
Prelude to Insanity

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The year is 2025, and I have decided to replace my smartphone with an upgraded version that proclaims to be replete with even more bells and whistles. It appears that my present phone is no longer “viable,” although it is serviceable in its present state. Everything functions well enough, and I am jolly-well pleased. But the ads say I need a new phone, so I willingly comply because I have deep pockets.

A hip-looking young man pushes buttons and waits as the new smartphone is programmed and connected to Wi-Fi. He tells me my current phone number has been transferred to this phone, and all calls and recorded messages will continue along the linear path “from them to me.” Nothing is amiss, so I leave the store beaming with all the pride that is usually accorded to the birth of one’s firstborn.

I now want to access pictures from a website that says it is “virus-free” and offers drawings and photographs that are not under copyright constraints. A smile crosses my face. Okay, I push the button that results in viewing the smartphone’s permission-to-access-website requirement, something akin to a disclaimer in reverse.

Smartphone: May I have access to medical, educational, and work records, including any comments published about you from birth to the present? (I click “Deny.” What does that have to do with downloading pictures?)

Smartphone: May I have access to the entire contents of your conscious and subconscious mind, both now and in all previous visible and invisible incarnations since the genesis of your existence? (I click “Deny.” Really!)

Smartphone: May I publish your responses to these permission inquiries on every social media outlet currently active? (“Deny.” Grumbling...)

Smartphone: It appears you are in denial. (What?) We already have access to all that information, derived by mega search engines sucking the contents out of the web and dark web, government agencies, and so forth. Likewise, when you held the smartphone close to view the screen, your electromagnetic vibrations conveyed positive and negative responses to our permission process, and these have now been added to the continuous feed of everything you are thinking, where you will be going, what you will be discussing with anyone, etc. However, in order to preserve the integrity of the malware cleaning program that came with your new smartphone, we offer you one last prompt: Do you forever want to delete and abort the information we have on you and proceed to access the pictures you requested? (I click “Accept.” Smiling.)

Smartphone: Request Denied! 