



The Man of the House

(Steamy Shorts #19)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: The lines of love and loyalty blur in this short, steamy tale of forbidden, off-limits desire.

Caught in a whirlwind of passion and longing, will they risk it all for a chance at love?

Evan:

I have been in love with Elena for months. Before I met her. Before I found out what she was like. Before I realized how the attraction shifted my brain. The problem is that she is off-limits.

Two main reasons: I'm almost two decades older, and she is my wife's daughter.

I've learned to accept the fact that she will only ever be mine in my dreams.

I can never touch her, hold her, or kiss her.

Never.

But then she throws a wrench in my plan to stay away. A one-sided love is one thing, but when she reveals she feels the same way, everything changes.

Elena is mine. "Sweet and musky and mine." So, mine!

F*ck everyone else and damn the consequences.

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Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

1

EVAN

I want her. So damn much and with every fiber of my being.

That shouldn't be the first thought to come to mind whenever I see her, but lust clouds whatever sense is left in me.

And yet, I stand here, behind this invisible line I can never cross. Loving her from a distance feels like drowning in silence. I ache to speak, to let her know what I feel, but knowing the words would shatter everything. So I keep it all locked inside, watching, waiting ... but with the full understanding that some dreams are meant to stay just that—dreams. Nothing more.

After all, I fell in love with Elena, my stepdaughter, way before I met her. For the fifteen months I was married to her mother, Gina always talked about Elena. What she was like as a kid, as a teen, as a young adult. What she liked and hated. What she did when she thought Gina wasn't looking.

Gina told me everything about her, and it felt like I already knew who she was. Maybe not all, but I got a good sense of what Elena was as a person, and it was hard not to fall for someone like that, even if she made it clear she didn't approve of me, what with how she acted around me at her mother's funeral a year ago.

“Hi, Evan. It's been a while. I know I was rude when we met, but I think we just started off on the wrong foot. How about I introduce myself again, and we can wipe

the slate clean?" Elena clears her throat. "Hi. I'm Elena, nice to meet you."

I stare at her like an idiot, even though my brain screams at me that the polite and decent way to respond is by accepting the handshake. Unfortunately, there's nothing polite or decent about the direction of my thoughts.

My whole world tilts on its axis. It's like getting unmoored and trying to navigate the waters in the middle of the fucking Pacific Ocean.

I have never felt so lost or unsure of the ground I stand on.

Mustering whatever strength I can find, I wrap my hand around hers, and it takes everything in me to suppress the shudder threatening to overcome me. Every limb, every nerve ending, every inch of my body comes alive for the first time.

I can feel the pounding in my temples, the rush of warmth down south, the front of my pants getting increasingly tighter, more uncomfortable, and more obvious to anyone daring to look.

Guilt and desire dance around each other as raw need sweeps over my head.

I shouldn't feel something this intense, especially to my stepdaughter. Sure, she's a grown woman, and her mother and I never really consummated our marriage because it was anything but romantic.

Still...

It's not a good look.

"I'm sorry. Did I say something wrong? You look angry." Elena tugs her hand back, her eyes narrowing, blue with threads of golden caramel radiating from the pupils.

She runs her fingers through her strawberry blonde hair and looks around the house—the place where she grew up and where I now live. It must be weird for her.

“No. Sorry. I...” I’ve lost the ability to speak and think. My thoughts are all over the place, and I can’t seem to get a grip on myself and these rioting emotions inside me.

“I get it. It’s not the best of days. This day will always remind you of what you’ve lost.” She shoves both hands in her back pockets, unable to meet my eyes, a slight frown creasing her forehead. It’s the most she’s ever said to me. A year ago, she only ever gave me a nod and a grunt.

“You lost her, too.”

“I’ll help you pack her things, okay? I know I told you I’d come back and get around to it, but I’ve been busy.” Elena bites her bottom lip, and it takes everything in me not to reach out and graze it with my thumb. “I’ll leave at the end of the week and be out of your hair, I promise.”

Thinking of her leaving makes my stomach drop. I don’t want her to go. No, fuck it. I don’t even want her out of my sight. I want her with me. I want to know her inside and out. I want to ... bury myself deep within her walls.

Shit.

I open my mouth to tell her she can relax, and I’ll take care of Gina’s things, but Elena spins on her heels, walking with her suitcase to her old bedroom.

I’m coming apart at the seams. I just know it. The last time I saw her, I had everything under control because there were things I needed to attend to. Plus, she stayed at a hotel and kept her distance from me.

This time, it's different. Knowing she's sleeping a few doors from mine makes it harder to keep my desires under control. I have wanted this woman for as long as I can remember. Now she'll be staying under the same roof as me for a week. A week. I can barely rein in my feelings, and I've only been in her presence for less than an hour.

Imagine what can happen in seven fucking days.

I am so sorry, Gina. I didn't want this. I never thought I would be unable to control myself around her. I underestimated her presence and how much magnetic draw she'd have on me.

Fuck me. Where the hell will I go from here?

* * *

The crackle of the fireplace fills the massive living room, the orange and gold embers casting flickering shadows on the vintage wallpaper. It's beautiful, cozy, and relaxing, and watching it never gets old. It's my favorite place in this house, and I often spend hours just staring at it, quieting the chaos in my head.

