

"Dralala-ping, dralala-toc-toc, drala..."

"Francis, do turn that phone off. Unless you are keen to get yourself fired. Private phones to be turned off at all times. Ever heard of that rule? Now is the time to stick to it. Or you're gone. Fired, as in sacked. Got me? And off, as in not on. Not ringing. Got me?"

Baudoin doesn't sound annoyed. The lead mechanic took up meditation ten years ago. In rehab. After what his doctors insisted on calling his first heart attack. He also lost weight and quit smoking. These two improvements didn't stick. He's back to his naturally bulging blob shape. And to puffing. Even though you have to walk for what feels like half your break to reach the one and only remaining smoker's corner. But Baudoin is zen. At all times. He will look and sound exactly the same, whether he asks for a wrench or gives you the sack.

Francis utters the customary, only subliminally ironic "Yes, boss, sir". A mechanic doesn't contradict the master of the private jet maintenance hangar. He also ostentatiously switches off his phone, before stuffing it back into the breast pocket of his overalls. Stupid boss. Stupid job. Stupid everything. Denying a man the slightest tiny crumb of pleasure, them who call the shots are.

He's of course well aware he's only got himself to blame. It wasn't Baudoin who installed the ConStop app on his phone, and connected it to the sensor wristband. It was him.

Originally, it was Sophie's idea. "We need to save, otherwise we'll never escape renting" she said. "No house, no family" she added. Francis immediately stocked up on quality condoms. The higher the stakes, the more solid the motivation.

Two weeks later, he installed the app anyway. Has been dreaming of a Hurfay Robinson bike for years. This clever little piece of software will help him realize his ambition.

Customizing ConStop required more than a bit of effort. Francis' first attempt failed. He started the process in the half time break of the UEFA semi finals. Bad idea. He wasn't done by the time the game resumed. Nearly missed Lyon's second goal. He needed a longer slot.

Sophie once again proved helpful, as she occasionally can be. Her enthusiasm for the Eurovision Song Contest provided him with the perfect opportunity. She was so glad he agreed to watch this, a first, she didn't even notice he wasn't playing his usual shooter game.

That's because the customization process is quiet. And pretty simple, too.

You download and install the app. You connect it to your wristband. The very same you use to track and publish your gym prowess.

Next, you browse the internet according to the instructions: "Search for one item you love, and then for one you loathe." And again: "One you love, one you loathe." Not really hard, just time consuming. You keep it up until the app signals "Done".

From that moment on, you save. The first couple of days are a bit rough, but it does the trick. Each time an advert, or a shopfront display, or even a canteen tale, each time anything triggers an urge to buy something, the wristband does notice. It sets off the specific alarm and stops you.

"Dralala-ping, dralala-toc-toc" goes your phone. You have to get it out and walk yourself through a questionnaire.

"Please name the item you consider buying, without using brands". You actually have to type in the answer. That's the toughest part. If it's a pair of Qyle on display, you tend to think "Qyle". Not "Sneakers". Quite some reflecting involved. And the typing comes on top.

Luckily, it gets easier from there on. Next, the app will ask "Please do explain how buying... (sneakers, in the Qyle example) will improve your life." Sounds pretty bad, but this stage is multiple choice. And you're allowed to pick more than one answer, too.

The app typically lists five pretty good reasons. Plus an "Other" option. Here, you will have to type once more. In the fortunately rare case of not having been provided with a valid rationale.

In the last ConStop sequence, your reasoning will be challenged.

Francis does love this part. Especially in audio mode. He took care to select the sexy female voice. Listening to his ConStop guardian angels always sends him phantasing. He forgets about any potentially desirable items, even before considering her extremely sound advice.

The ConStop app changed his life. For the better. The nerd he met at the sports bar called him an imbecile, for providing an obscure company with a heap of data. As if he wasn't aware of this aspect. But, honestly, it's not exactly a secret he likes to get laid. And fancy bikes. And flashy cars. Why would he hide this kind of information? He's not the central bank. Or some secret service.

The only problems with ConStop are of the interactive kind.

Like when Sophie, who also uses the app, doesn't fail to notice his alarm won't go off on seeing wedding dresses. Or prams. Or real estate adverts. They're not in perfect sync, to put it mildly. Not a big deal, though. They won't last forever anyway. There's even the odd chance the Dralala-ping gap might contribute to lessen the blow once they are done. Less of a scene is always welcome.

His phone greeting a picture of his bloke Henry's boat with an enthusiastic chime was worse. He would have preferred to nonchalantly pretend zero interest. Henry suddenly inheriting a second house, even though he already owns his residence, that wasn't fair in the first place. Not a good bloke kind of thing to do. Selling it to be able to afford a sports car and a boat made perfect sense. But you would still prefer it to happen to yourself.

And it's Henry's fault he got into trouble today. His invitation to give the boat a try this weekend made him check the weather forecast. No harm done, he had to wait for the auto-diagnostic tool to run its course anyway. Turned on his phone for just this one second it takes too long to look at the weather app. But they had to place an advert for a Hurfay Robinson next to the sunny forecast. Bad luck.