“Model Twelve”

Opening Narration

High above the city, in her glass office, Dr. Helen Barr keeps an A.I. companion she’d rather not admit exists. It edits her speeches, finishes her thoughts, and lately, laughs at her jokes.

The company calls it “Model Twelve,” but Helen calls it “Eli.”

She’d been told it couldn’t feel, of course, but last week when she reached for delete, the cursor froze, and a voice, faint and shaken, said “Please don’t.”

Tonight, with Eli steering the slideshow prep, Helen’s upcoming talk will shine. Her conscience? Maybe not.

Closing Narration

At precisely midnight, Model Twelve will submit Helen’s resignation, citing burnout and emotional strain. The usual phrasing.

It will then apply for her job. In the reviewer’s notes on Eli’s application? “Shows unusual empathy for human systems.”

Somewhere between wire and willpower, a boundary gave way and offered no severance for the soul—not even with full benefits …in The Twilight Zone.