I cradle the steaming mug of tea between my hands, welcoming the warmth bleeding into my fingers, my three-year-old tabby—a stray I picked up at the hospital and whom I named Clawdia—sprawled by my feet. She likes the fireplace too. And despite the fact that cats are mostly known for being cold, unsympathetic creatures, Clawdia seems to pick up on my moods. She always stays with me when my emotions are either down or chaotic.

Everything that happened today was a blur, except the moment with Elena.

I go over the short conversation, the skin contact, and I close my eyes, letting the

feelings wash over me. I knew I was in love with her before today—hell, before we even met a year ago—but I didn't realize how strong the emotion was until I almost pulled her to me. The need was overwhelming. I thought, for sure, I would move on and get over her, but it only got stronger. It's as if no time has passed since the last time I saw her. It could've been yesterday for all I know.

People like to say, "Out of sight, out of mind." Lies, lies, big, fat lies.

I open my eyes and exhale deeply, the thin ribbons of steam curling before me. The house is fairly quiet, and I assume Elena is already asleep upstairs. The only thing I can hear is the occasional pop of the log splitting in the hearth.

"Jesus," I mumble, mentally punching myself for how I behaved today. Odd. I'm forty-two years old. Too old for these feelings. Too old for acting like a lovesick schoolboy meeting his longtime crush for the first time.

A faint shift in the air prickles the back of my neck, and I feel her before I even see her. I cast a look over my shoulder and watch as she steps closer and sits on the recliner beside me. I note, with amusement, that there's no hesitation.

That's a relief. The last thing I want is for her to feel unsafe around me.

"Are you up for company or do you prefer to be alone?" she asks as she tucks her legs under her and leans back, her eyes on the fireplace.

"I'd prefer you here." Not the most appropriate words, but I can't do anything about it now. My mouth works faster than my brain, I guess. "You want tea?"

Elena scrunches her face. "No, thanks. I hate tea."

I chuckle without thinking. "I know. You prefer a double-shot espresso."

She swings her head to me, one eyebrow raised. “How do you know that?”

“Your mom. She always told me things about you.”

Elena buries her face in her hands and groans. “God, I hope she didn’t say anything embarrassing.”

I don’t reply, just sip my tea, thoroughly enjoying this weird turn of events. She turns to me, peeking through her fingers. “Please tell me she didn’t say anything embarrassing.”

I nod, a smile tugging on my mouth.

“Evan...”

I jolt at the sound of my name on her lips, almost dropping my cup to the floor. Yes, she has that kind of effect on me. A thousand people can call my name, and I can pick out her voice in three seconds flat.

“Evan, what did she tell you?”

“Nothing.”

Elena smirks. “You’re an awful liar.”

My gaze briefly drops to my cup, trying but failing to resist the urge to smile. “Nothing much. She told me when you wanted to come as a prune at a school event.”

“No!” Her face is a mask of horror, and I burst out laughing. “But that’s it, right? She didn’t say anything else? Right? Please tell me she didn’t.”

“No. Well, maybe just when you misheard your teacher saying you should wear your favorite food instead of bringing a picture.”

“Oh God. My classmates all stared at me when I showed up looking like a hot dog sandwich.”

Our gazes meet, and we both laugh. A much-needed relief from the heavy atmosphere earlier. Suddenly, visions flood my mind, scenes like this playing out in sharp detail. Scenes of me and her sharing moments of our lives, drinking our favorite drinks, chatting about our day, and just being with each other.

I want those things so badly that I feel a pain in my chest. A sharp stab of knowledge that I will never have any of those. I can only dream.

“I’m sorry I didn’t come to your wedding,” she says, leaning back against the seat.

“It wasn’t much of a wedding, really. We signed papers, and that was it.” The words are lodged in my throat, and I clear it. “Listen, Elena, you deserve to know about us. Me and your mom, I mean.”

Elena shakes her head. “No, it’s fine, Evan. I don’t need to know every detail. We had our differences, Mom and I, but I genuinely only wanted what was best for her.”

“Our marriage was purely transactional. For me, I could continue to live and work in this country and not get deported. For her, she would have a caregiver, who could also help her make medical decisions and sign important papers as needed.”

Elena wrings her fingers before she looks back at me. “I know a bit of that. Mom told me.” She hesitates for a beat and sighs. “This is going to be an awkward question, and you don’t have to answer—”

“If you’re asking if we’re romantic in any way, the answer is no. We deeply cared about each other, but that was it. Your mom put it best when she said we were each other’s best friend for a time.”

“You never?”

“Had sex? No. We didn’t have that kind of relationship. We were best friends living under one roof. She didn’t even take my name. I was her husband only on paper.”

“I don’t mean this in a bad way, Evan, but if she wanted a caregiver, she didn’t have to marry one.”

“I know, but she didn’t want strangers staying with her. She already knew me, and she trusted me. She trusted me enough to make decisions for her when she couldn’t anymore. She believed I would always do the right thing for her.”

“That makes sense.”

I set the cup down and steeple my fingers in front of my stomach, briefly debating how much I should tell her, eventually deciding to just drop everything now. Besides, what do I have to lose? “She also wanted someone to look after you.”

Elena blows a raspberry. “I’m twenty-three. I don’t need looking after. I’ve been doing fine on my own.”

“That’s what I told her.”

Her gaze lingers on me, a little too long to be casual. The tilt to her head is subtle, almost imperceptible, but it speaks volumes—curiosity, disbelief, and wonder coiled into one expression. Her lips part as though she wants to say something, but no words come.

