

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

by Richard A. Sanchez

One morning we woke up and it was just sort of there, the trailer in Bobby Branson's backyard. It was like a huge canned ham that had been turned on its side and dropped into the middle of the desert, an orange extension cord tying it to Bobby's house. A big truck hauled it in early that morning around five and left, we found out later. Bobby said his uncle was inside, and hadn't come out yet. That first day, we couldn't do much but hang from Bobby's chain-link fence and squint our eyes at it.

"How's he going to leave again without a truck?" I asked, pulling my hair back into a ponytail so I could look at the black round window on the trailer's side. It reminded me of a captain's porthole.

"He'll call somebody, I guess," Bobby said, frowning and crinkling his chin.

Thomas McCoy said: "Your uncle's just going to live in your backyard forever?"

"Not forever," Bobby said, "just as long as it takes."

I knew enough to know that he was probably just repeating what his mom had told him, which was probably exactly what his uncle had told *her*. None of us—even Bobby—knew what "it" was yet, or how many weeks or months it might take.

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