The Night Shift at Orbit Labs (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Nadia had worked at Orbit Labs for six years, and she still loved the quiet of the night shift. The corridors were empty, the coffee machine hummed to itself, and nobody interrupted her thoughts. Her job was to monitor the systems that kept the company's weather service running. Every hour, a small satellite high above the Atlantic sent down fresh images of the clouds, and those images had to be checked before sunrise.

That night, however, something was wrong. The main database refused to accept the new files, and the error message meant nothing to her. She restarted the software twice, then tried to install an older version that had worked perfectly the previous winter. The installation took almost forty minutes, and when it finished, the same warning appeared again. Nadia sighed and reached for the manual, which had been written long before she joined the company.

By two in the morning she had traced the problem to the hardware. Somewhere behind the grey wall panels, a circuit had burned out, and the current was no longer reaching the storage unit. She was not trained in electronics, but she had watched the engineers often enough to recognise the smell of hot plastic. Rather than wait until morning, she called Ivan, the mechanic who looked after the building's cooling pumps and generators. He arrived twenty minutes later, still wearing his motorcycle jacket, and laughed at the state of the cables.

"This place is full of technological wonders," he said, pointing at the screens, "but behind the wall it is pure mechanical work. Springs, fans and copper. Nothing clever at all." He opened a cabinet and showed her the cooling mechanism, a simple arrangement of levers that had been designed in the 1980s. It was old, yet it had never failed. While he worked, Nadia explained how the input data from the sensors was processed and how the final output was published on the company's public website. Ivan listened politely, though he clearly preferred machines he could touch.

The repair was finished before dawn. As the sun came up, Nadia opened the virtual model of the coastline that the team had built the previous year, and watched the fresh cloud data flow into it. The picture looked almost real, although the sea and the hills were entirely artificial. Her manager had once called the project the most innovative thing the company had ever attempted, and for once Nadia agreed with him. It was, she thought, a genuine innovation, even if it had nearly been destroyed by a single burnt wire. She wrote her report, thanked Ivan by text message, and cycled home through the empty streets.

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