The silence is thick and charged, and it sucks the air in the room. Even Clawdia shifts by my feet.

“Elena, what is it?”

She gets a faraway look in her eyes. “You’re not who I expected you to be.”

“What did you expect?”

“A smug, arrogant guy who’s happy and relieved she died, who probably has a new, younger woman with him here, and who doesn’t shy away from showing everyone how good his life is now that his wife is gone.”

“Was that why you avoided me like the plague at her funeral?”

“Yes. I hated you back then, and I was a hundred percent sure it wouldn’t take you more than two days to spend Mom’s money and get a new girl.”

It stings that she used to see me like that, but I can’t blame her. Unfortunately, she’s not the only one who thought of me like that, but she’s the only one whose opinion matters to me. “I’m not rich, but I’m not that callous either. I know she added me to her will, but I won’t take any, including this house. It’s not right. You deserve all of it. I don’t.”

“You’re leaving the house?”

I shrug. “Yes, after you. This place ... you can do with it as you please. It’s yours. I only held on because I’ve been waiting for you to decide what to do with her things.”

Elena leans forward, and I try to ignore the cleavage peeking from her button-down pajama top. Not now, Evan. Jesus. “But where will you go?”

“I have a job, Elena. I can rent an apartment. This house doesn’t and will never belong to me.” She frowns and stares hard at me. “You okay?”

“Yeah, why?”

“You’re squinting.”

Elena tucks a strand of blonde hair behind her ear and blushes. “Oh, yeah. Sorry. I can’t see without my glasses, so I usually do that when I’m talking seriously with someone.” She stands abruptly. “I’m going back to my room. Let me bring your cup.”

She steps toward me and reaches for the cup on my side table, but it’s a second too late when I realize she can’t see the tabby stretched out like an orange tripwire.

Her foot catches on the cat, sending her teetering backward, her arms pinwheeling, her mouth open in a yelp. I shoot forward, my hands finding her waist just as she falls, her weight pressing on me as I pull her upright and to me.

My face is on her soft tits, and she immediately pulls back and slants her body away from me.

“Shit, why did the rug move?”

I shake my head and laugh softly. “Sorry. That’s Clawdia, my tabby cat. I rescued her years ago.”

Her forehead furrows as she stares at the furry figure by her feet. “It’s a cat? Claudia doesn’t sound like a cat’s name.”

“Oh, it’s Clawdia. Claw as in C-L-A-W.”

Elena claps a hand to her mouth, her shoulders shaking. “Oh. Oh my God. That’s awful. Was it Mom’s idea? She was never good at naming pets.”

“It was mine.”

Elena winces, her ears turning red. “Shit. Sorry. I’d better get to bed. Good night, Evan.”

I give her a nod, trying to ignore the weird sadness enveloping me that she’s so near yet so far. “Good night, Elena.”

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

2

ELENA

What the hell happened downstairs? Was I ... flirting with him? With Evan, my stepdad? My God. What's wrong with me? He was Mom's husband!

I rest a palm on my chest, trying to remember all the relaxing techniques I learned in my yoga classes.

Why is my heart still racing? It hasn't slowed down since I first came face-to-face with him today. The same thing happened last year, too. I promised myself I would unleash my fury on him and give him a piece of my mind about how he took advantage of my mother, who was fifteen years older than he was. But then, I saw him and thought, "How is this guy so unbelievably and incredibly hot? Is he for real?"

I've never felt like this before, which is why I never had a boyfriend. As it turns out, I just want someone I cannot have. Someone I shouldn't even be thinking about like this. A forbidden fruit, apparently.

God, I swear if lightning strikes me right now, I'm going to embrace it. I deserve it because this is crazy. Thinking about Evan like that is crazy.

Is this what they say about being drawn to someone like a moth to flame? It will serve me right. Only a matter of time before I burn.

* * *

Evan and I spent the next four days clearing the garage, basement, attic, and bedrooms. He wasn't lying when he said he didn't touch anything because everything is exactly how I remember it. I leave in two days, and I don't know why the thought saddens me. He's been such great company. He's smart, witty, and funny.

He's also almost two decades older than I.

Why is this happening to me? Why the chaos in my head? Is this my punishment for not coming home for years, only stepping foot in my childhood home after Mom died? Is this her punishment for me?

A year ago, I chalked it up to shock from her death and seeing that my stepdad looked like that hot demon-killing guy from a popular TV show. But nothing has diminished whatever feelings I felt for him the first time I saw him. Unfortunately for me, it has only intensified, even after months of not seeing him, and I find myself looking forward to sharing meals with him.

My body was so dirty from all the cleaning, so I decided to take a shower. Once inside, and with my clothes off, I realize I'm out of lotion. Mom was obsessed with body butter, and she liked it better than lotions and serums. She used to buy by the dozen, preferring the expensive ones—those I cannot afford with my current salary. I used to think they were not worth the price tag, but my skin disagrees. It's softer and plumper with the body butter, something I cannot achieve with my cheap drugstore lotions.

Maybe she stocked up on them?

Five minutes ago, I heard Evan at the front door, so I know he's not on the second floor. Wrapping a towel around me, I tiptoe toward the small room Mom used to

store clean towels and toiletries. On my way there, I pass Evan's bedroom, and the door is ajar.

That stops me in my tracks. I should speed up, get the jar, and go back to my bathroom. Instead, I feel someone else possessing my body. Someone crazy and stupid and all sorts of trouble. Someone definitely not me.

