

# Just One Look

## by Becky

*Author's Note: This story takes off right when Nikolas told Laura the news that Stefan is alive. The dialogue should be very familiar. ;)*

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"You might want to brace yourself," Nikolas began.

Laura sighed, almost wanting to cover her ears. She knew things were going too well. "All right, I'm braced."

Nikolas smiled then, barely able to hold his excitement. "Stefan is alive." He still found it hard to believe.

It took a moment for his words to sink in, and there was a fearful hope in her voice as Laura asked, "What? "Stefan is alive?"

"I just saw him at the hospital."

Laura's stomach twisted with dread. "Is he hurt?"

"No," Nikolas assured, "Chloe Morgan needed to see a doctor."

She frowned, vaguely remembering the name. "You mean the Quartermaine's Chloe Morgan?"

"Yeah, she's with Stefan."

Laura tried to make sense of what he had just told her, while Nikolas and his friend talked. It seemed so surreal. She acknowledged Gia briefly before the girl left, then turned her attention back to Nikolas, her eyes reflecting her confusion.

"Okay, I'll make sense," he said. "Helena kidnapped Stefan and Chloe and held them prisoner on a deserted island in the Mediterranean."

"Oh, my God. And then she framed Luke for Stefan's murder?" Laura pieced part of the puzzle together.

"Yes," Nikolas said.

"It's so Helena, isn't it? Just maximize that pain. My God. Even yours. Even yours. And you mourned Stefan more deeply than anyone will ever know."

"But when I saw him, a long time ago on that island, I would -- I would wait for Stefan to come home and I would stare out that big stained-glass window."

"I know," Laura said softly.

"And I would fly through that door and I would leap into his arms. That's what -- that's what today was like, times one thousand. Ten thousand." His smile grew wide.

"Oh!" Laura uttered, her love for her son overwhelming her. She took him into her arms, squeezing him tightly.

"All the love I ever felt for my uncle just hit me all at once."

"Oh, Nikolas. I'm so happy for you. That's wonderful." She let go, and smiled at her son through unshed tears.

"So, what about now?" Nikolas asked. "How do you feel about Stefan?"

Laura looked away for a second. That was the last question she was expecting, or wanting to answer. Her mind raced, trying to think of something to say.

"Stefan's probably still at the hospital," Nikolas continued, watching his mother carefully.

Laura turned and walked a few steps as he spoke. She turned back to her son. "I'll go to see him, Nikolas. I will -- when the time is right."

"Do you love him at all?" Nikolas said impulsively, his unanswered question more blunt this time. "I'm sorry. That was rude to ask."

"No, it's okay," Laura said quickly, then paused. She answered him, her words coming out slowly this time. "I care about Stefan very much, and I always will. But, no, I'm not in love with him anymore."

Nikolas tried not to show his disappointment in his mother's words. He thought he had left that fantasy of his parent's being together behind him, but obviously he hadn't. "I put you on the spot. I'm sorry."

"But we both love you very, very much, and that's something that will never, ever change," Laura told him, meaning every word.

"Well, sometimes things don't work out no matter how much you love someone," Nikolas said thoughtfully. "You hold on to what you can and you let go of the rest."

"You know that already?" Laura asked.

"Maybe. Well, I'm -- I'm trying. I'm trying."

"You're amazing," Laura said, hugging him again. "I'm so proud of you."

"I love you," Nikolas told her.

There was a knock on the door, and they separated as Gia popped her head through the door. "I hate to bother you. Nikolas your car is double-parked, and they're not going to wait much longer. What do you want me to tell them?"

"Uh, just tell them I'll be down in a second."

"No, no, you go on ahead," Laura urged. "Go see your uncle."

"Are you sure?"

Laura nodded, "I'm positive. Really. Go see him, okay?" She kissed him on the cheek.

"I love you," Nikolas said.

"I love you," Laura replied. She turned to Gia. "Nice meeting you."

"You, too," Gia answered, but she noticed Nikolas' mother wasn't really paying attention, so she followed Nikolas out without another word.

Laura stared at the door, barely noticing when it shut. It took her a moment or two, maybe three, to remember she was standing in the middle of her office. She turned and stopped, her decision-making abilities suddenly impaired. She slowly walked to the window, once again taking in the beautiful view. But this time her eyes were searching for something. They finally landed on the familiar building.

General Hospital.

He was there. She touched the window glass without thinking. 'Stefan,' she mouthed. She had a moment of fear, feeling as if her uttering his name would make him disappear again.

She turned her back to the window and again stared at the closed door.

I'm not in love with him anymore. Her words echoed in the empty room, taunting her. "I'm not," she said out loud.

And she also wasn't going to General Hospital. Nope, she definitely wasn't going there.

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As she rounded the corner that led to the hospital, Laura had repeated in her mind the very plausible reason why she was there, until she started believing herself.

She parked in a remote place and sat in her car for a few minutes. She was feeling sick, her stomach was twisting, her mouth was dry. It had to be all that stress from the new business. That was it. It was a good thing she was here.

She got out of her car and walked halfway through the parking garage and suddenly stopped, and turned. Then turned back.

"I have as much right to be here as anybody," she muttered.

She finally reached the elevator and pressed the 'up' button. She waited two seconds before becoming impatient and deciding that taking the stairs was the way to go.

She had barely gone up a few stairs, when she heard the soft chiming sound indicating that the elevator was coming.

Retracing her steps, she was about to leave the last stair when she heard it.

His voice, it was unmistakable. She would have recognized it anywhere.

All she had to do was take one more step and she would be able to see him. She curled her fingers around the edge of the wall, and leaned over just enough to remain hidden.

She saw him, and time froze.

She gripped the stone wall, fighting every impulse in her that was wanting to touch him, and make sure he was really real.

Her eyes took in all of him, drinking in everything that had been missing in her life for the past months. He looked thinner, she noticed, but there didn't seem to be any signs of any abuse. In fact, he looked almost happy.

She thought she saw his head turn in her direction, and she immediately backed into the stair wall, her heart pounding in her chest.

A few seconds passed, enough for fantasies of him to pass through her mind of him finding her and kissing her until her knees weakened.

That didn't happen, and she slowly looked over the edge, overtaken with disappointment as she saw a now empty space, accompanied by a deafening silence, except for the still-strong beating of her heart.

She sat down, her body beginning to shake, tears pouring down her cheeks.

He was alive.

And Laura began to breathe easier.

~The End~