

Smart Home

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It all started with a chocolate thick shake from Carvel...

It's not my fault that we pass the ice cream store on the way home from our dental office. My wife, who besides being my office manager is also my best friend and harshest critic, said, "Will stopping for a thick shake help you fit into your black suit?"

I resent rhetorical questions and I resent diet reminders. So, of course, I felt absolutely compelled to stop and buy an extra-large, extra-thick, chocolate thick shake with extra chocolate chips.

Despite sipping as quickly as possible, I couldn't finish by the time we got home. I carried the remaining drink up to our bedroom, and, to my wife's utter horror, accidentally spilled it over our beautiful, artesian turquoise rug.

And that's when the trouble began.

The Might-as-wells

Carvel does not, but absolutely should, post warning signs, cautioning consumers that chocolate shake stains on rugs are totally resistant to removal. A succession of housecleaners, rug shampooers, and carpet specialists were unsuccessful.

"Well," my wife declared, "this carpet needs replacement."

Feeling guilty, a weak, "Okay, dear," was all I could manage.

After extensive consultations with decorators who are patients of ours, my wife and her fellow conspirators decided that our bedroom wallpaper, although beautiful and unblemished to my untrained eyes, would best be changed at the same time.

"And," this cabal declared, "while planning your new color scheme, we might as well change the furniture, the window treatments, the lighting, and, at the same time, junk the flat screen TV for a wall-mounted Smart Screen television."

They smiled sympathetically at my protests.

Getting Smart

Doing business with patients is fraught with hidden dangers. This malevolent gang of experts produced an electrician, also a patient of mine, to educate me on the manifold advantages of owning a Smart TV.

It was a conspiracy.

One after one, they all expressed shock that a professional who practices dentistry with every modern, digital, computerized, electronic gizmo, could possibly be satisfied living in an analog home.

“First,” they explained, “you absolutely must have a smart thermostat, that you can set with your personal preferences, schedule, and a personalized sensor that automatically adjusts the room temperature.

“Then,” they continued, “smart lighting is a must. Just imagine being able to adjust the color and hue based upon your mood; imagine being able to dim the lights from your smart phone; and, imagine the benefits of the lights automatically turning off when the sensor registers lack of motion in the room!”

I recalled sitting in my accountant’s new, ultra-modern office, two months ago, when the lights suddenly went out. The sedentary CPA suddenly sprang out of his chair and started frantically flapping his arms up and down. “The sensors turn off the lights every so often, if they don’t detect motion,” he explained.

The electrician continued. “In today’s environment, it is imperative for a house to feature a smoke and carbon dioxide Nest Protector, that, besides screeching loudly, turns on the lights if it senses that you are walking in the dark, and also notifies your cell phone.”

While listening to his sale’s pitch, I googled “Nest Protect,” and found that one reviewer wrote, “This device is good for causing you to have a panic attack! And, if you ever produce smoke by getting a little too sloppy cooking dinner, quickly turn off any non-emergency alarms right from the Nest app, rather than disconnecting the whole thing out of frustration.”

I continued to listen politely.

They went on to promulgate the purchase and installation of Amazon Echo that not only plays music, but connects you to a voice-activated digital assistant that can tell you the weather, browse the web for random information, and can set alarms or calendar events.

My wife asked, "Can it warn me if Dr. Galler is trying to eat a gallon of Haagen Dazs?"

They ignored her and continued.

"A Nest Cam features a functional, high resolution security camera that allows you to monitor children and nannies throughout the day," they advised.

I tried explaining that we no longer have children or nannies at home, but that I would like to observe my goldfish remotely from my cell phone.

Their enthusiasm was undampened.

"Are you ever nervous about leaving something plugged in, once you're out of the house? WeMo switch devices can help! Would you like to have a semi-autonomous robot vacuum the house without needing human supervision? The new model Roomba is now available!

"You can remotely control door locks with Smart Lock! Logitech Harmony Home Control can remotely control up to eight remote devices at one time!"

I sighed and promised to consider all their proposals.

Sleepless in Long Island

That night, I slept fitfully and had a vivid nightmare.

I dreamt that I woke one morning in a dark, cold room. I clapped my hands to turn the lights on, and heard the garage door opening. I clicked the remote on my night table to raise the thermostat temperature, and heard the coffee maker turn on.

While showering, I must have produced too much steam, because the smoke detector began screeching.

I turned on my electric shaver and heard the garage door close and my car start automatically.

While dressing, my automatic tie rack started spinning wildly, out of control. The electrician's face appeared on my Smart Screen TV.

"Dr. Galler," he exclaimed, "get downstairs immediately. Instead of boiling coffee, you caused the water in your fish tank to roast your goldfish!"

I woke up screaming. My wife claims that I kept shouting, "Carvel! Chocolate thick shake!"