I was telling the truth – she must have known I was lying – but because she felt responsible for me. The realization made me feel simultaneously elated and ashamed.

"At least let me leave you something for medical expenses," she said, pulling out her checkbook. I wanted to refuse, but I knew better than to argue.

"Thank you, Ms. Shaw." I forced myself to sound professional, detached. It was easier that way.

She scribbled out the check, then hesitated. "Sean... what you said to Jack..."

My heart stopped. This was it – she'd call me out on the lie, fire me, send me back to Olympus Club in disgrace.

But she just shook her head slightly and placed the check on the table. "Just... be careful around him. He can be volatile when he's angry."

Then she was gone, her heels clicking across the floor, leaving behind only the lingering scent of her perfume and a check with more zeros than I'd ever seen in my life.

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