Eviction

Mary Dengler
*Dordt College*, mary.dengler@dordt.edu

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“You must evict him now, or else!” Our neighbors wrote. “He’s crazy, evil, weird. His junk is everywhere; your patio’s an eyesore. Gardeners can’t trim. His hats adorn the bushes; bees fly from the grill. He’s probably selling drugs. He doesn’t own a car. His girlfriend’s shrill. We’ll fine you till you get him and his pothead girlfriend out!”

Our summer home is wrecked, I thought. From years in Iowa, pigsty came to mind, a cow yard full of muck, a garbage truck, a landfill, squalor, filth and kitch. But then the word “evict” brought Marx to mind, the bourgeois’ struggle with the proletariat; cash nexus, superstructure, base weren’t far behind. And have we come to that—are we exploiting them? “Let’s go and see,” I said.

We cased our summer place. A bamboo shade, a sea of bonsai, jade, and other potted plants, a piece of driftwood, easel, tables full of paints declared an artist’s world of work. We knocked, feeling the burden of complaints. Two long-haireds, grayed and laughing, bade us in and toured us through their place. Whatever space there was they’d filled with artifacts, his paintings—vibrant blues and greens depicting coasts and boats with sails on choppy seas. “The rent is soon to come,” they said, “as art sales are slow right now.” And Kate’s got cancer. Visit any time.

We left their home, a playground full of sail boats, whales, dolphins in the waves along a line of weathered shacks, depicted on our walls. Beyond this childlike world our neighbors met to plan new threats, make calls,

While twenty minutes south that playful sea depicted by the plein air painter’s brush rushed back and forth across my splashing feet and carried dolphins on that line where sky and ocean meet before a vast red flame. “I’m glad our renters like the view. I’m glad they’re painting, living, playing in our home.”