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.