# Conversations of a Dark Nature

By Julie Pepper

Synopsis

Leslie and Georgina are best friends married to Eric and Jaime, respectively. But when Leslie reveals a sexual indiscretion she committed with her high school boyfriend at her 20th high school reunion, Georgina is triggered into a yearning of her own. The impact trickles down to both husbands and back around again to their wives and their friendship, most graphically illustrated when all of them meet for a friendly dinner, which turns unfriendly and incites more disclosures.

Later, at a mutual friend’s wedding, everyone’s new circumstances are dredged to the surface. As harmony grows between Leslie and Eric, marital discord between Georgina and Jaime is exposed, igniting the group into a desperate attempt to reverse the inevitable outcome, of not only a broken marriage, but the dissolution of the friendships surrounding it.

Characters

LESLIE Late thirties to forties, a painter, always lusting after life and trying to get to the truth of things, can be intense.

GEORGINA Late thirties to forties, stealth smoker, big drinker. Her dream was to get married and have children, of which she has two.

ERIC Leslie’s husband. A photographer. Loves sports, nature and fun and would like to avoid conflict whenever possible.

JAIME Georgina’s husband. An account guy for an ad agency and an avid sailor. Extremely practical and technical, sometimes bordering on nerdy, but passionately so.

**Act One, Scene One**

Leslie and Eric’s kitchen, night. Kids are in bed and they’re sharing a quiet moment and drinking wine.

Leslie

It’s just that Jaime and Georgina never seem to have any ripples.

Eric

So?

Leslie

But we seem to have so many.

Eric

Do we always have to compare?

Leslie

No. But I always do anyway.

Eric

Well, don’t.

Leslie

Why do you think they don’t?

Eric

Don’t what?

Leslie

Have any ripples.

Eric

Maybe they don’t question everything like we do.

Leslie

They’re not as needy as we are either.

Eric

Speak for yourself.

Leslie

You’re needy, honey.

Eric

Not as much as you.

Leslie

No. You’re *more* needy.

Eric

Well, I know I don’t need this.

(*He goes over to his coffee grinder and grinds some beans. It’s loud*. *Leslie sits sipping her wine.* *Eric exits*.

Leslie gets up and makes a sandwich.

*Eric returns and deals with coffee. She stands next to him.)*

Leslie

You want half?

Eric

I’ll have a bite.

(*They eat.)*

**Scene 2** *(Georgina and Jaime are getting ready for the day. Both are under a time pressure to get out the door. She may be packing lunches and clearing breakfast dishes, while he’s grabbing a coffee and checking his e-mails. The kitchen is in disarray due to an obvious remodel.)*

George

When are they coming with the cabinets?

Jaime

They should be here by ten.

George

Today?

Jaime

Yeah.

George

And you were going to mention this, when?

Jaime

Sorry about that. Why? What are you doing today?

George

No, that’s fine. I’m meeting Les for lunch, but it’s okay, because I’m not meeting her til noon.

What about the fridge?

Jaime

Should be Friday.

George

Great. Oh, but when’s the electrician coming?

Jaime

What electrician?! Why do we need an electrician?

George

Gotcha.

Jaime

Funny. (*He grabs his coffee and jacket and starts to make his way to the door*.)

George

Uh, see you tonight?

Jaime

Oh. (*He steps back into the room*.) I might be a little late.

George

Okay.

Jaime

Hey, how did it go last night, anyway?

George

Good. They thought both pieces would be perfect for the auction.

Jaime

Well, that’s good.

George

Yeah it is.

Jaime

Well, I gotta go.

(*Jamie goes over to George and kisses her good-bye, perhaps on her forehead, but* *maybe in his haste, misses and kisses her eye*.)

George

Oooh. Sexy.

Jaime

Hey, I’ve gotta go.

George

See you later.

(*She zips up the last lunch, then checks to make sure Jaime has gone and the kids are out of sight and lights up a cigarette making sure to blow the smoke out the window.)*

**Scene 3**

Leslie

(*Simulating a bellydance*.) Your legs shake a lot and it’s almost like they’re giving your belly a running start.

George

So belly-dancing starts in the legs?

Leslie

Actually, I think it starts in the pelvis, descends down the legs and up through to the belly. Then you’re shaking so much it gets all mixed up.

George

What made you think to try it?

Leslie

I wanted something to free me up.

George

I’d be shy to try it, unless maybe I was drinking.

Leslie

I was a little.

George

Drinking?

Leslie

Shy.

George

No you weren’t.

Leslie

At first, then it kind of took me over and felt so good that I just loved it and forgot about everything else.

George

You’re like that.

Leslie

I’ve seen you like that.

George

When?

Leslie

Out dancing, hello?

George

Well, yeah.

Leslie

It feels so good, once in a while, to forget about everything else and be a little reckless.

George

I think that’s why I’m so into smoking lately.

Leslie

Yep. It’s so wrong.

