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Quarry

Hugh Findlay

A slow whispering river,
shallow ice pools slosh.

A lone gray fox drinks,
cold shock of wet paws.

He fords the river quickly,
frozen mudbank crunching.

Above, snow rides wild currents;
a red-tailed hawk circles, and

descends into sycamore,
white bark lost in snowflake.

Fox and hawk exchange
wary glances,

both predators hungry,
anxious, chilled.

The forest dissolves into
shrouds of white gauze.

Then nearby, a slight rustle
of movement—*quarry!*

The animals instantly
scan for motion,

alert to any minute change
of color, shape or sound.

From above, the hawk swiftly parses
ground, bush, and tree.

From below, the fox sniffs high
and fast for telltale scents.

Together they rake the forest,
deep into the falling flakes,

defining direction, reducing scope,
pinpointing range,

until they reach their target—
a single cedar, where

a branch bends and drops its
load of snow with a dull *thud*.

Bird and fox stop, feel their hunger return,
and move on.

A breeze follows them, stirring up
puffs of fog along the river bank.

Undetected, a snow hare slips
silently down her deep, safe hole.

Hugh Findlay's writing and photography have been published worldwide. In addition to many awards, his nominations include: a Pushcart Prize for poetry 2020, Best of the Net for poetry 2025, Best Microfiction 2024, and Best of the Net for photography 2024. IG: @hughmanfindlay. Web: <https://www.hughmanfindlay.com>

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