

## 8. EMPTY-HANDED

When Estelle arrives back in Atlanta, she feels as if a chapter in her life has closed. She has experienced something so affecting in Egypt that she is unsure who she is anymore. She has been completely devastated by her meeting with Dan. She had expected this great romantic moment with violins playing. Instead, her heart seemed to collapse.

As she rubs her finger along the amulet that she received from Dan, she touches magic that has nothing to do with him at all. She had entered the pyramids under the influence of Dan's love. But once inside, she had seen a sensuality that was so contrary to anything that she was used to. It is under this spell that she now lives her life.

She could have wished the worse for Dan when she left. Or she could have made a fuss. She just turned her back on it all and rushed back to Atlanta. Good riddance.

When Lily first sees Estelle, she notices something has really changed. Estelle is no longer the cowering little girl that she has known for years. Where she used to be a sweet tea with a slice of lemon, now she is a dark rich coffee with a touch of chocolate. There is a new flavor to her actions. She will no longer wait for a man. She knows what she wants.

There are nights when she can still feel the mysterious presence of Omar. She now understands the idea of the ancient curse where a soul searching for a body to inhabit. The rightful spirit has finally taken possession of her body.

She can't rush back to Egypt to find Omar or anyone else. Ultimately she feels that she was not meant to leave her Georgia home. She is like a tree whose roots have been planted deep. And they have are extending their hold.

Estelle wants to do something to take her mind off of the fiasco with Dan. She decides that she is going to sand and finish an antique table that she bought at a garage sale. She heads off to the home improvement store so that she can get all the necessary supplies. She looks a little lost as she is gathering her purchases together. He looks at her as if he is giving her the help that she needs.

She wonders to herself, "Do you work here?"

He obviously doesn't. But he disappears before she can say a word. Later, the two of them are together in the check out lane. She hardly thinks about it, but they are talking.

"You seem quite the expert here."

"I'm handy around the house," he says.

Estelle has a quick comeback, "I bet your wife loves you for that."

"I'm not married," he maintains.

"Never?" she asks.

"No, not even close." He is excited just standing next to her. He wants to do something more to attract her interest. "What are you doing after you finish your table?" he asks.

She didn't even tell him that she was working on a table. She had already felt that he is clairvoyant. "I don't even know if I want to do this today."

"I could come over and help."

They have already finished checking out and are standing in front of the register.

She answers, "You seem nice and helpful, but I don't even know you."

"I'm Barry."

“Hello, Barry. I’m Estelle.” When they shake hands, he leaves his on hers longingly. They look each other straight in the eyes. She feels a spark rush through her.

“We could get some dinner later on,” he says.

It seems a little forced. But she can already feel the chemistry. Besides, she doesn’t want to let herself miss another opportunity. She needs to think with her heart, not her head.

He takes her number on his cell phone. “I’ll call you, and we can meet somewhere.”

Barry ends up having Estelle drive all the way out to the Dunwoody. He knows a nice restaurant near Perimeter Mall. She’s used to running around in her neighborhood. She feels a little out of place since she is not on her home turf. He is able to immediately catch her off guard. But this is almost what she wants. She is waiting to be swept off of her feet. This is only the first step.

“You look good enough to eat,” he tosses her an off-handed comment.

Estelle smiles. She suggests, “You better pay closer attention to the menu.”

Barry seems a little too smooth to her. Does he often do this kind of thing?

Estelle asks, “What were you doing getting home improvement stuff in Buckhead?”

“That’s where I work,” he tells her. “I had to go in on a Saturday to check on a few things.”

Estelle wants to know what he does for a living. “What’s your office?”

“I’m a jewelry broker.”

Estelle comments, “So you’re used to keeping your eyes on dazzling things.”

He asks, “Are you fishing for more complements?”

“It wouldn’t hurt,” she says. “So you do a lot of traveling?”

“I get around,” he tells her.

“I just came back from Egypt.”

“What did you go to Egypt for?”

“I was trying to win back an ex.”

