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Eviction

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Eviction

Mary Dengler

“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
Though 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 pleinair 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.”