

Awakenings

by Becky

Stefan exhaled deeply. He needed Nikolas's signature. It pained him that he was even a little wary of seeing his son... his nephew... his son. They were in each other's eyes, he and his mother. And they both had reflected nothing but anger and recrimination recently. He was through with Laura, but he could never give up on Nikolas. He wanted to see him. He picked up the phone and dialed Nikolas' cell phone number.

"Yes?" Nikolas' voice answered.

"Nikolas, I must see you. There is some paperwork--"

"I can't now, Stefan."

"It is important that you sign these papers," Stefan insisted, feeling a stab of pain at hearing his name.

"Nothing's more important than my mother right now," Nikolas voice cracked.

Stefan paled as he tried to remain calm. "What do you mean? Is Laura hurt?"

"Do you care?" Nikolas accused. "Haven't you caused her enough pain?"

Stefan wanted to shout in frustration. He could hear the fear in Nikolas' voice. Something had happened to Laura and he was going to find out what. "She is your mother and I can hear that you are very afraid for her. Why, Nikolas?"

After a pause, Nikolas whispered, "She's been in a car accident. It's bad. She's lost a lot of blood and... I don't want to lose her."

The anguish in his voice added to the pain in Stefan's already shocked heart. He had to be with him... and her. "I'll be there soon," he said.

"Okay," Nikolas replied softly. "Thank you."

Stefan hung up the phone and hurried out.

As soon as the elevator opened, Stefan headed to where Nikolas was sitting with his head on his knees. Stefan placed a comforting hand on his back as he took a place next to him.

Nikolas looked up. "They're doing everything they can."

"I'm certain that they will be able to save her." He didn't even want to think of the alternative.

"I called Lesley," Nikolas continued, "She's bringing Lulu."

Stefan frowned. "Is that wise?"

"I didn't think it was such a great idea, either, but Luke insisted and Lesley agreed. They know best, I guess." Stefan tensed at the mention of Luke. "He's here then."

"Yeah, he went somewhere, but he's around."

At that moment, Luke returned. Stefan's eyes narrowed as he took in the haggard figure. Spencer had been drinking.

"What are you doing here, Steffin," Luke slurred. "Laura doesn't need you."

"No, but my son does and I intend to stay," Stefan replied evenly.

"Really, Stefan, you should stop using your son like that."

Stefan turned to the sight of Lesley carrying Lesley Lu. Ignoring Lesley, he smiled at the little girl, who was in obvious distress. "Hello, Lesley Lu."

Lulu's lip quivered as she asked him, "Is my Mommy gonna be okay?"

Before Stefan could answer, Luke interrupted. "She's going to be alright, Princess. You just come to Daddy."

Lulu shook her head and shouted, "I WANT MY MOMMY"

Lesley tried to soothe her, but she was inconsolable. Stefan's heart went out to the child and he was glad to see Nikolas move to comfort her.

"I could use a hug, Lulu. Could you give me one, please?"

Sniffing, Lulu nodded, putting her arms out. Nikolas took her and hugged her tightly. She rested her small head on his shoulder, her face towards him. He kissed the top of her head and reassured her, "I'm sure the doctors will let us see her soon."

"I hate hospitals," she whispered.

"Me too, Lu, me too," Nikolas said quietly.

"That makes three of us," Lucky chimed in. "Hi, squirt," he said as he kissed Lulu's cheek lightly. "Mom's going to awful glad to see you."

"You came," Luke said, moving to embrace his son.

Lucky stopped him by backing up and said, "I'm here for my mother."

Stefan, Lesley, and Luke looked on as the three siblings gave each other the solace that no else could provide.

Stefan was the first to see Tony and he immediately asked, "How is she?" The rest of the group quickly gathered to hear the news.

"We expect a full recovery," Tony informed them, smiling. That means she's gonna be okay," he told Lulu.

"I wanna see her," she demanded.

"Okay, but only for a few minutes. And only family," he said, looking pointedly at Stefan.

As Nikolas walked by Stefan, Lulu asked, "Aren't you coming?"

"He's not family, Lu," Luke explained.

"Yes, he is, he's Nikky's Daddy," Lulu informed him. She waved her hand at Stefan. "Come on."

Stefan didn't have the heart to refuse her, but he hesitated under the glare of Lesley and Luke.

"I think she's right, Father,>" Nikolas smiled.

"Yeah," Lucky agreed. "Lulu's always right."

He would just go to see Laura and quietly slip out, Stefan told himself. "As you wish, Lesley Lu," he said with a smile.

She grinned and reached out her arms. This time not hesitating, he took her from Nikolas arms and they all quickly headed for Laura's room.

The first thing she saw as she opened her eyes was Stefan holding her daughter, with her two sons at each side of him, each holding one of Lulu's hands. Her first thought was of what a beautiful family they made.

