

# Isak Dinesen

## Quotes

*People, Thinking, Men, Real, Dream, Ideas, Lying, Heart, Stories, World, Long,  
Writing, Country, Running, Morning, Eye, Believe, Art, Night, Law*

The cure for anything is salt water: sweat, tears or the sea.

~Isak Dinesen

You can't change the past, but you can ruin the present by worrying about the future.

~Isak Dinesen

I don't believe in evil; I believe only in horror. In nature there is no evil, only an abundance of horror: the plagues and the blights and the ants and the maggots.

~Isak Dinesen

There is something about safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows and feel as if you had drunk half a bottle of champagne "bubbling over with heartfelt gratitude for being alive."

~Isak Dinesen

There are many ways to the recognition of truth, and Burgundy is one of them.

~Isak Dinesen

God made the world round so we would never be able to see too far down the road.

~Isak Dinesen

When you have a great and difficult task, something perhaps almost impossible, if you only work a little at a time, every day a little, suddenly the work will finish itself.

~Isak Dinesen

A giraffe is so much a lady that one refrains from thinking of her legs, but remembers her as floating over the plains in long garb, draperies of morning mist her mirage.

~Isak Dinesen

Coffee, according to the women of Denmark, is to the body what the Word of the Lord is to the soul.

~Isak Dinesen

What is it which is bought dearly, offered for nothing, and then most often refused?--Experience, old people's experience.

~Isak Dinesen

Love, with very young people, is a heartless business. We drink at that age from thirst, or to get drunk; it is only later in life that we occupy ourselves with the individuality of our wine.

~Isak Dinesen

Be not afraid of absurdity; do not shrink from the fantastic. Within a dilemma, choose the most unheard-of, the most dangerous solution. Be brave, be brave.

~Isak Dinesen

"Do you know a cure for me?" Why yes," he said, "I know a cure for everything. Salt water." Salt water?" I asked him. Yes," he said, "in one way or the other. Sweat, or tears, or the salt sea".

~Isak Dinesen

There is something about Safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows

~Isak Dinesen

Here I am, where I am supposed to be.

~Isak Dinesen

I think all sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.

~Isak Dinesen

It's an odd feeling-farewell-there is some envy in it. Men go off to be tested for courage and if we're tested at all, it's for patience, for doing without, for how well we can endure loneliness.

~Isak Dinesen

our longing is our pledge, and blessed are the homesick, for they shall come home.

~Isak Dinesen

A poet's mission is to make others confound fiction and reality in order to render them, for an hour, mysteriously happy.

~Isak Dinesen

People who dream when they sleep at night know of a special kind of happiness which the world of the day holds not, a placid ecstasy, and ease of heart, that are like honey on the tongue.

~Isak Dinesen

To be a person is to have a story to tell.

~Isak Dinesen

You know you are truly alive when you're living among lions.

~Isak Dinesen

I have before seen other countries, in the same manner, give themselves to you when you are about to leave them.

~Isak Dinesen

Truth is for tailors and shoemakers. I, on the contrary, have always held that the Lord has a penchant for masquerades.

~Isak Dinesen

There is a particular happiness in giving a man whom you like very much, good food that you have cooked yourself.

~Isak Dinesen

I think it will be truly glorious when women become real people and have the whole world open to them.

~Isak Dinesen

If there were one more thing I could do, it would be to go on safari once again.

~Isak Dinesen

Up in this air you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: Here I am, where I ought to be.

~Isak Dinesen

Write a little every day, without hope, without despair.

~Isak Dinesen

To me, the explanation of life seems to be its melody, its pattern. And I feel in life such an infinite, truly inconceivable fantasy.

~Isak Dinesen

It is not the visions but the activity which makes you happy, and the joy and glory of the flier is the flight itself.

~Isak Dinesen

It is when people are told their own thoughts that they think they are being insulted.

~Isak Dinesen

Man and woman are two locked caskets, of which each contains the key to the other.

~Isak Dinesen

I had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills.

~Isak Dinesen

It is difficult to restrain admirers of Shakespeare once they have begun to speak of him.

~Isak Dinesen

I beg of you, you good people who want to hear stories told: look at this page and recognize the wisdom of my grandmother and of all old story-telling women!

~Isak Dinesen

The best of my nature reveals itself in play, and play is sacred.

~Isak Dinesen

We invent the past and remember the future.

~Isak Dinesen

The lime trees were in bloom. But in the early morning only a faint fragrance drifted through the garden, an airy message, an aromatic echo of the dreams during the short summer night.

~Isak Dinesen

Real art must always involve some witchcraft.

~Isak Dinesen

What is man, when you come to think upon him, but a minutely set, ingenious machine for turning with infinite artfulness, the red wine of Shiraz into urine?

~Isak Dinesen

If only I could so live and so serve the world that after me there should never again be birds in cages.

~Isak Dinesen

There are times of great beauty on a coffee farm. When the plantation flowered in the beginning of the rains, it was a radiant sight, like a cloud of chalk, in the mist of the drizzling rain.

~Isak Dinesen

My love was both humble and audacious, like that of a page for his lady.

~Isak Dinesen

But by the time that I had nothing left, I myself was the lightest thing of all for fate to get rid of.

~Isak Dinesen

Do you know...what I think is a great pity? It is this: that we have all become such skeptics that we hardly believe what our pious grandmothers told us.

~Isak Dinesen

I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

~Isak Dinesen

I do not think that I could ever really love a woman who had not, at one time or another, been up on a broomstick.

