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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