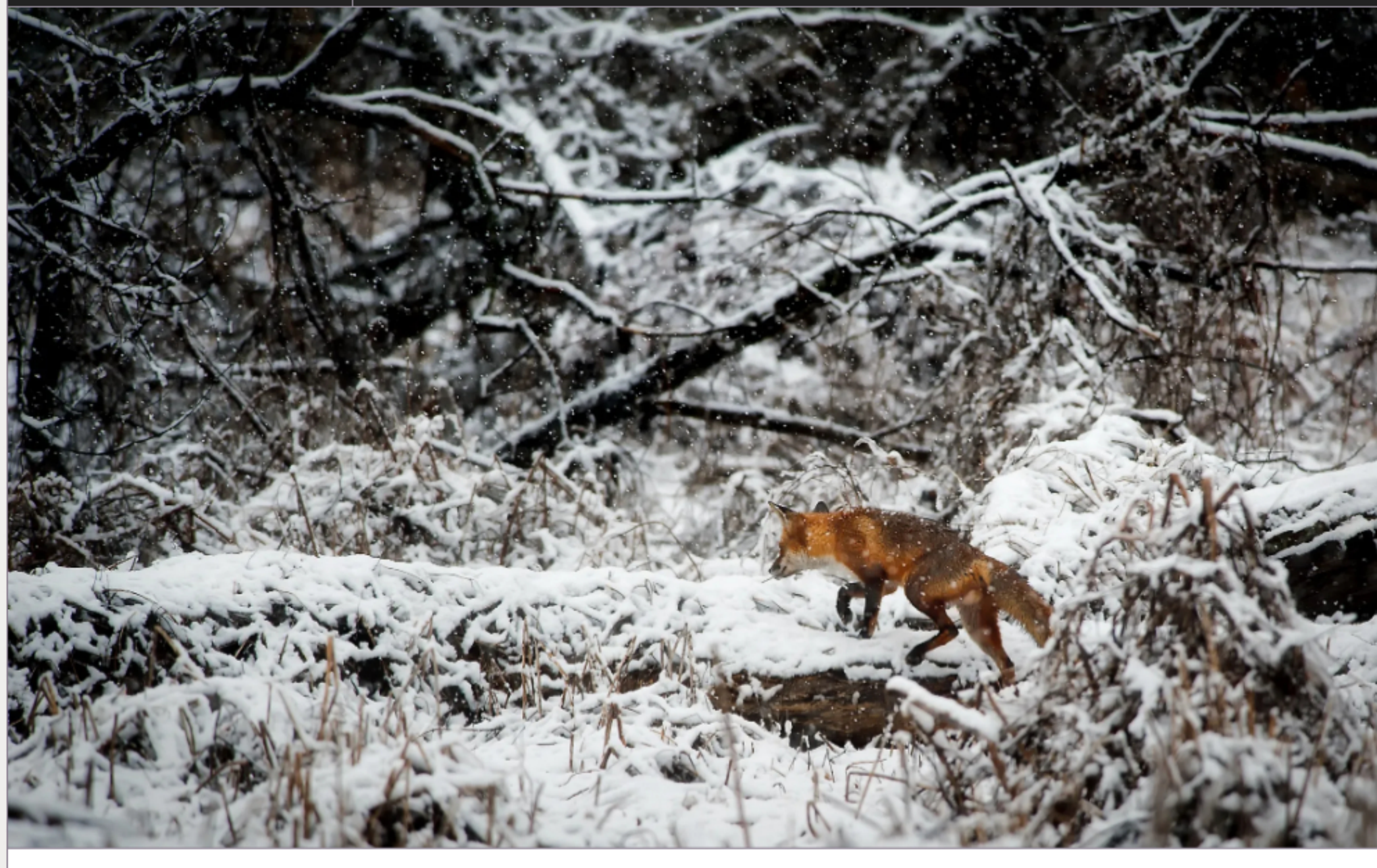




17 DEC 2020

THE LAST HUNT



In old Kentucky, in late autumn,
I walked down the railroad tracks,
nigh a man but less a child,
hunting squirrel the first day of the season.

