



Fonseca's Fury (Billionaire Brothers)

By Abby Green



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Serena has changed. Finally in control of her life, she refuses to let Luca intimidate her. She'll deal with whatever her new boss throws at her—from a rain-forest trek to the social jungle of Rio! But she can't handle the passion that flares hotter than Luca's fury.

Especially when it threatens to consume them both!

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Abby Green spent her teens reading Mills & Boon romances. She then spent many years working in the Film and TV industry as an Assistant Director. One day while standing outside an actor's trailer in the rain, she thought: *there has to be more than this*. So she sent off a partial to Harlequin Mills & Boon. After many rewrites, they accepted her first book and an author was born. She lives in Dublin, Ireland and you can find out more here: www.abby-green.com

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Serena DePiero sat in the plush ante-room and looked at the name on the opposite wall, spelled out in matt chrome lettering, and reeled.

Roseca Industries and Philanthropic Foundation.

Renewed horror spread through her. It had only been on the plane to Rio de Janeiro, when she'd been reading the extra information on the charity given to her by her boss, that she'd become aware that it was part of a much bigger organisation. An organisation run and set up by Luca Fonseca. The name Roseca was apparently an amalgamation of his father and mother's surnames. And Serena wasn't operating on a pay grade level high enough to require her to be aware of this knowledge before now.

Except here she was, outside the CEO's office, waiting to be called in to see the one man on the planet who had every reason to hate her guts. Why hadn't he sacked her months ago, as soon as she'd started working for him? Surely he must have known? An insidious suspicion took root: perhaps he'd orchestrated this all along, to lull her into a false sense of security before letting her crash spectacularly to the ground.

That would be breathtakingly cruel, and yet this man owed her nothing but his disdain. She owed *him*. Serena knew that there was a good chance her career in fund-raising was about to be over before it had even taken off. And at that thought she felt a spurt of panic mixed with determination. Surely enough time had passed now? Surely, even if this *was* some elaborate revenge cooked up by Luca Fonseca as soon as he'd known she was working for him, she could try to convince him how sorry she was?

But before she could wrap her head around it any further a door opened to her right and a sleek dark-haired woman dressed in a grey suit emerged.

'Senhor Fonseca will see you now, Miss DePiero.'

Serena's hands clenched tightly around her handbag. She felt like blurting out, *But I don't want to see him!*

But she couldn't. As much as she couldn't just flee. The car that had met her at the airport to deliver her here still had her luggage in its boot.

As she stood up reluctantly a memory assailed her with such force it almost knocked her sideways: Luca Fonseca in a bloodstained shirt, with a black eye and a split lip. Dark stubble shadowing his swollen jaw. He'd been behind the bars of a jail cell, leaning against a wall, brooding and dangerous. But then he'd looked up and narrowed that intensely dark blue gaze on her, and an expression of icy loathing had come over his face.

He'd straightened and moved to the bars, wrapping his fingers around them almost as if he was imagining they were her neck. Serena had stopped dead at the battered sight of him. He'd spat out, *'Damn you, Serena DePiero, I wish I'd never laid eyes on you.'*

'Miss DePiero? Senhor Fonseca is waiting.'

The clipped and accented voice shattered Serena's memory and she forced her feet to move, taking her past the unsmiling woman and into the palatial office beyond.

She hated that her heart was thumping so hard when she heard the door snick softly shut behind her. For the first few seconds she saw no one, because the entire back wall of the office was a massive window and it framed the most amazingly panoramic view of a city Serena had ever seen.

The Atlantic glinted dark blue in the distance, and inland from that were the two most iconic shapes of Rio de Janeiro: the Sugar Loaf and Christ the Redeemer high on Corcovado. In between were countless other tall buildings, right up to the coast. To say that the view was breathtaking was an understatement.

And then suddenly it was eclipsed by the man who moved into her line of vision. Luca Fonseca. For a second past and present merged and Serena was back in that nightclub, seeing him for the first time.

He'd stood so tall and broad against the backdrop of that dark and opulent place. Still. She'd never seen anyone so still, yet with such a commanding presence. People had skirted around him. Men suspicious, envious. Women lustful.

In a dark suit and open-necked shirt he'd been dressed much the same as other men, but he'd stood out from them all by dint of that sheer preternatural stillness and the incredible forcefield of charismatic magnetism that had drawn her to him before she could stop herself.

Serena blinked. The dark and decadent club faded. She couldn't breathe. The room was instantly stifling. Luca Fonseca looked different. It took her sluggish brain a second to function enough for her to realise that he looked different because his hair was longer, slightly unruly. And he had a dark beard that hugged his jaw. It made him look even more intensely masculine.

