

Nevadan to Nevadan

Complaint to March 2023 from Reno-Sparks, Nevada

Melanie Perish

Of course, I'm grateful for the snowpack.
City and citizens here understand
water is life, but everyone I see
cracks and splinters
sheltered or unhoused. Trees
live in fear of breaking
under time's weight and cold.

I am a city in despair that lives
insistent as sidewalk ice that will not melt –
the east side of Plumas Street,
the shadowed corner on North Center
now renamed University Way,
the nose on the Circus, Circus Clown.

On a scale of one to fifty degrees
my ability to speak without grit frozen
to sage leaves in Lemmon Valley
is in the single digits.

I am scoured out by gusts
or strapped with a fetid attitude
equal to valley inversion and toxic air.
My joy of light and longer days
twists drip-glazed like shrubs
under frozen roof-runoff.

Trinity of storm/freeze/semi-thaw
whips me day after day like a drunken
parent who's lost another job, but not
the need to beat children with fisted winds –
who sends the steel-wool sky
to bed without color.