George

There’s something about the whole ritual. The way the pack looks sitting there, waiting for you to break into it and take that first one. The way it feels between your fingers. That first drag as you light the end on fire and draw the smoke into your lungs. There’s nothing good about it, yet it’s so yummy.

Leslie

Delicious.

George

I want one. (*She fishes for one in her purse but can’t find one. She finds the empty box instead.)* Damn. I must’ve smoked the last one last night after the meeting.

Leslie

You want to run out and get a pack? I’ll cover you, if anybody wakes up.

George

No it’s all right. I really shouldn’t anyway. I don’t need to.

Leslie

Sometimes it feels so good to do something just because you want to.

George

Even if it’s bad for you.

Leslie

I did something bad.

George

What?

Leslie

The reunion.

George

Oh my God, I totally forgot-spill it.

Leslie

There was nothing right about it and yet it was delicious.

George

Was old boyfriend there?!

Leslie

Very.

George

You got some splaining to do Lucy.

Leslie

He was curious about me.

George

Well, yeah, you haven’t seen each other in twenty years.

Leslie

Or maybe it was that he was curious period. He seemed to have a million questions and before I knew it I had run out of the words to tell him and instead I wanted to show him- every inch of me, kind of let him see for himself.

George

Kind of?

Leslie

Not kind of.

George

Holy shit.

Leslie

I tried not to get that shit-eating-grin on my face, that you know I get when I’m excited, but I did anyway and then I couldn’t get it off. When I went up to the bar to get a drink, I felt my legs walking differently and my hands looked different to me and my mouth felt soft and delicate, everything sort of beautiful. Soon my mouth was laughing and my new beautiful hands were touching his and I wanted to escape everyone’s eyes, but to what, to where?

In the car we listened to the radio and talked, but that made me not want to talk at all, so I thought drive- but I had been drinking and weren’t you not supposed to be doing those two things together? So I ended up pulling into the first driveway I could which was my mother’s. How familiar and like old times because wasn’t this how we used to make out in the driveway before we snuck up the creaky steps, one at a time? But tonight nobody was even home.

George

Where *was* your mother?

Leslie

At a wedding up in the Berkshires.

George

Well, that’s perfect.

Leslie

When we got to my room it really was perfect because it was like we were finally home. The bed was just where it used to be and just as small. He’d hid under the paisley covers there a hundred times before. Then for a moment I wasn’t sure if we shouldn’t just go to sleep all pressed together like that, but then I thought, not until we’d licked each other all over.

George

All over?

Leslie

He smelled like a combination of beer and Irish Spring soap and cold fresh air and I wanted it to last.

George

But did it?

Leslie

Long enough to get that first time feeling for a second time.

George

Wow.

Leslie

Yeah and I couldn’t help myself and he knew it and I liked that, but it kind of scared me.

George

That would.

Leslie

Because he was beautiful and he recognized me.

George

He saw you.

Leslie

Through me.

George

It’s good to be seen.

Leslie

I cried.

George

You’re not used to it.

Leslie

No.

George

But, Les, God, I feel weird all of a sudden, like *I’m* starting to have trouble seeing you or more recognizing you.

Leslie

No!

George

You really did it?

Leslie

Really.

George

What does it mean?

Leslie

Mean?

George

How did you leave it?

Leslie

We said good-bye. He’s married.

George

So are you—last I checked.

Leslie

It was a high school reunion, it doesn’t count.

George

Yes it does. Otherwise what a fucking shame I missed mine.

Leslie

Why are you mad?

George

You do it, you spill it, you’re done with it?

Leslie

And that makes you mad?

George

I’m not mad.

Leslie

Yes you are. Look at you.

George

I’m confused, I’m surprised.

Leslie

It’s that whole doing something because you couldn’t help it thing.

George

Are you really trying to compare this to my smoking?!

Leslie

You’re not supposed to do it, it’s delicious.

George

But I’m not fucking the cigarettes and I don’t have to sneak around and lie to do it.

Leslie

Yes you do.

George

Because Jaime doesn’t like it.

Leslie

Well, now you’re making points for *my* argument, but maybe it’s because you like lying about it, because we’re not allowed to lie anymore, because it’s wrong.

George

Not as wrong as what you did.

Leslie

He kissed me for what felt like an hour. Just kissed me, sometimes on the neck, sometimes on my mouth, my ear, my arm.

George

You’re still excited.

Leslie

I feel sexy again. Not even sexy, pretty.

George

(*sarcastically*) So, what, you’re happy now?

Leslie

In a strange way I think I might be.

George

Yes, strange.

Leslie

Why should this make you unhappy?

George

You’re all belly-dancing and happy and glowing.

Leslie

And this upsets you?

George

Yes.

Leslie

You’re upset that I’m not more upset?

George

Yes.

Leslie

What else?

George

That’s enough.

Leslie

So you’re okay, otherwise.

George

I’m fine.

Leslie

(*Not convinced*) You’re good?

George

I wouldn’t say that.

Leslie

You’re not good?

George

No.

Leslie

Why?

George

Because now I want to do it.