“I guess that it didn’t work,” he says.”

Estelle questions him. “How would you know that? Is this more of your mind reading?”

“If it had have worked, you’d probably be with him.”

Now she hates that he’s reminded her that she’s alone. It’s simply not enough that he is looking at her at this moment. Estelle feels the hollow inside over Dan.

He smiles for her, “I’m good at fixing breaking hearts.”

She asks, “How can you do that? I didn’t find you in the broken heart department, did I?”

Barry answers, “Let’s just say that I know what’s girl’s best friend.”

She quizzes him, “Diamonds? Her mother?”

He laughs, “It’s something that has to be shown not said.”

The boy does have a mouth on him. What’s the poor girl to do.

During dinner, he does everything that he can to play the gentleman. He recommends wines. He talks about classic movies and good music. He wants to take her to the symphony or to the ballet. She gets lost in his eyes.

If it is moving too quickly, that is what she needs. She has spent too much time trying to strategize love. It’s hardly about that. She just wants his deep kisses and tender caresses. She doesn’t want to stop.

He has played his home court to his advantage. Now he needs to set up the perfect endgame. The sparkle of candlelight help create that mesmerizing hold. He only has to suggest and she will follow through.

For Estelle's part, she wanted this to be different. She did everything that she could to have this be just the beginning. He'd take her on a romantic picnic. Or they'd go on an excursion to the mountains. But her body is the only height that he wants to scale. She feels obliging at the moment.

Before she knows it, he is on top of her in his apartment. They are making out. There seems little doubt about the outcome of the evening. She does everything that she can to speed it along. He looks at her exposed legs and her luxurious blond hair. It is his dream, at least for the moment. He moves his body rhythmically with her. He is trying to get her excited.

Estelle realizes that there is a point at which she won't be able to hold herself back. She is screaming with desire. Now she is famished for love. She wants to devour him whole.

Her hands explore daringly. He craves her boldness. The room is shaking. He whispers in her ear. It sends shivers through her body. She pulls him closer.

The excitement causes her to jolt. He thinks that she is cold.

"Are you warm enough?"

She answers seductively, "I am inside."

He melts hearing her words. His desire is fluid. He can't contain himself. He kisses her neck so that he can focus his attraction. He becomes more aggressive. He almost pulls her hair. She gets into his forcefulness. Her legs are wrapped around his. Even dressed, he can feel her body heat. It only drives him on.

She says to herself, "What's your name?"

"Dan, or Omar, or Barry. I'll be who you want me to be."

The ghost in her has found the perfect match. He is a phantom with one thing in mind, pleasure. As he runs his hands along her body, she feels that she has finally discovered that flame that makes her go. And now it is burning brighter than ever. This is more than the heat of passion. It is more profound than that. This is her eternity. She doesn't have to worry about the future. Her present with Barry is satisfying enough.

Up until this point, there have been no second thoughts on Estelle's part. But things are beginning to change for her. She doesn't even know Barry, and he is all over her. This is not what she wanted at all.

"No!" she says.

He makes a strange face, "I thought that we were having fun." His shirt is half-open. His hair is a mess. They both sit up. She affects a slouch. Her legs are spread across the rug.

"This was really silly."

"That's cool," he tells her. We were having a good time. We can continue this another time."

He has played his hand too soon. There will be no other time. This was perfect to get back her confidence. But she is not going to sleep with the home improvement man even if he does deal in diamonds. He's just the sort never to offer her a stone. If she stays with him, diamonds will never be her best friend.

When she gets home, Estelle is beat. But she can still sense the rush from the evening.

She can savor this for herself. The more that she reflects on her feeling, the more that she is moved by the night's passion. She brushes her amulet. This is a powerful effect.

When she falls asleep, she can sense that she is being lulled underground. She returns in sleep to her natural home. There she completes what she could not with Barry. It is the culmination of any desire, a spiritual contentment. She again feels a wonderful pride about her body.

