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
time, 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]