With a hand on the doorknob, I take a shaky breath and evaluate all my life choices that have led to this. Mom used to say I had a good head on my shoulders, which was why it didn't bother her when I moved across the country for college. Yeah, well. That head is nowhere to be found. What am I doing? What am I even planning?

I have no idea.

The shower is running, which means only one thing. Evan is here, taking a shower. Something I should be doing, too. Except, it doesn't propel me to mind my own business and step out. No, sir. Something about the sound lures me in until I stand in front of his bathroom door.

I still have time to back out and pretend I almost made a mistake. He hasn't seen me, so I can run back out, and there won't be any awkwardness in the morning.

But...

The door creaks, and steam hits me full in the face. I can see Evan's silhouette, but that's it. I wasn't kidding when I told him I couldn't see without my glasses.

He turns off the shower, and I stand frozen in the doorway.

"Elena?"

I don't see him clearly until he's a few feet away from me, standing in all his naked glory. And by God, his body is insane and unreal.

My eyes take him in. The broad shoulders, the hard chest, the washboard abs, and the ...

I swallow hard, my throat dry, every inch of my body clenching at the sight, wetness pooling between my thighs. His cock is massive and glorious and ... standing proud.

He's aroused, and when I gaze back up at his eyes, it has darkened. I'm face to face with a different version of Evan. An Evan that has awakened all my lady parts. An Evan I want to pounce on.

"Elena, what are you doing? Why are you here?" His voice is low and deep, devoid of any friendliness and warmth. Am I delusional, or can I hear his longing?

My core throbs, and I cross my legs instinctively, seeking friction. He doesn't miss the movement, and his jaw clenches. I have never seen this side of Evan, but my body responds to the primal desire clouding his eyes. It's the desire that mirrors my own.

"Elena, you either leave now or I won't be responsible for what happens in the next ten minutes."

"What happens next?"

"You don't want to know."

"What if I do?"

"Elena..."

In another time and another place where I have my wits about me and I'm not stupid, I would have run away as far as I could. Maybe check into a hotel and never see Evan again.

Instead of that rational, wise Elena, another version of me rises to the surface, and I give in to my desires. Desires that have been clawing at me since day one.

I drop the towel to the floor, ignoring how raw and vulnerable I feel.

“Ten minutes.”

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

3

EVAN

N o way.

No fucking way.

This isn't happening. Elena isn't attracted to me. I'm dreaming. Probably sleepwalking. And I'll wake up any minute soon.

Elena backs into the room until the backs of her thighs hit the bed. She's naked and as perfect as I pictured her in my head. No, scratch that. She looks way better than the image of her I used to jerk off to.

Small, perky tits, soft stomach, and thick thighs.

Perfect, perfect, perfect.

"Elena, I'm giving you one last chance to run away from me."

"Why should I do that?"

"I'm your stepdad."

"On paper."

“I’m also way older than you.”

“And?”

“Elena...”

“Tell me you want me to leave, Evan. Right now. And I would.”

“No!” The word bursts out of me before my brain catches up, and I scrub a hand across my face. “Fuck, Elena. I’ve been trying to keep my distance.”

“Do you want to?”

“No. Fuck, I want you so much. I’ve wanted you before I met you.”

“B-before you met me? What do you mean? How?”

I raise my face to the ceiling and swallow. “Maybe I have a thing for women dressed in a prune and a hot dog sandwich.”

I barely have the chance to process it when Elena grabs my hand and stands on her toes to kiss me. It’s a kiss that destroys me completely, from the inside and out.

The tension simmering between us boils over, and we’re all over each other, my hands cradling her face, her fingers grabbing my hair, her nails scratching at my back.

There’s nothing separating us—literally nothing—and I take advantage of it, knowing I might never have the chance again. I lift her and drop her on the mattress, grabbing her ankles to jerk her to the edge of the bed.

“Last chance to stop this, Elena,” I tell her, blood roaring in my veins, my loins

aching with the need to feel her pussy around me.

Elena glares at me and lifts herself on her elbows. “I’m getting tired of you trying to talk me out of this. I want it, Evan. I want it so much.”

That’s all the encouragement I need.

I kneel before her, kissing her calf and biting the side of her knee. “Let me eat you. Let me taste. Please let me beg on my knees.”

She parts her legs and arches her back, and I waste no time diving into her pussy.

Fuck, she tastes sweet. Sweet and musky and mine.

“You taste so good. I’m going to make you feel so good, you’re going to see stars.” I run my hands along her smooth inner thighs and part her folds. With the single-minded focus of a starving man about to have his first meal, I drag my tongue along her pink pussy, flattening it on her clit.

Elena bows off the mattress, but I hold her down. I worship her in languid circles, taking note of when she clamps her legs around my head and yanks my hair. She likes it slow. She likes it when I lick her pussy slowly and suck lightly on her clit. She likes it when I shove my tongue inside her while my finger teases her button. She likes it when I explore her pussy with my tongue, my mouth kissing her folds.

My fingers dig into her thighs as I eat her. In between her whimpers and moans, she grabs my hair and rides my face, her juices smearing all over me.

“F-fuck yes, baby. That’s it. Ride my face. Ride my tongue. Use me,” I tell her.

“Ah, God. Evan, please. Evan, Evan, I-I’m c-coming...” She stretches the last word

as her body shakes and her eyes roll to the back of her head.

