

Heart Sutra

gate gate pāragate pārasamgate bodhi svāhā
(gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, enlightenment hail)

My child plucks petals in the Secret Garden Cafe on the eve of my wedding,
fills her plastic beaded handbag, the one my father bought her—

my parents at the ashram! Chris's mother from Regina, his Harvard-genius brother.
The awkward conjunction of genetics and our desire to transcend the world.

The musicians hover at that place between science and art, tuning their instruments
by ear, by heart. They can measure its frequency now, the heart—

not the sound of its rhythmical pulsing, not the slow hail of a rose unfurling,
but a finer resonance, something electromagnetic. My bridesmaid has giggling fits

when she's nervous. My daughter stops to fidget with the silk flowers on her shoes,
my father checks his cufflinks and we head towards my groom.

The garden blooms with touchy-feely devotees, flying in and out of standing meditation
under fading September light—gone, completely gone. The Guru hasn't shown—

He's beyond the world, in some sort of altered state
by sundown. Fairy lights sparkle on the deck, illuminate

all the glittered paper hearts pinned to the backs of chairs, railings, tree trunks. Love notes
shining on the table legs, swinging from thorns on the primrose vine. Hail the seva of sweetness

on the buffet table, devotional offerings: rosewater lassi, toffeed profiterole tower,
passionfruit pavlova, marshmallowy ptasie mleczko—the enlightenment of sugar

waiting on the other shore, beyond the ceremony. Our best man sobs,
clutches the podium as he reads, his comb-over strands

lifting in the breeze. Our vows hail the elusive sound
of the heart—in Sanskrit anahata means

unstruck, unharmed. They say a roomful of people in heart mediation
create a silent field that others might fall into. My daughter scatters petals on our feet—

my love sinks to one knee, asks my daughter to be his daughter.
If we could peel back the facade of the world, all we'd see is light.

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