WARREN CHANG

Entrance to Highway 1, 2010
Oil on Canvas, 30 x 30 in

courtesy: the artist

PAUL SKENAZY

Between the Rows

They found him sleeping early one morning in his bag. His exhale sputtered out, leaving traces of spittle on his lower lip. One hand partially covered his eyes and nose, the fingers spread softly over his face like he was playing hide and seek with the two stray cats who lived more or less permanently in the garden. The cats were curled near the man's face. The pepper plants were already in white flower. The man's palm was cupped softly just above his wide lips, a contented rumble coming out of his mouth.

They saw he had constructed a makeshift pallet out of two planks aligned side by side and set over another single one he'd wedged into the soft earth between the rows of vegetables to keep the slabs from collapsing down into the trough. Smart, they thought, when they woke him and watched him deconstruct his bed and return the boards to the stack beside the back wall of the garden. At the meeting that night, a couple of the men who found him remembered noticing bits of dirt at the edges of some boards the last few weeks; a couple of others admitted ignoring the indentations they'd seen along the line of peppers and eggplant. It seemed he'd never strayed from those two rows, whether from a passion for nightshades or the fit of the boards no one was ever sure. But now that they'd discovered him sleeping in a little later than usual, the random clues added up, and they realized he had been sleeping in the garden for some time now.

They might have done the same themselves, probably, except for the law. The law was the City Council, whom they catered to with bittersweet thanks for the privilege of their food and lodging—the Welcome Garden, the Gimme Shelter two blocks away. The law said they worked in the garden, slept in the shelter, sold the vegetables and flowers they grew on Wednesdays at the farmers' market on Saturdays and from a cart at the gate. The Council left it to them to decide how to divide the money. They had a common pot, with a wage scale for the ten or so regulars, the fifteen or twenty others who appeared when they needed food or cash, and the still more vagrant many who would wander in, pretend to do their time, and drift off quickly with their pay. The Council rented the empty land for them by remitting the owner's taxes. It donated the tools, helped them build the storage shed in back and the rickety fence and sign in front. It paid for a quarter-

page ad box at the back of the Parks and Rec catalogue and made sure they had a stall at the market. And in return, the city wanted them off the streets—in the garden during the day, preferably in the shelter at night, but certainly out of sight. They knew the law, had fought for the help, and enforced what they needed to. It was easier to be cops than get hassled by them, was what they said to each other when they had to come down on someone.

There were lines they didn't cross. They never locked up the garden at night. There were enough locks in their lives; let the kale and cauliflower have their way. If someone was hungry enough to harvest by flashlight, they needed the food and should take it. But they knew they were supposed to be invisible come sunset. Some of them lived under the bridge, except when the river ran high in late winter or the cops decided on a drug bust. A few set up camp in the woods just below the golf course, where they'd play cat and mouse with the rangers who tried to clear them out every two or three months. The people who ran the garden tracked the comings and goings, but they didn't pay too much mind if someone floated out of sight for a few weeks, didn't make it to work for a few days, or just disappeared. There were always two stories to explain it: the one about the itch for travel and the one about the lucky son of a bitch who got a job.

The sleeper was a loner, so nobody had a bead on him. He'd only been around three or four weeks—just appeared one afternoon from nowhere. He asked about work, nodded like he knew plants. No arguments, no attitude. He had a Japanese weeding knife of his own that he carried in his back pocket and used for almost everything. And his own gloves: old cowhide, the seams splitting, the suede thinned. At the end of the day, he would carefully oil the knife, and after a few days of work, he asked for some thread and a needle and repaired what he could of the gloves. He offered no suggestions but would sometimes shift things around a little, water less or more than advised. They asked him to weed or load up the cart for the market, and he did it, quiet at his business. He took what food they offered at the end of the day, what money they passed out on market days, and showed up the next morning. That was all anyone ever cared to think about him until they found him asleep.

They were polite when they woke him—gave him a few minutes to roll up his bag, put it away, go out back to pee. He didn't seem surprised to see them, didn't seem bothered by their questions. He'd never said much, they realized later, talking about him. He answered people one at a time, stiffly, as if not accustomed to using his tongue. He didn't stand listening to anyone very long, either, they told each other, trying to make sense of him. As if he didn't let words take up too much of his mind. He nodded and shrugged, like he preferred to speak with his shoulders and chin. Like his muscles had more to say than his mouth, was the way they explained it. He took in their interrogation as calmly, or indifferently, as he stacked boxes, planted seedlings.

—How long have you been sleeping there?

A shrug.

—A couple weeks, give or take.

—Why?

—It's restful.

—What's so good about it?

A pause.

—Smells.

—Don't you know the rules?

A nod, then a couple of more in confirmation.

—Why don't you sleep in the shelter with the rest of us?

He looked down, then back up slowly.

—The smell.

—What smell?

—People.

(They realized later that he must have kept his bag wedged behind the compost heap, since there was nowhere else he could have hidden it where they wouldn't have come across it by chance sometime. His bag, they figured, must have smelled, too: of the fermenting eggshells, onion skins, roots, weeds, straw.)

* * *

They took him to the shelter that night—waited while he got his bag, found him a bed, checked to be sure he lay on it, whether he slept or not. The next night was the same, and the next, until a week or so passed, and another week after that. By then, they'd forgotten to pay attention to him. So they were never sure how long it was before they realized he wasn't there. Deliberately this time, they went to the garden very early in the morning. They didn't find him. They knew he must have been there from the straight lines about halfway up along the same row of peppers he'd slept in before. When he came in through the gate to work, they asked him where he'd slept. He just shrugged, looked up at them with the interest he might take in a piece of toast, stood quietly before their accusations and warnings. Nodded, pulled his knife and his gloves from his back jeans pocket, and went to work. They followed him.