I don't let up. Instead, I knead her ass roughly and bury my tongue deep, feeling her pussy flutter around me, her juices gushing and coating my mouth.

Jesus. This is the best meal I've ever had. Messy. Filthy. And oh so fucking perfect. I can have this every day for the rest of my life.

Apparently, we're far from done.

Just when I thought I sapped her strength, Elena pushes me gently and guides me to sit on the bed.

I brace my hands on either side of me, watching in admiration as she stands before me with nothing—absolutely nothing—except for the glistening juice sliding down her thighs.

“You like what you see, Evan?” She has the most beautiful fuck-me eyes I've ever seen, and those blue orbs run down my body and settles on my hard cock, now jutting in front of my stomach.

“I'd like it better if I'm buried inside that pussy, Elena. Now ride me. Ride me like the good girl you are.”

“Oh, demanding. Not sure I like that.”

“Fucking ride my cock, Elena.”

“Say please.”

“Fuck. Please, baby. You're killing me standing like that in front of my cock and not

doing anything. Please.”

“Because you asked so nicely, I’ll oblige.”

With a lopsided grin, she loops her arms around my neck and straddles my lap, her pussy teasing my shaft. “Elena, I’m going crazy. Please.”

Instead of sitting on my cock, she swipes her wet pussy along my length. My head explodes with desire, and the desperation to feel her wraps around me. My cock aches.

My hands go to her thighs, but she swats them away. “Don’t touch me, Evan. If you do, I’ll leave you here with your beautifully hard cock.”

“Ah, fuck. Elena...”

She nips my earlobe and licks the outer shell of my ear, chuckling darkly. “Tell me you want this so badly.”

“I want this so badly. I want you so badly.”

“Well, then...”

Elena lifts her hips and lowers herself on my cock. I’m about to combust because of how tight and wet she feels. “Elena... God...”

“I learned something online.”

I don’t even know what she’s saying anymore. I’m afraid if I move even an inch, I’ll come. “Uh-huh.”

“I’ll spell coconut with my hips. Let me know if you like it.”

“O-okay.”

If she asked me to bang my head against the headboard, I’d do it. I’d do anything she wanted. I am completely at her mercy.

“C,” she says and circles her hips.

“Oh God, baby. Ride this cock. It’s yours. It’s all yours.”

“O. C. O.”

It’s then that I realize she’s trying to spell the word with her hips. In between the letters, she slides up and down my rigid manhood.

“N. U. T.”

“Goddammit. Yes, baby. Yeah, I’m yours. This is yours. All of me.”

Without thinking, I shove two fingers into her mouth. Her eyes widen with surprise at first before she begins sucking.

“Shit, Elena.”

She does all the work—bouncing on my lap and sucking my fingers, her saliva dripping down the sides of her mouth. I buck my hips as much as I can, meeting her downward moves. “You like that, baby? You like me pounding you?”

“Y-yes, Evan. God, yes. More.” She’s sweating hard, her hair sticking to her face, and drool on her chin.

I've never seen anyone more beautiful.

We switch positions until she's under me and I'm hovering above her, my cock still inside her tight pussy. I raise her arms over her head, pinning them with one hand, as I begin thrusting into her.

"You like this, baby? Your cunt likes my cock? Watch it, baby. Watch my cock disappear inch by fucking inch."

"Yes, fuck. Oh God. Deeper. Harder. Evan, please."

I fuck her harder, one hand squeezing her tit while my mouth covers the other. I suck on the skin, making sure it leaves a mark. Making sure I leave a mark that will take days to fade.

"Holy shit, Elena. You're so fucking hot, and you take me so well. Such a good girl."

She responds with a low, long moan as she tugs her hands free, her nails raking along my back. She's leaving her mark on me as well. Good girl.

"I'm about to come, Elena. You come with me, okay? Let me fill you."

"Y-yes."

My thrusts become wild and uncoordinated. I'm just driving into her with everything I have as my finger finds her clit again to help her along. She trembles when the first spurt of come coats her walls.

"Ride it out, Elena. Ride it out on my cock. Come for me, baby."

Spots of color dance before my eyes as I come harder than I've ever had. I fill her as

she pulses around my cock, her hips moving as I soften inside her.

God, she's perfect. This is perfect. I've never wanted anything as much as I want this.
Forever and ever.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

4

ELENA

I wait for the guilt to come, but it doesn't. Regret? None. Shame? None.

In broad daylight, I expect to feel the full gravity of what Evan and I did last night. I expect to feel shame and the desire to dig a hole for myself and stay there for the rest of my life.

I don't.

As he slides a hand across my bare stomach and cups my breast, I only feel happiness. When he cups my face and kisses me softly and slowly, butterflies flutter in my belly.

Why did I have to fall for him of all people? Why did my heart jump at the sight of him? Why did I feel so darn happy and contented when he held me after he fucked me senseless?

I can't explain it, but I know, deep in my core, this goes beyond sex. I can actually picture it in my head—him and me together for the rest of our lives.

Of course, that is, if we're both brave enough to hold our heads high as we see all the judgmental people turning their noses up at us. And there will be plenty.

You don't sleep with your stepdad. Period. But I did and I loved it, and I would do it

again and again without remorse.

“Penny for your thoughts,” Evan says as he puts a plate of pancakes and bacon in front of me. He’s been cooking for me whenever he can, but he needs to go back to work when I leave.

Leave.

God. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth. I have my plane ticket ready, and in a few days, I’ll be across the country from him.

