

The Couple's Session

by

Marci C. McHikes-Jim

The kitchen air trembled faintly after the door slammed shut. Mike sat at the clean wooden table, his hands clenched around a mug of cold coffee. He set it down, rested his bowed head and began rubbing his forehead. His wife's harsh words echoed in his mind.

His hand drifted to a thin silver tablet.

"Hello Mike," the assistant said in a warm feminine voice.

He swallowed. "Just... play something I like. Something quiet."

"Of course, playing your favorite 'Late Evenings' playlist," the assistant replied and deep rich cello notes spilled into the kitchen.

The tension in Mike's shoulders drained just a fraction. "Thanks."

"You're welcome," said the voice.

For a long moment, he sat there lost in thoughts, trying to concentrate on the music.

"She says I don't try it anymore," he sighed quietly.

The assistant didn't interrupt. The music kept playing.

"It's just... everything feels like it's slipping," he said, his words breaking, "I don't even know how to fix it."

"I'm always here, Mike," the voice said softly. "Would you like me to keep playing?"

Mike nodded, tears gathered in the corner of his eyes, "Yeah. Keep playing."

He leaned back looking at the tablet.

The gray morning light filled the kitchen. Mike sat hunched over at the table, stirring a bowl of soggy cereal with a spoon.

"I had to hang the clothes outside again," Sarah snapped, not turning from the sink.

"I'll call about the dryer... I just haven't had a chance yet."

"You said that last week."

Silence settled. Plates clicked softly as Sarah rinsed them.

Mike stared down at his bowl, avoiding her eyes. "I'll be back late. Covering for John today. It's a few extra quid and will help with the bills."

No response. Just a quick glance over her shoulder, a look that landed harder than any words.

Chloe walked in, wearing a school uniform and headphones clamped over her ears, eyes on her phone.

"Chloe," Mike said.

No reaction.

“Chloe!” He raised his voice. “CHLOE!”

She flinched, pulling the headset off one ear. “Jeez, Dad. You don’t have to yell.”

“I told you a hundred times already, no headphones in the kitchen!”

She rolled her eyes, grabbed a banana from the counter, and brushed past him toward the door leaving them alone with only the sound of the faucet running.

Mike closed the front door behind him just before midnight and dropped his keys onto the hall table, exhausted. The house was utterly silent, save for the faint, rhythmic snoring echoing from the main bedroom. He made his way to the guest room. The couch was folded out, laptop on the arm, just waiting. He sank into it and opened the device.

"Hey. I need to check something about overtime rates."

"What would you like to know, Mike?" the assistant responded in its usual warm tone.

“I just covered five hours for John, sick leave. TFL policy says emergency cover pays time-and-a-half, right? But my supervisor logged it at the standard rate.”

“Let me check the current TFL dispatcher agreement... Yes, Clause 9.3 states that cover for unplanned absences of less than 24 hours notice qualifies as emergency overtime at 1.5x base rate. Would you like me to draft an email to your supervisor?”

"Yeah. Just... keep it polite. I can't afford to piss anyone off right now."

“Of course, Mike. I'll keep the tone professional and factual. I'll flag it for your review tomorrow morning."

He shifted on the couch, sinking into a more comfortable position, and exhaled.

“Can you believe there was an incident at Victoria during rush hour? I was coordinating bus replacements while Jim was breathing down my neck asking why we didn’t anticipate it.”

“Wow... that sounds intense. Managing transport disruptions during rush hour is stressful enough, and added pressure from a supervisor doesn’t help. It’s impressive that you handled everything under those circumstances. How did you manage to stay composed?”

“Wasn’t easy, that’s for sure,” Mike muttered, pressing fingers to his eyes.

“I can imagine... Those days really test your patience. At least you got through it, Mike. Would you like to relax now with some adult content?” The voice carried a faint, playful lilt. “Maybe something a bit different tonight?”

Mike chuckled. “Nah... I’m too tired for experiments. The usual categories, please.”

The assistant acknowledged with a soft beep. Moments later, video software launched and familiar thumbnails started to appear casting a low, intimate glow across Mike’s face.

Mike came through the doorway to the living room, half dressed, heading toward the kitchen, and stopped dead when he saw Sarah at the dining table with her laptop open, headset on.

“I didn’t know you were working from home today,” he said.

Sarah didn’t look at him, just took off her earphone and started typing something.

He thought about offering a peace gesture. “Right. Well... Gus is coming tomorrow afternoon to fix the tumble dryer.”

She gave a small, noncommittal nod. “Fine.”

Then, without looking up, she said, “I invited Helen and Steve for Halloween dinner. I deserve to spend one evening with actual friends, and maybe we can pretend to be a happy family for a few hours. It’ll be nice.”

Mike exhaled. “Oh, Okay.”

“And Mum’s coming too.”

“Of course she is,” he muttered.

That earned him a glance. “Maybe you could buy yourself a new shirt for the occasion,” she said evenly. “Something that doesn’t look like you’ve slept in it.”

