

When he looked at the time, Ben decided to check on his wife Mayu. He was a little surprised she hadn't come to check in on him since he had been busy so long in the family room, ~~that~~ which he had converted into his virtual workshop. He began to feel some concern when he found her still in bed sleeping.

"I'm so tired. I need to sleep." ~~Was~~ was all she said.

"But you've been sleeping for ~~14~~ fourteen hours!"

"I'm pregnant."

"You've never slept a wink more than nine hours since you started and before that only six. And you missed your morning bath!"

"I'm pregnant." She turned her back to him. She was making it abundantly clear that she had already spoken enough.

"Are you sure you're ~~alright~~ all right?" The look she gave him made him feel as welcome as a cockroach.

"Can I get you anything to eat or drink?" She looked at him fiercely, then turned her back to him again. Even a ~~slow-minded~~ slow-minded *gaijin* like him could read her intention loud and clear. He shrugged quietly to himself and decided it was best to leave her alone. No sense in digging himself in any deeper. "She'll tell me if she needs anything." he thought.

"Well," she said rather slowly, sounding kind of drugged. "I do feel a little sick. But I just need to sleep some more." She was obviously remembering where she was and was making an effort to cross the cultural barrier.

"Sorry." Ben acknowledged her effort and apologized for her discomfort while quietly expressing his love for her and his longing for her to feel better.

And then she was back asleep. There was nothing else he could do, so he decided it was time to go for his usual walk in the woods. They lived on a cul-de-sac that culminated in a trailhead. He entered the forest here, the path branching into a network of trails surrounding a hill that was the highest point in the area. He rarely climbed to the top, spending most of his time in the woods in a kind of walking meditation amongst the trees, letting his thoughts unwind and his feelings settle, since he was the kind of person who needed a foundation of peace in his life to maintain his creativity and sense of spirit. The forest had a few ~~old-growth~~ old-growth trees but was mostly filled with young Cedar ~~cedar~~ and Douglas Fir ~~fir~~ that had re-grown since being cut during colonial times. People often walked their dogs or jogged along the main paths but rarely explored the other trails that he loved. It didn't take long to get off the beaten path and the contours of the land once again shaped the contours of his mind.