

## Honest Abe —————

### I

He had a beautiful body.  
Slack and long and covered in black  
It stretched straight up  
Flooding the air with the sooted suit  
And soil he gathered  
In the back woods of Illinois,  
Those days he walked barefoot four miles  
To school.

And he was modest,  
Only showing the high white flesh  
over the dark beard of his presidency.

He was everything once,  
And whole,  
And his heart often laughed and resounded  
So loud that many got earaches

(that time  
after his cabinet voted No  
on emancipation  
he chuckled a bit, raising  
his right long hand, saying “the ayes have it!”)

And his heart rested higher than most,  
Feeling in the same plane over the earth  
Where most minds match wits  
Endlessly disputing the emancipation  
Of all things.

### II

I saw his face once in the dark  
While walking under a clear moon.  
A strange taste in the moonlight  
Made my pale legs halt the half-limp walk.  
My eyes followed the narrow light  
Of the moon to its image  
On a sleek Coal-black car,  
And I peered through that blackness  
Of the night  
To a penny the size of a small ache,  
It was that obscure.

The corpse couldn't even rot in peace  
Before the grave robbers came,  
Dug it up  
And shattered his bones, still full of marrow,  
Beneath a heavy hammer of honor and praise,  
And ground up calcium and cartilage with copper,  
The crudest of those precious ores.

Hollow worship  
Was all it was,  
A huge empty vessel voyaging among achipelagos,  
Over shallow alginated oceans,  
The way the finger moves across the green crust  
Over Lincoln's face of the penny.

### III

I walked and learned  
That Lincoln lost his aspect, lost that  
Sympathetic stare,  
When they cast his head in copper  
And they took of half his face.

Naked and dismembered, he was  
Tearless and in shame  
While I fumbled in my pocket,  
Yelling “Fuck the Nickels and Dimes!”  
As fingers ran the maze of metal  
Ridges for my keys.  
And the feet moved two steps forward  
Til I found another coin;  
An old copper piece of Lincoln,  
A small fragment of his grace.  
The air formed voiceless whispers as  
I held him in my hand—  
They said that all the scattered pieces  
Can be made whole once again.

**Mark A Clements**