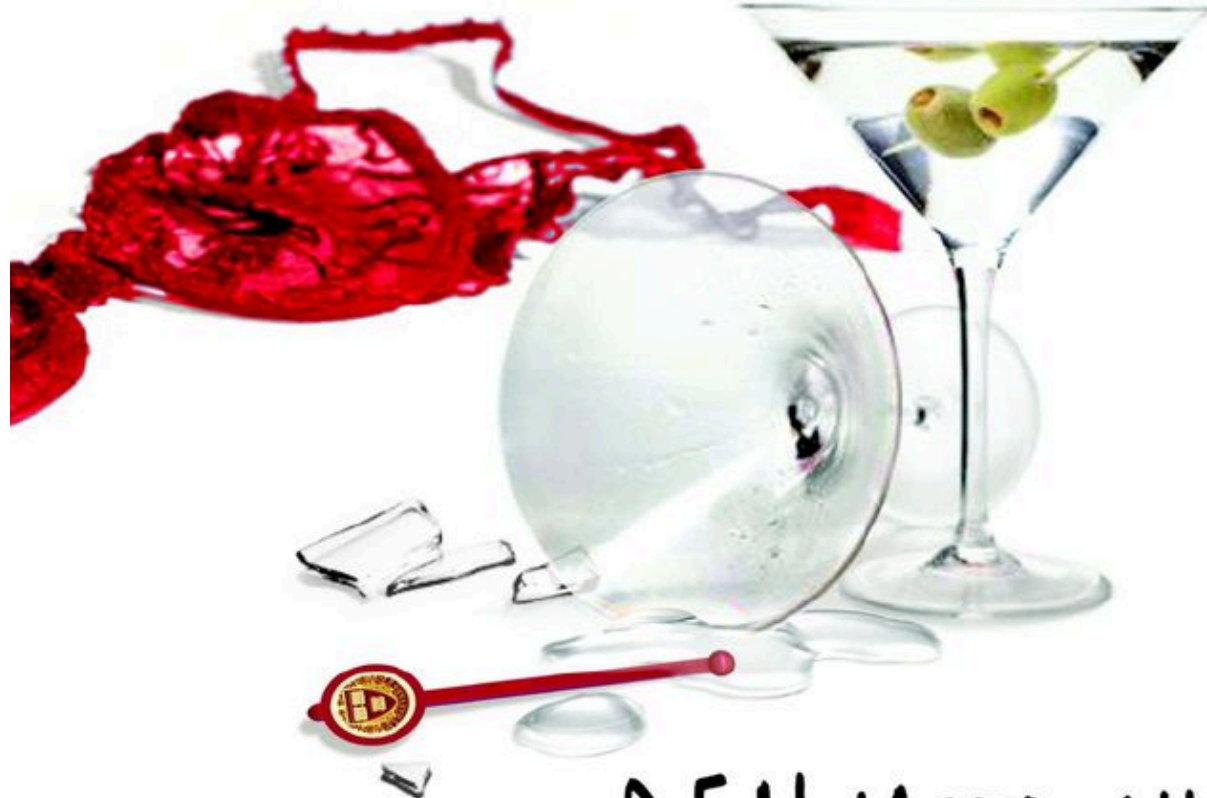


THE ACCIDENTAL BILLIONAIRES

THE FOUNDING OF
FACEBOOK

A TALE OF SEX,
MONEY, GENIUS
AND BETRAYAL



BEN MEZRICH

author of BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE

The Accidental Billionaires

The Founding of Facebook
A Tale of Sex, Money, Genius and Betrayal

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DOUBLEDAY

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FIRST EDITION

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TO TONYA,
THIS GEEK'S DREAM GIRL ...



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The *Accidental Billionaires* is a dramatic, narrative account based on dozens of interviews, hundreds of sources, and thousands of pages of documents, including records from several court proceedings.

There are a number of different—and often contentious—opinions about some of the events that took place. Trying to paint a scene from the memories of dozens of sources—some direct witnesses, some indirect—can often lead to discrepancies. I re-created the scenes in the book based on the information I uncovered from documents and interviews, and my best judgment as to what version most closely fits the documentary record. Other scenes are written in a way that describes individual perceptions without endorsing them.

I have tried to keep the chronology as close to exact as possible. In some instances, details of settings and descriptions have been changed or imagined, and identifying details of certain people altered to protect their privacy. Other than the handful of public figures who populate this story, names and personal descriptions have been altered.

I do employ the technique of re-created dialogue. I have based this dialogue on the recollections of participants of the substance of conversations. Some of the conversations recounted in this book took place over long periods of time, in multiple locations, and thus some conversations and scenes were re-created and compressed. Rather than spread these conversations out, I sometimes set these scenes in likely settings.

I address sources more fully in the acknowledgments, but it is appropriate here to thank in particular Will McMullen for introducing me to Eduardo Saverin, without whom this story could not have been written. Mark Zuckerberg, as is his perfect right, declined to speak with me for this book despite numerous requests.

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CHAPTER 1 | OCTOBER 2003

It was probably the third cocktail that did the trick. It was hard for Eduardo to tell for sure, because the three drinks had come in such rapid succession—the empty plastic cups were now stacked accordion style on the windowsill behind him—that he hadn't been able to gauge for certain when the change had occurred. But there was no denying it now, the evidence was all over him. The pleasantly warm flush to his normally sallow cheeks; the relaxed, almost rubbery way he leaned against the window—a stark contrast to his usual calcified, if slightly hunched posture; and most important of all, the easy smile on his face, something he'd practiced unsuccessfully in the mirror for two hours before he'd left his dorm room that evening. No doubt at all, the alcohol had taken effect, and Eduardo wasn't scared anymore. At the very least, he was no longer overwhelmed with the intense urge *to get the fuck out of there*.

