



A Mother's Story

By Gloria Vanderbilt

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In 1988, Gloria Vanderbilt's 23-year-old son Carter committed suicide. As Vanderbilt looked on, Carter swung away from the terrace wall of her 14th-floor New York apartment and, in Vanderbilt's words, "He let go." In this poignant memoir, Vanderbilt reflects on her own painful history and what she describes as "the final loss, the fatal loss that stripped me bare." She thought, she says, that she could not survive the death of her son. This memoir is a testimony to her courage and her own return to life.

From Publishers Weekly

In 1988, the author's 23-year-old son, Carter Vanderbilt Cooper--Princeton graduate, editor at American Heritage, outwardly confident and in control of his life--committed suicide, falling from the terrace of her Manhattan apartment as she watched helplessly. This luminous, wise, healing and deeply moving memoir opens with Vanderbilt's flashbacks to other personal losses, including abandonment by her mother, Gloria Morgan Vanderbilt, who left for Paris in 1925, dumping her at the age of one year on her maternal grandmother and an Irish nurse; the death of her father, Reginald, three months later; and the death of her actor/screenwriter husband, Wyatt Cooper, in 1978 after he suffered several heart attacks. Some of these traumas were covered in her 1985 autobiography, *Once Upon a Time*, and the self-conscious narrative is padded with diary excerpts from 1971. But when Vanderbilt finally recalls her son's death--which she believes was the result of a psychotic episode induced by a prescription allergy drug, Proventil--the writing shines, communicating her almost unbearable pain and sorrow with shattering intensity.

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From Library Journal

Vanderbilt's affecting memoir tells of the 1988 suicide of her 24-year-old son, Carter Cooper. This and her two earlier autobiographies (*Once Upon a Time*, LJ 5/1/85; *Black Knight, White Knight*, LJ 5/15/87) and an inspirational book about creativity (*Woman to Woman*, LJ 2/1/79) are all offered in the same vein: to share her experiences in the hopes of encouraging others. Here Vanderbilt recounts a childhood filled with loss and abandonment, her husband Wyatt Cooper's strong family background, and their happy and mutually sustaining marriage. Against this backdrop of familial love she describes Wyatt's death in 1978 and then the day that Carter jumped from her 14th-story terrace while she watched. In spare, unadorned prose Vanderbilt relates "the loss that had no echo" and her own survival. Most public libraries will want this haunting portrayal.

--Wendy Knickerbocker, *Rhode Island Coll. Lib., Providence*

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Teresa Sullivan:

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