

Knucks

By Carl Sandburg

In Abraham Lincoln's city,

Where they remember his lawyer's shingle,

The place where they brought him

Wrapped in battle flags,

Wrapped in the smoke of memories

From Tallahassee to the Yukon,

The place now where the shaft of his tomb

Points white against the blue prairie dome,

In Abraham Lincoln's city ... I saw knucks

In the window of Mister Fischman's second-hand store

On Second Street.

I went in and asked, "How much?"

"Thirty cents apiece," answered Mister Fischman.

And taking a box of new ones off a shelf

He filled anew the box in the showcase

And said incidentally, most casually

And incidentally:

"I sell a carload a month of these."

I slipped my fingers into a set of knucks,

Cast-iron knucks molded in a foundry pattern,

And there came to me a set of thoughts like these:

Mister Fischman is for Abe and the "malice to none" stuff,

And the street car strikers and the strike-breakers,

And the sluggers, gunmen, detectives, policemen,

Judges, utility heads, newspapers, priests, lawyers,

They are all for Abe and the "malice to none" stuff.

I started for the door.

"Maybe you want a lighter pair,"

Came Mister Fischman's voice.

I opened the door ... and the voice again:

"You are a funny customer."

Wrapped in battle flags,

Wrapped in the smoke of memories,

This is the place they brought him,

This is Abraham Lincoln's home town.

Source: Cornhuskers (1918)