

My Mother's EXAMPLE

By Erin Barker

I slammed the plate into the dishwasher and cried in frustration.

"Erin, you can go to that pool party," my dad said. "You can take a break."

"It's not about that!" I yelled as I stormed from the room.

My tantrum wasn't about Adriane's pool party. My mom and my youngest sister, Abby, were sick with pneumonia. My dad and I had spent the last week caring for them and trying to keep the household functioning normally. This meant cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, doing laundry, and driving my other two sisters around.

All of these things muffled my nagging worries and fears. I was worried about my family and nervous about leaving for college soon. So I kept myself busy and tried to ignore my fears. I had even planned on skipping Adriane's party, but I was tired and the thought of a carefree evening, hanging out with friends by the pool, pushed my

emotions over the edge. I exploded and took out my frustration on my dad.

I cried for a while in my bedroom. Then, feeling guilty, I went upstairs to see if my mom or Abby needed anything. I found my mother giving medicine to my fever-flushed sister. My mom was barely able to breathe and had been bedridden for days. My dad and I urged her to return to bed. We told her that we could take care of Abby. She wouldn't listen.

"I'm all right. You two get some sleep," she said. "Abby needs me."

I tried not to cry as I watched my mom comfort my 10-year-old sister. She checked her temperature, helped her into bed, then crawled in after her and held her shaking body. Abby stopped moaning and calmed under my mom's protection.

My mom was more ill than she had ever been. The pneumonia would eventually send her to the hospital for several days. Yet in the middle of her trial, she forgot about herself. Rather than complaining about her own illness, she found a way to ease her daughter's pain.

I had planned on becoming the martyr that night by staying home to help. Instead, I was embarrassed by my outburst and humbled by my mother's actions. Watching her, I knew she would do anything to help my sisters and me.

I felt her love that night and wanted to follow her example. I resolved to show those I love that I will be there when they need me, regardless of the personal sacrifice required. ■

