Delayed

by
Sydney Buckholt

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Sydney Buckholt October 2026

Sydney Buckholt
Stholtwrites@gmail.com
510-610-8723

FADE IN

EXT. AIRPORT - TARMAC - NIGHT

Storm clouds gather above a lone airplane.

A large commotion can be seen happening on the inside. Muffled shouting is heard.

INT. AIRPLANE

The cabin is in an uproar as flight attendants forcefully move a beligerent WOMAN up the aisle to the door. MALIK (30s, calm, calculated) stares out on the tarmac, not bothered by the commotion.

The woman makes her way in front of him and stops, pointing a finger towards the back of the plane.

WOMAN
(terrified)
I don't fucking care that you're kicking me off. I am telling you, right now, that the man in the back is not real!

Everyone turns their head to the back of the plane. Malik checks his watch. The flight attendants continue to guide her towards the front of the plane.

As they fasten her down into a seat, another passenger unbuckles his seatbelt and pushes towards the lavatory.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
All passengers must remain seated while we're on the tarmac.

PASSENGER
We've been parked here listening to that lunatic for forty minutes. I think I've earned my private time.

He pushes in and locks the door behind him. The flight attendant smiles tightly and looks to Malik, almost as if asking for assistance.

Malik casually answers his phone.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
Are we on schedule?

MALIK
There's been a delay.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
(beat)
We kind of delay?

MALIK
Disgruntled passenger.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
Sounds like your making friends, then?

MALIK
Not necessarily.

Malik checks the back of the plane. The cabin has become a stale misery of a room no one can leave from. No sign of whatever the woman was pointing at.

UNKNOWN
We're not in a position for delay's, Malik. The cargo you travel with is--

MALIK
--Extremely valuable. I know. Rest assured, your pressure will reach it's destination by morning.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
It better.

The call ends. The plane begins to pull into a gate.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Thank you for your patience, passengers. We'll begin deplaning shortly.

The plane parks into the gate. Outside, ramp agents toss luggage from the plane into a large cart. Malik watches as a **black hard-shell case** gets tossed inside without a care.

He winces as it slams against the other luggage.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE H - MOMENTS LATER

Malik spills into the airport along with all the other passengers. They hurriedly pass him as he nonchalantly makes his way to the **DEPARTURE BOARD.**

It reads: VATICAN CITY - CONCOURSE B - ON TIME

He back to the sign above his gate: H CONCOURSE. He glares slightly, then begins his journey to Concourse B.

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The airport is alive around him with bars, lounges, families, rolling suitcases and overlapping announcements.

Malik passes a young SECURITY OFFICER who nods as he passes by. Malik ignores him, completely focused on getting to his gate.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE B - LATER

Malik arrives slightly out of breath. The display above still reads ON TIME. He takes a seat nearest the door and relaxes.

Moments later, the display changes to DELAYED.

Malik takes a deep breath, unable to hide his irritation, and approaches the desk. JARED (50s), a gate agent with the calm of a man that rivals Malik, types at the podium.

MALIK
Good evening. Why is there a delay for this fight?

JARED
There's a large storm heading this way.

MALIK
Pilots fly through storms all the time. What makes this one so different?

JARED
Other than unpredictable high winds and lightning strikes I'd say it's just the same as any other storm.

MALIK
How long will the delay be?

JARED
Hard to tell. But if I were you, I'd start looking for a hotel room for the night.

Jared packs up his desk and exits. Malik looks out the window and sees the dark clouds forming over the tarmac. Passengers swarm the surrounding desks completely irate as more plans become delayed.

Malik turns to find an inviting airport bar. He ponders for a beat, then walks over.

INT. AIRPORT BAR - NIGHT

Rain begins to pelt the windows of the airport as Malik takes a seat.

On the television, a meteorologist stands before a blood-red radar map. KATHY (50s), a warm but firm bartender, sets down a water in front of Malik.

KATHY
Get you something stronger, honey?

MALIK
Scotch. Neat, please.

Kathy pours dutifully, scanning Malik's attire as she does.

KATHY
Final stop?

MALIK
Passing through.

KATHY
(points to t.v.)
I doubt that.

MALIK
I've traveled enough to know that an alternative always presents itself when in need.

KATHY
Well, I've worked here long enough to know when to tell you to start looking for a hotel.

Thunder rumbles outside. The rain turns into a heavier pour.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Are you traveling for business or pleasure?

MALIK
Business.

KATHY
I'm sure your boss will understand the circumstances.