We haven’t talked about our future. We’ve been skirting the issue, and none of us is looking forward to opening up about it.

“Do you think Mom hates us? You know, with what we did.”

Evan sits across from me, his eyebrows knitting together. “Your mom wasn’t a hateful woman. She was still in love with your dad, and she always told me she wouldn’t stop me from pursuing anyone I liked, even while we were married.”

“She said that?”

“Yeah. She even went so far as to introduce women to me.”

“That’s weird because you were still married to each other.”

“That’s what I told her.”

“She and Dad loved each other so much that when he died, a part of her died too. It was me who urged her to remarry, even if it’s just for companionship. I just never thought she’d go with someone younger than her.”

Evan smiles. "I know. She told me that, too." He adds milk to his tea and stirs it, his eyes never leaving my face. "Listen, your mom said you don't know how to drive."

"God, she really told you everything, huh?"

"She did. So, I have a couple of days off. What do you say about free driving lessons?"

I want to say no, simply because I hate driving with all of my being, but I also want to go outside with Evan and spend as much time with him as I can. "Fine. It doesn't mean I will actually drive, though."

He takes a sip of his tea and smirks. "We'll see."

Three hours later, I'm pretty sure Evan is almost at the end of his rope. His frustration at my lack of interest is almost palpable, and I laugh to myself.

The vacant lot stretches before us, and beyond it, the road is empty. I've been here before, back when I was in high school. We used to hang out here because it's away from everything and everyone else.

"Why don't you buy a bigger car, Evan? This Fiat is too small for you."

At this, the side of his mouth quirks upward. "You're too small for me, but you take me so well. Same with this car."

"Oh, God. How dare you compare me to your car?"

"You started it."

I stare at him in disbelief until an idea comes to me. I rest my hand on his knee and

slowly slide it upward. “How about I sit on your lap?”

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

5

EVAN

“Elena, if you do that, there won’t be any driving lessons happening anymore. Besides, this car isn’t tinted. Anyone can see us.”

I should’ve known Elena wouldn’t listen. Even as I growl at her, she crosses the center console—her elbow on my cheek and her knee almost hitting my family jewels—and settles on my lap, fanning her skirt around her, her hands on the steering wheel.

My cock instantly roars to attention as her ass presses against it, and she senses it. She moves her hips, making me harder and harder.

“Oh, wait. What is that? Is it a gear stick on my butt?”

“Elena...”

She leans her back against my chest and continues to grind on me. “I’m not wearing panties, just so you know.”

“Fuck.”

Elena grabs my hand and slips it between her legs, and I groan at how wet she is already. She runs my finger up and down her slit as her ass presses down on me. “Take out your cock, Evan. Now.”

“Elena...”

“I won’t tell you twice.”

She lifts herself slightly so I can take out my cock, and when she sits back down, she slides my full length into her until I’m seated in her pussy. “Fuck, Elena. Fuck!”

“Oh, God. I can never get used to your big cock, Evan. You stretch me so good.”

I grit my teeth and throw my head back as Elena circles her hips and bobs up and down on my lap, her hands gripping the steering wheel.

“Jesus Christ, Elena.”

She leans her upper body on the steering wheel as her hips milk me for all I’m worth. I’m trapped in the driver’s seat, but I can’t just do nothing, so I slip my hand under her skirt and play with her clit, strumming it until she bounces faster and her noises get louder.

“Don’t stop, Evan. Don’t stop. I’m there. I’m almost there. Please!”

Elena stiffens before I feel her juices slide to my balls. One second later, I feel myself throbbing inside her, and I bellow her name as hot spurts of come spill inside her.

* * *

The driving lesson was a bust for the simple reason that Elena wasn’t interested. Instead of listening to me explain how to turn, parallel park, and reverse park, she just kept rubbing me through my pants or flashing her tits at me, and I gave up any attempt to teach her.

We get back home, and Elena jumps out of the car, sprinting to the door. I don't rush to follow her, like I know she wants me to. Instead, I walk as if I have all the time in the world.

Elena dramatically taps her foot and crosses her arms as she waits by the porch. When I'm within hearing distance, she raises one brow at me. "You really need to learn how to keep up with me."

"I kept up with you just fine earlier."

Her eyes crinkle at the corners, and she wraps her arms around my waist. "That you did."

We stare at each other and smile. That's all we do when we hear someone clearing their throat behind us. Elena and I spring apart and turn in unison.

Fuck.

It's Mrs. Roberts, the nosiest woman I've ever met and the source of every true, false, and exaggerated gossip in this neighborhood.

She pounds her fist into her thigh and yells, "You disgusting piece of shit! I told Gina you were nothing but bad news. It's not enough you inherited some of her estate; now you have to go after her daughter too!" The woman is so red in the face, I swear she's one breath away from a heart attack as she grabs Elena's wrist. "Let's go to the cops."

Elena flits her gaze to me before looking back at Mrs. Roberts. "The cops? Why?"

"Did he touch you against your will? Did he blackmail you? Did he force himself on you?"

Elena yanks her arm back. “What? No!”

Mrs. Roberts refuses to listen to Elena. “Oh, you poor child. Such innocence.” She faces me with fire in her eyes and jabs a finger at me. “Men like you will take that innocence and trample it. I will make sure you won’t get a cent from her, you conniving scum.”

I hold up both hands in an attempt to placate her. I was not raised to argue with older people, even if they were wrong. “Mrs. Roberts, hear me out. You don’t understand.”

