

Tinder Stockfish



I wake up. It's Monday and the short weekend is over, time to go back to work. I feel the weight of the routine that awaits me during the day, with the same absurd tasks and the same empty faces. The bitter coffee is my only consolation in this mechanical existence, where each tick-tock of the clock is a cruel reminder of the slow erosion of my spirit.

I look out the window, the sun hasn't risen yet, it must be 5 in the morning. I sigh with relief knowing that I still have 3 hours to myself. I try to close my eyes and go back to sleep, but my efforts are in vain. I think about my ex, about how our relationship slowly died and the loneliness and emptiness it left behind. These last few months, chess had occupied every corner of my mind and my obsession with obtaining the title of Grand Master had displaced the wounds of my soul. However, in these moments of calm, her image keeps appearing and I can't get her out of my mind.

It can't be, I tell myself. It's been more than six months, I have to do something.

I grab my phone and download Tinder. Impatiently, as the loading bar advances, I think about what to put in my profile, what photos could capture my essence and how I can describe myself if I don't even know who I am. I start by choosing the main photo of my profile, an image that was taken of me two years ago on the beach trip after my graduation. Seeing my smile in that photo, I remember those simpler times when I hadn't yet become just another cog in society's machine. As I upload the photo, I try to imagine what women who stumble upon my profile will see. Will they realize that I'm broken inside? These thoughts transport me to the rejections of my adolescence, awakening in me a deep feeling of inadequacy.

I can't take it anymore, I'm going to leave this and start playing bullet chess on my computer.

I'm opening the browser when a popup appears: "Tired of not getting matches? Take your profile to the next level with Tinder Companion, your AI-powered dating ally!"

Curious about how the app might work, I click on the link:

"Tinder Companion is the perfect ally to optimize your Tinder profile. Over the last few years, we have created an artificial intelligence capable of analyzing your activity on social networks and your browsing data to obtain a complete view of your identity and preferences. Using this detailed information, our algorithm generates a highly attractive profile that is representative of you. In addition, our system takes care of swiping automatically, ensuring that you find the ideal person with minimal effort."

"It won't hurt to try," I think as I download the app. I click start and accept without hesitation all the permissions they request to sell my personal data to an American multinational.

Five minutes later, I find myself in front of the virtual me created by the app. It's fascinating: it has chosen the same profile picture that I had in mind. I start reading the description when the alarm goes off; it's 8 and, as always, I have to rush to get dressed and showered so as not to be late for work. Before leaving, I publish the profile.

Entering my cubicle, using the Neuralink in my brain, I excitedly check my Tinder notifications. Three matches! After so many months in which the sweetest word I had heard was that routine and obligatory "good morning" from my colleagues, finally something interesting is happening in my life. But then, reality hits me - what should I write in the chat? I feel completely lost. Conversations on Tinder seem like a completely different game than chess, the possible moves are infinite and I don't know the opening theory.

My thoughts are interrupted by an urgent meeting called by my boss. CuidaPlus, our most important client, has changed CEOs for the umpteenth time and, in a desperate attempt to jump on the latest technological trend bandwagon, has decided to cancel the web project we had invested months of hard work in. Now, to keep the contract, we must develop a chatbot prototype in a week to replace the website. I sigh in frustration, feeling how my work has become a mere exercise in satisfying the whims of bosses who proclaim themselves "innovators" and "visionaries", but whose minds seem too small to understand the true meaning of usefulness.

Just as I'm about to fully immerse myself in chatbot development, a notification from Tinder Companion appears on my Neuralink: "Don't know what to say? Try FlirtBot, the smart chatbot that chats for you for just €9.99 per month." FlirtBot, the Stockfish of dating, an almost perfect AI for flirting. Without thinking twice, I click on 'Subscribe', knowing that it will continue to work in the cloud even after turning off my Neuralink. With a sigh, I disconnect from the device and go back to immersing myself in my work.

