

## WARNING: KEEP OUT OF REACH OF HOUSEWIVES

I'm half past 40 now, dreadfully close to approaching 50, and my brain cells seem to be abandoning me at an alarming rate. It's pitiful, really, and I'm getting no compassion from the teenagers in my house who have thought I was "old" for quite some time. I can't wait until they're the age I am now and realize what came as a shock to me, which is that it's only the body that ages. The spirit and soul remain youthful, vibrant, active, intact and ageless. (Though if you happen to be male, your sense of humor usually becomes permanently arrested in the not-so-witty years between the ages of ten and twelve where fart jokes are the height of comic achievement.)

Adding to my distress is the saga of the basement remodeling project. Recently, several people came over to give me estimates for removing the ancient petroleum-based adhesive after I'd spent many backbreaking hours pulling up all the old, disgusting layers of tile. I was stunned to receive their bids. It never occurred to me why their bids were so exorbitant until *after* I decided to save money by doing it myself. I finally realized it was to help offset the cost of hospitalizations and care for the effects of early-onset Alzheimer's as a result of breathing noxious fumes in an enclosed area for days on end. I could practically hear each brain cell gasping desperately for its last breath before fizzling into oblivion in my head. But checkbook hidden and brain cells be darned, I persevered on my own despite the skull and cross bones on the can of solvent and the dire warnings in capital letters not to use the product in an enclosed, airless space such as, specifically, a basement. No doubt I suffered the loss of more than a few I.Q. points while my sinuses vaporized as I sat on my knees scraping toxic, black, sticky sludge off the concrete. Such tenacity. Such vision. Such stupidity!

The plan is to stain and seal the floor, faux paint the walls, get rid of the, "Early *You Want It?*" décor then refurnish and redecorate with an antique/sports theme and create a mar-velously inviting family room. Unfortunately, by the time it's all said and done I'll probably be sitting in a corner with my head bobbing in a state of brain-dead incoherence while my husband comes over periodically to wipe the drool from my chin. At least I'm *assuming* he will. For all I know, he'll tilt my head to the right, prop a plunger under my chin, tie a bib around my neck and toss me into a corner while he watches Monday Night Football on the big screen T.V.

I have these nightmares of him and his thin second wife enjoying all the fruits of my labor for years to come while my cold ashes sit in a shoebox in the back of his closet.

Could someone help me keep an eye on him?