

*Etty Hillesum Essential Writings*

By Etty Hillesum

Excerpt Titled: Self and World as One

Sometimes, when I least expect it, someone suddenly kneels down in some corner of my being. When I'm out walking or just talking to people. And that someone, the one who kneels down, is myself.

And now a mortal shell lies on that more than a familiar bed. Oh, that cretonne coverlet! I hardly need to go back there again. It's all being played out somewhere inside me, everything; there are wide plains inside me beyond time and space and everything is played out there. And now I walk along those few streets again. How often I have walked them with him, always engaged in absorbing and worthwhile dialogue. And how often will I be walking there again, no matter in what corner of the earth I happen to be? Am I expected to put on a sad or solemn face? I am not really sad, am I? I would like to fold my hands and say, "Friends, I am happy and grateful, and I find life very beautiful and meaningful. Yes, even as I stand here by the body of my dead companion, one who died much too soon, and just when I may be deported to some unknown destination. And yet, God, I am grateful for everything.

I shall live on with that part of the dead that lives forever, and I shall rekindle into life that of the living that is now dead, until there is nothing but life, one great life, oh God.

-September 16, 1942, Wednesday, 3:00pm

Tide told me that a girlfriend once said after the death of her husband, "God has moved me up into a more advance class; the desks are still a little too big for me."