

Laurie

American Gothic

The Untold Truth

Looking at the back of his neck she could see the cruel tendon lines faintly drawn on his leathery wrinkled skin folds. They were waiting, waiting for the moment when he clenched his steel jaw in anger and lifted his lips into that familiar dog snarl and then the blood rush would come. She dreaded those moments and shrunk her body in obedience but her mind was still her own and from here, in the safety behind his back, she could meekly set it free.

“Look at the great magnanimous bastard. What a prick. Standing there like some stoic symbol of good old American can-do and god fearing hard work. Jesus, God would be horrified.”

“I just can’t believe that you, you of all people, got chosen to portray Mr. Wood’s idyllic Midwest farmer. If only he knew what I know, seen what I have seen. And that pitchfork, that sharp brutal pitchfork, what it has achieved in the name of discipline and keeping order. Lord, at times I’ve just had to shut my mind. If only people knew”

“Ma knew. Ma always knew, but I was too young and stupid, too headstrong for my own good. “That man’s no good and he’s too old for you,” she’d say. “He’s trouble.” But did I listen. I was too hot in the pants, too worried about missing out and Ma knew that too. “There’s plenty of time for all that fooling around,” she’d say. “No need to rush things child. He’s no god dammed good” Did I listen, humph, no way.”

“When they found her all drowned in that creek I knew it was you. I looked at them holes in her poor old body and they matched up pretty well with your pitchfork there. “Musta gone through a fence,” said the sheriff. “Or maybe got tangled up in some sticks and the like while dragging along the bottom. Nasty.” “Yep,” was all you could muster. I saw the glint in your eye; I saw that tiny twisted grin. You didn’t fool me.”

“Cos I know you. I’ve seen what you do when the rage descends. I’ve seen you in your worst state, in your lowest times. You’re an animal, a beast. What you did to the Fredricks dog when it poked its nose once too often through the fence defies description. Poor harmless animal, how it howled and howled. Still gives me nightmares. Nailed up on the barn wall with that pitchfork of yours right through its guts and you, no remorse, no pity, just that thin lipped smile. The same one you gave the Fredricks when they came inquiring about their dog. “Never seen him,” you said, so cold, so heartless. If only people knew.

“And then there’s Henry. He was a baby, just a baby, my baby, my poor beautiful child. The doctors were working on the problem. There was still a lot more they could do. I pleaded and pleaded but you, “No way,” you said. “I don’t want to be stuck looking after some moron, some imbecile child for the rest of my life.” You took my baby, that innocent child into your barn and, and..... My baby.

If only people knew.

If only people knew.

If only I was a tougher stronger woman.

As she watched, his knuckles whitened and tightened their grip on the pitchforks handle.

His lips parted slightly, just enough to let words slip out.

“But you’re not.”