

6. WHILE THE CAT'S AWAY

It has already been a week since Dan has left. At first, she is so devastated that she works to put him totally out of her mind. It is like a serious injury. She waits to let the pain go away before she surveys the damage. Once the severe ache has dissipated, she realizes that she has survived through the worst. And then it hits her. He is gone, perhaps for good.

It is not like her, but she consumes a whole bottle of wine by herself. She feels like passing out. She just lies on her bed and stares at the light on the ceiling. No one is part of this hurt. This she feels all by herself. In a strange way, she almost enjoys the feeling.

She is sure that he is with someone. It's not just resentment that she feels. She feels angry that she has opened herself up to be with him.

Dan has maintained a pretense of keeping in touch. She receives an email every day or so. But it so difficult for her to penetrate that distance.

Lily tells her, "You can't be yourself as long as you stay here. You're only half a person."

Lily feels that if she doesn't get Estelle out of the house that she will wither and die. She convinces Estelle to meet her for dinner.

Estelle tells her, "I can't go to Egypt. I have not idea what I'll find there. He could be with another woman."

"When he sees you. He'll run to your arms," Lily works to cheer her up."

"What if he doesn't?" Estelle asks.

That idea is enough to convince her not to go.

For the next few weeks, she is being oriented to her new job. Stephanie is so helpful at accommodating Estelle. She is glad that she is going to be able to quit her other job. For all these years, she has been torn by doing two things at once. Now she is liberated from the hospital. It has always been such a secure job. But it never allowed her to spread her wings. She was not born to be an accountant. She recognizes that it is the foundation of her business expertise. But she finds pure numbers so dry. She prefers to watch the give and take of stocks. She loves to observe the velocities fluctuate up and down. Behind these currents are the beliefs and dreams of regular people. They get caught up in the speculations of giants as they battle their rivals for a few inches of victory.

Estelle learns how to service her clients. She has a good grasp of tax law and is able to create lasting investments. Stephanie appreciates having such an eager student. Although the job was initially intended to be temporary, Estelle is learning all the techniques that will ensure that the company finds a place for her.

Estelle becomes so caught up in the new job that she practically forgets about Dan. After a day at work, she comes home and put the figures out of her mind. She occasionally reads up articles to help at work. But it is no longer like having homework in the evening. The hours are long but it is no longer as distracting as having school and work at the same time.

Estelle realizes that the worst thing that could happen would be to become too complacent. The internship was set up so that she would have the opportunity to demonstrate her drive. She is doing just that.

To observe her at work, no one would know that she is suffering over a man. One might assume that she is very good at hiding her discomfort. But that is not what is happening. She

wants to worry more about Dan. She just doesn't have the time. In the back of her mind, she assumes that Dan is doing the same. They both are making sacrifices for the future.

Once she starts doing regular work, it all becomes more intense. Now she has more time to catch her breath. Thoughts about Dan start to accompany her watching the markets. She hates the fact that all her doubts have resurfaced. Once she gets the hang of work, then everything gets a little riskier for her emotional life.

It's a Sunday afternoon. Estelle is being a little lazy. She is lying on her couch thumbing through a fashion magazine. It is pages and pages of swimsuits. The models work to stretch the fabric to suggest further and further stages of undress.

With Dan, she felt very daring. Each stage of her provocation was only part of her opening to him emotionally. She hated the easy surrender that she felt with Phil. There it was the night talking for her. A little too much to drink and the heat of the moment. She only regretted that kind of openness.

Estelle's modesty is her way of protecting herself. She likes her body. She feels no shame about it. In warm weather, she doesn't like to burden herself with extra layers. And it gives a girl a sense of confidence to wear something that has a hint of the tease about it. But she doesn't want to get into that trap of wearing clothes just to entice men. If the moment is right, she is willing to be seductive. But Estelle never wants to sell herself short.

For Dan, she has never been afraid to communicate her intentions. As she thinks about him, she can feel his kisses on her neck. She almost feel faint with their touch. He becomes more aggressive as he caresses her shoulders. Her body now rides the rhythm between them. They are locked together in a dance. He comforts her. He surrounds her. She surrender to his embrace.

Her heart is racing. She calms herself with deep kisses. The passion becomes fiercer. She wants him to devour her. His hands are on her hips, and he slides them down her body as she glides along with his movement. She wants to throw off her clothes. She wants him to touch her more provocatively.

