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The Metro Section

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Anesthesia Puts Author Of 'First Wives' In Hospital

By LESLIE KAUFMAN

Olivia Goldsmith, the best-selling author of "The First Wives Club," is in critical condition at Lenox Hill Hospital after reacting badly to anesthesia given to her for plastic surgery, her lawyer said.

The lawyer, Steven Mintz, would say only that Ms. Goldsmith went to her doctor for "personal elective surgery" on Wednesday morning, but two different friends of Ms. Goldsmith said it was an operation to remove loose skin under her chin. Her heart reacted badly when the anesthetic was introduced and she has remained unconscious at Lenox Hill ever since, Mr. Mintz said.

Mr. Mintz described the author's condition as "uncertain" and said tests were being conducted to determine the full nature and permanence of her condition. Public records indicate that Ms. Goldsmith is in her early 50's.

Although Ms. Goldsmith has written more than a half-dozen novels, she is best known for "The First Wives Club" (Arrow, 1992), which playfully imagined the revenge of three women who had been dumped by their husbands for younger second wives. The book, which was made into a successful movie starring Diane Keaton, Goldie Hawn and Bette Midler, poked gentle fun at women who had undergone plastic surgery to retain youthful looks.

Her literary agent and good friend Nick Ellison confirmed that Ms. Goldsmith had been sick earlier this year and had undergone gall bladder surgery, but said that when he spoke to her days ago she seemed in perfect health. "She was just so full of life and so up," he said.

A spokeswoman for Lenox Hill declined to comment, citing patient confidentiality.



Ms. Goldsmith