He’s a stray, with headlight eyes and high-beam yellow fur. Though only a cat, Tom carries himself like a bear, leader of the parade, with his tough guy face, saying, try me, I dare you. When we fight, I know I’ll win and so do you. I’m Grandfather Cat and no one’s beat me yet! Life’s taken chunks out of his ears and pride, but Tom rebuilds himself every time, digging his claws into whatever hope he can find, wherever he can find it. And he always finds it, whether it comes in the form of a squashed donut, or a nine-inch-open garage door on a rainy night, or just the lap of waves on the Seekonk River to tell him, without a single meow, in which mud he is lying. And he never stays in the mud for long. Perhaps it’s his strong immune system or his resistance to water that keeps him going, or perhaps it’s something stubborn rooted deep within him, something that refuses to let go— to let him let go. Grandfather Cat’s tongue never stops licking and his inner clock never stops ticking. Grandfather Cat’s seven billion grand-kittens never waste a single one of their nine lives, and by Cat, neither will he. Because these mud puddles are his home, and Fox Point is his world, and Providence is his universe, and he’s King of it all. Because when Tom patrols these sidewalks and alleys, he feels his authority and so does every other living thing. He is the second coming of sliced bread and he damn well knows it. This is Tom’s life, the boss cat, and he’s never going to die.