

POEMS
by
Mary Kennan Herbertⁱ

MR. DEATH IS ON A ROLL

Scythe sits in the corner, temporarily.
Ghoulish prankster feels merry,
(hopefully not unduly wary), hunched
over his keyboard, lists of the doomed
taped to the monitor. Who in December
will hear his tap on the door? Remember
gift wrap, shipping and weeping are free.
Bony fingers tap dance over the keys,
technology makes the Reaper's job easy.
Now all he needs is a cheap supply
of winding sheets, maybe fleece-lined,
and for funereal fun, a well-cut cassock and-
don't cry- a holiday vacation, a hammock.

KIDS ARE STARVING

My mother points out that children in Europe are ashamed.
They go hungry while I refuse lunch. Same old, same
old. "They scrape the cracks in the table tops, with their
fingernails, to get a few crumbs, a few nibbles for dinner."
Odd, but I am not thinking of declined spinach and bread,
but of wooden tables so old and scarred they easily provide
ingredients of a meal in carvings of initials on aged oak,
initials of lovers one might view later, when eager for a Coke.
Curious memories of World War II: safe in the Heartland,
I cut and paste and show what little I can defend.

DAY OF THE DEAD

A cool holiday, more fun than Halloween.
Love those skeletons partying on and on.
A colorful jolly day, skulls full of whatever.
Skulls made of sugar, gravestones of candy.
Those amigos know how to celebrate life
after death, or whatever works. My brother
is dead, a kid of sixty. His hands reach out
as if holding a newspaper, extra, extra,
eyes open too, looking for the weather!
Maybe he was searching for the Day of
the Dead! I wish I could send a new trio
of guitarists to play for his initiation
at the center of all these lively festivities!
Hola! He can now dance in a cantina
all day, all night– forever, if he wishes.

ⁱ Mary Kennan Herbert is an American poet originally from St. Louis, Missouri. Currently she lives in Brooklyn, New York, and teaches literature and writing courses at Long Island University in Brooklyn. Her poems have been published in numerous literary and theological journals in many countries around the world. Several collections of her poetry have been published by Ginninderra Press in Australia.