~Isak Dinesen

Within our whole universe the story only has the authority to answer that cry of heart of its characters, that one cry of heart of each of them: "Who am I?"

~Isak Dinesen

All sorrows can be borne if you can put them into a story.

~Isak Dinesen

The pleasure of the true dreamer does not lie in the substance of the

dream, but in this: that there things happen without any interference from his side, and altogether outside his control.

~Isak Dinesen

I had seen a herd of Elephant travelling through dense native forest ... pacing along as if they had an appointment at the end of the world.

~Isak Dinesen

Man reaches the highest point of lovableness at 12 to 17 - to get it back, in a second flowering, at the age of 70 to 90

~Isak Dinesen

I start with a tingle, a kind of feeling of the story I will write. Then come the characters, and they take over, they make the story.

~Isak Dinesen

death - a passage outside the range of imagination, but within the range of experience.

~Isak Dinesen

Where a pack of monkeys had traveled over the road, the smell of them lingered for a long time in the air, a dry and stale, mousy smell.

~Isak Dinesen

Truth, like time, is an idea arising from, and dependent upon, human intercourse.

~Isak Dinesen

It is often the case with a new idea that when it comes knocking on society's door with modesty and the best premises for its existence, there is a tremendous outcry from inside.

~Isak Dinesen

There are things which cannot be carried through even with the good



will of everybody concerned

~Isak Dinesen

The divine art is the story.

~Isak Dinesen

One may take many liberties with God which one cannot take with men.

~Isak Dinesen

A visitor is a friend, he brings news, good or bad, which is bread to the hungry minds in lonely places. A real friend who comes to the house is a heavenly messenger, who brings the panis angelorum.

~Isak Dinesen

The entire being of a woman is a secret which should be kept.

~Isak Dinesen

No domestic animal can be as still as a wild animal. The civilized people have lost the aptitude of stillness, and must take lessons in silence from the wild before they are accepted by it.

~Isak Dinesen

I have a feeling that wherever I may be in the future, I will be wondering whether there is rain at Ngong.

~Isak Dinesen

A great artist is never poor.

~Isak Dinesen

It is not a bad thing in a tale that you understand only half of it.

~Isak Dinesen

Be unswervingly and eternally loyal to the story.

~Isak Dinesen

We must leave our mark on life while we have it in our power.

~Isak Dinesen

God made the world, My Lord, and looked at it, and saw that it was good. Yes. But what if the world had looked back at him, to see whether he was good or not?

~Isak Dinesen

When you have caught the rhythm of Africa, you find out that it is the same in all her music.

~Isak Dinesen

And were my faith so strong that it could move mountains, that is the mountain that I would make come to me.

~Isak Dinesen

One must in this lower world love many things to know finally what one loves the best.

~Isak Dinesen

Who tells a finer tale than any of us. Silence does.

~Isak Dinesen

I don't think... one get a flash of happiness once, and never again; it is there deep within you.

~Isak Dinesen

Now, looking back on my life in Africa, I feel that it might altogether be described as the existence of a person who had come from a rushed and noisy world, into a still country.

~Isak Dinesen

I felt that Paris was illuminated by a splendor possessed by no other places.

~Isak Dinesen

In the mind and nature of a man a secret is an ugly thing, like a hidden physical defect.

~Isak Dinesen

Through all the world there goes one long cry from the heart of the artist: Give me a chance to do my best.

~Isak Dinesen

some travelers are drawn forward by a goal lying before them in the way iron is drawn to the magnet. Others are driven on by a force lying behind them. In such a way the bowstring makes the arrow fly.

~Isak Dinesen

Human talk is a centrifugal function, ever in flight outwards from what is on the talker's mind.

~Isak Dinesen

Tragedy should remain the right of human beings, subject, in their conditions or in their own nature, to the dire law of necessity. To them it is salvation and beatification.

~Isak Dinesen

To set sail somewhere is more important than life itself.

~Isak Dinesen

As we grow old we slowly come to believe that everything will turn out badly for us, and that failure is in the nature of things; but then we do not much mind what happens to us one way or the other.

~Isak Dinesen

You must not think that I feel, in spite of it having ended in such defeat, that my "life has been wasted" here, or that I would exchange it with that of anyone I know.

~Isak Dinesen

Of all the idiots I have met in my life, and the Lord knows they have not been few or little, I think that I have been the biggest.

~Isak Dinesen

One does not travel by plane. One is merely sent, like a parcel.

~Isak Dinesen

There is something strangely determinate and fatal about a single shot in the night. It is as if someone had cried a message to you in one word, and would not repeat it.

~Isak Dinesen

I do not see eye to eye with the camera.

~Isak Dinesen

It is little silly to be a caricature of something of which you know very little, and which means very little to you, but to be your own caricature — that is the true carnival!

~Isak Dinesen

It is a good thing to be a great sinner. Or should human beings allow Christ to have died on the Cross for the sake of our petty lies and our paltry whorings

~Isak Dinesen

For really, dreaming is the well-mannered people's way of committing suicide.

~Isak Dinesen

through the loveliness and power of her dream world she was now, in her old frock and botched shoes, very likely the loveliest, mightiest and most dangerous person on earth

~Isak Dinesen

And I had by now become used to the idea of witchcraft, it seemed a reasonable thing, so many things are about, at night, in Africa.

~Isak Dinesen

While we are young the idea of death or failure is intolerable to us; even the possibility of ridicule we cannot bear.

~Isak Dinesen

In the Ngong Forest I have also seen, on a narrow path through thick growth, in the middle of a very hot day, the Giant Forest Hog, a rare person to meet.

~Isak Dinesen

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