He was wearing a light-coloured open-necked shirt tucked into dark trousers. For all the world the urbane, civilised businessman in his domain, and yet the vibe coming from him was anything but civilised.

He crossed his arms over that massive chest and then he spoke. 'What the hell do you think you're doing here, DePiero?'

Serena moved further into the vast office, even though it was in the opposite direction from where she wanted to go. She couldn't take her eyes off him even if she wanted to.

She forced herself to speak, to act as if seeing him again wasn't as shattering as it was. 'I'm here to start working in the fundraising department for the global communities charity.'

'Not any more, you're not,' Fonseca said tersely.

Serena flushed. 'I didn't know you were...involved until I was on my way over here.'

Fonseca made a small sound like a snort. 'An unlikely tale.'

'It's true,' Serena blurted out. 'I had no idea the charity was linked to the Roseca Foundation. Believe me, if I'd had any idea I wouldn't have agreed to come here.'

Luca Fonseca moved around the table and Serena's eyes widened. For a big man, he moved with innate grace, and that incredible quality of self-containment oozed from every pore. It was intensely captivating.

He admitted with clear irritation, 'I wasn't aware that you were working in the Athens office. I don't micromanage my smaller charities abroad because I hire the best staff to do that for me—although I'm reconsidering my policy after this. If I'd known they'd hired you, of all people, you would have been let go long before now.'

His mouth twisted with recrimination.

'But I have to admit that I was intrigued enough to have you brought here instead of just leaving you at the airport until we could put you on a return flight.'

So he hadn't even known she was working for him. Serena's hands curled into fists at her sides. His dismissive arrogance set her nerves even more on edge.

He glanced at a big platinum watch on his wrist. 'I have a spare fifteen minutes before you are to be delivered back to the airport.'

Like an unwanted package. He was firing her.

He hitched a hip onto the corner of his desk, for all the world as if they were having a normal conversation amidst the waves of tension. 'Well, DePiero? What the hell is Europe's most debauched ex-socialite doing working for minimum wage in a small charity office in Athens?'

Only hours ago Serena had been buoyant at the thought of her new job. A chance to prove to her somewhat over-protective family that she was going to be fine. She'd been ecstatic at the thought of her independence. And now this man was going to ensure that everything she'd fought so hard for was for naught.

For years she had been the *enfant terrible* of the Italian party scene, frequently photographed, with reams of newsprint devoted to her numerous exploits which had been invariably blown out of proportion. Nevertheless, Serena knew well that there was enough truth behind the headlines to make her feel that ever-present prick of shame.

'Look,' she said, hating the way her voice had got husky with repressed emotion and shock at facing this blast from her past, 'I know you must hate me.'

Luca Fonseca smiled. But his expression was hard. 'Hate? Don't flatter yourself, DePiero, *hate* is a very inadequate description of my feelings where you are concerned.'

Another poisonous memory assailed her: a battered Luca, handcuffed by Italian police, being dragged bodily to an already loaded-up van, snarling, '*You set me up, you bitch!*' at Serena, who had been moments away from being handed into a police car herself, albeit minus the handcuffs.

They'd insisted on everyone being hauled in to the police station. He'd tried to jerk free of the burly police officers and that had earned him a thump to his belly, making him double over. Serena had been stupefied. Transfixed with shock.

He'd rasped out painfully, just before disappearing into the police van, 'She planted the drugs on *me* to save herself.'

Serena tried to force the memories out of her head. 'Mr Fonseca, I didn't plant those drugs in your pockets... I don't know who did, but it wasn't me. I tried to contact you afterwards...but you'd left Italy.'

He made a sound of disgust. 'Afterwards? You mean after you'd returned from your shopping spree in Paris? I saw the pictures. Avoiding being prosecuted for possession of drugs and continuing your hedonistic existence was all in a week's work for you, wasn't it?'

Serena couldn't avoid the truth; no matter how innocent she was, this man *had* suffered because of their brief association. The lurid headlines were still clear in her mind: *DePiero's newest love interest? Brazilian billionaire Fonseca caught with drugs after raid on Florence's most exclusive nightclub, Den of Eden.*

But before Serena could defend herself Luca was standing up and walking closer, making her acutely aware of his height and powerful frame. Her mouth dried.

When he was close enough that she could make out the dark chest hair curling near the open V of his shirt, he sent an icy look from her face to her feet, and then said derisively, 'A far cry from that lame excuse for a dress.'

