



A Change of Perspective

In the midst of rekindling their bond, Laura and Leslie were both struggling with the challenges surrounding their families. Laura had convinced their father to undergo a combination of hormonal therapy and chemotherapy for his cancer. Meanwhile, it was time for Leslie to confront the reality about the state of her marriage.

Hunter came into the bedroom while Leslie was reading. Ignoring her presence, he headed straight for their closet.

"Hi, honey. I didn't realize you'd be home early this evening."

"I forgot some paperwork that I need for a meeting tonight," Hunter responded. He walked into their huge walk-in closet with built-in cabinets and drawers. Leslie had organized his garments in a systematic manner. From formal to informal, and darkest to lightest, his suits, sport coats, dress shirts, and slacks hung on special hangers. His ties and belts hung on custom-made racks, and his shoes sat on custom shelving. Other essentials and accessories were neatly arranged in cabinets and drawers.

"A meeting tonight?" Leslie asked, surprised. She got out of the bed and followed him into the closet.



"Yes, a meeting," Hunter said. He switched out his suit jacket for an Armani Collezioni plaid jacket and abruptly left out.

Leslie followed him. "When do you think you'll be back?"

"It'll be late, so don't wait up for me," Hunter responded, heading down the hallway to the staircase.

"Before you leave, my sister wants us to go to church with them this Sunday. It's Easter, remember?" Leslie asked, walking quickly to catch up with him.

Hunter entered his study, sat down at his desk and began entering some information into his computer. "Don't plan on me going. I'll be out of town this weekend."

"You hadn't mentioned anything about going out of town. Where are you going?"

"I'm going to Baltimore to see my parents and to check on the girls and Casey. Dad has a business deal he wants me to look at, and Courtney needs some money for rent," Hunter replied.

"Courtney hadn't mentioned anything to me about needing money," Leslie said.

"That's probably because she knows I'm the one with the money," Hunter said, his anger evident.

Ignoring his comment, Leslie responded, "Do you need to go this weekend? You can put the money in Courtney's account...or I could go with you." She walked closer to his desk.

"Leslie, you know I'm looking at confidential information, and yes, I need to go this weekend. No, you don't need to go with me; like I said, I have to do some stuff for my dad. I'll be back Sunday night."

After printing out some information and shutting down his computer, Hunter began preparing for his departure. "I'll see you in the morning. It'll probably be late when I come in. I'll probably sleep in one of the guestrooms."

"Are you going to be home early tomorrow? I attended a healthy living class the other day. The instructor guides the

participants on how to cook healthy dishes. Since one of your favorites is gumbolaya, I wanted to experiment with how to make a healthy version. I was going to cook it tomorrow.”

“Not interested in being your test subject. Anyway, I’ll be home late tomorrow. I’ll call you tomorrow from work,” he said, slamming the front door behind him.

Leslie walked in the kitchen and contemplated what she would eat for dinner. *It’s so depressing being in this big house alone night after night. Always having to eat by myself. I know what would make me feel better, and that’s the sampler of my breaded favorites at McMurray’s Grill — boneless buffalo wings, catfish strips, steak fingers, popcorn shrimp, fritters onion rings, and fried okra. Or, I could stay home and eat my freshly made tuna salad on top of the mixed greens with my fruit medley...which sounds boring. Trevor says ‘It’s all about choices.’ I can’t allow unhealthy food choices to be my reaction to feelings of loneliness and unhappiness. Okay, I’m not going to succumb to these feelings; tuna salad it is.*

Since they’d moved to Texas, Leslie rarely saw Hunter. He was always working late or just never at home. She knew he wouldn’t call her. Their interactions with one another were virtually non-existent. She knew he never loved her and that whatever feelings he may have had for her in the past were dead. The time had come for her to re-invent herself. She had always lived in the shadows of her husband and children, but now she was ready to move to the forefront.



It was Easter Sunday, and Laura was excited that Leslie had finally decided to attend her church service. Leslie was to meet Laura and Marti at the church since it was mid-way for both.

“Hi, Laura and Marti,” Leslie said while standing in the vestibule. “And baby Jessica.”

“Hi, Leslie,” Marti and Laura responded.

“Where’s Hunter? I thought he was coming with you to church,” Laura inquired.



“Actually, he went to Baltimore on Friday. He needed to help his dad with some paperwork,” Leslie said, reaching for Jessica.

Laura was growing concerned that Hunter was never around. She could discern from her conversations with Leslie that he was never at home and that they never spent any time together.

“Well, I’m glad you’re here,” Laura said, hugging Leslie.

“So am I,” Leslie responded, admiring the crowd of people walking into the sanctuary.

“Let’s go inside so we can get good seats,” Marti suggested.

“He means so he can get *his* seat,” Laura laughed.



Leslie enjoyed the praise and worship. The pastor’s message for the morning was *Basic Training for the Spiritually Unfit*. As the pastor spoke from a variety of scriptures, Leslie began to think about her life — spiritually and emotionally. She continued to listen to the pastor and his message, stating that no one was exempt from the troubles of life, that storms will always come from different areas. He stated that one’s connection to the right source would provide strength, courage, and perseverance. He also stated how God uses trials to reveal and restore. Leslie’s spirits were lifted by the pastor’s message.

