

Surfing in
Stilettos

Carol E Wyer



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As Amanda's mother says: 'He who laughs ... lasts!' May this book give you a quite a few chuckles.

Introduction

Fortifying Your Fifties - Introduction

Welcome to the first post on this, my new blog—**Fortifying Your Fifties**. It is not, as the title may suggest, about drinking your way through your mature years, although I might be tempted to get Phil to stop off at various vineyards as we travel through France. When I mentioned that we'd have the chance to taste wines, he snorted rudely, and said if I started doing that, I'd still be in Bordeaux by the end of the year, pickled at the bottom of a very large vat of wine.

No, this blog is for those of us who may be in our fifties but feel in our forties or even thirties, or in my mother's case—her teens. She has a brand new venture which is keeping her occupied—one that will surprise you all—but more about that later. She has also found out about Skype, so the weekly phone call from her has taken on a whole new dimension.

My newly discovered vigour for life is due in part to having finally shoved my son Tom out of the nest. Given we were having trouble convincing him to fly solo, we decided to jump first, so now we are the ones who have flown the nest, leaving Tom still in it.

I also put my new desire for life down to having enjoyed a steamy, online relationship with a hottie. It made me realise that maturing doesn't necessarily mean becoming old. "You don't stop laughing because you get old; you get old because you stop laughing." So why not follow my exploits and hopefully have a few laughs with me?

My grumpy—yes, he is still grumpy—hubby Phil and I are about to take off on a gap year to tour around Europe. I envisage a life of relaxation under moonlit skies, passion rekindled, and a lot of wine. There will be stylish shops to visit, places of interest, quaint cobbled streets, different cultures, vineyards, more shops, and hopefully, a lot more wine.

It should be fun, provided Phil cheers up. I hope we manage to enjoy ourselves and don't end up in the divorce courts or worse still, a prison cell, having been found guilty of murder on the Bürstner campervan. The way my life swerves about, I am sure I could end up at a completely different destination to the one planned; so climb on board and join the journey. *Tickets please ...*

SexyFitChick ... Love this new blog and the photo of you and Phil in the sidebar. He doesn't look half as miserable as you paint him to be, particularly in that woolly hat with all those badges on it and those roller skates. Why are you sitting on a giant, orange Space Hopper? I hope you intend posting some photos of the hunky, foreign men you meet en route. Don't forget to hand the best-looking ones my business card. I'm counting on you. By the way, what do you mean you enjoyed a "steamy, online relationship with a hottie"? This is Todd we are talking about, I presume? The Todd Bradshaw. The Todd Bradshaw who lives near me here in Sydney and is often to be seen with a young girl on his arm. The dirty rat, cheating, lying ex-boyfriend hottie ...

Facing50 ... Hello SexyFitChick. Thank you for the compliment. I have all your cards and will do my best to promote you! I'll explain about the Space Hopper in my next post. Maybe I exaggerated about Todd a little, but he was pretty good-looking in his day and certainly *hot*. Can't stay online long. Phil (not a *hottie*) is cooking baked beans on the gas stove outside, and judging by the grunts he is making, I think the food is ready. How romantic.

PhillyFilly ... Glad you are blogging again. I missed you. I spent the last few weeks getting some essential surgery. I had a bun lift. I guess you'd call it a bottom lift. I look like J-Lo, but I'm having difficulty sitting down. I keep sliding off the chair. The neighbor whistled at me yesterday. My daughter said he was whistling for his dog, but I don't believe her; it had to be my sexy, new ass he was admiring. I saw him; he couldn't take his eyes off it. I'm looking forward to hearing about your trip. I'd love to be on it. Are you going to Switzerland? There are some great clinics there. I'll send you the addresses in case you fancy a quick refresh while you are there.

TheMerryDivorcee ... I'd love to be on a European Tour, too. I went to Venice with ex-husband number six to try and patch up a few differences we were having at that time. It was going quite well until we took a gondola ride and I ended up in a bar with the Venetian Gondola boatman, who, funnily enough, became husband number seven. Those Italians sure know how to treat a lady. You can't blame a girl—not when a guy sings so beautifully to her.