At work, she is a little blitzed from the night before. Barry calls her cell phone, but he's already history. He seemed all too calculated. She didn't mind her own assertiveness. But she can hardly give in to his offer. She respects herself more than that. There were never going to be any ballets or concerts. He knew what to say at the moment. On another lonely night, he'd be offering emotional rescue to another girl.

Men just see her as all her attractive parts, her hair, her legs, her lips, her breasts. She feels as she's coming apart at the seams. It is hard keeping herself together under the circumstances. This is the total opposite of a phantom trying to take possession of her body. It is more like the phantom who has been possessing her has drifted away, and now she can't hold things together.

In the past, she may have doubted if she was attractive. This is more than that. Attractiveness is hardly sufficient to stop her slide. She feels less than perfect. Estelle is unsure what she can do to ease her discomfort.

Her experience of Egypt still lingers in her heart. She is doing everything that she can do not to dwell on how the mystery has affected her soul. She tries to fill her days with any distraction. But it really isn't working. The curse is still part of her psyche. And when she gets ready for bed, there is this feeling of apprehension. She tries to fall asleep. She is lying still on her bed. But there is a too much of this chill shaking her up.

She feels almost like a child staring into the darkness. She knows something is there. She wants to hide. But she needs to let her curiosity lead the way. This was that feeling that influenced her in the pyramids. There is this hot warmth that now fills her room. It is more than the electricity of night passion.

The dreamy intoxication now swirls around her. The air is suffocating. But she is losing consciousness. Her fatigue has caught up with her. As her eyes get heavy, she is already drifting in the nether world. Her visions now have a clarity that she has never had before since her visit to Egypt. These dreams are again emerging for her again.

Estelle has tried to hold back. But now she can feel the rush taking her over. She can hardly believe that is back again in the murky air of the pyramids. And she can feel these caresses wash over her body. At first, she is a little hesitant to go along with the changes. But then she accepts the kisses from her phantom lover.

None of this is real. But she finds it so comforting. And it reminds her of the torrid days with Omar. There is something in her dream that seems even more powerful than anything that she could have done in Egypt. But she doesn't care. That is just enough for her. She wants this excitement.

Estelle can feel Omar's lips cover her body. His tongue explores all the crevices of her flesh. Each time that she tries to resist, his touch provokes a new sensation. She is delirious.

She is in the midst of a dream. Estelle can hardly reason why she left Egypt? But this

seems like her ancestral home. This is her life. Everything else seems lifeless.

She feels so much alive in her nakedness. In the dream, these feelings get mixed with her striving for the spirit. And she hears the eternal calling. It is like a flame that never goes out. It burns the body until it is a passion without the flesh. It lives on sheer will.

Estelle needs the influences of Egypt to take her beyond the rather narrow world of Atlanta. In her dream, she now extends beyond herself. If she woke up at this moment, the same magic would not last. She needs to feel the echoes within her.

This is the trick that now haunts her. If she wakes up, Omar will have stolen her soul. She needs to dig deeper in this dream for something that she can take back to her workaday world. Otherwise her heart will forever be buried in a world of dreams and magic.

The solution is almost brutal in its form. There is no doubt about this part of the dream. It is much more aggressive than before. Things had seemed symbolic and other worldly. Now it is more sexual in form. She moves along with her ravisher. She welcomes his deep touch. He explores her body to release all of its extremes of desire. She is still asleep, but she almost cries out as she tries hang out through this intense exertion.

She can feel her body passing through such dramatic changes. Emotional climax follows emotional climax. She is almost on a roller coaster. The ride is descending, and she is shrieking. She wants to hold on. She cannot. She is slipping. She is just dragged along by the flow.

The room seems to quake. She feels this sense of contentment. But she has been found out. This is not guilt. Just a sense of helplessness.

When Estelle wakes up, she can't get over the intensity of her dream. It stays with her the whole day. Obviously, she can't go back to Egypt. She needs to talk things through with Lily.

"I've sworn off bars," Estelle seems forceful. Her feeling won't last. But she needs to be assertive for the moment.

