

The Gloaming

Saba Keramati

Poetry

with reference to Naomi Shihab Nye

I have been trying to write a poem everyday
with Stephanie. *Good practice*, we say, we rationalize,
because we are just not sure how else to move
in this world. I open a document. Title it
The Gloaming, because that is the time of day.
Nicholas is cutting onions in the kitchen
and crying. A football game in the background.
A 24-year-old boy's leg snaps in half
and he is carted off the field. Gaza is home
to the largest number of amputee children
in modern history. All I have eaten today
are a handful of pistachios. It's selfish,
to eat, and also not to eat. I only wanted
to write a poem about the light turning
the color of candied ginger, the stars
glistening like grains of sugar in the not-quite
daylight. An astrology company emails to tell me
The negative emotions you feel are holding you back
from your fullest potential. It is true,
I have often turned to the moon to guide me.
But lately I think instead of Naomi
who lost her best friend to cancer
twenty some years ago, who I met
at the wedding of a boy without a mother,
who wrote of the lonely moon over Gaza,
and I remember that most of the sorrow I feel

is human-made. It is not self-pity,
to feel. It is not even unproductive,
though if it were, it would still matter.
It is why we write poetry, why my husband
cooks me dinner, why we mourn our martyrs.
When forces in power say to keep moving,
we allow ourselves our grief.
We can't forget it.

Saba Keramati is a Chinese-Iranian writer from California. She is the author of *Self-Mythology* (University of Arkansas Press, 2024), selected by Patricia Smith for the Miller Williams Poetry Series.
