

Coal Mine Pickle Jar

by Chad Smith

It's doing nothing for me
No reaction
Hit the fast forward button
Still nothing
I can hear the music and sound sped up
Hit the fast forward button again
Still nothing
At this speed he is being rough with her

We are in the school cafeteria now
I see him sitting there
I am happy he is here
He is excited to see me too
His long blond hair seems clean today
Still ratty
He is wearing his holey cardigan sweater
Striped shirt
His chin has stubble and is that?
Yes
A smile
So rare for him
I set my food tray down at his table
I ask him what he's been up to
He says it's been rough for him
I say, "I hear you man"
He is happy that I have been writing
Doing the good work
I stop and he looks sad
This can't be
You're not here
You blew your head off in a tool shed

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And then

Shed tool a in off head your blew you
Here not you're
Be can't this
Sad looks he and stop I
Work good the doing
Writing been have I that happy is he

I say, "I hear you man"

I realize I am dreaming
Must try to wake myself up
I can't move
If I can scream then that will wake me up

Awake

I am in my grandparent's house
On the staircase to the basement
But this isn't my grandparent's house
It is a house I have never been in before
But I keep coming back to it in my dreams
I have woken up in another dream
The same house
We can climb up and hide inside the walls

My mother tells me
When she was a girl
She had nightmares
About a small wrinkled old man
Who was like a troll with one long pointy fingernail
That he would use to stick in her bellybutton
Tickling her bellybutton with his long pointy fingernail
And she couldn't move

Couldn't get away
I can't move
I try to move my arms
I try to move my legs
If I can scream then that will wake me up
I scream

Do you remember seeing the sun in your dreams?
It is warm
I am lying in the field looking up at the clouds
You are here with me and you love me again
We are happy
A warm peace pours over us
I hold your hand
We should stay here forever

I am awake now
Damp with sweat
He swore to us that he didn't have a gun
And now we know that was a lie