"What's wrong?" asks Lily. She is nibbling her goat cheese appetizer.

"That's what I'm wondering. I feel as if I'm unattractive. It gives me the creeps."

Lily looks at her, "You don't have a thing to worry about."

Estelle tells her about her dream. "I feel as if I'm a flower wilting in the hot sun. I'm getting older by the second."

"You have nothing to worry about. You're a knockout."

Estelle looks at her make up in the mirror. It seems like a bad mask. Everything about her seems brassy and cheap. She longs for the natural life that she experienced when she was abroad. But she can't run away from her new job. There is nowhere to go. She has been rejected by the man that she loved. This is all so hopeless.

After a few drinks, she is recovering some of her old charm. She can feel the spark starting to brew inside her. But she wants to stick to her guns. No partying after dinner.

Estelle's strictness with herself is such a comedown after dinner. Somehow she needs to close the door on the world. When she is home, she realizes her mistake. Now she is again the proximity of the same nightmare.

Estelle is now a little jumpy before bed. She obviously can't drink coffee. More drinking is out of the question. She takes a long shower and has some water. Then she tries to settle down.

Her experience of the night before now seems like only a memory. Other thoughts fill her

head. She feels relieved as sleep comes upon her.

Tonight's dream is more explicit. There is no so much of a spiritual side to her experience. It is more directly sexual. It reminds her how she misses the touch of a man.

Estelle hates the fact that she has been punished for staying in. She was worried that partying might make her more vulnerable. But she now aches for a real lover. This is almost getting in the way of her job. Nevertheless, she has this restful sleep. Satisfied, she wakes to a hearty breakfast. Her appetite is at its peak. She is a little surprised that she has eaten so much. But she needs to be ready for the day.

Estelle seems to breeze through her accounts. She has a few phone calls to make. Then she attends a general meeting. Stephanie seems impressed by her performance. She has no idea of the turmoil that is brewing in Estelle's soul.

By later in the evening, Estelle relents on her pledge not to go to a bar.

"It is Friday night," Lily reminds her.

The girls eat a light dinner and race into the eye of the hurricane. Estelle wants to see if a real man can measure up to the phantom lover of her dreams

Estelle asks, "how can I tell if a guy will measure up to my expectations."

Lily is full of glee, "That depends on what are your expectations."

Estelle has seen the insides of the pyramids. She expects it all.

Evan seems like the kind of guy to offer it all. He is much more sophisticated than the run of the mill guys that she has been encountering. He works as an architect. He has plans to leave his mark on the world. His vision is more lofty than Dan's. He wants to take the raw form of the steel and stone and turn it into something immaterial. He is the perfect balance to her dream lover. For the moment, he could accept that role,.

He initiates her into a world of exotic martinis. He lets these elixirs do the talking for him. He is eloquent. He adjusts his jacket as she tries to lead her around the room in an elaborate dance. Of course, they stay seated, but he makes her feel as if he is ready to escort her around the world.

He takes a long look at her dress and is turned on by what he sees. It is slightly low-cut in the front. It is pulled tight at the belt. He runs his fingers along the waste. She holds his hand against her hips.

"Do you like that?"

Of course, he does. She has been saving herself. And now she has to surrender completely. It is not even a question. He ends up back at her place. Fortunately for her, she passes out on the couch. The next morning, she looks at the mess and hopes for some kind of rescue. It is not coming. She thinks about sneaking out. But she considers another round with her new find. This encounter will not be tainted by too much alcohol.

In the light of the daytime, Evan seems more appealing. They share an early lunch. Then she needs to retreat.

"I've had enough for now, Evan. We can continue this another time."

He impresses himself on her and goes for an evening rendezvous. She just needs to retreat for a long shower and a good nap. She doesn't want night two to end up the same way as night one.

When they get together for dinner, it is obvious that Evan is giving it everything that he

has. Estelle needs this one. She can feel his kisses non-stop. She imagines a long night. But by dessert the sweet taste is beginning to hit its bitter core.

