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Survivor Vade Mecum

Go swimming in salt water.
Think, *I am a living, breathing organism.*

Remember your neighbor Marlene,
her neon lips, twenty-something

feral cats, her Buick, its red and white
bumper sticker: *Shit happens.*

Under the topsoil in her backyard,
a constellation of cats.

You've added some to this lot.
The mangled mass on Georgia Avenue,

blood spreading like a puddle of piss—
someone else's hit-and-run.

You asked your dad to please give
the body a proper burial,

and he pulled over, scraped it
from the asphalt into a cardboard box.

You are a living, breathing organism
with all of your fingers and both feet,

swimming in the ocean, feeding the fish.

Tara Skurtu
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Tara Skurtu is a Lecturer at Boston University, a Robert Pinsky Global Fellow, and a recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize. Her poems have been translated into Romanian, and appear in *Poetry Review*, the *Dalhousie Review*, *B O D Y*, the *minnesota review*, *Los Angeles Review*, and elsewhere.