

Wait room

by Verkaro

It was Saturday morning.

"The coffee maker is not ready yet," said one of the old men. Like the present company, his form was swollen with mismatched layers of cold weather wear.

It was a white room with a dozen men, three couches, and a large screen television flickering with the morning news. On the sink counter, under locked and labeled cabinets, was one of those tall stainless steel tanks -- good for brewing thirty cups of coffee at a time.

Frowsy-headed, grim, the new fellow ambled past those waiting faithfully. He put a hand on the silver water reservoir and yanked it back.

"Hot."

"The green light must flash before we can drink," droned the first man. "See, it is not yet flashing the green light."

The new guy listened with a blank expression for a moment before he shoved his cup under the spigot.

"No, no, no..." admonished the first, weakly. Everyone in the room looked on, slightly worried or annoyed.

A stream of steaming black filled the styrofoam cup.

"Now you done it," said the first man. He was trembling. "If you don't wait till the little green light flashes," he gestured around the room, "you mess it up for everyone."

"Look, I don't even know who you are," said the new guy. He took a noisy sip and squinted past the steaming cup at all eyes turned his direction. He made his way for the door. "Coffee's ready."

And the line formed, men holding their empty cups, bundled up, taking one day at a time.