MALIK
My boss is expecting the package tomorrow morning. I intend to have it in his hands by that time.

KATHY
Must be some package to have you willingly wanting to travel into storm like this to have it delivered.

MALIK
That, it is.

KATHY
(nonchalant)
Okay. The kitchen is still open for another hour if you want dinner. Give me a holler if you need anything.

Kathy turns and disappears into the kitchen. Malik watches the storm simulation play on loop as he sips his drink in silence.

INT. AIRPORT BAR - LATER

The bar is now empty except for Malik.

The chairs have been placed on top of the tables and the television off. Kathy zips up her raincoat in the back.

Malik checks his phone for any flight updates. Everything still reads delayed.

KATHY
Last chance, honey. I can call a friend of mine at the motel down the way. It’s nothing fancy but it’ll get you through the night.

MALIK
It’s a generous offer, Kathy. But it’s one I’ll have to decline.

She frowns and exits.

Moments later, an airline alert fills his screen:

FLIGHT 617 to VATICAN CITY - CANCELLED.

His eyes narrow. He makes a call.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
Yes?

MALIK
We have a problem.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
What kind of problem.

MALIK
The flight has been canceled.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
Find another.

MALIK
All flights have been canceled.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
(beat)
This is disappointing, Malik.

MALIK
It’s a minor setback. The package will remain in my care until I reach the destination.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
Where is it now?

MALIK
My guess would be in the baggage area below.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
You’re not certain?

MALIK
No.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
(beat)
This doesn’t feel right. You need eyes on it.

MALIK
Understood. I’ll make my way down to retrieve it.

UNKNOWN (V.O.)
Very well. Guard your mind, Malik.

The call ends.

Malik finishes the last bit of his drink and sets it down neatly on the counter. He rises, and exits.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE B - CONTINUOUS

Malik makes his way down the long corridor. As he progresses, the airport becomes emptier until ultimately his footsteps are the only thing that echoes in the area. He pauses, then looks around.

Lightning flashes outside. The rain falls down in sheets. The stores and restaurants sit dark and vacant around him. It's an eerie scene.

His eyes find a sign that reads: BAGGAGE AREA | EMPLOYEES ONLY

He approaches and tries the door. Locked. To the left of the handle is a **card scanner.** He turns back around, out of options. *Screech!* The sound of a rusty wheel grabs his attention.

To his right, a janitorial cart moves forward slightly. An **employee badge** gently swings from it. Malik snatches the badge and enters the stairwell.

INT. BAGGAGE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

A cramped area with minimal light. Rusted conveyor belts sit dormant as if they havent been used in years. It's quiet aside from the storm raging outside.

Malik enters and scans the area. He finds the only belt with baggage still piled on it in the very back of the room. He walks towards it.

The suitcases have been stacked carelessly. Malik rummages through them until he finds the corner of the **black hardshell suitcase.** He smirks then pulls it out.

His smile fades as he turns it around and realizes that one of the latches has been opened. He stares into the small opening for a beat. Then, something shuffles behind him.

Malik turns but finds nothing but the empty area. He scans the area for a beat, then snaps the suitcase closed and starts carrying it back towards the staircase. As he gets to the door, the conveyor belt turns on.

Malik watches as the bags are dragged around the carousel for a beat, then he sees *fingers* slowly disappear behind a pillar. He dashes into the stairwell and slams the door.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

He wastes no time moving up the spiral staircase. He grips the suitcase handle tightly as he rounds the first floor. As he does, a second pair of footsteps join his. He stops and looks over the railing.

Empty. Silent.

He continues upward. Moments later, the second pair join him. He stops again and looks over. A pale face with beady eyes stares back at him from the lower level. Malik turns and dashes up the stairs.

The second pair of footsteps match his speed effortlessly. They're right behind him when he finally reaches the door to the terminals. He runs through it and slams the door behind him.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE B

Malik presses his hand on the door, waiting for the other man to try and push through. He doesn't come.

UNKNOWN (O.S.)
Don't move!

Malik freezes. From the reflection of the window on the door, he can see the young SECURITY OFFICER (20s) standing with a taser pointed to the back of him.

SECURITY OFFICER
Turn around, *slowly*.

Malik thinks for a beat, not wanting to take his hand off the door.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)
Now!

Hesitatantley, he removes his hand from the door and raises both in surrender. Slowly, he turns around and faces the officer. His face is young but his demeanor is serious.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)
You want to tell me what you were doing down there?

MALIK
I was retrieving a very important package.