She takes his love. She wants to leave no doubt. Estelle is now lying on her bed. The magazine lies open at her side. She murmurs. She is half-conscious. The fantasy has become so real that she can feel him come alive for her. The both of them are embroiled in love-making again. This is how she wants to be naked. It is all part of her giving herself to him. And he accepts her body as he gift. She has always felt so protected when she has been with him. There is nothing dirty about their connection. She wants that warmth to radiate again from deep inside her.

Her whole body is pulsing. She slips deeper and deeper into a dream-like state. And Dan becomes more and more real. She looks at his powerful arms. His magnificent shoulders frame her body. His muscles draw her closer and project all this intensity for her. She can't help but let herself go. It is no longer about the body. It is about this feeling of eternity. It burns her whole body. It is total affirmation. She says yes to him over and over again. This is what she has always wanted. She has tried to ignore this feeling. But it has overcome her. She is crying out for him.

Estelle again renew her love by Dan's reappearance. Since he is really in Egypt, her fantasy only emphasizes her loneliness. She doesn't feel any less attractive. She wonders if she

is wasting herself. But if she gives up on her love at this point, how weak is she? There will always be times in her life where she will have to be on her own. If she runs to another man, every time that Dan is away, then there is nothing to the trust between them. His kisses still speak for the times that they have shared and the commitment between them. She can't let that fade away.

Lily meets her the next night for drinks. The bar is crowded, but Estelle tries to ignore the other patrons. She still doesn't want to say anything about her misgivings. But after a couple of gin and tonics, she starts to reveal more about her fears.

"He could have found someone else."

Lily counters, "You were the one who said that he went there to work. It's his first job after college. There's probably loads to learn.

Estelle says, "I know what you can learn from Egyptian women. He's probably something even more special over there. A delicacy. They're all after him."

Lily suggests, "Why don't you do your own research. It's not as if he's here right now."

"That not like me."

Lily disagrees, "You? You have to do what's right for your mental health. If you need a little medication to get rid of your headache, take it."

Estelle looks confused, "What do you mean?"

"It doesn't hurt to have a little fun. It's just for now. And if he ever comes back, you never have to tell him."

Estelle can't go along, "That would be wrong. We're still together."

"He asked you to marry him, and you turned him down. Now he's fair game, and so are you. Don't go down with the ship. It's done!"

Estelle feels hurt by Lily's description. She is not going to accept that this is the end.

"I still feel the same love for him. There was nothing like it in my life."

Lily continues her argument. "Right. It made you a better lover. It told you what you need from a man, sex. And you're pretending that you can do without it. You're starving yourself girl. These are the best years of your life. If you don't live now, you're going to regret it while you're older."

"I want something else for myself. I'm hardly going to give in to someone that I don't know, especially after I've known true love."

"Your true love has flown away on an airplane. You are by yourself. You're going to get brain fever if you don't do something quick. All your love juices are going to back up in your head and make you sick."

Estelle laughs, "Where does that nonsense come from?"

"I read it in a romance novel," Lily says.

"It doesn't sound like something that's right for me. If I give myself to a man, I give him my soul. That's why I need to be right about things. I'm not going to hop in bed with the first hot guy that I see.

Lily reminds her "But when you've been this close to a man, it opens up part of your personality. You are able to peer deep into your soul. Once you've felt that feeling, it's like a drug. You need it just to stay sane."

Estelle responds, "A few drinks will be just fine for me."

Estelle notices a guy staring at her. She looks away.

Lily tells her, "I saw that. He's sort of cute. Let him approach you."

"No way. I'm not going to meet another guy in a bar."

"If you remain unapproachable you're only digging your own grave. You don't want to die of a broken heart."

"My heart's not broken. I'm fine just as I am."

When Estelle gets home, she feels that she is taking Lily's advice. Maybe it is the alcohol and the excitement talking, but she is unable to calm down. She has waited all this time for a reason to open her heart. And now her man has taken off to Egypt without her. It feels deflating. Maybe it wouldn't hurt to find someone new. But it doesn't feel right to let go of her one true love. If she's pining away in Atlanta, that must mean that he's probably doing the same in Egypt.

Who is she kidding? Once he got the taste without Estelle, he's one loose horse. Any Philly that comes his way, and he's fair game. The stallion is beating his way around the track, while Miss Priss is locked in her stable.

One fantasy is hardly enough to tide her over. She wants the treat that might emerge full-blooded from a steamy romance novel. She laughs just thinking about how vulnerable she has become. One shy little smirk from the right guy, and she will become putty in their hand. She thinks about the guys in her office. These are the men of honor who have stayed on even after Phil has been dismissed. But they are all so dull.