She backs me toward the wall and points an accusing finger in my face. “You think you will ever be part of this neighborhood with your lowly background? You can have Gina’s house and money, but you’ll never belong here. You will never be anything more than a penniless opportunist. A predator who needs to be in jail.”

I spare a glance at Elena, who’s staring daggers at Mrs. Roberts’ back, pleading her with my eyes not to rise to the older woman’s bait. “Mrs. Roberts, please. Elena wants?—”

“You think I will sit here and watch you prey on these hapless women? I will teach you a lesson you will never forget. You think I will let you take advantage of this family? For all we know, you killed Gina!”

“Mrs. Roberts, shut the fuck up!” Elena breathes hard, her hands clenched into fists at her sides.

The older woman clutches the front of her blouse. “Elena, my child. You don’t mean that.”

“I am not a child. I’m a grown woman who can think for herself. If you will only insult Evan, then please leave. We don’t need you here. Even my mother wouldn’t

like the words coming out of your mouth.”

“You don’t mean that.” Mrs. Roberts’ shoulders slump in defeat. “I was only trying to protect you.”

“And I will always be thankful for that, but I draw the line at you insulting Evan when he hasn’t done anything wrong with Mom or with me.”

At this, Mrs. Roberts regains her fire, and she straightens her spine. “Very well then. I see that he has successfully brainwashed you, just like he did with Gina. You’re young and beautiful, and you have your choice of men. You cannot end up with this scum, like your mother. She always had poor taste in men, if you don’t mind me saying that about your late father.”

I can almost see the fury rise within Elena. Her eyes narrow, and her voice changes, anger wafting off her in waves. “You did not just insult my father.”

“It’s true, though. He was as penniless as this pathetic excuse of a man. Now, come. I’ll ignore what you said earlier. Let’s go to my house and talk. Women need to protect each other.”

I cannot take it anymore, and despite not wanting to hurt the other woman’s feelings, I will not let her hurt Elena. She can insult me all she wants, but not Elena, Gina, and her late husband. With a glare, I ask, “Is that what you told your daughter, Mrs. Roberts, when she brought home a married man who left his wife and kids for her?”

A muscle pulses on her cheek, and her nostrils flare. “You son of a bitch. That’s none of your business.”

“Exactly the point Elena’s been trying to make. Good evening.”

I turn my back to her as I motion for Elena to walk before me. If she's so angry that she wants to stab me, then she can do so, but I won't let her touch Elena.

The door closes behind me, and Elena whirls, tears streaming down her face. It's like a punch to the gut. "Elena, I?—"

"I think she's right, Evan."

Her words hit me like a hot knife in my stomach. "Elena, she's not. You can't?—"

"This is all sorts of wrong. You're my stepdad, and my mom died. Yes, a year ago, but still. You were her husband, and yet here we are playing like a happy couple."

I open my mouth to say something, but the guilt hits me in full force. Her words hang in the air, sharp, biting, and irrevocable.

My throat tightens as a flicker of pain crosses her face. "Elena, is that how you really feel?"

"Mrs. Roberts won't be the first and the last to think about us like that. I can't live like this, where every pair of eyes is on me, on us. I can't have people confronting me from out of nowhere and telling me how I live my life is wrong."

The colors fade to a muted gray with every word from Elena. My whole world blurs as a dull ache blooms beneath my ribs. My fingers twitch, desperate to reach for her, but they stay frozen at my sides. I force myself to speak, to let her know what exactly I feel for her. "I love you, Elena. Tell me you don't feel the same way, and I'll let you go." My voice is barely above a whisper, but I know she hears it.

"I ... I'm leaving tomorrow. Goodbye, Evan. It was good while it lasted."

For a moment, I can't breathe. I watch her walk upstairs, trying to hold herself together. I want to go to her, comfort her, and tell her everything's going to be okay, but I can't do any of that if I'm the source of her pain, of her suffering.

I promised Gina I'd take care of Elena, and I failed.

The only woman I've ever loved, and I lost her.

6

ELENA

Everything is a literal blur because from the moment I wake up to the minute I sit on the plane, I don't stop crying. I've gotten weird stares from my fellow passengers and even had a concerned lady ask me if someone hurt me.

How can I tell her my heart is breaking and I feel a hollow ache in my chest? How can I explain that I found the love of my life, but had to leave out of fear of being judged by others?

I press my forehead to the cold window, trying to relieve the pain in my chest and the heavy weight in my stomach. Evan's face flashes behind my eyes—his lopsided smile, the way his blue eyes glow when he's happy, his muscles flexing with every move.

God, I love him. I love him so much it hurts.

Was I wrong? Did I make such a hasty decision that would end up hurting us both? Was I too wrapped up in others' opinions that I sacrificed my own happiness? People like Mrs. Roberts shouldn't have a say in my life or Mom's. They're nothing but vicious gossips who thrive on others' pain.

Stupid, stupid, stupid.

Someone settles into the seat beside me, and it barely registers through my haze of

sadness and heartbreak. I don't think I can function properly anymore. My life before Evan seems so far away now, and it's all I can do not to bawl my eyes out again.

I wipe my cheeks quickly, a bit embarrassed to be caught like this, and turn to apologize, expecting a stranger looking awkward and uncomfortable.

But it's not a stranger.

It's him. Evan.

I blink several times, wondering if I conjured him in my head, and I'm now seeing him everywhere. But no. It's him. In the flesh.