“What the hell,” she tells herself. She only loves once. An after dinner drink, and she’ll go along with anything. That is just how she feels until the deadline gets closer. She keeps looking for a handy window to make her getaway.

Evan is not really taking no for an answer. And his kisses played in real time seem forced. There is little that she can do to get on track. The door is seeming farther and farther away. But she is willing to crawl if she has to.

Evan is smiling his gigantic smile as he moves his hands along her gentle legs. This is the prize that he has been dreaming about all day. She is trying to squirm out of this. But when she closes her eyes, Evan tastes like the lover of her dreams. She can smell the honey. She doesn’t want to stop.

Estelle wonders why she can take one for the team. As she gets closer to the point of no return, she just wants to get out. Evan thinks that he is doing a good job.

In her imagination, she tells him, “I’ve got you this far. Just do the rest on your own.”

She says as much before she leaves. She can see him in the throes of ecstasy congratulating himself.

When Estelle gets home, she again wonders what is wrong with herself. She could have had a night of guiltless pleasure. Instead, she heads home all pent up. She needs to relax. There is no dream lover tonight. This is her meager harvest. She sleeps soundly, She awakens refreshed and very alone.

Estelle is beginning to think that she’s got it all wrong. She’s tried to work it out with a couple of men since she’s been back. And nothing is happening. When she gets together for a drink with Estelle, she sounds more than a little desperate.

Lily offers her philosophy, “Give him a little, and get him to come back.”

Estelle wonders what she has to give. And does she really want the Evans of the world to make a return trip.

Lily adds, “Every so often you need a guy to take care of you. You need his warm touch.”

Lily is attractive. She is full of confidence about herself. But her philosophy only seems at a dead end. Where are these wonderful men that she extolls. If it was that great, Lily wouldn’t be alone too.

Estelle comments, “I don’t want some guy hanging around for a while, and then just disappearing. I’ll be right back where I started from.”

Lily counters, “It’s not about that at all. It’s about getting a little comfort for yourself. Someone to warm you up on a cold night.”

“Warmth is one thing. I’m not looking to get burned. If I wanted your kind of love, I’d get a puppy.”

Lily rolls her eyes, “A man can give you things that no puppy can!”

Even if she is alone, Lily plays it fast and loose so that she doesn’t have to embrace her solitude. These physical encounters replace prolonged intimacy. It seems to do her fine. She doesn’t mind having a picnic with a guy with whom she shares little in common.

Lily describes her point of view, “It’s not like we sit around talking about the weather. “

She jokes, "If there's work to get done, we do it!"

Estelle finds it all so messy. "You make it sound mechanical. I want a love that lasts. Something that gets down in the soul."

"Dear, this ain't religion."

Estelle wonders, "I know that you get really lonely. You just don't admit it."

"It's one thing to feel alone. But it's like any feeling. It passes. You hook up with the wrong man and end up giving up your heart, and you dwell on it for months."

Estelle is still a believer, "But there's nothing like true love."

"What good is love if you end up like you are now? It's no difference if it's Dan or some guy that you met the other night."

Estelle feels dismayed. Lily seems to be cutting so close. It reminds Estelle of the hurt that she feels. There is something there inside that is even deeper than the nightmares or all that rigamarole from the other night with Evan. It is almost like the putrid smell of sulphur that hangs in the air. There is little that she can do to dispel it.

She wishes that Lily's advice would help. It just seems like the road to ruin. Sure if she was more intimate with a guy, it would get him coming back. And Estelle might feel even more attached to him. But all this seems like a fatal recipe. When she would finally wake up and would realize that there was there, then she'd hate herself for it.

Estelle has already gone through this conflict with Dan. She was so hesitant to become physically involved with him. But her patience paid off. If she worked it out once, that can happen again. The only problem now is that she is trying to develop trust in a looking-glass world. All the men that she meets are lost in self-admiration. Even their careers are just a added gem on their crowns of vanity.

