

The Houseguest

by Jim Harrington

"Who's that?" Carl asked about the man standing near the fence.

"Says his name is Angel Lopez," Jake replied.

"For real?" Carl moved to one side for a better look.

"I know. He doesn't look like a Lopez," Jake said.

"You got that right." Carl listed to the left and shaded his eyes.

"What is he, Chinese?"

"Does it matter?" Jake turned and walked away, dragging his right foot, the one that got run over and cost him his job right before the company declared bankruptcy and went out of business.

"What's he want?" Carl said to the air.

"Says he needs a new home." Jake bent down and picked up a Cheerios box. "Wants to know if he can stay with us while he checks out the area." He peered into the box and threw it back on the ground, away from his home. "He was snooping around our stuff when I got here. Said he was checking out the accommodations." Jake looked toward the fence. The guy named Angel Lopez was taking a leak. "Like we're some kind of hotel. I should have asked him if the minibar was to his liking."

"Does he smell?" Carl asked.

"Not that I noticed." Jake continued his housecleaning by throwing a tattered shirt into the neighbor's concrete yard.

Carl straightened and turned his head toward Jake. "Did you tell him our carton is hardly big enough for the two of us?"

"Of course, I did," Jake slapped the back of his neck. "Damn mosquitoes are bad this year." He wiped his hand on his shirt and continued cleaning up the area. "He said he didn't take up much room." Jake looked at Carl. "I told him to take a hike."

"Guess he didn't hear you." Carl walked over to where Jake was standing. "Maybe we could let him stay for a couple of days. It'd be a shame to throw him out on the street." Carl put his hand on Jake's shoulder. "You know how that is."

Jake looked at Carl and smiled. "Why you old softy. You know that's why I love you."

Carl shrugged, his face flushed.

"Okay, he can stay," Jake said. "We've been sharing the same blanket anyway." He stepped back and pointed a finger at Carl. "But you gotta wear some pants at night."