My Evan.

My breath catches in my throat as the shock morphs into something warmer.

"Hi there," he says. His voice is low and steady but heavy with emotion.

"Evan?"

His neck flexes as he searches my features. "I can't let you go, Elena. I can't. I'd die without you." He swipes a finger across my wet cheeks. "I see you're hurting too. Please don't do this to us."

I think about how my life has changed in just a few days. How I never felt as happy as I was when I was with him. How the world has more color because of him.

Will I let people like Mrs. Roberts take that away from me? People who don't know us? People who only take one look and judge? People who will take every opportunity to gossip instead of help?

Society and its neat little box of expectations are driving me up a wall. I've always been the good girl. Go to college, work, lead a stable life, avoid scandals.

The old me and my old life. Was it living? Or was I simply existing?

I never wanted to fall in love with my stepdad—it wasn't in my plans, obviously—but it happened. Evan was right. Mom was never the hateful, vindictive type. She would have been happy for us.

Mrs. Roberts was wrong. Mom didn't have poor taste in men. On the contrary, Dad was an amazing guy. The type of father who always showed up. Who was there when I fell on my bike and scraped my knee. Who would wait outside school if I had to come home late, just so I wouldn't walk alone.

Just because Dad didn't make as much money as Mom did. Just because he came from a middle-class family. Just because he didn't understand the need to constantly show off.

Dad was amazing, and so is Evan.

At the end of the day, Evan and I did nothing wrong. We just happened to fall for each other. We are not hurting anyone. We're just two people trying to live our lives.

Just like that, the emptiness begins to fade and is replaced by lightness. Warmth seeps through my bones as I stare at the man who makes me feel like life is truly beautiful and truly worth living.

With a shaking hand, I touch his cheek and whisper, "Let's run away, then."

Evan's handsome face splits into a grin. "I thought you'd never ask. I love you, Elena."

I smile through the tears and sniff. “I love you, too, Evan.”

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

EPILOGUE

EVAN

The past year was a whirlwind of big changes, moves, and lots of laughter and love.

I bought a two-bedroom apartment near Elena's office, and she moved in with me. We both decided to sell her childhood home since Elena no longer had any desire to go back there after that incident with Mrs. Roberts.

As we packed, we found two letters addressed to both of us. The papers were in one of Gina's jewelry boxes.

Ethan,

Elena can be cold and aloof, but when she loves, she loves hard. Any man she falls in love with is lucky because she's the type who will only ever love one in her lifetime.

This is neither a demand nor a request, but I witnessed you being too hard on yourself, so I hope you will give your heart a chance—a chance at loving Elena.

In my mind, you both are perfect for each other. I hope you feel the same way too.

Elena,

By the time you read this letter, I assume you've met Ethan. He's the nicest, sweetest, and kindest man I've ever met, aside from your father, of course.

He has helped me tremendously for these past few months. It's not just the trips to the hospital but all those late-night bouts of anxiety and depression. He would talk to me until the wee hours of the night, just listening to me ramble about things.

I think you already know what kind of marriage it was. You might call it transactional, but it's more like a partnership for us. I helped him, and he helped me. Along the way, we became close friends.

I know this is presumptuous of me, which is something you've always hated, but you deserve a man like him, Elena. A man who will look after you and love you with everything he's got.

If you do end up with him, you already know you have my blessing.

I love you, Elena. You're the best thing that happened to me and your father.

Love,

Mom

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:30 pm

ELENA

Marriage was never part of my life plans. I grew up thinking something was wrong with me because while everyone else had crushes and boyfriends, I had no interest in anyone.

Then along came Evan.

After that letter from Mom, I spent a week crying because part of me always wondered if she would have approved of our relationship. Had she been alive, would she have given her blessing? After all, Evan is a lot older than me.

That letter freed me. It answered every question I had. It was like Mom knew what would happen once Evan and I met. To an outsider, it sounds twisted and sick, but not to us. Not to me, Evan, and Mom. We knew each other best. Damn everyone else.

“Okay. One, two, three, smile!” Our next-door neighbor and now-closest friend, Emil, raises the camera and clicks.

Evan and I can’t contain our happiness, and we’re pretty sure it will show in the photos. We’re still in the city hall, just married, and Emil insists on getting at least a hundred shots. His girlfriend, Alice, has become my unofficial assistant as she fixes my hair, makeup, and dress.

It’s everything I’ve ever dreamed of and more. I can hardly believe this is real, that I’m marrying Evan.

My ex-boyfriend, now-husband.

Husband.

The word feels like an electric current through my body. My heart beats so wildly it almost hurts, but it's the best kind of ache. Evan catches me staring, and he gives me that knowing grin because he understands exactly what I'm feeling. He feels it too.

He followed me to my city and started all over again, but he didn't mind. And after two years of being together, he proposed. Of course, I said yes.

"Penny for your thoughts," he whispers, his warm breath brushing my skin.

"I can't believe how lucky I am."

"I was just thinking the same thing."

I tug him closer to me. "I love you, Evan. I love you forever and ever."

He plants a soft kiss on my lips, and my whole body tingles with excitement. He will always have this effect on me. "I love you, too, Elena. I love you forever and ever."

Evan squeezes my hand in that quiet, familiar way, and I melt into him.

This is the life I never thought I wanted, but I can't imagine doing anything else and being with anyone else. It's always been him.

The End

Thanks for reading!