A late start, sunless, and the cold day
began to build its walls around.
As I walked, a gray sky foretold of snow,
and no birds sang.
Spits of flake lit on my gun stock,
my leather cap, my steel-toed work boots.

The day wore on and leaves
hushed their busy talk.
The wind lay down in frosty fields
and the small sounds magnified.

When I arrived at the clump
of sycamore, locust, and willow
that watched over the glassy pond,
all creatures were burrowed or
nested, calmed in body and mind,
the pond spreading a crisp
countenance across its face,
sleepy and sleeping at the same time.

And I the only moving thing,
slow and deliberate,
scanning the trunks and high limbs,
picking through the half-hearted leaves,
and keeping a corner eye for the
quick flicker a hunter always seeks.

But the scene was as if in a painting,
frozen and lovely and lifeless.
So I sat half-hidden downwind,
twisted a cigarette,
and watched while the flakes
fattened and powdered the earth.

To keep warm, I struck a small fire
behind a downed log.
I curled my collar up and
yanked my ear flaps down.

The afternoon prevailed.
The snow thickened.
And the cold seeped deep into my spine.
Until finally, I surrendered to
an empty trip and prepared to go.

Then over the bare ridge of a nearby hill,
suddenly came two red fox,
bounding, leaping, snapping playfully
at the snowflakes floating down.
First one, then the other, jumping
over their backs, nipping
at the flakes and then nuzzling
the other's neck.

And I, sudden voyeur,
watched in lockstep,
dazzled and entertained
by their dance of joy.

They zigzagged and drifted
approaching the trees in which I hid.
So close they came then,
my heart flew, my breath held,
and I wrestled mightily with myself.
A quarry much more rare and
rewarding before me,
yet so magnificent and
gloried in my mind.

I pointed my rifle to peel my eyes upon them,
following their movements
and gauging my sights.
Then they, just in range, suddenly stopped,
catching a whiff of the spriggy fire,
and stared in my direction.

We looked at each other,
the three of us transfixed,
the sacred moment frozen,
the pond, the trees, the snow,
all of us in anticipation.

Finally,
I raised my rifle and fired
one report into the treetops.
The lovers bolted in opposite directions.
One left, one right, shooting
red streaks, their coats
stark against the white hills,
until the tips of their bobbing tails
bled away into the deeply
drawing snowfall.

I knelt a spell before leaving.
Letting the rippling chorus of
the shot die into the woods,
tasting the spent incense of
gunpowder close to my breast,
watching the pond finish freezing over in ice,
and measuring myself
in its reflection.

And so it happened.
I broke my rifle down
and began the long walk home,
the day dying into night.

By Hugh Findlay

Hugh Findlay writes a lot, sometimes publishes, and would rather be caught fishing.
He mows his lawn on Saturdays, naps daily, and reverses his underwear in a pinch.
He can fix anything but the crack of dawn and broken hearts, just ask his kids.
He once defrosted a Thanksgiving turkey with a blow dryer up its butt.
He cooks a pretty good gumbo but can't sing or dance.
He doesn't believe in god or time or the "Euro step."
He's colorblind but can smell like a bloodhound.
He quit dying his hair and pole vaulting.
He feels funny in suspenders.
He grows tomatoes, poorly.
He likes beer.
@hughmanfindlay

Related

- At the Pond
14 Dec 2023
In "Wetlands"
- The Pond
20 Jun 2020
In "Chapbook Contest 2020"
- The Quietest Pond
30 Nov 2023
In "Wetlands"

SHARE THIS:



LIKE THIS:

☆ Like 1 like

PREVIOUS

[Adirondacks](#)

NEXT

[Chapbook Release – Still by Corey Ruzicano](#)

TRANSLATE

Select Language

Powered by Google Translate

2024 SUBMISSIONS

Theme: Water

Submission period: October 1, 2024 – November 1, 2024

Published: Winter – Spring 2025 on our online journal.

