

Vintage Whine



A Web Of Intrigue

I recently took my dumb phone with me on a mini break to St. Anne's Spa with three of my BFFs.

Our sojourn was blissful, and I spent 24 hours not checking email or Facebook or sundry ailments which tend to assail crumbles entering their sunset years. Now that internet addicts are being monitored 24/7, however, I couldn't help wondering whether the geeks at the helm of the good ship Google were amazed that I was still breathing, given the plethora of medical sites - whoops, that should be wellness sites in today's positive thinking parlance - I visit.

When the government starts combing my virtual history for evidence of tax evasion, bomb assembly or various strange proclivities that would make a sailor blush, all they will find is a string of searches focusing on the aging physique. The fact is, the minute someone tells me about a symptom or health problem - sorry, issue - they have noticed, I'm on the case.

Since the dawn of time, around the year 2000, when my use of the internet started to morph from casual into obsessive, I have ignored stern admonitions from the Health Care Community about not looking stuff up online.

While other people are compulsively checking their BlackBerries and iPhones in a variation on a theme by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young: *If you can't be with the one you text, ignore the one you're with*, I'm on my sweet, old-fashioned desktop, trawling the web for the latest news on, say, calcium (currently a bit of a calamity, according to a recent study awaiting an outraged response from calcium manufacturers).

I returned to the old homestead feeling a little under the weather, owing to a very late night and more than my approved per diem 1.5 units of alcohol, and went to bed at 9:30 p.m., only to be awoken by a massive crack of thunder at around 5 the next morning. I was drifting back to sleep again when the power surge protector on my computer started beeping like a banshee every 25 seconds to alert me to the fact that the hydro had gone AWOL, a not entirely novel experience for residents of the 'ville.

I tried to tune it out - after all, what is the universal soundtrack to modern life but an endless series of beeps emanating from cash registers, microwaves, bank machines, reversing trucks etc.? - but eventually gave up in despair and trudged upstairs to switch it off.

After a further fruitless half hour trying to return to the land of nod, I staggered downstairs, rummaged through the muddy drawer to find the barbecue lighter, lit the gas and boiled a saucepan of water for a nice cup of tea. By 7 a.m., computer withdrawal symptoms were receding and I was beginning to appreciate a world without phones, the internet and those ubiquitous beeps.

Four hours into my Xtreme wireless deprivation, I had perused the morning paper, cleaned the rooms upstairs and sorted out my winter clothes for storage when a triumphant elongated beep announced that the beast was back. Like Pavlov's dog, I immediately stopped what I was doing and went online.

My name is Kate, and I am an internet addict.

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