The Security Officer looks at the suitcase, then back to Malik.

SECURITY OFFICER
Baggage claim is on the other side of the building.

MALIK
I must have been sidetracked then.

SECURITY OFFICER
You just so happened to have an employee badge while being sidetracked?

The officer nods to the lanyard hanging from Malik's pocket. Malik doesn't respond. The officer cautiously approaches Malik and snatches the lanyard from his pocket.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)
Stealing airport property and breaking into a restricted area? I should call the cops on you.

MALIK
That won't be necessary. For any law that I've broken, I apologize. I have the property I'm looking for and will not be bother henceforth.

SECURITY OFFICER
How do I even know that's your property?

Malik instinctively reaches into his jacket pocket. The officer raises the taser.

MALIK
(calmly)
I'm only trying to show you my credentials.

The officer narrows his eyes but nods. Malik reaches into his pocket and pulls out his passport. The officer takes it and reads it.

SECURITY OFFICER
Okay, now I know your name. How do I know that's your suitcase.

Malik lifts the case up. Engraved on the bottom in gold etching is: PROPERTY OF MALIK BELLVUE. The officer lowers the taser. Malik lowers his hands and looks behind him to the staircase.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)
That are is restricted for a reason Mr. Belvue. You could have gotten yourself hurt.

MALIK
I understand. However, this is a very sensitive item that needs my constant attention. I wasn't prepared to be delayed here.

Thunder booms outside.

SECURITY OFFICER
Yeah, this storm came out of nowhere. I was supposed to be off tonight but my coverage could come in because of it.

MALIK
It appears we've both had dire predicaments tonight.

SECURITY OFFICER
Guess so.
(beat)
Look, if you head back to the terminal, I'll forget all about this.

MALIK
That would be greatly appreciated.

The officer steps aside. Malik exits.

SECURITY OFFICER
If you need to get anywhere that requires a badge, please just find the security office!

MALIK
Will do.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE B - LATER

Malik sits in the waiting area. He attaches a pair of **distinct handcuffs** to his wrist and the suitcase. He pulls out his and types.

CHYRON OF TEXT:

MALIK - Secured.

UNKNOWN - Good. Stay focused.

Lightning flashes outside. The lights in the terminal flicker briefly then shut off, casting Malik into complete darkness.

He looks around. Shadows dance throughout the airport as more lightning illuminates the area.

Behind him, a man stands at the end of an empty **jet bridge.** Malik turns just in time to see the man lift the gates phone and slowly wrap its cord around is neck. He smiles directly at Malik, then steps off the bridge.

The cord SNAPS taut. Malik dashes the gate doors.

INT. JET BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The body sways in the intense winds. Malik sprints toward the end of the bridge and--steps directly into an aircraft cabin.

INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

The aircraft is dark and empty. Malik turns back and sees the cabin door closed. He tries to open it; locked. He goes for the cockpit; also locked.

DING! The passenger call button goes off. Malik slowly turns around. Now, the plane is filled with stagnant passengers shrouded in shadow.

DING! The call button goes off again. Each passenger slowly turns toward the sound in unison. A small light illuminates an empty seat in the back. Cautiously, Malik makes his way down the aisle.

He reaches the seat. It’s covered in blood. The intercom chimes on. A deep, raspy voice breathes into the cabin.

VOICE
He’s not real...

Suddenly, Malik is grabbed by one of the phantom passengers. He’s thrown to the ground. The other passengers pile on top of him, scratching, kicking, and screaming nonsense.

They pull at the suitcase viciously. Malik grips it tight and fights back. He kicks a few off, elbows another, and swings the suitcase around, clearing a path to the front of the plane.

He stops just as the cockpit door slowly opens.

A tall silhouette of a man stands in the door. He holds out a gnarled hand, asking for something Malik has.

Malik holds the suitcase to his chest and continues to fight off the phantom passengers. There's no way forward or back. He looks around desperately for an escape route and finds the emergency side door.

He elbows another phantom and dives for it. He cranks the lever and falls out of the plane into the--airport waiting area.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE B - CONTINUOUS

The lights have returned. All is quiet.

Malik scrambles to his feet and looks out the window. The storm rages on but there is no plane on the tarmac. He checks the bridge, no one is hanging from it.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone. The screen has been smashed. He curses; looks around. He spots the SECURITY OFFICE sign above and heads towards it.

INT. AIRPORT - SECURITY OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Malik stands in front of the frosted glass door and knocks.

MALIK
Hello? Is anyone in there?

