

Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

Zach Murphy
Foxes and Coyotes

THE TULIPS GREW APART FROM EACH OTHER that Spring. The ground cracked and crumbled in ways that I'd never seen before.

I watched the foxes and the coyotes battle all Summer on Cesar Chavez Boulevard, where the blood would leave permanent stains on the concrete. The reckless packs would flash their teeth, mark their territories, and steal more than just scraps.

Me, I was a squirrel. I was small. But I was agile. I hustled from sun up until sundown at a frenetic pace. I always minded my own business and stuck to my own path. I didn't want to get involved with the vicious nature of pack mentality.

My best friend was a squirrel, too. We grew up around same nest. We used to climb trees, chase tails, and break soggy bread together. We'd walk the wires between safety and danger. And when we got too deep into the mess, we'd get out just in time. Growing up, I always wondered if we would live long enough to die from old age, or if the environment and its elements would get to us first.

That Fall, my best friend got caught up with the foxes and the coyotes. Now he's gone.

The foxes and the coyotes lied low in the Winter. Me, I trotted across the frozen ground and desperately hoped I'd see my best friend's footprints once again.