She thinks about Dan when she first met him. He was a prime example of dull. And then he turned into the wild shirtless wonder. Maybe she could lead her new candidates around in a little pageant. Sort of a dance where each stripped off his cold, business-like attire and showed the world what he really has. She thanks the Lord that she is never trashed when at work. Then she would really embarrass herself.

She finally gets to sleep by trying to put it all out of her mind. If Dan is the man of character, he will wait for her.

Weeks later, Dan sends her this long rambling letter. She is starting to get worried. While he more or less ignored her, she figured that he wasn't really trying to hide anything of consequence. But the letter shows that is making such an effort. He really tries to profess his love for her. There is no precedent for this kind of letter. It comes out of nowhere. All that she can do is read between the lines. He has found someone new. He is trying to convince himself that his new love means nothing. But he knows that he is already overwhelmed. Estelle has just become a go-between.

She has something to go on. But her imagination now starts to get the better of her. If there isn't already a lover, one is sure to materialize. This is not a man in love with her; it is a man falling out of love with her. It feels terrible to come to this realization.

Before she received the letter, she was really thinking about other men. Now she feels just pathetic. There is really nothing that she can do. She wants him back more than ever. Everything is coming to a boil. She feels that she is being scalded. She jumps.

She wants to go crazy. She wants to do something stupid. All that she can do is go hide in her apartment. She drinks a little to try to forget. But that only reminds her of how terrible it is. She realizes that she is getting sloshed. This is not her usual style. She doesn't want to get

into a rut. She has just never faced anything like this before. Almost passed out on her bed, she wonders what could be worse.

Estelle has tried to hide it from Lily. There is nothing that she really can do this late at night. She is on her own. If Dan could just reappear at this moment and throw open the door of the apartment. There is going to be no rescue for the way that she feels. She can't keep thinking this way. Tomorrow after work, she is going to have to get out of the apartment. She is lucky that this is Thursday night and not Monday. She couldn't take a full week like this.

At work the next day, she is dragging. The supposed candidates for love at the office all look pathetic. She hopes to hell that none of them strip off their shirts for her. She wants to be left alone.

When she meets Lily that night, Lily is waiting for her with a cocktail.

Estelle asks, "Are you having two Cosmos?"

Lily answers, "I timed your entrance so that there would be one waiting for you."

"You should have had two the way that I feel," Estelle is really in the dumps.

"Look around, girl."

She does look around and sees nothing. Perhaps she needs more practice. The night seems to spin around like this. Estelle has spent two nights stuck in the mud. She doesn't want to descend into a life of alcoholism.

The next day, Estelle goes to the gym and really sweats it out. Strenuous aerobics and some serious running pulls her back to the top of her game. After a good massage and a nap, she is in the pink.

Lily tells Estelle that her only hope is a night on the town.

"You can't let his silliness bring you down. You've got to live a little.

Even after her work out, she really is still down is really down. The only thing that can get her excited is getting ready to go out. She feels a little reckless tonight. She wants to let everyone know that she is the one.

She smooths body lotion out on her skin. As she works the lotion deep into her legs, her natural attractiveness again radiates all over. She again feels like her old self. As she looks at her body in the mirror, there is no sense of shame. She feels proud how she looks. Her clothes are going to reflect how she is feeling about herself.

Tonight she dons high heels to accentuate her shapely legs. She has bought a special pair of shoes that are squared-off just about the heel. This highlights her look. Her skirt is short and emphasizes that same assertive attitude. There is a sassy confidence in her low cut top.

She promises herself that she's not going to drink tonight. She's going to get intoxicated from the stares of men. Once she meets Lily, she gets into her groove. She notices that a guy is digging on her. She really clicks with his vibe. He keeps looking over and looking away.

"I just had to meet you." He approaches her. He doesn't give his name. She puts out her hand, and he caresses it. Their lips are close enough for a kiss. He slides his body next to hers. They are dancing together even though there is no dance floor. He puts his hand on her lower back. She is really turned on.

This all seems too easy. At this point, she is ready to follow the stranger home. Lily is getting a kick out of it all. She is doing little to try to influence her friend. She thinks the guy will be good for her.

When he goes to the bathroom, Estelle rushes over to Lily. “I want to get out of here. If I don’t, I’m going to sleep with him.”

They run off to E-Merge. It’s going to be a wild night of dancing. But they can hardly give in to all the flirting. It’s a rush for the moment. That is enough for the both of them.

