

AMY REA

The Exception

You have been dead
longer than you were alive.
I have lived
nearly twice as long as you

and written far fewer poems,
with far less power.

But I am here. I have seen
kids grow,
husband gray,
dogs age and die.

You said of a son:
I do not will him to be exceptional.
It is the exception that interests the devil.
It is the exception that climbs the sorrowful hill
Or sits in the desert and hurts his mother's heart.

You had that exception.
It hurts my mother's heart to think of it.
At the age you died,
I would have died for art.

Or so I like to think.

But now
if I could trade
my lack of distinction—
the lack of the devil's attention—
for your all-too-brief exception—

I wouldn't.

I will take my unexceptional
years, the time,
twice what you had
and counting.

Kids grown into adults.
Friends, some here, some gone.
Food. Wine. Gray Goose martinis.
Bunions and beaches,
Calluses and sweet corn,
wrinkles, heartburn, age spots.
Summer's fresh tomatoes.

I have time.
You have anthologies.
I don't say that lightly.

You win in poetry.
I win in years.
Perhaps we have both won,
and lost,
a little,
or much.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AMY REA writes poetry and fiction from her home in Minnesota, often accompanied by her elderly (and highly neurotic) Border Collie. Sylvia Plath was her introduction to poetry, for which she is grateful. She has also been published in *Alimentum* and *The Rake*.