

## Dear Stephen,

Teresa M. Breeden

It's snowing again  
and still.

I feel like I always start my letters  
this way these days, but winter  
doesn't seem to mind  
the monotony, the bitter chill,  
the endless expanse of blown ice  
with more on the way.  
Winter has its own bills to pay.

In a bout of optimism,  
I bought grapes. Not loose  
and ripe for snacking, but gangly  
brown sticks of plants  
ready to find their forever home  
in the yard up against the chicken coop.  
I can picture them climbing:  
the olive of the wide leaves  
shadowing the mesh,  
the seeking tendrils tightened like tiny fists  
around the wire. The bright  
nearly yellow-green of the developing fruits.

Plant them in ten days,  
the instructions say,  
which brings us back  
to the snow: another foot last night  
over the feet below, the most  
we've ever had  
since records were kept,  
and my fragile grape roots, thin and bent  
are locked out of the soil  
along with my hands which should have dirt  
under the nails this time of year,  
instead of rummaging in the mudroom bins  
for another pair of gloves.

You probably can't imagine such snow,  
there in your temperate home.  
Think about this, the dog has to bound  
in eager doggie leaps, for the drifts are over  
his hips, and much  
too deep for stepping.

I imagine the voles  
scrabbling in their tunnels, curling up  
in their holes far beneath the snow,

like me, collapsed in the green comfy  
chair, bundled in the blanket Susan made  
years ago, after another day  
of shoveling. It can't wait, you see,  
for me to be ready to do it.  
It just falls and falls, brazen and  
unrepentant as though  
it has no responsibility  
or maybe all the responsibility;  
that after years of drought  
and climate fluctuations  
this' year's snow  
is just  
what's come due.

And you? Bored of your comfortable  
weather yet? Ready to crawl over  
the passes for a visit? People retire  
here, you know. They choose this  
place to die. Despite the chill, the scouring winds,  
the snow that doesn't lie still.  
You could come for a day, or better yet,  
you could stay.

Warm Regards,

tmb

*March 5, 2023; Carson City, NV*



Photograph by Teresa M. Breeden