Serena could feel heat rising at the reminder of how she'd been dressed that night. How she'd dressed most nights. She tried again, even though it was apparent that her attempt to defend herself had fallen on deaf ears. 'I really didn't have anything to do with those drugs. I promise. It was all a huge misunderstanding.'

He looked at her for a long moment, clearly incredulous, before tipping his head back and laughing so abruptly that Serena flinched.

When his eyes met hers again they still sparkled with cold mirth, and that sensual mouth was curved in an equally cold smile.

'I have to hand it to you—you've got some balls to come in here and protest your innocence after all this time.'

Serena's nails scored her palms, but she didn't notice. 'It's true. I know what you must think...'

She stopped, and had to push down the insidious reminder that it was what *everyone* had thought. Erroneously.

'I didn't do those kinds of drugs.'

Any hint of mirth, cold or otherwise, vanished from Luca Fonseca's visage. 'Enough with protesting your innocence. You had Class A drugs in that pretty purse and you conveniently slipped them into my pocket as soon as it became apparent that the club was being raided.'

Feeling sick now, Serena said, 'It must have been someone else in the crush and panic.'

Fonseca moved even closer to Serena then, and she gulped and looked up. She felt hot, clammy.

His voice was low, seductive. 'Do I need to remind you of how close we were that night, Serena? How easy it must have been for you to divest yourself of incriminating evidence?'

Serena could recall all too clearly that his arms had been like steel bands around her, with hers twined around his neck. Her mouth had been sensitive and swollen, her breathing rapid. Someone had rushed over to them on the dance floor—some acquaintance of Serena's who had hissed, '*There's a raid.*'

And Luca Fonseca thought... He thought that during those few seconds before chaos had struck she'd had the presence of mind to somehow slip drugs onto his person?

He said now, 'I'm sure it was a move you'd perfected over the years, which was why I felt nothing.'

He stepped back and Serena could take a breath again. But then he walked around her, and her skin prickled. She was acutely aware of his regard and wanted to adjust her suit, which felt constrictive.

She closed her eyes and then opened them again, turning around to face him. 'Mr Fonseca, I'm just looking for a chance—'

He held up his hand and Serena stopped. His expression was worse than cold now: it was completely indecipherable.

He clicked his fingers, as if something just occurred to him, and his lip curled. 'Of *course*—it's your family, isn't it? They've clipped your wings. Andreas Xena-kis and Rocco De Marco would never tolerate a return to your debauched ways, and you're still *persona non grata* in the social circles who feted you before. You and your sister certainly landed on your feet, in spite of your father's fall from grace.'

Disgust was etched on his hard features.

'Lorenzo DePiero will never be able to show his face again after the things he did.'

Serena felt nauseous. She of all people didn't need to be reminded of her father's corruption and many crimes.

But Luca wasn't finished. 'I think you're doing this under some sort of sufferance, to prove to your newfound family that you've changed... In return for what? An allowance? A palatial home back in Italy, your old stomping ground? Or perhaps you'll stay in Athens, where the stench of your tarnished reputation is a little less...pungent? After all, it's where you'll have the protection of your younger sister who, if I recall correctly, was the one who regularly cleaned up your messes.'

Fire raced up Serena's spine at hearing him mention her family—and especially her sister. A sense of protectiveness overwhelmed her. They were everything to her and she would never, ever let them down. They had saved her. Something this cold, judgmental man would never understand.

Serena was jet-lagged, gritty-eyed, and in shock at seeing this man again, and it was evident in her voice now, as she lashed back heatedly, 'My family have nothing to do with this. And nothing to do with *you.*'

Luca Fonseca looked at Serena incredulously. 'I'm sure your family have everything to do with this. Did you drop a tantalising promise of generous donations from them in return for a move up the career ladder?'

Serena flushed and got out a strangled-sounding, 'No, of course not.'

But the way she avoided his eyes told Luca otherwise. She wouldn't have had to drop anything but the most subtle of hints. The patronage of either her half-brother, Rocco De Marco, or her brother-in-law, Andreas Xenakis, could secure a charity's fortunes for years to come. And, as wealthy as he was in his own right, the foundation would always need to raise money. Disgusted that his own staff might have been so easily manipulated, and suddenly aware of how heated his blood was, Luca stepped back.

He was grim. 'I am not going to be a convenient conduit through which you try to fool everyone into thinking you've changed.'

Serena just looked at him, and he saw her long, graceful throat work, as if she couldn't quite get out what she wanted to say. He felt no pity for her.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Warner:

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