

JASPER AND MILLIE SHELL

American Gothic but not as pretty.

Jasper and Millie Shell had been married for years. Ya know, I don't believe I ever even once heard her say a word. I always assumed she knew how, just never wanted to.

They weren't too old – 40s I'd guess – but it'd been a rough 40 years. The Shells lived somewhere out past The Ridge, out South of town. I don't believe they owned a car, just their old John Deere tractor. He'd been on his family's farm since day one. I swear his hands were as big as hams, and kinda flat, he'd been workin' the dirt so long. Jasper was a big ol' boy and always wore patched overalls – remember Junior Samples from *Hee Haw*? Those 40+ years had been rough on Millie. She looked considerable older than her real age – a hard-lookin' woman. And she always wore a bonnet. Only one time did I ever see her without it. Her hair was snow-white and pulled back into a real tight bun. She had that double-chin thing goin' on. Livin' on the farm; reckon food was the only thing they had enough of.

Around the first of ever' month, they'd drive to town and buy for the whole month. What talkin' needed to be done was handled by Jasper and that suited Millie just fine.