

# Extract from Ducks, Newburyport by Lucy Ellman

THE FACT THAT the raccoons are now banging an empty yoghurt carton around on the driveway, the fact that in the early morning stillness it sounds like gunshots, the fact that, even in fog, with *ice* on the road and snow banks blocking their vision, people are already zooming around our corner, the site of many a minor accident, the fact that a guy in a pickup once accidentally skidded into our *garage*, and next time it could be our house, or a *child*, Wake Up Picture Day, dicamba, Kleenex, the fact that a pickup truck killed Dilly, the fact that she'd successfully dodged cars for three whole years, the fact that she knew all about cars, but during that time the traffic grew, the fact that it's crazee now, the fact that after she got killed the kids painted a big warning sign with a big black cat on it and stuck it right by the fence, but nobody notices it, the fact that they're all going too fast to see it, 🎵 *When the cat died we had catnip tea* 🎵, the fact that failure to yield causes one in five accidents in Ohio, the fact that car crashes are up twenty percent since 2009, haw tree, buckeye, black walnut, hickory, butternut, the fact that Stacy's old enough to handle the road but the other kids aren't, the fact that a little boy was killed in his bed just the other day by a skidding car crashing into his house, Ben asleep, the fact that there are two cardinals right now in the lilac tree, the fact that eleven percent of Americans carry on driving when the fuel-tank-empty light comes on, the fact that you'd

think it'd be more like eighty percent, Ronny, chicken feed, the fact that there are macrophages, Ben, the fact that I dreamt I flew all the way to India to get a teaspoon of cinnamon but when I got home I realized I needed flaked almonds too, security, holding pattern, go figure, not in my back yard, the fact that we have to do our taxes and try to remember every little bit of income and expenditure, the fact that there was more of the latter than the former, Family Dollar, Baker's IGA, password, username, your card is now active and ready to use, the fact that not only do we have to calculate our income and expenditure but we gotta figure out how to get more money, and keep on getting money till we're dead, Medicare, Medicare For All, the fact that by the time Leo's old enough to get Social Security it probably won't cover the price of a ham sandwich, much less a bottle of wine, the fact that we're in for a wineless old age, oi veh, OJ, the fact that Leo has to go to Philly tomorrow and I'm not so good on my own, the fact that Ben knows so much for such a little kid, maybe too much