

Chairs and Mirrors

by Foster Trecost

The first time became clear after the second. I sat in a chair, not the one I would've chosen. Mouths moved all around me, but the ringing in my ears was louder than the voices. I couldn't hear anything except the ringing, but not the one I wanted to hear. A phone sat in the corner.

I used to work in a chair. Not like this and not one behind a desk either, one behind a wheel. My name was stitched on my shirt. Now a number's stitched on my shirt. I always wondered why they put the names no one cares about in plain sight. The people who boarded my bus sure didn't care. I may as well have been a number back then, too.

There's a mirror in front of me and I thought it was so I could see myself, but I didn't want to see me. Then I realized some folk did want to see me, but didn't want me to see them. It wasn't even me in the mirror. The reflection was just a body that looked like mine, but it wasn't me. The people hiding on the other side didn't see me, they saw a guilty man. I'm not guilty.

Then nothing mattered. The ringing in my ears died down and I could hear voices. They were nice voices and I smiled at the people I couldn't see and felt sorry for them. I looked above the mirror at a clock, almost midnight. The room became quiet and I surrendered.

Then the phone rang.

That was the first time. The second was much the same, and now it's the third and I'm sitting in my chair, wishing it was the one behind a wheel, smiling at the people I can't see. And the phone just ain't ringing.

