



Lies, All Lies!

Last night (I am writing this in 'real time', a day before publication date) I returned from the annual family get-together in Canada. As you read a couple of weeks ago, this year was a bit special because of the 60th anniversary celebrations, and I spent nearly three weeks over there, quite a bit longer than I usually stay.

Five of us - my parents and their three 'children' - went on a week-long Alaska cruise together, and even if this were a 'Story A Day' I would certainly have no trouble at all finding good content for it *that* week. Perhaps one day I'll tell you about the waiters and the anniversary cake(s), but I'm a little hesitant to do so, as I don't want my mother to fall over laughing again ... But as this is the final installment in this particular 'volume' of stories, I have another episode that I think might be more suitable, and it was something that happened not on the cruise, but a few days after returning to Vancouver.

Along with my two daughters, I had spent the middle of the day down at the garden allotment belonging to their mother. It's a bit early in the season yet, so we weren't able to feast on any of the fruit that grows there, but had a pleasant picnic lunch and watched my two grandchildren dig in the dirt and tear around the paths. The walk home normally takes around a half-hour through pleasant forest trails, but because we were pushing a buggy this time, we had to stay out in the open on the main roads, making it a hot and noisy slog up long hills together with all the trucks.

When we got to the house, I sat on the sofa for a while, and enjoyed a glass of juice one of them brought to me. And this is where our accounts differ. As my girls would have it, I 'collapsed onto the sofa', basically unable to take so much as another step. Lies, I tell you, lies!

The 'truth' - as usual - lies somewhere between the two extremes. Certainly I was ready to sit down for a while, but no, I did not 'collapse'. But as we joked about this during the rest of the time we spent together, I felt a real sense that something had changed between the three of us.

Many years ago, when they were very small, their 'daddy' was of course all-seeing, all-knowing, and completely invincible. As they grew up bit by bit, they gradually learned to see me as a 'normal' person, one with a certain skill set, good at some things, less competent at others. They certainly respect me, but of course do not think of me as any kind of superman.

I think though, that when they saw me sit down on that sofa to rest for a bit, they stood in the kitchen and exchanged glances with each other, the message perhaps unspoken, but clear nonetheless - one day their dad is going to be an old man. And then one day, a very old man. And then of course ...

I don't want to over-dramatize the episode. None of us broke down in tears at this. But things have definitely changed.

My younger daughter Fumi is very busy with her fashion accessory business, and is doing very well indeed with it. A father will of course brag about his children's accomplishments, but there is no bragging in the statement that she is already - after little more than a year in business - outselling her father, who has been at

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it for decades. My comments to her about what I perceived to be 'problems' with her packaging methods were politely, but clearly, ignored.

Her older sister's accomplishment is less easily measured, but when I tell you that she works a full 40-hour week out of the home in addition to her normal wife and mother duties to her family, you will get the idea. And here too, my 'input' was not particularly helpful. Her two little boys may indeed be at a difficult stage, but the last thing they need is clumsy disciplining that conflicts with what their parents are offering.

So it's not just the physical aspect of their father's age; we have now - clearly - left the country of 'daddy knows best'. I report this with very mixed feelings; of course I am saddened at my loss of 'status' in their eyes, but this has been replaced with pride at seeing how good they are at what they are doing. They certainly no longer 'need' me, and any parent has to be proud to see his children that way.

But you'll now have to excuse me, I have to get back to the spreadsheet I have been working on. I've got some ideas about how I might be able to increase next year's print business ...

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