Estelle has to complete the romantic interlude in fantasy. In her dream, she gives into the stranger. His kisses do not stop. And his tongue points the direction of his intent. This is more than satisfaction. This is utter delight where Estelle just loses herself as he explores her body and her soul. She wants to scream out, but she holds it in for a more extreme release.

Her body flutters, then it vibrates to his caresses. The electricity shoots through her so rapidly that she cannot catch herself before another wave shakes her at the core. This quaking gives way to a more gentle rocking back and forth. Their bodies merge together. She has come to know this physical knowledge as the key to unlock a deeper well of spiritual desire. She assumes intimacy even where there is none as this feeling goes to the core of who she is. She is surrendering herself without any constraint.

It is surprising that this feeling unleashes a torrent of animal desire. She craves the most intense stimulation. She is completely turned on by his hard, well-shaped muscles. It could be Dan or it could be any stranger tonight. It is all the same. Two bodies thrashing anonymously in the night trying to forge an identity in flesh and will. This is what turns her on about her desire. It makes her free. There is nothing else on which she depends. There is no tragic history. It is all now.

Estelle retreats in fear from her realization. It makes her a prisoner of her hunger. Whether she longs for Dan or someone new, it gives them a power over her. Once she tastes that honey, she can’t stop herself. She is so grateful that she is alone at this moment. Only she knows this heart of her sin. Only she will touch this secret place.

She lies on her bed and seeks complete relaxation. There is nothing mental about her present state. She wonders how long she can go on like this. She is bouncing back and forth between wanting to dump Dan and wanting to rush to Egypt. She could just send him an email breaking up for good. Its immediacy would beat the traditional Dear John letter. But how can you break up with someone who has already left you.

Part of her wishes that she had got really trashed. She really wants to give in to her desires. What is stopping her? She doesn’t want to feel that Dan and her are over for good. Her hesitancy means that she is still holding out hope for another day.

Estelle wonders if she has to travel to Egypt. Up until now, that has been the furthest thing from her mind. She thought that she could resolve all this on her own. But that hasn’t worked out. She can feel the pressure building. But she can hardly leave work. She almost messed up this opportunity once before. She really has an aptitude for the job.

Sunday evening, Estelle meets Lily for a quiet dinner. They try to resolve Estelle’s dilemma.

“I really should get out of Atlanta for a while.”

Lily wonders, “I thought that you had couldn’t get out of work.”

Estelle says, “I can dream!”

“What you need is a good beach. A tight swim suit would solve all your problems.” Lily offers her remedy.

Estelle feels a little strange about it all, “I think that tight bathing suit would only make me feel that I had problems.”

“You look great. You have nothing to worry about.”

Estelle feels that Lily is just trying to be nice. But it isn't as if Estelle has anything to worry about in anything that she wears. It's not simply that clothes flatter Estelle, Estelle flatters the clothes by wearing them. If it were a Saturday night, this might be the start of a flirt-fest. But this is a Sunday night, and Estelle is trying to slow down the action, not speed it up.

“I think that the beach would only be a distraction,” Estelle remarks.

“Don't tell me that you want to go chase after the love deserter!” Lily hits hard.

“I'm the one that said no to his proposal.”

“You keep saying that. But you had no choice. You just got a job here. What were you supposed to do? You couldn't give up your career and all the work that you did in school just so that you could be the perfect wife in Egypt.”

On Monday morning, Estelle is still thinking about a possible vacation. But she is afraid to mention it to Stephanie. She has only been at her internship for two months. It's hardly time to get away. She can only suffer in silence.

Later in the day, she gets embroiled in a phone conversation with Lily.

“I have to surprise him”

“You're nuts if you're going to run off to Egypt without calling.”

“If I call him, he could say no.”

Lily is certain about her advice, “If he says no, you don't go to Egypt.”

“I know that down deep, he wants me to be there. I can feel it. He said as much in his letter.”

Lily contradicts her, “You said that the letter was a sure sign that he was going to hook up with an Egyptian girl.”

Estelle makes an excuse, “That was my jealousy talking. I should have known better.”

Lily tries to add some humor, “You should have listened to your jealousy. Otherwise, you get to Cairo, and there will be a reason for your jealousy.”

Estelle wonders, “You think that he's going to do something to make me jealous.”

Lily tries to make sense to her, “Girl, you don't get it at all. At least, if you warned him that you were coming, he might try to hide his new lover.”

“You are messing with me, Lily.”

Lily is impatient, “You only hear what you want to hear.”

