Moving Up

by Foster Trecost

Sometimes I had the time right and sometimes the place, but never both. A while back they finally showed up together, and I got promoted.

From the outside, The Express looked pretty plain. Gray metal doors, two of them. But behind those doors, that's where it got interesting. The carriage was bigger than the others, and trimmed in mirrors and brass. A chandelier hung up top and tiny marble squares tiled the floor. Maybe the most extravagant elevator ever built, she pulled passengers to the sky lobby, forty-eight floors up.

These assignments aren't doled out to just anyone. Seasoned operators, that's who gets them. Elderly men with an easy demeanor achieved only through aging. And Carlson had aged plenty. He was the perfect elevator man, knew his riders by name, knew who had children, who had grandchildren. He had both.

I'd been stuck in Bank B for fourteen months, which was long enough to know I needed more than "*What floor, Sir,"* and "*Where today, Ma'am*." I didn't know their names, didn't want to know, but I knew I needed more. After a few trips, I decided I'd had enough. I made my way to the man in charge, but not because someone filed a complaint. This time I was going to get a raise, or I was going to quit.

This was about the time Carlson closed his doors. He'd just greeted everyone and asked about their weekends. "Next stop, sky lobby," he said, and the elevator started to rise, but about half way up, he decided he'd had enough, too.

In his wordless way, the man in charge asked what I wanted, but before I could say his phone rang. He picked it up, listened, and hung up, and there was no way me or anyone else could've known he'd just been informed of Carlson's untimely passing. "Report to The Express," he said. "You've been promoted. I don't know why you're here, but the job's yours. I suggest you take it."

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/foster-trecost/moving-up--2»*
Copyright © 2014 Foster Trecost. All rights reserved.

Right time, and right place, and I've been running The Express ever since. I'm sorry Carlson had to die, he was a decent man in every way: *"Next stop, sky lobby,"* were his last words, and I'm sure they rang about as true as anything he'd ever said.