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television that had been left on in the night. An arts channel was on. An opera was playing. I was drawn to the screen as Tosca declared, with power and sorrow, her passion for the painter Cavaradossi. It was a cold March morning and I put on my sweater. I raised the blinds and brightness entered the study. I smoothed the heavy linen draping my chair and chose a book of paintings by Odilon Redon, opening it to the image of the head of a woman floating in a small sea. Les yeux clos. A universe not yet scored contained beneath the pale lids. The phone rang and I rose to answer. It was Robert's youngest brother, Edward. He told me that he had given Robert one last kiss for me, as he had promised. I stood motionless, frozen; then slowly, as in a dream, returned to my chair. At that moment, Tosca began the great aria "Vissi d'arte." I have lived for love, I have lived for Art. I closed my eyes and folded my hands. Providence determined how I would say goodbye. I was asleep when he died. I had called the hospital to say one more good night, but he had gone under, beneath layers of morphine. I held the receiver and listened to his labored breathing through the phone, knowing I would never hear him again. I stood motionless, frozen; then slowly, as in a dream, returned to my chair. At that moment, Tosca began the great aria "Vissi d'arte." I have lived for love, I have lived for Art. I closed my eyes and folded my hands. Providence determined how I would say goodbye. Providence determined how I would say goodbye.



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Later I quietly straightened my things, my notebook and fountain pen. The cobalt inkwell that had been his. My Persian cup, my purple heart, a tray of baby teeth. I slowly ascended the stairs, counting them, fourteen of them, one after another. I drew the blanket over the baby in her crib, kissed my son as he slept, then lay down beside my husband and said my prayers. He is still alive, I remember whispering. Then I slept. I awoke early, and as I descended the stairs I knew that he was dead. All was still save the sound of the