The Delivery Before Dawn (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Marek had driven the same route for eleven years, but that Tuesday felt different from the start. He left the depot at four in the morning with a delivery of medical supplies, and the roads were still empty. His white van smelled of coffee and cardboard, and the heater made a rattling noise he had learned to ignore. On the seat beside him lay a folded map, kept purely out of habit.

The first part of the journey ran beside an old canal, where mist hung above the still water and a few narrow boats were tied up for the winter. Marek liked this stretch because nothing ever happened there. He kept to the inside lane and let the faster traffic overtake him. Somewhere around the second bridge, his phone lost its signal, and the navigation system on the dashboard froze completely. He was not worried; he could have found the hospital blindfolded.

Things changed once he reached the ring road. A lorry had shed part of its load near the junction, and blue lights were flashing in the distance. An ambulance was already there, parked at an angle across two lanes, and a paramedic was kneeling beside a man on the tarmac. Marek slowed down and lowered his window. A police officer waved him towards a side road, explaining that the main route would be closed for at least an hour. Marek nodded and thanked her. There was no point in trying to rush, since the diversion was the only option available.

The detour took him past the airport perimeter fence, and he stopped for a moment to watch. Two aircraft were waiting at the end of the runway, their wings dark against a pale sky. A cargo jet came in surprisingly low overhead, and the whole van seemed to shake. Marek had always found the moment of landing oddly beautiful, that instant when the wheels touch and the engines roar in reverse. He remembered his only flight abroad, sitting in a cramped cabin with his knees against the seat in front, wondering whether he would ever afford a proper holiday or even a cruise around the Greek islands.

He arrived at the hospital forty minutes late, but nobody complained. A porter helped him unload the boxes, one of which contained a surgical kit that had been flown in from Germany the previous evening. Marek climbed a short ladder to reach the shelf at the back of the storeroom and stacked everything neatly. On his way out, he noticed a poster advertising the latest recruitment campaign for drivers, offering better pay and shifts. The delays that morning had been largely beyond his control, he thought, yet he had still done his job properly. Outside, the first commuter train rumbled past on the rail line beyond the car park, and the city finally began to wake up.

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