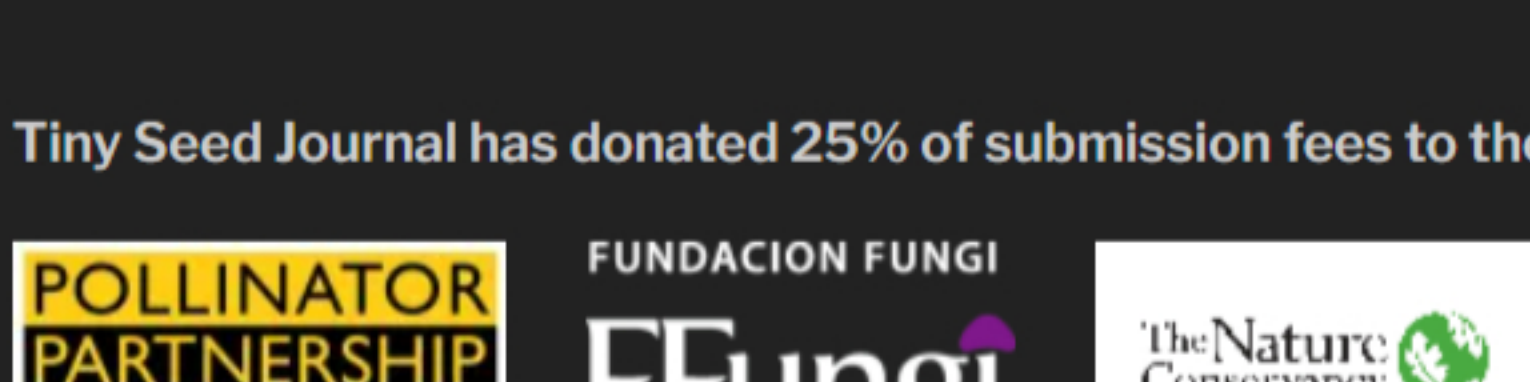
If the submission fees are a barrier to sharing your work, please get in touch with us at info@tinysseedjournal.com

ARCHIVES

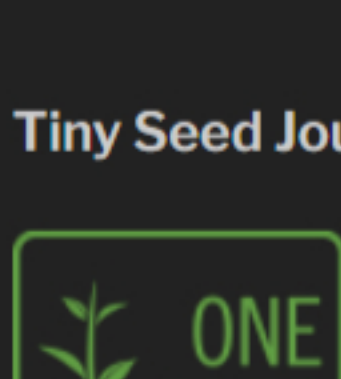
- February 2025 (19)
- January 2025 (32)
- September 2024 (1)
- December 2023 (20)
- November 2023 (29)
- October 2023 (33)
- September 2023 (30)
- August 2023 (32)
- July 2023 (31)
- June 2023 (30)
- May 2023 (32)
- April 2023 (17)
- March 2023 (3)
- February 2023 (4)
- January 2023 (3)
- December 2022 (22)
- November 2022 (30)
- October 2022 (32)
- July 2022 (15)
- June 2022 (29)
- May 2022 (17)
- March 2022 (7)
- February 2022 (29)
- January 2022 (27)
- December 2021 (31)
- November 2021 (11)
- October 2021 (2)
- September 2021 (5)
- August 2021 (36)
- July 2021 (32)
- June 2021 (1)
- May 2021 (18)
- April 2021 (26)
- March 2021 (3)
- February 2021 (1)
- January 2021 (41)
- December 2020 (55)
- November 2020 (89)
- October 2020 (103)
- September 2020 (74)
- August 2020 (104)
- July 2020 (83)
- June 2020 (31)
- May 2020 (30)
- April 2020 (27)
- March 2020 (28)
- February 2020 (21)
- January 2020 (29)
- December 2019 (23)
- November 2019 (21)
- October 2019 (19)
- September 2019 (13)
- August 2019 (20)
- July 2019 (31)
- June 2019 (31)
- May 2019 (26)
- April 2019 (31)
- March 2019 (48)
- February 2019 (27)

Tiny Seed Literary Journal & Press are fiscally sponsored by [Tiny Seed Project](#).

Tiny Seed Journal has donated 25% of submission fees to the following organizations:



Tiny Seed Journal has planted over 570 trees from journal sales and submission fees with **One Tree Planted**



Tiny Seed Journal is a nature based literary press fiscally sponsored by the [Tiny Seed Project, Inc.](#) 501(c)3.