

Artificial Intelligence takes a flight

Returning to Deep Blue

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Bo looked down at the clouds and felt completely exhausted. For twenty years now, the same routines, the same places, the same people. Each day an exact copy of the other, she could image how that weatherman in Groundhog day must have felt. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, who could tell the difference? Okay, she had been around the world these last two decades but it was not like she had seen a lot. She usually stared at the clouds below her, mainly because there is not much to see when you spent most of you time at an altitude of 35.000 feet. She knew them all by heart, from stratus to stratocumulus, from altostratus to altocumulus, and from cirrocumulus to the aggressive and stormy cumulonimbus. For most people they were the roof of the world, for her they were just the carpet. A carpet that fogged her up mind and made her feel depressed. Amazing, what time and boredom could do to a curious mind. Twenty years ago, when Bo was born, there had been much talk and excitement, as if Mr. Bilbo Baggings had announced the celebration of yet another birthday party. She had been a revolution in aviation history, and she marked the dawning of a new era. Increased capacity, improved materials, and state-of-the-art environment-friendly technology. But foremost, she had been the first autonomous airliner that could fly totally independent using her own 'grey box'. Having been tested for years in unmanned military aircrafts, this artificial intelligence control system had proven its superiority over pilots. It

was more accurate, responded quicker and more reliable to unforeseen situations, and most importantly, it did not get sick, did not dye, and did not demand a monthly paycheck. Grey box aviation was hot and she had been the hottest exponent of them all. Indeed, even now she had to admit that these early years were wonderful. People could not wait to fly with her, and the buoyant expectations of these travelers in her carbon belly gave her more energy than the thousands of liters of algae oil in her wings. Especially children gave her a feeling of joy that no jet engine could match. Kids who, in all their innocence, never heard of fear of flying and only had eye for all the beauty she had to offer. Children who crowed with pleasure when she took off, who experienced turbulence as a rollercoaster ride and who dozed off by the soft humming sound of her engines. But all these pleasant memories now seemed like centuries ago. Only five years after she was born, her brother came to the world. Her magnificent brother who was even bigger, better, faster, and even smarter than she was. At first, she had been proud, and with a love that only exists between a brother and a sister she followed his first take off. Like a caring mother she had watched over him during his first touchdown. But unconsciously she had become jealous with this though masculine machine. It did not take long before he took over most of her intercontinental flights. She was left with the short round trips during summer holidays in which she had to drag thousands of sweating tourists to their sunny destinations. 'Bring the leeches to the beaches' she called these trips. During

winter time, she was used as a cheap flying doctor, to safely bring home the unfortunate with their arms or legs (or both) in plaster. She had to listen to them, moaning and complaining about their bad luck, their pain, their discomfort. And over time she had also lost so many friends, by inadvertence, technical defects caused by overdue maintenance, or just because the increasing popularity of teleportation made airplanes superfluous and expensive. One by one her friends and colleagues had disappeared, put aside in a desert to rust away between their ancestors.

Now Bo also felt tired and listless. She was sick of her full stomach. It was already the fourth time this week that she was jam-packed with these obnoxious human beings that were only interested in getting a sunburn as quickly as possible. And the children, these annoying children. The only thing these little creatures from hell nowadays did was cry, pee, and pluck at her chairs. She felt old and worn down and it took her so much energy to stay focused on her tasks. Maybe it was better if she also disappeared. Just call it a day and find piece, she had worked long enough to deserve some rest. She looked down at the clouds again through which she could see the ocean beneath her. An ocean of oblivion, with cool and refreshing waves. Waves without worries, without tourists and without children. It took Bo's grey box only half a millisecond to make the decision. Deep Blue, here I come. She locked the emergency teleporters, adjusted her flaps, switched the engines off and took a last long glide into the depths of eternity.

