

A photograph of a winter landscape. The top half shows a snow-covered ground with a tree trunk on the left. The middle section is a dark path with a repeating circular pattern. The bottom half shows snow with scattered brown leaves. The title is written in a large, elegant, black serif font across the middle.

*To Those  
Who Wait*

by John Fuller

Charleston is pleased when everyone arrives for Thanksgiving. Regrettably, this Thanksgiving will be noteworthy, and all three children being here means a lot to him. It's been three years since Angie, Marcel, and Eve all came.

Marcel, the eldest, unfolds from his little Volkswagen. He cherishes his mobility, and would drive a hundred miles to bring a friend take-out. He's devoted and faithful, and Charleston is proud of his easygoing reliability.

Eve, the baby at 30, is arriving from the airport, where her older sister picked her up. Charleston wants to greet them, and Marcel, wresting luggage from the hatchback, but he needs to urinate so badly it will have to wait. It's been like this about a year.

He finds the half-bath off the entryway, but peeing quickly is a bygone dream. It had been slow before; now it seems downright glacial in pace — probably psychosomatic.

Pulling the curtain back a little, he sees everyone hugging and laughing, tumbling bags onto the walk. Marcel gestures toward the house as though someone has asked after him. He hates missing all the greetings, and his vision blurs with tears. That's happening a lot, too, lately. Because he will die soon, or maybe from self-pity? Or is everything he loves actually more luminous since the diagnosis?

Charleston finishes just as everyone pours inside. Greetings and hugs and everyone's recent news buoy him down the hall, and they flow around the kitchen island for drinks. The turkey plumps on its platter, nearly cool enough to carve.

Perfect.

Couldn't it stay perfect? His news will taint this evening with his children — and their companions, for each has brought someone home. Marcel has Jackie in tow, a gorgeous, fat woman of tremendous wit.

Eve brought Doreen, whom Charleston has only met once. Dark, angular; Charleston liked her keen way of connecting ideas.

Angie, of course, has Wendy. They've been together nine years. Redheaded Wendy can be difficult (like Angie), but is so wildly exuberant that you always forgive her. Charleston enjoys the peppery sparks between them. His children bring friends home not for protection, but to share their blessings.

Dishes float to the table, broadened by two leaves. The dozen platters, serving bowls and cutting boards full of food require the expansion. Charleston has been to pee three times since the children arrived. Surely they've noticed? Surely he won't surprise them?

After second helpings Marcel and Eve, always competitive, vie to finish the potatoes. Everyone bets on the outcome using silverware as poker chips. Nearly hysterical, Charleston's eyes are wet.

Finally, dessert is winding down, the coffee vanishing, and Charleston knows it's time. He looks around at everyone; one last

look at the time “before we knew Dad was sick”. He soaks in the feast’s aromas, the sounds of intimate fellowship. He closes his eyes; suddenly he’s ready to speak.

Then Angie rises.

“It’s so good to be home! Since Mom died it’s sad, but good. You are all my family.”

“Alright, Obama, spit it out,” Wendy says. Angie playfully bonks her on the head before continuing.

“Wendy and I are getting married! In June. Here at the house, if that’s okay, Dad.” She’s looking at Charleston, who nods, beaming at this additional joy. He’s so sentimental lately.

Marcel takes his hand. Angie kisses Wendy hotly, and everyone shouts congratulations. The pop of champagne makes Charleston’s bladder feel ready to burst.

Relieving himself alone, he’s aware of all the perfection; all the sadness. He’ll make his dismaying announcement over email after all.

“Just hold it a bit longer,” he smiles to the mirror.

*More stories at [dorknerdgeek.org](http://dorknerdgeek.org)*

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