



## Beauty Sleep

I shocked my mother the other day. Something I said was so unbelievable to her that she couldn't reply at first, and just stared back at me, not knowing what to say.

Now she has known me for nearly 58 years, and - as must be the case with anybody's mother - not much goes on with her kids that she hasn't seen before at one time or another. So this was quite an unusual event for me, and I have to say, I was shocked that *she* was shocked.

We were chatting together over Skype - the internet video telephone service. As it happens, Tokyo and Vancouver are eight hours apart (during the summer), and this turns out to be a very convenient time difference for us. When I get up in the morning and make my first email check of the day, it is afternoon 'tea-time' for her, and she is sometimes then using her computer to write mail, or play some light games. When I check my computer again in the early afternoon, after finishing my morning's printmaking work, it is evening for her, just before her bed time. Then, much later in the day for me, when I am reading my final batch of mail on the computer before going to bed around midnight, it is morning for her, and she is making her own first check of the day.

So I sometimes 'bump into her' as many as three times a day, seeing the small Skype icon that tells me that she is 'online' and available. I don't actually call her three times every day of course - nobody's mother wants their kids doing *that* - but I do ring now and again so that I can hear her latest news. The chair and music stand where my father sits to practice his guitar is in the same room as their computer, and I can sometimes see and hear him playing in the background while she and I chat.

But returning to the 'shocking' episode I mentioned ...

We are now well into our hot and humid summer, and this kind of weather really tends to sap one's energy; I for one always feel more lethargic at this time than I do when the weather is cold and crisp. I have also been working very hard on my printmaking these days, which always takes a lot of energy, and in addition to these 'tiring' influences, have also been disturbed very early many recent mornings by some noisy barking coming from a nearby house, where a woman is raising show dogs, and having trouble keeping them disciplined. The upshot of all these factors is that come the early afternoon, it becomes impossible for me to hold back the yawning.

And so it was the other day (the call with my mother was taking place at my mid-day, just after lunch.) She saw me yawning, and when she asked - as mothers do - whether or not I was getting enough sleep, I just mumbled something about feeling a bit tired, and then mentioned that as soon as we got off the phone, I would be lying down for a nap.

That was the moment. She couldn't believe what I had just said. A nap. Her son. Her 57-year-old adult son was going to 'lie down for a nap'. She simply couldn't process this information.

To my mother, naps are for babies, or for the elderly. The *really* elderly. She herself - or so she told me anyway - has never taken naps before, and has no intention of starting now, or anytime soon. It seems that in her

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mind naps are for 'weaklings', and this discovery that I am a 'secret' napper has forced her to face the fact that her number one son may be ... a weakling.

Well, I have to reject such a categorization of course, but there is no arguing with the fact that somewhere around one o'clock most afternoons, the Skype icon on my own computer switches from 'online' to ... 'away'.

This weakling needs a re-charge!

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