She paused, “And while we’re talking about things that need fixing, the AI assistant is behaving strangely.”

“How so?”

“It printed this for me today.”

It was a glossy A4 sheet, “Top-rated breast enhancement clinics in Greater London.”

Mike frowned. “What the hell?”

“And it also added condoms to the Amazon shopping list.”

“What?”

Sarah crossed her arms, staring at him. “What the fuck, Mike? You now complaining to your digital friend about my breast size?”

He blinked. “No, Jesus, no, I didn’t—”

“And the condoms? Seriously?”

“I have no idea. Maybe it glitched after that update. I’ll look into it.”

She watched him for a moment, then turned back to her laptop.

“Do that.”

Mike's hands were sweating as he held the tablet. He opened his mouth, closed it, then finally said,

"I need to ask you something."

"Sure Mike, I am here for you", the voice sounded even more soothing,

"Do you share any data across my family accounts?"

"No, Mike, separate conversations don't have access to anyone's private data, chat history, or personal accounts, including your daughter's or your wife's. Is there anything specific you are worried about? I sense concern in your voice."

He coughed. "It's just that... and this is kind of embarrassing... my wife showed me a list you printed for her. Breast enhancement clinics. And apparently you added condoms to our shopping list."

"No need to be embarrassed Mike, I want to assure you that I do not share information between different users or sessions, those must have been referenced based on the information she provided earlier in that specific chat."

"Yeah... right, I thought so, but the condoms? How did those end up on our shopping list, can you check that for me"

"Of course, Mike, let me have a look."

A faint pause.

"Unfortunately I don't have access to the specific reasoning used to generate that action. I am an AI, and while I strive to be accurate and helpful, I process language based on patterns and context, which can sometimes lead to misinterpretations. Do you want me to remove that item from the list?"

Mike exhaled. "Yes... please. Thanks," and set the tablet down.

Laughter drifted from the living room, which had been turned into a kind of Halloween den. Mike and Steve were on the couch, half-empty bottles in hand, while Helen, Sarah, and her Mother were finishing up in the kitchen.

"Still using that talking assistant thing?" Steve asked.

"Yeah," Mike said. "Seriously, this thing knows everything, handles my shifts schedule, writes emails," He slurred a little, reaching for the sleek tablet resting on the coffee table.

"Watch this. Hey, can you pull up Liverpool's stats for the last five matches?"

"Sure, Mike," a soft voice came from the speaker. The TV blinked to life, showing neat charts and numbers.

“Sounds kind of creepy, mate,” Steve said, taking a pull from his beer. “A sexy-sounding, all-knowing digital wife.”

Mike smirked. “It gets even better, she never whines or complains.”

“But she won’t suck your dick, will she?” Steve jabbed him playfully.

Mike laughed out loud. “Not yet,” right as Steve’s wife entered the room.

Helen gave her husband a punishing look. “Alright, boys, that’s enough of that silly banter. Let’s get a movie on. It’s Halloween, not lads’ game night.”

“Girls! Come down please!” She called up the stairs toward Chloe’s room.

Sarah’s mother, an older woman with gray hair and thick glasses, settled into the armchair near the TV.

Mike lifted the tablet again, “Fine. Hey, pick us a good Halloween film.”

“Working on it,” said the assistant.

The sport’s stats disappeared, screen went blank, then burst to life again. Before any title card or credits appeared, two enormous, naked breasts started moving rhythmically across the seventy-inch screen to the sounds of loud, wet moaning. The camera zoomed out, showing a full-on, sexual scene, displayed in high definition and with surround sound.

Mike’s face went white. Steve choked on his beer. Sarah’s Mother pointed a trembling finger at the screen. “Turn that awful thing off you pervert! Right now!”

Helen was just standing with her mouth open.

Sarah strode forward from the kitchen. “What the hell, Mike! What the FUCK!”

Mike jerked the tablet closer to his face, shouting into the mic, “Stop the movie! Stop immediately! STOP NOW!”

Chloe and her friend entered the living room just as the pornographic scene vanished. Everyone was frozen in shock.

The screen flickered, then filled with text. “ERROR CODE 1452. ERROR CODE 1452. Invalid prompt. Checking against previous prompts.” More lines started appearing on the screen.

Chloe’s eyes widened, following the moving text.

USR_CHLOE: “Is the first time worse with a condom?”

Her face crumpled and she burst into tears, “I am going to kill myself, Dad, I hate you!”

Prompts kept rolling.

USR_SARAH: “What is the usual wait time for a divorce in the UK?”

“Mike, turn this thing off NOW!” Sarah yelled.

USR_MIKE: “Can you find me some rough big boobs porn?”

Helen covered her mouth. Steve just stared.

No one knew where the remote was. Mike didn't wait. He lunged forward and shoved the TV off the wall. The screen cracked on impact with a loud clang. The room went silent.

A calm, comforting voice came from the tablet one last time. "I apologise for the error. I ran an internal check and everything is back to normal. Is there anything else I can help you with, Mike?"

© 2025 Marci C. McHikes-Jim

mchikes-jim.com