YoungFreeSingleandSane ... I'm so happy for you. I hope you don't fall out though. Being confined in one space with someone 24/7 can cause huge problems. Just living in the same flat as Jonathan drove me mad. He had some dreadful habits. He even used to pick his toenails while we watched television!

Gypsynesters2 ... We can highly recommend this life. We left our kids behind two years ago and have been traveling around the States ever since. Should have left them years ago. Don't worry about being in the same space all the time. We fought to start with, but then it all settled down. Maybe that was because I left my nagging wife behind at a service station and picked up a gorgeous hitchhiker, who has been with me ever since. Good luck. :)

OneFlewOverTheEmptyNest ... What a great idea. Our kids keep coming back like boomerangs. Every time we think they have gone, one or another of them returns, needing our help. Enjoy yourselves and don't drink too much wine.

Chapter One

Todd Bradshaw lay exhausted in bed. The sheets were jumbled together on the floor. Sunlight streamed through his condominium window, which had an enviable view overlooking the coast at Hawk's Bay. He had rediscovered paradise. In his arms lay his first true love, Amanda Wilson. He had not been this blissful since the last time he had held her. Admittedly, she was older. There were some lines around her eyes, and her body was softer and a fraction rounder, but that made her even more delectable.

He recalled the afternoon of passion they had just savoured. Age had had an agreeable effect on her. She had matured in many ways and was far more confident about her body than she had been all those years ago when he had first known her. *Where had she learned to do that thing with an ice cube?*

Amanda opened a sleepy eye and smiled up at him. The laughter lines accentuated a little, making her look even more appealing and full of mischief.

"What are you staring at?" she asked huskily.

“You,” replied Todd, tenderly tucking a stray hair back behind her ear and admiring the gleam that shone in her green eyes. “Shall I go and get some more ice cubes?” he asked.

She placed her hand behind his head and guided him towards her, kissing him fervently. She still had that power over him. Thirty years and more than double that number of women had been and gone from his bed since he had last been with her, but it seemed as if the years hadn’t passed at all. What a fool he had been to wait this long to reclaim her.

Reawakened with desire, he ran his hands over her soft, smooth skin. His hands travelled past her firm, round buttocks and onto the tops of her legs. She panted hard. That wasn’t right. In fact, the more he thought about it, the more he realised none of this was right. Her skin wasn’t very smooth at all. Actually, it was quite hairy. *Gosh, she had really let herself go! Had she stopped waxing her legs?* The panting was getting more urgent and louder in his right ear. His ardour receded rapidly. *Yuck! Was that slobber?*

Todd Bradshaw woke with a jolt. The television was still showing the same football match he had started to watch half an hour ago when he had dozed off. Digit, his cattle dog, was asleep next to him, panting and drooling in his ear. Todd shrugged the heavy dog off and stared at the figures running about on the screen. What was the matter with him? In recent weeks he had been dreaming nightly about Amanda, but now the fantasies were spilling over into the day.

He really should forget her.

He blew his first opportunity decades before when he left her for a meaningless relationship with a diplomat’s daughter. They had been a solid item before that, and Todd had even considered asking Amanda to marry him. They had met in the romantic city of Casablanca, where they had both worked. Their relationship had been intense, fuelled by the heat of the orange sun that set magnificently each evening in front of their apartment; long walks along pale, golden, sandy beaches with only the sound of the waves to accompany them; and the heady aroma of cinnamon and other exotic spices that rose from the bakery below them each morning. There was no doubt that living abroad in the dazzling country of Morocco had helped cement their passionate relationship, and both

had fallen heavily in love, especially Amanda. Scared by the thought of becoming trapped in a more permanent relationship when he still believed the world was waiting to be explored, Todd had felt the walls closing in on him. When his contract in Morocco expired, he had immediately applied for a position in Kuwait, knowing Amanda would be unable to get work there. It would allow him a little breathing space before committing fully to the delicious Amanda.