“Leslie, did you enjoy the service?” Laura asked.

“I sure did,” Leslie responded.

“Hopefully, you’ll be coming back to visit,” Marti said.

“Most definitely.”

“Are you coming out to the house for dinner? We’re having baked chicken, macaroni and cheese, and a vegetable medley,” Laura said.

“You’re having macaroni and cheese? I know that’s not healthy...is this a splurge day for you?” Leslie asked.

“Don’t get excited; it’s a healthy version of macaroni and cheese. We use whole wheat elbow pasta. Although we use

traditional products like cheese and butter, our version is much lower in fat."

"I think I'll follow you all home," Leslie said. "Since Hunter is gone, I hadn't thought about what I was going to eat."

"Great. Just follow us."



Walking through the front door, Laura made Leslie feel welcome. "Do you want a t-shirt to put on, Leslie, so you can be more comfortable?"

"I'm okay. I'll watch the baby while you and Marti get situated," Leslie said.

"Great. I'll go in the kitchen and get things ready. Jessica will probably be asleep in a few minutes. Marti has to go to the grocery store."

"It was a great turn-out at church. Is it normally that crowded?" Leslie asked, while playing with Jessica.

"We generally have a good crowd, but there's always going to be more people on holidays like Easter and Mother's Day."

"It's been so long since I've been to church. The pastor's message got me to thinking about some things," Leslie admitted. "Hey, I've really gotten into working out." While holding Jessica, she walked into the kitchen to be closer to Laura. "Since I've been going to the living healthier classes, I've learned so much in a short period of time. Last week, we learned about foods that are supposed to be healthy but aren't."

"What are those foods?" Laura asked.

"Salmon was one," Leslie stated.

"Oh, yeah, I know about the farm-raised salmon and how they're loaded with antibiotics and get their color from dye."

"You're absolutely right," Leslie said. "Hunter has always loved salmon. For years, we've eaten it two to three times



a week. Now, I'm finding out that what we may have been eating is unhealthy."

"Wild salmon is the way to go. It's more expensive, but if you're going to eat it, it's better to be safe and make sure you're eating the version with nutritional value. Wild salmon get their red color from krill, an antioxidant that's in their natural food source," Laura said. "What was another food?"

"Granola bars," Leslie said. "Looks like Jessica is fading away."

"I figured so. You can take her in the living room and lay her down beside you on the sofa," Laura said. "What's wrong with granola bars?"

"Vanessa, the registered dietician Trevor mentioned says a large percentage of granola bars are like candy bars, offering no nutritional value. They contain the processed carbohydrates you hear so much about. She says they have minimal fiber, and, just like a candy bar or soda, they have a lot of sugar."

"I can see how that's probably true," Laura said.

"Vanessa says you can make your own healthier version from products like raw oats, coconut flakes, chopped almonds, raisins, and a spoonful of raw organic honey."

"I'm going to try that."

"Living healthier is quite a journey. I'm comparing it to putting together a jigsaw puzzle: when you look at the cover on the box of the puzzle, you see a pretty picture that'll hopefully represent the results of your efforts. Then, you open the box and see the tiny pieces you need to assemble to form the picture. If you're inexperienced at puzzles, the notion of fitting the right pieces together can be overwhelming and discouraging. Well, in our scenario, we see a picture of eating healthier and exercising. Just like with assembling the pieces of the puzzle, you can become overwhelmed by the thought of what it takes to fit together the right lifestyle pieces to be healthier."

"All while trying to face the daily obligations, problems, and distractions of life," Laura interjected.

"It's okay. I'm ready to put forth the effort because now I understand the end results," Leslie replied excitedly. "Another class I attended was really fun. We played a game where we had to pick out the foods with the most calories and fat."

"Which foods were they?"

"Okay, which one do you think is the lowest in fat — a donut, bagel, or breakfast sandwich from your favorite fast food restaurant?"

"Let's see. I don't eat donuts because I know they're high in fat and sugar. Before going healthy, I loved to stop by The Breakfast Club, my favorite breakfast spot, to get the egg, sausage, and cheese sandwich. But, of course, I stopped because I found out it was high in calories and fat. On the weekends, I'd go order their catfish and grits, or wings and waffles," Laura chimed.

"It's a good thing you've gone healthy," Leslie commented.

"On the days where I was rushed, I'd stop by my favorite bagel shop and get a honey whole wheat bagel," Laura said. "So, I'm going to go with the bagel. It's lower in fat."

"You're correct in the traditional sense. The bagel is the lowest in fat. The other day, though, I saw a donut company advertising donuts that contained three to four grams of fat; nevertheless, bagels are the better choice, especially the whole wheat without the cream cheese."

"Do they talk about the sodium in foods? I know bagels are high not only in carbohydrates but also sodium — something you can't overlook."

"You're right. Vanessa did talk about sodium. She even gave us a handout with a listing of the different terms used for sodium, terms that people don't generally associate with salt and sodium."

"When you get home, email me that list. I'd love to see it. I think I'll attend the next class with you," Laura said.

"That would be great. Vanessa has started a series called *The Ten Essential Habits for Living Healthier*."