



## Holographic 'wife' ministers to Japan's single men

Azuma Hikari wakes her 'master' every morning, reminds him not to forget his umbrella, texts him supportive messages during the day and makes sure the family home is just so before he returns in the evening.

She is the perfect wife, with matching blue hair and eyes, long legs and an array of beautiful outfits. She is described as 20 years old, she likes doughnuts but hates insects. The only drawback to the relationship is that she is a hologram that only stands a few inches tall and lives inside a cylindrical projector.

Japanese technology company Vinclu Inc. started taking advance orders, in Japan and the US initially, for the Gatebox Communication Robot in 2016 with 300 units available. The company has released a series of videos to explain how Azuma Hikari enriches the life of her master, claiming she grants the dream of closing the distance between real people and characters.

The aim of the product is not just pursuing entertainment or convenience, as the company says. They want the characters to be

naturally in people's daily lives and to spend relaxing time with them.

In one of the videos, Azuma Hikari wakes her master with a gentle exhortation to get out of bed. They exchange fond farewells before he heads off to work, text messages between his meetings and she is programmed to ensure the lights and heating are on before he gets home. The master can also receive impatient e-mails from his holographic partner if he is late getting home because she is lonely.

Like any normal couple, they sit and watch some television before wishing each other good night.

Not everyone is impressed with the project however, with commentators on the Tokyo Otaku Mode Facebook page suggesting that the product is extremely depressing. Others pointed out that holographic partners bode ill for a nation that is already experiencing a worrying decline in its birth rate. Another user asked, "What happens when you come home and she is cheating on you with the toaster?"

Adapted from *The Telegraph*

### ACTIVITIES

1 Read the text and choose the best option to complete the sentences.

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|---|--|
| <p>1 Azuma Hikari is<br/>A a real wife<br/>B the character of a video<br/>C a holographic wife</p> <p>2 She is 20 years old, blue-haired and<br/>A she has few clothes<br/>B she is just a few inches tall<br/>C dark-eyed</p> <p>3 She takes care of the house<br/>A but leaves when the master comes back home<br/>B and caters for all the master's needs<br/>C and goes to work with her master</p> | <p>4 The videos released by the company<br/>A explain how Azuma enriches her master's life<br/>B provide entertainment and fun<br/>C explain how to place an advance order</p> <p>5 Azuma not only reminds her master of important things but she also<br/>A answers his business emails<br/>B sends her master impatient emails if he is late<br/>C sends him business information</p> <p>6 The project<br/>A has received only positive feedback<br/>B has been strongly criticised by everyone<br/>C has been praised but also criticised</p> |
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2 Read the text again and answer the following questions.

- 1 Why is Azuma different from real wives?
- 2 What makes her the 'perfect wife'?
- 3 What does she do when her master is away?
- 4 What does she do to make her master's life enjoyable?
- 5 Why is the news shocking?
- 6 What are people worried about?

3 Match each word or expression with its meaning.

- |             |                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Array     | A A set of clothing                 |
| 2 Outfit    | B To state to be true               |
| 3 To claim  | C A goodbye                         |
| 4 To pursue | D An impressively large number      |
| 5 Fond      | E To strive to gain or accomplish   |
| 6 Farewell  | F To be unfaithful to one's partner |
| 7 Bode ill  | G Affectionate, tender              |
| 8 To cheat  | H Indicative of a negative outcome  |