

## Forever

I arrived home this afternoon after a fast trip down the four-lane to the medical center where my daughter was taken in the morning by ambulance. When I got the call from her husband, the situation at first looked grim. She was in a lot of pain that began suddenly after breakfast. Something to do with all of those doodads women have inside them.

Driving down the Thruway, I realized I was afraid for my daughter. I know she was frightened, too. And it couldn't have been easy for her to be loaded up on a stretcher in front of her tiny daughters, trying to look brave and telling them, "Mommy will be OK."

As I sat in the ER waiting room after seeing her for a few moments, I knew she was in good hands. Between the doctors and medical staff, she was safe and I knew her husband would later care for her and wait on her when they got home. Luckily, it turned out the emergency was not too serious and this afternoon she is back home feeling relatively comfortable.

My son-in-law's large family will call in the troops and my daughter's house will be teeming with cooks and cleaners and babysitters and whatever else is needed while she recovers. I told the oldest sister of the clan that I was also ready to help out

with any and all chores. The woman looked over my shoulder, smiled wanly and was quiet. So I guess my guise of uselessness has held together quite well, thank God. I'll be able to stand around looking patriarchal and not wear myself out.

In reality, there isn't much I can do for my daughter. I'm not a doctor. I'm not her husband. I'm an adequate babysitter, but I can't cook anything more complicated than hot dogs. I can't even lift much anymore, but I remember throwing her up on my shoulders years ago and carrying her around the park all morning. Just like I'll carry her in my heart. Forever. I'm her father.

My children deserve all of me ... my love, my prayers, and eventually ... if there's any left ... my money. There probably won't be much of it and I haven't always been terrific at providing either of the former. But that doesn't negate the perfectly reasonable claim they have on me. And my heart.

I brought my daughter and her brother into this world ... with the able assistance of my wife, of course ... and I will never stop being in some way responsible to them.

My own father once told me he would someday stand before God and be asked how well his children turned out. I never believed that, but I do believe I will be asked how hard I loved them. And if I can't answer, "as much as I could," someone will say, "well ... your loss."

*David Griffin      copyright 2007*

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