

Emmy's First Cry

November 1954, under the snow and ice in northern Greenland, Dr. Greenglass, a talented engineer hired by the Army Signal Corps to investigate “electronic minds” was alone in his lab. Frustratedly working into the night, having lost all sense of time in the permanent darkness that besieged the miles of secret tunnels in Camp Centurion, he reviewed his meticulous notes and the reams of formal mathematical predictions on his desk. He poured a drop of I.W. Harper bourbon into his coffee and blushed at his audacity and the far-reaching promises he’d made.

Emboldened by the small amount of liquor, he abandoned all reason and began furiously flipping hundreds of switches and pulling at patch cords and placing them in random places on the plugboard. He launched into a frantic rendition of “That’s All Right” by Elvis Presley as he hooked up a couple of URM-25 signal generators and twisted the frequency dials to the swinging rockabilly beat. As he was reassuring Mama that it was alright for the fiftieth time, a noise came from behind him and he froze in place. The line printer had just produced a string of letters: “WahfyohXveO5Y”. Baffled, he returned to randomly twisting the dials with no results. Determined, he resumed a more muted Elvis impersonation and nearly broke down in tears of joy when Emmy printed “VAmt6nSn7a4d3VV43D”. Wide eyed and giddy he felt like a new father and almost burst with pride as he cried out “Welcome to the world, baby doll.”