After a while, Estelle figures that she should get back to work. She can't keep worrying about this. She needs something to get her mind off of Dan. She sees what is happening. She's waiting for some kind of miracle. If she meets a new guy that will be a sign that she can let Dan go.

Estelle feels that she has too much time on her hands. At least when she was in school, there was never a moment to think about crap like this. She is going crazy just trying to get control of herself. So this is what the effects of love are. Before she could always find a new guy if the first one pissed her off too much. This is too crazy. It wasn't supposed to be like this. She never loved Dan this much.

It is strange that she seems to value him more by his absence. Sure she loved being with

him before. But she also took it for granted. Now she aches to feel his body next to hers. She is sailing through her work, but the pressure just make it seem harder. She has no idea what she can do to settle down.

Estelle decides to stay in on a Monday night. If she goes out, this will become the habit. She is just trying avoid making a decision.

She calls Lily at 11. Lily does not have much time to hear about Dan again.

“I told you earlier that we should have gone out tonight.”

“I don’t like the kind of guys that you meet on Monday. They can’t ever keep out of bars. Those guys are alcoholics.”

Lily says, “There’s always Monday night football.”

Estelle is no football fan. But even she knows that it is hardly the season yet.

Lily answers her. “I guess it’s hunting season on eligible men.”

“I’m not really into hunting right now. I don’t want to make a serious mistake when I’m not being reasonable.”

“You just want to do your hunting in North Africa.”

The next day Stephanie has what seems like good new for Estelle.

“We’re ending the internship prematurely so that we can start you on full employment. We do have to give you one week off so that we can get everything squared away. We will give you a small bonus to tide you away.”

Estelle is really excited about the opportunity. She just doesn’t want to squander the gift. She talks to her parent that night. They are giving her money for her graduation. She can go anywhere that she wants for the week. She has money saved up as well.

Estelle meet Lily for dinner to discuss her plans.

Lily advises her, “You’ve got to go to Acapulco.”

“It’s summertime. I was thinking about traveling up North.”

Lily tells her, “You could go see Santa Claus, and he’ll get you a new man.

Estelle answers back, “I could go to Egypt.”

“You’re not going to do that. You’ll need even more money.”

“Not that much more,” Estelle tells Lily.

Estelle has her mind set on Egypt. She has already planned her itinerary. She knows what sights she wants to see.

Estelle tells Lily, “This is going to be like stepping back in time.”

Estelle is so excited that she is celebrating. After a few drinks at dinner, she decides that she needs to go dancing. So they head off together for a lively night.

At the dance club, Estelle meets a man who has been to Egypt before. His name is Norman. He works in banking. Estelle is interested in his experience.

“I know Stephanie. We used to work together.”

Estelle tells him, “That is amazing.”

Norman asks her, “Why do you want to go to Egypt?”

“I’ve heard about the sights.”

“Is that all?” he asks.

“I’ve got a friend who’s there.”

“A guy,” Norman wonders.

“Yes,” she admits.

“I have to warn you. The Egyptian women are beguiling.”

“What about the Egyptian men?” asks Estelle.

Norman laughs, “I never really had time to notice.”

Norman seems like such a sensual man. He is a little older than she is used to. But Estelle finds him charming. She looks around and doesn’t see Lily anywhere.

“We could go back to my place for drinks if you would like,” Norman invites her.

Estelle is a little afraid, “I’ve got to find my friend.”

“You could bring her.”

Estelle wonders what Norman is suggesting. But she is so lively tonight that she is almost ready to try anything. She feels that Norman is becoming her Egypt.

She finds Lily making out with a guy. Lily claims that she will get a cab home.

“It’s a little far, Lily.”

Lily asserts, “I’ll be OK.”

Estelle ends up letting her be on her own. Estelle could leave right now. It is a Tuesday night, and she needs to work the next day. But she is having fun just hearing Norman talk about Egypt.

Estelle ends up going home with him. After a few drinks, she passes out on Norman’s couch. She wakes up around 7, and wonders where she is. She puts her shoes on, and she rushes home. She just has time for coffee and a shower. Then she is off to work.

At work, she feels like a zombie. It has all been too much for her. But she wants to see Norman again. They have never even kissed. But she feels that he can share his knowledge about Egypt.

Estelle wants to catch up with Lily. Lily has her story for Estelle.

“I made out with the guy. Then I left just after you did.”

“I would have waited for you,” Estelle tells Lily.

“I could tell that you were in the middle of a good thing and I didn’t want to interrupt.”

