

From Brokenness To Billionaire Bride

Hunter Beach and Elena Barron

Chapter 1

My father raised seven brilliant orphans to be my potential husbands. For years, I only had eyes for one of them, the cold and distant Damien Paul, believing his distance was a wall I just had to break through.

That belief shattered last night when I found him in the garden, kissing his foster sister, Eve-the fragile girl my family took in at his request, the one I had treated like my own sister.

But the true horror came when I overheard the other six Fellows talking in the library.

They weren't competing for me. They were working together, orchestrating "accidents" and mocking my "stupid, blind" devotion to keep me away from Damien.

Their loyalty wasn't to me, the heiress who held their futures in her hands. It was to Eve.

I wasn't a woman to be won. I was a foolish burden to be managed. The seven men I grew up with, the men who owed my family everything, were a cult, and she was their queen.

This morning, I walked into my father's study to make a decision that would burn their world to the ground. He smiled, asking if I'd finally won Damien over.

"No, Dad," I said, my voice firm. "I'm marrying Hunter Beach."

Chapter 1

My name is Elena Barron, and I am the sole heiress to a global logistics empire. For as long as I can remember, my world has revolved around seven young men my father took in. They are the Barron Fellows, underprivileged prodigies my father is grooming. One of them is meant to be my husband and his successor.

For years, my heart only beat for one of them: Damien Paul.

He was the most brilliant, the most talented, and the most distant. I spent my youth chasing after him, a shadow clinging to his light. I baked him cookies he never ate. I waited for him after his classes, but he always walked past me without a word. I told myself his coldness was just his nature, a wall he built because of a dark past.

I believed that if I just tried hard enough, I could break through it.

Last night, that belief shattered.

I couldn't sleep, so I went for a walk in the moonlit garden. That's when I saw them, hidden in the shadows of the old oak tree. Damien had Eve McClain, his foster sister, pressed against the trunk. He was kissing her like his life depended on it, a passion I had only ever dreamed of receiving.

Eve, the girl my family had also taken in at Damien's request. The girl everyone saw as sweet and fragile. The girl I had treated like my own sister.

That single moment destroyed everything.

This morning, I walked into my father's study and made a decision that would change the course of my life.

"Dad, I've decided who I'm going to marry."

My father, Mr. Barron, looked up from his papers, a warm smile on his face. "Have you finally won over Damien? I knew you could do it, sweetheart."

I shook my head, my voice firm. "No. I want to marry Hunter Beach."

My father's smile vanished. He put down his pen and looked at me, his brow furrowed with confusion. "Hunter? The tech mogul from Silicon Valley? Elena, he's not one of the Fellows. What is this about?"

"He loves me, Dad. Truly."

"The Fellows are brilliant. They've been raised alongside you. Javier is a master strategist, Kenneth has a fiery passion that could move mountains. Any one of them would be a worthy partner."

I felt a bitter taste in my mouth. "Worthy? Dad, you have no idea."

My mind flashed back to a week ago. I had been searching for my favorite book in the library and overheard voices from the adjoining study. It was the Fellows. All of them except Damien.

Javier Solis, the cunning one, was speaking in a low voice. "We need a new strategy. Elena is becoming more insistent about Damien. She's not a child anymore."

Kenneth Boyle, always hot-tempered, scoffed. "So what? We just keep ignoring her. She'll get the hint eventually."

"It's not that simple," Javier replied, his voice calm and sharp. "Mr. Barron wants a marriage. If it's not Damien, it will be one of us. And none of us want that. Our loyalty is to Eve."

A cold dread had filled me as I listened, hidden behind a bookshelf.

They talked about how they had orchestrated small "accidents" and "misunderstandings" to make me look foolish or clingy in front of Damien. They even mentioned the time Javier had "saved" me from a falling sculpture in the garden two years ago, an event that had made me see him as a hero.

"That was a good move, Javi," Kenneth had said with a laugh. "She looked at you like you were a god for a whole month."

Javier's voice was smug. "It was easy. A little nudge was all it took. The point was to make her feel a debt to someone other than Damien, to complicate things. To make her feel confused."

They laughed. They laughed at me. At my trust, my affection, my "stupid, blind" devotion.

They weren't competing for me. They were working together to avoid me. To keep their little group intact.

The only one they spoke of with any kindness was Hunter Beach, the outsider. They pitied him for wasting his time on me, a girl they saw as a burden.

"At least he's not one of us," Javier had concluded. "He's not part of the family."

Their ultimate goal, the reason for all the deception, was Eve. They saw her as one of their own, a fellow survivor from the harsh world they'd escaped. They were united in protecting her, in ensuring that she, not I, remained the center of their universe.

My hands clenched into fists at my side, my nails digging into my palms as the memory burned through me. I was trembling with a rage so pure it felt like ice in my veins.

My father had found them in orphanages and broken homes, seven brilliant boys with nowhere to go. He gave them the best education, a life of luxury, and a future. When he chose Damien, the boy had made one condition.

"You have to take my foster sister, Eve, too."

I remembered being so moved by his loyalty. I, a naive sixteen-year-old, had begged my father to agree. "Please, Dad! He loves his sister so much! We have to keep them together."

And so, Eve came to the Barron estate.

She was treated like a princess. The Fellows doted on her, buying her gifts, protecting her from any perceived slight, always taking her side. If I ever showed a hint of jealousy, they would look at me with disappointment. "Elena, she's had a hard life. Can't you be more compassionate?"

I would shrink back, filled with guilt, believing I was the petty one.

Now I knew. It was all a lie. They weren't brothers protecting a fragile sister. They were a cult, and she was their queen.

The memory of what I saw last night returned, sharp and painful. After I'd heard them in the study, I'd stumbled out into the garden, my mind reeling. That's when I heard the whispers from the oak tree. That's when I saw the kiss.

I saw every detail. Damien's hands tangled in her hair, Eve's arms wrapped tightly around his neck.

Then I heard her voice, a tearful whisper. "Damien, what if she makes you marry her? I don't want to lose you."

Damien's reply was cold, devoid of the passion I'd just witnessed. "She won't have my heart. Marrying her is just repaying a debt to her father. You're the only one who matters, Eve. You always have been."