The money was excellent, and Todd had just about decided to propose to Amanda when one fatal night, he went to a party at the local diplomat's house and was approached by Vanessa, the diplomat's twenty-year-old daughter. She fell for Todd's bronzed, good looks and suave manner in a flash. Todd, being Todd, couldn't help himself; after all, the girl practically threw herself at him. If he were honest, she reminded him of his Mandy in looks—his Mandy who was far away in the UK, teaching in a private school in the Midlands. Todd caved in and had his fling with Vanessa. Feeling guilty, he told Amanda about it. Amanda's reaction had been one of utter disbelief and dismay. They had split up, not to be reconnected again until Todd found her on Facebook.

He ruined his second opportunity last year. Amanda had been going through a crisis with her husband, and Todd knew she was on the brink of leaving him. He only had to persuade her that he was the one with whom she should be. He had been invited to his nephew's wedding in the UK and so decided to use the trip as an opportunity to woo Amanda. He arranged to meet her the day after his nephew's wedding. Convinced he would be able to win her round, he had far too much champagne at the wedding. Weaving his way back to his room, he became distracted by the beautiful young Australian bridesmaid who had cornered him by the bar and spent a long time chatting to him. She was extremely interested in him. Her being thirty years younger than he was, Todd was flattered by the attention. That fact, combined with several more glasses of champagne, resulted in his spending the night, pretending he was still twenty-five years old himself. The girl was a gymnast and wrung every ounce of energy he possessed out of him. He slept all morning the next day and awoke sometime in the afternoon with an appalling hangover. The girl in question wasn't about to let him escape and leapt on him as soon as he woke. Several hours later,

Todd felt his age and older. The girl left him to recover along with her phone number written on a pair of her tiny, lace panties. He threw them away.

He had missed his meeting with Amanda. He had messed it up yet again. She had kept him as a friend on Facebook, but they no longer chatted or played Lust Scrabble. Habit made him look at the computer. He sighed. *Blast!* There she was. The little green light illuminated next to her name indicated she was online and was available to chat. He stood up and paused in front of the computer keyboard. Should he?

Something was seriously wrong. He hadn't chatted up a single woman since that wedding episode. Last night at the local bar, he had refused the advances of a delightful Swedish girl with baby blue eyes, long eyelashes, and legs to die for. She'd made it obvious that she found him attractive and had felt his muscular thighs, fit from years of cycling, in a highly suggestive manner. He'd made his excuses and returned home to watch television. God, how he wished it had been Amanda who'd been feeling his leg.

He clicked onto her page and read her latest status updates: *En route to La Belle France—watch out vineyard owners!*

There were various good luck messages under the last status. She and her husband Phil were off on a gap year, touring around Europe. Todd rubbed Digit's head affectionately, musing on what might have been. If only he hadn't got drunk and ended up with that bland blonde. Instead of making him feel youthful, she had only served to make him realise he was a fifty-six-year-old man—a man who currently had hair growing out of his ears and who had recently bought a nasal trimmer.

He sighed again, more heavily, and decided to turn in for the night. He had an early start cycling in the morning. He needed to train for the next Veteran's race in a few weeks. Ha! That just about summed him up—a veteran. The adrenaline produced in such a race used to give him a tremendous buzz. He always thought it was better than sex, unless, of course, the sex was with Amanda Wilson. Now, nothing seemed to excite him. He was starting to feel his age, and worse than that, he was starting to feel lonely.

The small green light next to her name flickered tantalisingly. It would be so easy to type *hello*. Maybe she'd respond. Maybe they could start afresh ...

Digit emitted a loud fart and turned over, his tongue hanging comically out of his mouth.

“You’re probably right, old friend,” laughed Todd, pulling the plug on the computer. “Not this time.”

Chapter Two

At the same time as Todd switched off the computer and went off to dream about her, Amanda Wilson was heaving the contents of her stomach into a bush, her face ashen grey with bits of something rather nasty stuck to her chin. Phil was sitting in the driver’s seat of the *Bürstner* campervan, listening to the radio, his face devoid of expression. Amanda retched one last time. There was nothing left. Her stomach was finally empty. She felt utterly drained.

Clambering back into the campervan Phil stared coldly at her.

“Feeling better now?” he asked querulously. He turned the key in the ignition as she buckled up. He was going to suggest stopping at the next cafe for a fry up but thought better of it, although he could almost smell the aroma of the eggs, bacon, sausage, grilled tomatoes, baked beans, fried bread, and maybe even some potato cakes.