No answer. He knocks again, this time the door inches open. Malik can see that the room is empty. He opens it further.

It's a small office with a built-in desk. Three monitors displaying multiple camera views sits on the desk. Malik walks around the desk and examines them. The majority of the views hold nothing of interest...except for one.

Camera View - Concourse B displays an empty terminal aside from a man sitting in one of the seats. The man is perfectly still with a wide grin on his face. Malik leans in closer for a better look. The man turns to look at him.

SECURITY OFFICER
What the hell do you think you're doing?

Malik jumps. The officer stands in the door holding a bag of chips.

MALIK
I'm sorry, I was just--
(looks at camera; the man has disappeared)
--I needed to speak with you.

The officer eyes him suspiciously.

SECURITY OFFICER
About what? And why are you behind my desk?

Malik quickly moves from behind the desk as the officer takes his rightful place.

MALIK
I was thinking I could find via the cameras but you must listen to me closely--we need to leave this airport now.

SECURITY OFFICER
Excuse me?

MALIK
I'm afraid something has been unleashed and you are in danger.

SECURITY OFFICER
(dismissive)
What kind of *danger* am I in?

MALIK
It's hard to explain but you must heed my warning and leave this place now.

SECURITY OFFICER
Mr. Belvue I really don't have the energy to entertain whatever fantasy your portraying. Please go back to the terminal.

MALIK
This isn't a fantasy. This entire airport is becoming a gateway to--

SCHOOM! The lights go out.

Malik and the officer are shrouded in darkness.

SECURITY OFFICER
(sarcastic)
Great...

The officer rummages through his drawer and finds a **flashlight.** He turns it on, pointing it directly at Malik.

MALIK
(ominous)
This is the beginning of the end.

SECURITY OFFICER
This is a blackout due to the storm. Emergency lights should be on in a moment.

The two stand in silence for a beat. The emergency lights don't come on at all.

MALIK
Officer, time is of the essence here. We must leave.

SECURITY OFFICER
Heard you loud and clear, Mr. Belvue. I'll get right on that after I figure what's wrong with the generator.

The officer moves past Malik and exits. Frustrated, Malik follows him.

INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Guided by the flashlight, Malik follows the officer down the empty terminals.

MALIK
Please, officer. The exit is the other way.

SECURITY OFFICER
Mmhmm. What's up with the handcuffs?

MALIK
(confused)
It's just a safety precaution. So I don't lose the package.

SECURITY OFFICER
Looks a little fancy for a simple safety precaution.

MALIK
(beat)
It's called a Maker's Cuff. The user is bound to whatever it's cuffed to for all eternity unless the Maker's Key opens it.

SECURITY OFFICER
So it's a religion thing?

MALIK
I am not at liberty to say.

SECURITY OFFICER
Oh, of course, but you can tell me when I need to leave my job?

MALIK
I am only trying to help you.

SECURITY OFFICER
From *what*?
(Malik refuses to say)
If you can't tell me what it is that's after me, then I guess I'll take my chances.

They reach the elevator. The security officer steps inside. Malik tries to join him.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)
Sorry, Mr. Belvue. Authorized personell only.

MALIK
If you will not heed my warning, at least let me go with you.

SECURITY OFFICER
I'm just resetting the breaker. I'll be ten minutes tops.

The elevator doors close. Malik looks above and watches the numbers descend to the BASEMENT and stops. He looks around and finds an EMERGENCY STAIRWELL. He heads towards it.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Malik exits the stairwell into a long dark hallway. At the very end, a small light illuminates a door. He walks towards it.

As he approaches, he sees the light is coming from the Security Officer's flashlight. He picks it up. It's covered in blood. He shines the light around. A trail of blood leads to the lone door in the area.

A red light begins to pulsate behind the door. Malik takes a deep breath and approaches.

INT. BASEMENT - BREAKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Malik opens the door and finds the Security Officer splayed down the middle of his body and fixed to the large red bulb above the generator. Below him, a pale **MAN** with black pupils and a devious smile welcomes Malik.

MAN
(deep, resonating)
Hello, Malik.

MALIK
Erebus.

EREBUS
Ah, you do know my name. It's a shame you didn't inform *him* before sending him down to his death.

Erebus waves over to the security officer's limp body.

MALIK
I'd rather not speak pure evil into exist.

EREBUS
(chuckles)
Dear boy, I exist everywhere.

MALIK
Why are you here, Erebus?

EREBUS
(smiles)
You have something of mine. I'm here to retrieve it.

