

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Written by

Double-O Uh-Oh

Elements:

Thriller, dodgeball, daycare center, air marshal

FADE IN:

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING PARKING LOT - DAY

An unassuming sedan pulls fast up to the gate, skids to halt, then dashes ahead as soon as the gate opens. The car practically skids into a parking space, and an athletic YUUSUF (38) leaps out toward the building entrance.

The Somali-American Yuusuf wears a shirt and tie. And a pistol in a shoulder holster. After one hurried step, he reaches back in the car for his suit jacket. He struggles the coat on just as he reaches the door.

INT. DAYCARE CENTER RECEPTION - DAY

Yuusuf skids to a halt at the check-in/check-out window, bumps into a trashcan. The startled RECEPTIONIST (59) reaches for it, but the can has enough heft to remain upright.

YUUSUF

Sorry I'm late, the plane was
delayed and --

The Receptionist finds her smile and points a thumb at the clock on the wall.

RECEPTIONIST

You're almost an hour early,
Yuusuf.

Yuusuf checks his watch and the clock, laughs at himself.

YUUSUF

You'd think an air marshal who
flies for a living would get used
to time zones, right?
(calms down)
Can I get them now?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The receptionist leads Yuusuf to a double-door as his energetic daughter BILAN (5) skips behind. Receptionist opens the door, and they're immediately assaulted with the sounds of balls bouncing and sneakers squeaking on floors.

The ongoing dodgeball game is down to about a dozen teen-aged boys on each side. Six balls of different colors fly around the gymnasium. Yuusuf snuffles upon seeing his son MARK (15) still active in the game.

YUUSUF

Sometimes seeing him just makes me think of what coulda been. When we fled the fighting in Somalia, I took Mark and my wife took Daahir. Better chance that one of us would make it.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm so sor--

A dodgeball blindsides Mark, bounces over toward Yuusuf. Mark sees where the ball went and jogs over. Yuusuf rolls the ball back toward the remaining players.

YUUSUF

Hey, Mark. Nice moves out there.

MARK

I'm going by Sharmaarke now.

YUUSUF

Oh, your real name? Go get your stuff and we'll get some dinner on the way home.

BILAN

I want a ball, Daddy. Can I have a ball? The balls look fun. I want one. Daddy!

Yuusuf grabs a nearby unused pink dodgeball, hands it to Bilan. She bounces it giddily.

Mark emerges with his backpack. The four walk along, Bilan half dribbling and half chasing her ball.

An ALARM blares, but the fire alarm strobes don't flash. A walkie-talkie on the Receptionist's belt comes alive.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Lockdown. Lockdown. This is not a drill. All sections check in.

Multiple voices chatter on the radio as the group rush to the closest door. The Receptionist's ID card won't open it, so she tries several keys on a ring. Yuusuf draws his pistol.

The door opens from the inside, a teen girl waves them in and closes the door after them.

INT. ART ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Art supplies and little kids' paintings fill the room. The teen, a teacher's aide of some kind, is the oldest of five children here.

Distant pinging of gunfire, then a muffled BOOM.

RECEPTIONIST

You NEVER open the door in a lockdown. Anyone coming to rescue you will have keys.

(into radio)

Echo two-five. Gonna take a minute to check on everyone here.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Roger echo two-five. Be advised, hostiles wearing explosive vests.

YUUSUF

Most civilians get the numbers wrong. What the hell is going on?

He removes a small pistol from an ankle holster and hands it to the Receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST

They have some high-profile terrorist upstairs.

YUUSUF

How do you even know that? No wonder his friends know.

Yuusuf and the Receptionist both motion for the kids to stay hidden, then look out the door.

GUNFIRE forces them back.

Yuusuf, back against the wall opposite where the shots came from, takes one more look, rolls back to avoid more shots, then fires once diagonally across the hall.

The fire extinguisher hanging there EXPLODES, and a man's SCREAM O.S. withers away.

YUUSUF

There might be a dead-man's switch.

After a couple tense seconds, Yuusuf peeks out. Just then BOOM! The man's vest detonates.

RECEPTIONIST

A delayed dead-man's switch? That's just mean.

Yuusuf and the Receptionist again motion for the kids to stay hidden, then after one more peek rush out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Receptionist gets a key to fit the reception area door, Yuusuf looks left and right then smacks his forehead.

Bilan runs up to him, clutching her ball tight. Mark chases after her with an apologetic look on his face.

YUUSUF

You were supposed to stay there!

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

All sections: The hostiles entered hiding in trash receptacles. All receptacles to be considered suspect until cleared.

Receptionist pulls the door open, it swings away from her, reveals an Al-Shabaab TERRORIST (18) armed with an AK-47 rifle. He sprays the entrance with gunfire.

Yuusuf fires two shots as cover, Receptionist dodges back. Gunfire erupts from a second unseen location in the room.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Echo two-five be advised, surveillance shows two hostiles.

A single GUNSHOT.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

We lost the video feed. Agents responding to your area.

YUUSUF

(loud)

What are you gonna to do? All the doors in there are locked, I'm not gonna let you out this way, and with that ballistic glass all you can accomplish is blowing yourselves up.

RECEPTIONIST

(quietly)

The glass isn't --

Yuusuf puts a finger to his lips. He fires a covering shot, flings himself across the doorway to the door side to get a look at the other shooter. He aims his pistol... and freezes.

YUUSUF

Daahir?

The second shooter, DAAHIR (15) looks exactly like Mike with a different hair style. He stares back at Yuusuf in shock.

The Receptionist drops her radio trying to aim her small pistol at the first Terrorist.

YUUSUF

This isn't who you are, Daahir. You don't need to prove you're tough. And even if you did, *nin is waalaba waabiyaa hela*. That's not how you end up.

Daahir lowers his rifle. The first Terrorist does not.

YUUSUF

Is there some kind of dead-man's switch on those vests?

DAAHIR

There's a panic button and a heart monitor. Push the button, die, or take it off, it goes.

The first Terrorist keeps his rifle pointed at the Receptionist with one hand, slowly reaches for a panic button on his belt with the other.

A speeding pink dodgeball SLAMS the Terrorist in the face, knocking him on his back. Mark stands at the door, smiling.

MARK

(to Daahir)
Butt-wipe.

DAAHIR

(to Mark)
Fungus.

FBI AGENTS storm into the room, handcuff Daahir and the Terrorist then call for the bomb squad.

RECEPTIONIST

What was that you said to him?

YUUSUF

Nin is waalaba waabiyaa hela. It's Somali, roughly translates to "Every bad-ass eventually runs into someone badder."

FADE OUT.