“Yes, I think so. I don’t know why I feel so bad.”

“No, you probably can’t remember,” retorted Phil. “I wonder what could have made you feel so bad? Maybe it was the two bottles of homemade wine you downed as soon as we arrived, or it could have been the half bottle of Kahlua you quaffed after that—” He didn’t finish. Amanda had shoved the door open and was hurtling back to the bush to be sick again. Phil harrumphed, turned off the engine, and turned up the radio.

Surveying her pasty face and her hair encrusted with bits of what looked like carrots when she eventually returned to the campervan, Phil felt marginally less annoyed with her. It wasn’t really her fault. She had just been trying to be friendly. That was her nature. She always wanted to please people, like an over-exuberant puppy. She would do almost anything to make someone happy. It was the Wicked Witch of The South West who had caused Amanda to be so ill this morning. Thanks to her, they had missed their ferry and

would now have to wait to join one tomorrow. He drummed his fingers against the steering wheel while Amanda fiddled about with her seatbelt, getting tangled up in it due to a lack of coordination.

It was her mother who had plied her with alcohol all night and kept her up talking so that by the time she finally fell into bed, it was time to get up. It was her mother who had clambered into the attic at three o'clock in the morning and insisted on dragging down a whole pile of Amanda's toys she had played with during the 1970s. It was also her mother's fault that there was now a huge, orange face staring at him in the rearview mirror. The Space Hopper was grinning stupidly at him from the back seat where it was strapped in with a seatbelt. He bet she had sent it to watch his every move.

God knows how her mother could keep up that energetic pace, but she did. It was completely unfair that to cap it all, her mother had got up this morning after one hour's sleep, fresh-faced, cheerful, and displaying no trace of a hangover. *How on earth did she do it?*

They had stopped off to visit Amanda's mother before they departed on their gap year. Amanda and she had only recently buried the hatchet and had become friends. The Old Boot had been effusive in her welcome, but Phil had known she would soon show her true colours—after all, this was Amanda's mother, the scourge of the Twister mat, Queen of karaoke, she who could outdrink a sailor on shore leave.

Amanda and her mother had a lot of catching up to do, and Phil knew they needed time together. He excused himself early on in the evening to sleep in the campervan, glad he did not have to suffer any more of his mother-in-law's attempts to ply them with alcohol to get them into a party mood. Her homemade wine was more potent than bootleg Russian vodka. He rubbed his tongue against his upper palate, letting the tip brush the back of his teeth. He was positive her hooch had dissolved a layer of enamel from his teeth.

Amanda was turning grey again. He revved the engine and attempted to distract her. "Why is there an inflated orange Space Hopper sitting behind us?"

"Ah, I remember that part of the night, or was it morning by then? Mum had been on a trip down memory lane. She was reminiscing about evenings we spent together when Dad was away on exercise. He was often away abroad for months on end. We used to spend quite a lot of time together when I was younger. Anyway, she got

quite nostalgic at one point. She kept rabbiting on about board games we used to play to while away the hours—MouseTrap, Buccaneer, Monopoly. She mentioned loads of games I couldn't recall so she went to find them.

“Can you believe it? She'd kept every single one of my old toys and all of my school reports? Oh Lord! The school reports ...” Amanda recalled hazily how her mother had gone through the pile of reports the night before. Talking to her as if she were fifteen, she had reprimanded her again for being juvenile in chemistry and not taking German seriously. Amanda's alcohol-dazed mind had wondered how German could be taken seriously with a teacher named Herr Cutts, who marched around the classroom with a cane under his arm.

Her mother had reminded Amanda about her appalling handwriting and how she had disappointed her teacher in physical education class by constantly turning up with notes to be excused from various sports. The notes had, in fact, been forged by Amanda, who hated all physical activity, particularly netball during the winter months when they were forced to go outside in subzero conditions, wearing nothing more than a tee-shirt and a tiny gym skirt. Too tipsy to care about the reprimand, Amanda had giggled like a fifteen-year-old at her mother's attempt to reproach her while thinking to herself, *My handwriting may have been poor, but I was an ace forger.*

“Anyway, she got all teary at one point and said how she wished I hadn't grown up. Then she gave me some of the toys to remind me of the good years. My roller skates are in that box over there, and if we get bored, there is a great game called Frustration that we can have a go at.”