As the night progresses, the girls are a little tipsy. Luckily, they don't have far to drive. Estelle is going to put Lily up for the evening.

Lily has not always been so cynical. She was going to get married to Louis. For six months, she planned for the ceremony. Her father spent all this money getting things ready. At the last moment, Louis chickened out. Lily later found out that there was more to it. He had been with another girl for months. He kept up the pretense for Lily. When Lily was hit by the news, it was devastating. She had put all her eggs in the one basket, and the basket had gotten tossed uncontrollably in the air. It was only with Estelle's help that she was again able to face the world. She made herself tough. But she lost her soft center. In its place, she developed a tough exterior that wouldn't break for anything. That is why she is so committed to her pleasures. They serve her for the time being. She wants to find a good man. But she gives so much time to the rotten apples, that she is starting to accept that fate.

Estelle sees the choices for herself. She can become like Lily. Or she can continue this monastic life. Her celibacy isn't what it's cracked up to be. It means living her romantic life in her dreams. And inevitably these dreams sour into nightmares. Her trip to Egypt told her that there was something else in her life. Those warm nights with the gentle breezes enlightened her about a deep romantic love that had nothing to do with her heritage. But that was her fear. She couldn't let go and give herself completely. When she saw Dan, she was reminded of the purpose of her trip. She lost some of the power that she had gained with Omar.

There may be some truth to her dreams. She had to find someone who can live life with



that same abandon. Someone who is not there to suck her dry. Someone who can renew her with his kisses. She recognizes that feeling. She wants to wake up in the morning in his arms completely refreshed. This is the total opposite to scurrying in the morning to find her clothes and get out, before the guy of the night realizes what has come over him.

Estelle sees the cycle as wearing her down. Eventually sex will just become this addicting drug. She won't seek it because it's something that she likes. Instead, she'll fear coming down by herself. The lows will get worse and worse. That is why she'll need the lulling kisses just to keep herself sane. Then she'll pretend that this is something that she really likes so that she won't have to admit how deep in the crap she is.

Estelle has known the deep promise of a real love. Even if Dan didn't live up to his end of the deal, there is something inside of her that she won't let go of. She knows that she can find that again.

Estelle looks over at Lily. She seems ready to pass out. Estelle needs to prop her up if she is going to get her back to the apartment. For a while, Estelle thought that she was just as zoned as Lily. Now it is obvious that is not the case. Estelle sobers up and wants to get out of this bar before they turn on the lights.

Over breakfast, Lily and Estelle further discuss the dilemma.

Estelle says, "We need to go somewhere new. Maybe a book club."

Lily underlines the problem, "You're the same as me. We want successful guys. Not total losers. But it takes real drive to make it happen. And it makes you lose your soul."

Lily objects, "I'm not like that."

"Look where that gets you. Heartbreak. We all go through that one big break up. And then we wise up to the world. You realize that love is just a good lay that lasts."

"That sounds like BS. You don't really believe that, do you?"

"If you get good and liquored up, it feels as good as anything real."

Lily wonders, "But you're the one who's going on picnics with these guys. You have to face them in the daylight."

Lily has her own version of events."

"After a few drinks and making out on the grass, I'm not facing any daylight."

Estelle believes that Lily's philosophy has become monstrous over the last year. Maybe that incident with Phil only added to her attitude. She realized how a man had almost wrecked their friendship. In a sense, this has only made her less careful. She has substituted the extreme highs of physical pleasure for any hopes for a deeper romance.

Estelle now depends on Lily to make her whole again. She sees the utter hopelessness of this quest. Lily can't even guide herself. What advice can she offer her friend?

A night with Lily in the apartment has meant that Estelle didn't have her gripping dreams. She has missed the visitation of her phantom lover. However, she recognizes the severe limits of her fantasy. That too can become addicting. The wall will only close around her. That seems the ghost's intention. It is burying Estelle deep in the pyramid of the mind, a pyramid of her own making.