The day progresses, but the feeling of being trapped in an endless cycle of absurd demands persists. The developers, including myself, wage a constant battle to get a few precious hours of continuous concentration so we can make progress on the chatbot development. However, our efforts are constantly undermined by managers, who, in their apparent infinite wisdom, schedule meetings at the most inopportune and productive moments. These plans, of course, never materialize, and only serve to increase our frustration and disillusionment. Meanwhile, my mind wanders, wondering if FlirtBot is having more success in his conversations than I am in my attempt to communicate with the "higher intelligences" that are my bosses.

Finally, 6 p.m. arrives. I turn on my phone, eager to escape the chaos of the office and, to my surprise, I see a notification: FlirtBot has exchanged 128 messages with one of the girls and she wants to meet at 7 p.m. I can hardly believe it. I look at the girl's photo; she's short, wears glasses and her expression seems shy, but her eyes reflect intelligence. Her face seems strangely familiar to me. I accept the date and hurry back home to change and get ready. Maybe this unexpected connection is just what I need.

I arrive at the bar five minutes early and discover that it's a place with an excellent selection of strategy board games; it seems that FlirtBot knows my tastes well. I settle at a table from where I can observe the entrance while I take a look at the messages my bot exchanged with her. Before I can read anything, I see her arrive and, instantly, I realize that I recognize her. She is a young prodigy who, at only 20 years old, invented the mathematical basis of the algorithm used by all the complex language models of today, like my FlirtBot.

I can't believe my eyes: how is it possible that a girl like her is interested in someone like me? If I talk to her, she'll soon find out that I'm a fraud. What will she think of me? Despite my ability to please my superiors and my speed in calculating variations in chess, I could never live up to the imagination and intelligence of someone like her, who revolutionized computer science. My breathing quickens, and my hands start to sweat; I recognize this feeling: I'm experiencing an anxiety attack.

Fortunately, I have an idea. A few months ago, when I suffered a series of anxiety attacks, the doctor suggested that I install an implant connected to my Neuralink. This device, when it detects an anxiety attack, allows me to cede control of my body to a program that takes charge of notifying the people around me that I must leave and taking me to a safe place where I can calm down. Seeing the potential of this gadget, I decided to go a step further and modified it with a complex language model that adopted my personality, thus avoiding the need to interact with the unbearable people around me.

I realize that I can easily connect my implant with FlirtBot. The idea seems absurd to me. Am I really going to let an AI take over the conversation while I completely disconnect? Wouldn't this be the same as what those hateful online chess players do when they cheat, letting a computer dictate their moves?

However, as I see her approaching my table, my anxiety grows exponentially. My mind fills with negative thoughts: What if she realizes that I'm not at her intellectual level? What if she completely rejects me? The prospect of facing these fears is overwhelming.

In a desperate impulse to avoid the situation, I decide to give in to temptation and allow FlirtBot to handle the conversation. With a simple mental command, I plunge into a deep sleep state, similar to that experienced during general anesthesia, letting the bot take control.

I open my eyes and realize that I'm no longer in the bar; this girl is in front of me, visibly nervous. She tells me she needs to go to the bathroom. I take advantage of her absence to check the logs of my Neuralink. Apparently, the date was so successful that we ended up at her house; impressive. I wonder if it was me who attracted her or if, in reality, FlirtBot is an improved version of myself, like a program that surpasses the skills of its creator.

Suddenly, an alert appears: the Neuralink battery is low after heavy use during the day. Damn, I don't even know what I've said so far. I don't want to leave like this, but how do I tell her I'm leaving without revealing that I haven't really been present? I feel my breathing speed up again; after coming this far, I can't allow an anxiety attack in front of her. Then, I realize something: the Neuralink scanner has detected a charger ten meters away. It must be her charger. I just have to plug in there for 15 seconds while she's in the bathroom, and I'll have enough battery for my implant to handle the farewell.

I follow the Neuralink's directions until I reach a closed door. I slowly push it open, and when it does, there she is. My heart skips a beat. How do I get out of this situation? What excuse could I give? I see that she doesn't know what to say either; she has the same fear reflected on her face. Then I notice a cable connected to her head and a bump on her skull, identical to the one I have from the anxiety implant. I brush my hair aside to show her the bump and,

upon recognizing it, her eyes light up with understanding. I try to speak, but she starts to laugh. I join in her laughter and, within seconds, we find ourselves on the floor, laughing out loud.