

## Forever

I arrived home this afternoon after a fast trip down the four-lane to the medical center where my daughter had been taken by ambulance. I had received a call earlier today from her husband, and 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 carry around 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."

I sat in the ER waiting room after seeing her for a few moments, telling myself 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 mobilize for duty 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 sort of looked over my shoulder, smiled wanly and was quiet. So I guess I won't be called to active duty very soon. 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 first two. 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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