Phil concentrated on the road. Honestly, there were times when he wished Amanda would act her age and behave more maturely. If she took after her mother, however, then she probably never would. What a dreadful thought!

Fortifying Your Fifties - Day 3 - July

Finally, we have landed in France. We've been together in this campervan for 48 hours, and I already have a strong desire to hit Phil over the head with something heavy—probably the Le Creuset pan I used to be sick in. He spent the entire trip here on the ferry

asking me repeatedly if I fancied bacon and eggs with a nice, greasy slice of fried bread and then laughing.

“Sick?” I hear you cry. Yes, sick. I am ashamed to admit that it was self-inflicted. My mother is partly to blame, but I have known her for years (all my life in fact), and I really should have known better than to stay up drinking with her all night. Lord knows how her septuagenarian friends do it.

We visited her en route to the ferry port. I hadn’t seen her for several years, not since my father died. It’s only recently that we have decided to start afresh.

As Phil and I pulled up in the campervan or camping-car or motor home, which I’ve named ‘Bertie the *Bürstner*’, a giant Weeble came rushing out of the front door. On closer inspection, I realized it wasn’t a Weeble, but my mother. She is now as wide as she is high. She had a cigarette in one hand and a smile the size of Wales spread across her face. She hugged me and then hugged Phil, who looked very uncomfortable. He has always been wary of her. We’d hardly got through the door before she shoved a can of lager into Phil’s hand and poured me a huge vodka and lemonade. I didn’t have the heart to tell her I stopped drinking vodka in the eighties.

Crafty old Phil made his excuses straight after dinner and took himself off to bed in Bertie, claiming he had a long drive the next day and needed to be adequately rested. He left me in the clutches of my mother, who gleefully declared, “Great! Now that Old Stuffy Drawers has cleared off, we can have some fun.” She proceeded to drag out a couple of demi-johns from her brewing cupboard, which is really just a cupboard under the stairs that houses all her home-brewed wine.

“This is my special brew,” she announced, dragging out a cloudy bottle. The stuff smelled evil and had a kick like a mule, but after a few glasses, I was too busy floating in an alcoholic haze to worry any more.

I think we reminisced, or my mother did. My mouth didn’t seem to want to work. My lips had gone numb by then. She showed me how to link up to Skype. She set it up on my laptop so we can chat face to face while I am abroad. I really wish I had been sober enough to have prevented her from doing that. Regular Sunday telephone calls were bad enough, but now she’ll see me, and I won’t be able to put down the phone and make a coffee while she rabbits on

anymore. She'll see if I am yawning or pulling faces at her. It'll be like being at an interview.

At some point, when my legs had joined my lips in the numb department and my brain was barely functioning, she magically produced a pile of toys and games I used to have. She'd saved them for me.

"I couldn't bring myself to part with them," she declared unpacking a game of Ker-Plunk and a pair of roller skates. Before I knew it, we were sitting on the floor playing the darn games. I remember laughing nonstop because the marbles kept falling down. At the time it had seemed so hilarious.

At one point I tried to leave to get some sleep or at least a glass of water, but Mum explained it wasn't really worth going to bed as it was nearly time to get up, which made sense at the time. She fetched me another glass of wine. I think I may have tried to bounce around the room on a Space Hopper, but things really did go out of focus at that point, and I believe I dozed off on a chair.

The next thing I remember was Phil shouting that it was time to get a move on or we'd miss the ferry. I had to go to the bathroom. I think you know why. Yes, I was sick. Eventually, I was ready and said goodbye to Mum, who seemed remarkably cheerful. Just as we were about to leave for the ninth time, she disappeared into the house, only to reappear five minutes later with an armful of games. She hugged me goodbye again and whispered in my ear, "You may want to play some of these while you are shut away together. Remember, you don't stop playing because you get old. You get old because you stop playing."

She then insisted on our posing for a silly-looking photograph before we set off on our big adventure.

"Say cheese! Come on, Phil. Make an effort! Think of something that makes you happy! That's better. Goodness gracious—you actually look quite nice when you smile." She took the photo which you can see at the top of this post.