Erebus holds out his hand. Malik grips the briefcase tightly.

MALIK
You and I both know that the only way you'll ever get your hands on this briefcase is if you tear it from my wrists.

Erebus smiles as the red light begins to fade out.

EREBUS
(whispers)
Is that all...?

Malik backs away towards the door, flashlight still in hand. As the darkness grows around him, the flashlight begins to flicker. He moves faster, shaking the flashlight to stay on.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Malik exits the Breaker Room and sprints towards the elevator. Erebus's dark chuckle echoes in the dark void chasing him. Malik reaches the elevator but it doesn't work.

He rushes into the stairwell, just as the darkness crashes into the walls.

INT. AIRPORT - CONCOURSE B - MOMENTS LATER

Malik exits the stairwell and jams the lock. He backs away as the door violently shakes from the darkness on the other side.

Satisfied, he turns and runs down the terminal, following the signs to the nearest exit. He reaches the front of the airport and stops at the doors.

On the outside, standing at attention in the rain, are grotesque phantoms eagerly waiting for Malik to exit the airport. Malik backs away.

EREBUS
There is no escape, Malik.

Erebus appears and calmly walks down the hall towards Malik.

EREBUS (CONT'D)
This entire area has become part of my void.

Determined, Malik looks around for another escape route. He finds the **Baggage Carousel** at the far end. A rare smirk crosses his face.

He dashes towards it, just as Erebus reaches for him. He scurries up the tunnel and disappears.

INT. BAGGAGE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

It’s dark and damp.

Using the flashlight, Malik shuffles up the tunnel until he reaches leveled ground. He continues on.

As he shuffles, the sound of something *slithering* up behind him is heard. He stops and points the flashlight behind him. Empty. He turns back and keeps going. Moments later, the flashlight begins to flickers then dies.

Darkness surrounds him once again.

He pushes forward, faster now. As he creates distance from his entry point, the floor becomes *squishy*. The sound of flesh ripping comes with every push. Finally, the flashlight comes on.

The entire tunnel is made out of bloody limbs and severed heads.

The scream out to him as he crawls faster. There’s a light at the end of the tunnel! The hands and mouths of the dismembered bodies claw and bite at him viciously. He’s covered blood but almost there...

He reaches the opening and fumbles out of the tunnel and onto the luggage belt.

INT. BAGGAGE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Malik collapses onto the floor. The briefcase still attached to his bloody wrist. His body is covered in deep cuts. He hobbles towards the exit. The briefcase is snatched up by Erebus.

Malik hangs in the air and faces Erebus.

EREBUS
I’ll be taking this back now.

He swipes at Malik’s wrist, slicing it clean off. As he falls, Malik reaches with his other arm and snatches the briefcase from Erebus. He makes a break for the exit.

Erebus chases after him in a storm of rage. He’s just about to reach him but Malik is took quick. He escapes out onto the empty tarmac.

EXT. AIRPORT - TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

He stumbles forward, distancing himself from the horrors behind him. His open wound gushes blood as he makes his way out onto the pavement, then collapses.

EXT. AIRPORT - TARMAC - LATER

Malik awakes to red and blue lights flashing. A large fire crackles somewhere nearby. He's surrounded by EMT's.

PERSON 1
We've got someone alive over here!

Multiple footsteps approach. A bright light is shined into his eyes.

PERSON 1 (CONT'D)
Sir? Can you tell me your name?

PERSON 2
Jesus christ, what happened to his hand?

PERSON 3
What's he holding?

Malik tries to move and screams out in pain.

PERSON 1
Sir, please stay still. You've just been in a plane crash.

Confused, Malik looks to his left. Body bags scatter around the tarmac. In the far distance, half a plane sits lopsided and on fire.

One of the EMT's tries to remove the briefcase. Instinctively, Malik snatches it back and shoves his foot into the person's chest.

PERSON 2
What the fuck!

MALIK
I need to go.

PERSON 1
I can't let you do that sir. You're in really bad shape.

MALIK
I need to get to Rome!

The EMT signals something to the other EMT. Malik begins to struggle against their restraint. The EMT takes out a small syringe and inserts it into his arm.

MALIK (CONT'D)
No! Don't! It needs to get to the Vatican. It...needs to...

Sleep overtakes him.

The men remove the briefcase and lift him onto a stretcher. As he's rolled away to an ambulance, one of the EMT's examines the briefcase.

He notices that one of the latches is loose. He looks around for a beat, the slowly opens the briefcase...

FADE TO BLACK