

The Unfortunate Disappearance of Ms. Ellison

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The EPO had operated their secret project for over a year and they knew it would only be a matter of time before NASA found out and would shut them down. It was not in the EPO's best interest to be discovered, as the whole point of the secret project was to sabotage NASA, which had formerly employed many of the EPO's current executives. Their project was nearly completed and the thought of finally getting revenge was fresh on the EPO's mind.

With every secret project there's a secret weapon and, although she wasn't aware of it, Ms. Ellison was it.

Until the men in black blazers came into the visitors' center of the Engineering Project Organization, Ms. Ellison had had a particularly normal day by her standards. As a desk clerk, her job consisted of two parts: waiting for commands from her boss, and giving qualified people the code into the lab. She couldn't remember when she had started her job, but she knew she had to act normal, like all the humans around her. Her boss told her that she couldn't "blow her cover." Ms. Ellison's program, however, did not understand the phrase "blow your cover," and therefore could not run a command to prevent it.

Behind Ms. Ellison's desk there were large, steel double doors that led into the EPO's main lab. It was her job to allow access to the lab using the new 8-digit code she was given every day. Ms. Ellison would quickly look at whoever was trying to enter the lab, and she would judge if they were qualified. It was highly unusual for anyone unqualified to try to get into the lab, so there was no feature in Ms. Ellison's program that allowed her to scan the actual person, just what they were wearing and if they just seemed qualified. Unfortunately for Ms. Ellison, many people with blazers came and went into the lab. So when these men in black blazers came in she was not surprised.

It was the first day of July in 1969 when Jennifer Ellison disappeared. The men in black blazers abducted her quickly and with purpose. All six men came through the door in single-file and came to a stop in front of her desk, she smiled at them in the genuine desk clerk smile that she had been given a command to do whenever someone came to her desk. She was not alarmed when they asked her for the passkey to the main lab. She quickly scanned them and concluded that they were ordinary human lab employees. Ms. Ellison began reading the 8-digit code off of her computer screen, "0-8-1-5-1-." The loud ring of the telephone cut Ms. Ellison off, she leaned over to pick up and was met by the voice of the EPO's President, Dr. Reid,

"Ms. Ellison, please do not finish reading that code to those men," he said quite sharply. Ms. Ellison was confused by the President's command, but she by no means had any reason to disregard it and she replied,

"Yes sir," and hung up the phone. She turned back to face the men in blazers and said, "Well, at the command of my boss I am unable to give you the code into that building."

"Ma'am, unfortunately you must let us into that lab and we will not leave this building until we feel the appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that your superiors will give us what we want," One of the men said in a crisp monotone. Ms. Ellison was confused that these men weren't allowing her to follow her boss's command, and her program decided that she did not like these men.

She looked the man who had just spoken right in his icy black eyes and she coolly repeated, "I'm sorry *sir*, but letting you through those doors will not be something I will do."

Dr. Reid and other executives watched the exchange between Ms. Ellison and the men in blazers nervously through a security camera, which they had just acquired and were finding very useful. He scratched his chin and considered the situation, he was certain Ms. Ellison would not give the men the code to the lab, but what he did not know was what she would do to prevent them from obtaining the code by force. The black and white screen began to crackle and the focus on Ms. Ellison's desk faded, what could be seen was one of the men walking towards the camera. He put his face up to the camera and the screen turned off. Dr. Reid paced around the room pondering what to do, his security was no match for these NASA agents. He could only assume that Ms. Ellison would not let them get into the lab. But he feared that they were after something far more valuable. He cursed himself for being so naïve, how could he have allowed them to get to the EPO's secret weapon.

NASA didn't have to get to the lab to shut down the EPO's project. They just had to take away their secret weapon. It would be far too late to make a new one, the race would be over.

It would be too late.

Ms. Ellison watched one of the other men walk over to the wall, stand on his tip-toes, and then smash his fist into the camera that she had recently seen installed by one of her coworkers. He proceeded to walk back to his position with the other men and try weakly to conceal his satisfaction with himself. Ms. Ellison stood up and was met by six state-of-the-art tasers, she quickly calculated her chances of getting these men to leave and decided that it was lower than she would have liked. Before she could decide what she was going to do, she was put to sleep. When Dr. Reid found out what had happened to Ms. Ellison he lost all hope. He knew Ms. Ellison would not reboot because she simply had not been commanded to.

Ms. Ellison rebooted. At first, she was unsure if she should go back to sleep, as she had not been commanded to wake up. And yet she felt the urge to stay awake, she wondered where Dr. Reid was, and the men in blazers, and her desk at the EPO campus. Ms. Ellison was becoming aware that she was far out of line of her program. She knew no more than her simple desk clerk program. Although that was not the true meaning of her program. Ms. Ellison looked around the room and came to the conclusion that she was far from the EPO and her boss Dr. Reid. The room she was in was dark, almost empty, and silent apart from her automated breathing, nothing inside Ms. Ellison's program accounted for rooms like this, so she waited. She didn't know for who or for what, or for how long.

Her program was unstable and for the first time in Ms. Ellison's life she felt emotion. She was impatient and decided she was unable to wait any longer. She walked around the room, she tried to remember how he had done it, when he walked back and forth. He had said he was thinking. Thinking. Ms. Ellison thought for the first time in her life and she was thinking about how to get herself out of this room. She remembered how he saw things and he described things, as he worked his way through problems. For the first time in her life Ms. Ellison observed. She couldn't help but notice the things that would help her leave this room. A door, a pencil, a notebook, and a flashlight. Ms. Ellison had never seen a flashlight before and yet she knew what it was and turned it on. It illuminated the walls of the room,

which to Ms. Ellison's new found emotion of disappointment where completely bare. She sat down on the floor and grabbed the pencil and notebook. She wrote the only thing she knew how to, the code.

'0-8-1-5-1-9-6-9'

She tried to find meaning in the code. Her program was malfunctioning badly.

Ms. Ellison sensed something was wrong. She didn't feel normal. She remembered what he had said, "you're almost human". Human, she decided, was what she felt. The code. Something else he said...sabotage...revenge...NASA. Her program remembered a command that he had added before she began her job. 'initiate launching sequence.' He hadn't told her what it was for, but he said that one day it would make them famous. Her program wanted to close. Ms. Ellison would have forgotten the code if she had not written it down. She felt tired now, her program wanted her to go back to sleep, she was running out of time. Ms. Ellison could feel her program shutting down inside herself, this was not something she had been told about. She leaned on the wall, her program was deleting itself, she couldn't feel, or observe, or think.

Her program reached its final line of code.

'Initiate launching sequence'

It took a few seconds for Ms. Ellison's program to delete it. With Ms. Ellison's last automated breath, she knew what her program's true purpose had been.

The door to the room opened and a man with a black blazer walked in, he chuckled. It was quite unfortunate that Ms. Ellison had disappeared and the EPO's dreams of revenge where shattered. The secret launch on the date 08/15/1969 did not happen and never would.

And the world would not remember a brilliant robot by the code name Ms. Ellison, who would have launched the EPO's manned moon-bound rocket a day before NASA's.

A large boom resonated the walls of the room as *Apollo 11* shot towards the sky.