

The Hollow Men

*Mistah Kurtz-he dead
A penny for the Old Guy*

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us-if at all-not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging
And voices are
In the wind's singing
More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom

Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer-

Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom

III

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose

Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men.

V

*Here we go round the prickly pear
Prickly pear prickly pear
Here we go round the prickly pear
At five o'clock in the morning.*

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow
For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow
Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow
For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

Author Notes

1. Mistah Kurtz: a character in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness."
2. A...Old Guy: a cry of English children on the streets on Guy Fawkes Day, November 5, when they carry straw effigies of Guy Fawkes and beg for money for fireworks to celebrate the day. Fawkes was a traitor who attempted with conspirators to blow up both houses of Parliament in 1605; the "gunpowder plot" failed.
3. Those...Kingdom: Those who have represented something positive and direct are blessed in Paradise. The reference is to Dante's "Paradiso".
4. Eyes: eyes of those in eternity who had faith and confidence and were a force that acted and were not paralyzed.
5. crossed stave: refers to scarecrows
6. tumid river: swollen river. The River Acheron in Hell in Dante's "Inferno". The damned must cross this river to get to the land of the dead.
7. Multifoliate rose: in dante's "Divine Comedy" paradise is described as a rose of many leaves.
8. prickly pear: cactus
9. Between...act: a reference to "Julius Caesar" "Between the acting of a dreadful thing/And the first motion, all the interim is/Like a phantasma or a hideous dream."
10. For...Kingdom: the beginning of the closing words of the Lord's Prayer.

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