My partner wants me to write them a poem about Sheryl Crow

By Kayleb Rae Candrilli

but all I want to do is marry them on a beach
that refuses to take itself too seriously.
So much of our lives has been serious.

Over time, I’ve learned that love is most astonishing
when it persists after learning where we come from.

When I bring my partner to my childhood home
it is all bullets and needles and trash bags held
at arm’s length. It is my estranged father’s damp
bed of cardboard and cigar boxes filled
with gauze and tarnished spoons. It is hard
to clean a home, but it is harder to clean
the memory of it. When I was young, my
father would light lavender candles and shoot
up. Now, my partner and I light a fire that will
burn all traces of the family that lived here.

Black plastic smoke curdles up, and loose bullets
discharge in the flames. My partner holds
my hand as gunfire rings through
the birch trees. Though this is almost
beautiful, it is not. And if I’m being honest,

my partner and I spend most of our time
on earth feeding one another citrus fruits
and enough strength to go on. Every morning
I pack them half a grapefruit and some sugar.
And they tell me it’s just sweet enough.