Estelle wants to see the light. It is a beautiful day. There is a crispness in the air. This is hardly like the North. Late Fall and Winter are generally mild. Although a cold day can take its toll.

Lily needs a ride back to her car. After she drops off Lily, Estelle decides that she is going to take a walk in Piedmont Park. It is the perfect day for a walk. Estelle is wearing a light sweater.

As she walks around the park, she notices a cute guy with a dog. She tells herself that he's not following her. But he keeps on the same path that she is on. Even when she changes course, he is there. She stops by the lake. She is looking over the waters from the bridge. He is just behind her. He has a big smile on his face. She is waiting for him to stop. She is planning to reach down and pet his dog.

The man stops briefly. It is just enough to get Estelle going. Her heart races for a brief moment. She is getting caught up in the feeling. She would even kiss him here. She doesn't know him. But Estelle believes her first impression. He smiles at her.

Estelle opens her mouth to say something. She realizes that the man has only stopped to adjust the leash in his hand. He walks on. His back is to her. She feels as if she is being abandoned.

Her walk has been her exercise for the day. It hasn't been very strenuous. But it is enough to make her feel alive. She has a light lunch and a nap. She rents a DVD and watches it.

It is a Saturday night. The girls are going to make the rounds of the clubs.

Crissy joins Estelle and Lily. Estelle has hardly seen her in the last year. She had found a steady guy, and this kept her out of circulation, but Mr. Wonderful's freshness has finally expired. And Crissy wants to see what she has been missing.

A little new blood makes the girl's search seem less hopeless. Crissy has always been the go-getter. She is able to squeeze blood from a stone. Tonight she finds a lovely guy amidst the hapless rest of the brew crew. Estelle only watches her success.

"This is Steven." Crissy talks about him as if she has known him for years. If she is alone for now, she doesn't want that state to last. Steven seems serviceable for the time being.

Lily and Estelle look at each other in astonishment.

Lily tries to size up the situation, "So that is what's been happening. We arrive a little late on most nights, and all the great guys have been taken. Maybe that's the secret."

Estelle disagrees, "If we thought that was the case, we'd stake out these places all the time. I thought that was part of the problem."

Lily won't give up, "You've got to give Crissy her due."

After a while, Estelle gets a little perturbed. Crissy is on the couch making out with her new find.

Lily observes, "She is wasting no time!"

Estelle isn't so accommodating.

"She was suppose to hang out with us and talk."

Lily notes, "If we were going to talk, we shouldn't have come to a dance club."

Estelle says, "She isn't doing much dancing."

"She's saving the dancing for the dark." Lily laughs.

Lily and Estelle get drinks for themselves. "A good gin makes a break the perfect martini," says Lily.

"I didn't know that you were an expert."

"I need something to hold me together."

Estelle notes, "I think that Crissy has found her glue."

Lily describes the situation. "Crissy has just broken up with a guy. She's still warm. A guy can sense that. That's what attracts him. If she waited, then she'd be like us, two cold fish."

"That sounds stupid. I don't feel like a cold fish. And I never felt that thing when I broke up with Dan."

Lily reminds her, "When you first came back from Egypt, all these guys were after you. Besides, you never had a complete break. So you spent all this time just wallowing around waiting for him to come back. Guys don't want to go back to your place and have you drone on about your ex. A guy wants to think that you're the only thing in his life. It gives him the confidence to go out tramping with the boys."

If she listened to Lily, she'd be overwhelmed by her life. She thanks her lucky stars that she enjoys her work. Otherwise, the club life would be the be all and end all of her experience. She wishes that she could do more traveling. But she has just come back from her trip. Maybe that is the problem in her life. She has let these Southern roots become too comfortable in the Georgia clay. She needs to fly away from herself. She can't become Lily or Crissy. That would be her death.

Estelle tries one of Lily's martinis. For the time being it warms her insides. She contemplates the night in a good way. She is relaxing. She is spreading her wings.

There's a guy over there by the bar. He is calling her over. She can feel the magic. They head off to dance. She is having a great time. Who knows what might happen?