The Hollow Men

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

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|                       **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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