They agree to talk after work. Estelle leaves early and just collapses on her bed. She wakes up around 8. Lily is nowhere to be found. She calls up Norman,

“Do you want to get some dinner?”

“It’s getting late,” she says.”

“I could make you something. Or we could meet at that nice place in Brookwood. It’s open late. And it’s pretty casual.”

The restaurant sounds safer for her.

Norman is really turning on the charm tonight. Estelle is wearing looser-fitting clothes, but he feels a real contentment sitting with her. He senses her attraction. She notices that he is paying closer attention to her tonight. Her hair seems so smooth. He just wants to run his hands through it.

Through dinner, Norman hardly says a thing. It is clear that he wants her to come back to his place. As she settles in her chair with her glass of wine, his interest seems only too tempting. He is a charming guy. What’s not to like about him? And he’s so clever about everything. It gives her a rush just to realize what is going on. He doesn’t even try to touch her. But his look is almost hypnotic. It is as if he has learned a special technique to render women helpless.

She barely hears his words. She only hears the music. The music is inviting her to come along. She hasn't worn her amulet necklace since Dan left. But she has it on tonight.

"That is beautiful," he says.

"My friend got it for me. It's from Egypt.

"I know," he says.

"That's where my friend is now." She's not sure what that's supposed to mean. Is she telling him that she has a friend who just happens to be in Egypt. Or is she telling Norman not to worry about Dan because he is in Egypt. Either way, it only seems to encourage him. He seems to move his chair slightly her way.

Estelle realizes that she is going to have to make a decision. His voice is so lulling. Her lips have a gleam to them. He is focusing on their pout. He is kissing her lips with his eyes. She can feel herself surrendering to her charm. Norman is touching in places to make her feel helpless. He runs his hands through her hair. He pushes his way next to her. He touches her hand.

Estelle can't tell if this is only fantasy. But she is going along with his advances. It is only a short step to going back to his house. She wants to catch her breath, but she has become so involved in the mischief. Yes, Dan is far away in Egypt, and he can't do anything. Her love is so far away.

Estelle sits up quickly. She snaps out of the spell.

"I need to get home."

Norman looks surprised, "We haven't even had dessert."

"I have to get ready for Egypt."

He asks, "Are you leaving tomorrow?"

"No," she says. "But I need to get there. I need to get ready."

The die is now cast. No other man will be right for her. She needs to see Dan again. Once she gets home, she gets on the computer. She books her ticket.

Lily talks to her in the morning.

"I'm sorry that I didn't return your call. I left my phone at work."

Estelle tell her the news.

"Are you crazy? He may totally reject you."

Estelle says, "I have to take that risk."

Lily doesn't let up.

"You are going to have to get together with me after work to talk."

Estelle seems frantic, "I have to pack for my trip."

"You're not going for over a week. If you're panicking now, you're going to be over the edge by then. That's not how you want to be when you fly that distance."

At this point, no one can dissuade her. She has recognized her weakness. She would have gone home with Norman. Despite his charm, they wouldn't have lasted more than a week or so. And then there would be other Normans.

Estelle touches her amulet for its miraculous power. She has to get her life back. Egypt is her only solution.

At dinner, Lily is unrelenting, "The trip might have been a good idea if Dan was welcoming you there. As it is, this could be the disaster of a lifetime."

Estelle still won't be dissuaded. She has committed herself. Nothing is going to stand in her way.

She tells Lily. "I can feel it in my bones. It is destiny. If you've ever felt this kind of magic, there is nothing that you can do."

Lily jokes, "I've felt that kind of magic. But then he tried to kiss me in the morning."

"It's not like that."

Lily makes her point, "The hell it's not. You're mistake is just a more expensive version of the same thing. But your prince may not want to even kiss you."

"I've made up my mind."

Lily is still trying. "You're being stubborn. I'm not saying that you have to agree with me outright. Just break down the argument logically."

"I have. I've made list upon list. And every detail tells me to go after my dream. I have to find Dan. I have to go to Egypt."

Lily can see that Estelle is possessed. She just has to go along with it for the time being. If Estelle is going to fly off for Egypt, she has to be as well prepared as possible.

Estelle can hardly believe that she is going. She has never done anything this daring. Why she's even afraid to go over to a stranger's house. She's going to a country of strangers. Her only salvation is to find her love. She had nightmares about this journey. But now it is set in stone. In ten days she will be on a flight. She takes a deep breath. This is all a matter of the will. And she has taken the only possible option. Otherwise, she would wonder all her life if she had just let him slip away.