To be sure, the room in front of him was intimidating: the immense crystal chandelier hanging from the arched, cathedral ceiling; the thick red velvet carpeting that seemed to bleed right out of the regal mahogany walls; the meandering, bifurcated staircase that snaked up toward the storied, ultrasecret, catacombed upper floors. Even the windowpanes behind Eduardo's head seemed treacherous, lit from behind by the flickering anger of a bonfire consuming most of the narrow courtyard outside, twists of flame licking at the ancient, pockmarked glass.

This was a terrifying place, especially for a kid like Eduardo. He hadn't grown up poor—he'd spent most of his childhood being shuttled between upper-middle-class communities in Brazil and Miami before matriculating at Harvard—but he was a complete stranger to the sort of old-world opulence this room represented. Even through the booze, Eduardo could feel the insecurities rumbling deep down in the pit of his stomach. He felt like a freshman all over again, stepping into Harvard Yard for the first time, wondering what the hell he was doing there, wondering how he could possibly belong in a place like that. *How he could possibly belong in a place like this.*

He shifted against the sill, scanning the crowd of young men that filled most of the cavernous room. A mob, really, bunched together around the pair of makeshift bars that had been set up specifically for the event. The bars themselves were fairly shoddy—wooden tables that were little more than slabs,

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starkly out of character in such an austere setting—but nobody noticed, because the bars were staffed by the only girls in the room; matching, bust-heavy blondes in low-cut black tops, brought in from one of the local all-female colleges to cater to the mob of young men.

The mob, in many ways, was even more frightening than the building itself. Eduardo couldn't tell for sure, but he guessed there had to be about two hundred of them—all male, all dressed in similar dark blazers and equally dark slacks. Sophomores, mostly; a mix of races, but there was something very similar about all the faces—the smiles that seemed so much easier than Eduardo's, the confidence in those two hundred pairs of eyes—these kids weren't used to having to prove themselves. *They belonged.* For most of them, this party—this place—was just a formality.

Eduardo took a deep breath, wincing slightly at the bitter tinge to the air. The ash from the bonfire outside was making its way through the windowpanes, but he didn't move away from his perch against the sill, not yet. He wasn't ready yet.

Instead, he let his attention settle on the group of blazers closest to him—four kids of medium build. He didn't recognize any of them from his classes; two of the kids were blond and preppy-looking, like they'd just stepped off a train from Connecticut. The third was Asian, and seemed a little older, but it was hard to tell for sure. The fourth, however—African American and very polished-looking, from his grin to his perfectly coiffed hair—was definitely a senior.

Eduardo felt his back stiffen, and he glanced toward the black kid's tie. The color of the material was all the verification Eduardo needed. The kid was a senior, and it was time for Eduardo to make his move.

Eduardo straightened his shoulders and pushed off of the sill. He nodded at the two Connecticut kids and the Asian, but his attention remained focused on the older kid—and his solid black, uniquely decorated tie.

"Eduardo Saverin." Eduardo introduced himself, vigorously shaking the kid's hand. "Great to meet you."

The kid responded with his own name, Darron something, which Eduardo filed away in the back of his memory. The kid's name didn't really matter; the tie

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alone told him everything he needed to know. The purpose of this entire evening lay in the little white birds that speckled the solid black material. The tie designated him as a member of the Phoenix-S K; he was one of twenty or so hosts of the evening's affair, who were scattered among the two hundred sophomore men.

"Saverin. You're the one with the hedge fund, right?"

Eduardo blushed, but inside he was thrilled that the Phoenix member recognized his name. It was a bit of an exaggeration—he didn't have a hedge fund, he'd simply made some money investing with his brother during his sophomore summer—but he wasn't going to correct the mistake. If the Phoenix members were talking about him, if somehow they were impressed by what they'd heard—well, maybe he had a chance.

It was a heady thought, and Eduardo's heart started to beat a little harder as he tried to spread just the right amount of bullshit to keep the senior interested. More than any test he'd taken freshman or sophomore year, this moment was going to define his future. Eduardo knew what it would mean to gain entrance to the Phoenix—for his social status during his last two years of college, and for his future, whatever future he chose to chase.

Like the secret societies at Yale that had gotten so much press over the years, the Final Clubs were the barely kept secret soul of campus life at Harvard; housed in centuries-old mansions spread out across Cambridge, the eight all-male clubs had nurtured generations of world leaders, financial giants, and power brokers. Almost as important, membership in one of the eight clubs granted an instant social identity; each of the clubs had a different personality, from the ultra-exclusive Porcellian, the oldest club on campus, whose members had names like Roosevelt and Rockefeller, to the prepped-out Fly Club, which had spawned two presidents and a handful of billionaires, each of the clubs had its own distinct, and instantly defining, power. The Phoenix, for its part, wasn't the most prestigious of the clubs, but in many ways it was the social king of the hill; the austere building at 323 Mt. Auburn Street was the destination of choice on Friday and Saturday nights, and if you were a member of the Phoenix, not only were you a part of a century-old network, you also got to spend your weekends at the best parties on campus, surrounded by the hottest girls culled from schools all over the 02138 zip code.

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