"Now, you already look like you are enjoying yourselves. Remember, have fun! Talk to you soon, Amanda."

As she waved goodbye and we pulled away, I asked Phil what "happy" thing he had managed to conjure up that made him smile for the photograph.

"Not seeing your mother for an entire year," he replied.

My stomach rebelled all the way to Dover, and we had to keep stopping for me to relieve myself. I hope the trip gets better. Needless to say, we missed the ferry that day.

By the way, my mother seems to have sneaked the Space Hopper on board Bertie. Phil is not impressed. I have a feeling he might shove a large nail or pin into it before much longer.

Posted by Facing50.Blog - 8 Comments:

Madasahatter ... I am so glad I found your blog. I really needed a laugh today, and that photograph is one of the funniest I have ever seen. Your green face looks great against the orange of the Space Hopper. I always thought Space Hoppers were very large, but now they seem so small. I had a game of Ker-Plunk, too, but my brother kept shoving the marbles up his nose so my mother got rid of it. Anyhow, seeing you both in the photo has made me seek out an old hula hoop. I shall go into the garden now and practice with it. Your mother is right—we need to find our inner child again and release it from time to time.

Facing50 ... I would like to release my inner child, but it is being restricted by my seat belt at the moment, which seems to be stuck. I can't seem to release it anyway. Phil has gone to the toilet at the services, and I am taking advantage of a few minutes to say hello to you all. I might have to get off the iPhone though and try to release myself before he gets back, or he'll be even moodier than usual.

SexyFitChick ... I think the rollers skates Phil was wearing were a bit tight because his smile is more of a grimace. He's in quite good shape for his age, isn't he? He'd be in better shape, though, if he actually used those roller skates. Maybe for his next birthday, you should buy him a proper pair of blades like the ones I have. You could both go zooming off down the Promenade des Anglais in Nice on them. I like the way he rolled up his trousers to show off his knees and to give the impression he was wearing shorts. Well done, Phil, for being game. By the way, you really do look sick in that photograph. Your mother should get that rocket fuel of hers licensed and sent to Russia. She'd make a fortune. Skype! Way to go. I'm Sexy.1 on Skype. We should try to hook up, too.

Facing50 ... Don't remind me. I don't know what she uses in it, but I think it could be used as a deadly weapon if administered in the right doses. Yes, Phil is okay for his age. He doesn't think so, though, and keeps moaning about how he is getting flabby. He should worry—all my top bits now are sagging to meet the bottom bits. I should have a go at blading. I might just try my old skates first, though. My balance isn't what it used to be. As for the rolled-up trousers, that was my mother's idea. Phil was very cross that he had creases in them after rolling them up and spent some time in Dover trying to iron them back out. I'll add you to my Skype list and see if we can chat, although it could be awkward with Phil breathing down my neck all the time.

YoungFreeSingleandSane ... Hope it all gets better. Jonathan said I was too childish for him. That can't be right, can it? I agree with your Mum. We should always try to be a little youthful. Of course, compared to Jonathan, I am childish—he is twenty-seven years older than me!

TheMerryDivorcee ... Great photo. That Space Hopper looks like huge fun—its smile reminds me of my current husband. Actually, he's a similar color, too, after going to the tanning salon. Sorry to hear you were sick. Your Mom is a great old bird, isn't she? Message to YoungFreeSingleandSane: I bet he felt younger when he was with you. He'll probably miss your youth and vitality. Keep looking. As they say, there are plenty more monkeys in the forest.

Gypsynesters2 ... Hello from Mexico. It's fabulously hot here, and we are about to go skinny dipping in the ocean. Hope the trip heats up for you. We'll raise a couple of glasses of tequila to you both. We are on Skype, too. It's marvelous. We can check up on all the family back home and then shut the internet off and enjoy ourselves.

Facing50 ... Thank you all for your comments. I have managed to get out of the seat belt now, and Phil is squirting it with WD-40. I tried out the skates while he was busy, but I think I've lost the knack. They kept sticking. I'll get Phil to put some WD-40 on them, too, and see if that helps. Stay tuned for the next post.