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Neighbors

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Neighbors

Mary Dengler

Across the street, a family rents a nondescript beige house
With beige garage; they recently arrived from Mexico, I'd guess.
How quietly, each day, their actions start, from early morn
At 5 a.m. and lasting until after dark; from house to garage
back and forth they run, with only one to manage. At first
the words "Meth Lab" came tumbling from my mouth,
Since that's what renters started in my other house.
But then, an upstairs friend walked boldly over and inside
That busy place, and what did she see there?
A cottage industry, tortilla factory intact,
Going at full speed, with lines of workers, shaping,
Baking, packaging—enough to stock the restaurants
Of all surrounding towns. At first, small trucks that serve
Their fare from windows pulled into their space, but soon
A line of vans as large as hotels took their place to get
Their morning fill. These people never stop their work
Until great stacks of boxes crowd their yard, all neatly organized,
With noise and scent contained within their tiny space.
I've never met these neighbors, only smile as several tiny children
Race across their yard. I'll bet that after years of work they could
Own housing south of town, decide to run for mayor,
Decide who's out and who is in, as well they should:
They moved, survived, and make America the Beautiful
The thriving place it is.