—What's your problem with the shelter?

He shrugged his shrug, bent down over the row of carrot seedlings he was thinning. When they didn't move, waiting for his answer, he stopped his work. Looking down at his hands, he said, quietly,

—Used to be OK inside when I could pay. Then I couldn't, so it's not.

And said nothing more.

Twice in the next week they tried to catch him at night in the garden but found nothing but the back cover of a comic book sitting where the boards had been, and the two kittens, the calico with its eyes shining back at them in the flashlight, the gray stripe curled asleep. They tried to coax him back into the shelter with offers of cards and cigarettes, but he just shook his head and shuffled out the gate by himself a few minutes before the end of the work day. Exasperated, they threatened:

—Do you want to lose the garden?

—I just want quiet, he answered, so softly they barely heard.

* * *

The boy came up to him one morning. He was short, dressed in red sweatpants, dragging a long stick behind him like a hoe. He stood by the side of the broccoli row staring at the man, not saying anything, while the man pulled up weeds and reset the soil at the base of the stalks. After the man looked up at the boy a couple of times and he still didn't move or say anything, the man took his knife, cut off some florets, and handed them to the boy. The boy bit into them quickly, swallowed, and looked back at the man.

He was on his third piece when his mother came up, panting as she called his name—Bobby—in small puffs of air. She seemed alarmed that he had wandered off, alarmed perhaps to find him so close to the man, and concerned when she noticed his cheeks puffed out and his mouth chewing on God knew what. She laughed, though, when he stuck a couple of fingers inside and pulled out tiny but recognizable chunks of broccoli to offer her with a look of pride. She turned to the man, who'd been looking at the scene quietly from his knees along the row of plants that separated him from them.

—He's never eaten broccoli before, she said to him.

He smiled, cut off more florets, reached them across to her. She nibbled slowly as she put her other hand on her son's shoulders, waited as he waved goodbye to the man, and then turned him to the gate, where a box of winter greens was waiting for them.

So it began. She would come back once a week, as she had for years, to pick up more vegetables. The boy always insisted on going with her now, running quickly through the garden until he found the man. He brought along a little trowel of his own. He'd kneel next to the man, watch, then follow his example. They rarely spoke, though sometimes the man would put his hand over the boy's and adjust his fingers on the handle or indicate a spot on the trowel to show him how deep he should dig. His mother would appear eventually; thank the man, who would nod back at her and to Bobby; and lead the boy out against his mildest protests—a stalk of celery, a zucchini, or a green onion stuck ceremonially in his pocket.

Eventually she asked about the man, was told what I've told you. It took her another month to come one day without Bobby. She found him hunkered down along the back of the shed, a butterhead lettuce in one hand. He nodded his silent, circumspect hello, pulled out a blanched inner leaf, and offered it to her.

—No thanks. Can I talk to you?

He waited, pulling out leaves one by one, brushing off the clinging dirt at the base, then munching on them slowly while he looked at her.

—I wanted to thank you for your kindness. With Bobby. Bobby couldn't stand vegetables before. Now he can't get enough of them. His kindergarten teacher calls him BB, for Broccoli Bob, because he's always chewing on some broccoli or carrots or slices of pepper instead of the potato chips and peanuts he used to carry in his lunch pail. He has his own little garden patch now, in my backyard, as he might have told you. We just planted garlic yesterday.

The man didn't say anything, but shifted his eyes down and waved a leaf in the air, releasing a small worm. He brushed the leaf again before putting it to his mouth.

—I've asked about you, around here. I heard about … the shelter.

Still the man looked at her quietly.

—I have this empty garage behind the house. Just an empty garage. Or a garage that could be empty, doesn't have much in it, a few boxes and our bikes. It isn't insulated or anything, you understand, just the walls and the beams. But it would keep you out of the rain. I could get a little heater in there if you wanted. You can be alone, or almost alone. I mean, Bobby and me are the only ones in the house. There's a washroom just inside the back door you could use to clean up, along the hallway across from the kitchen. With a shower. So you wouldn't have to disturb anyone. Think you were a bother. Be bothered by us.

When he stared at her, he seemed to look through her to the trees behind, as if she were a window. He didn't say anything, just scratched at a clump of dirt that had stuck to his jeans along the thigh.

—I just have this feeling I can help. Bobby is so fond of you. I wanted to offer what I can.

She left him a small piece of paper with her address on it.

—I'm just up the street, large old place, house looks like a barn. In fact, it was one before they parceled off the land around here. It's close, so you can walk to work, come and go. You don't have to always be there to stay, you understand; it won't matter to me.

He took the piece of paper from her hand and looked at it, up at her again.

—I won't, was all he said, and went back to his eating.

She stood a moment more, then backed off, not sure what he meant. She didn't tell him about herself, explain the last year since her husband died in the car accident. A long year, when she was often called to preschool because Bobby had slapped someone in the cheek or tried to break up a game during recess or just screamed out wildly in class. She didn't explain her own job, designing websites, or tell him about the money she got from the insurance policies, or the loneliness in bed that was even worse than the ache she felt those last years with her husband, knowing he was off with one new woman or another on his sales trips. What they didn't know about each other, ever, in fact, would fill two lives. She didn't think about all that then, only that here was someone who seemed to know how to help Bobby chew a vegetable in peace.

When she got home, she moved the boxes from the garage to her storeroom underneath the house and hung up the bicycles in a corner on a hook screwed into a rafter. She opened the army surplus cot she'd bought years before at a garage sale, set out a couple of wool blankets and a pillow in the middle of it. She found an old shag rug and stuck that out in the garage on the floor along with a small electric heater. It was maybe a week later that she came home from shopping to find the blankets, pillows, and rug at her back door, the heater alongside with the cord wound tightly around it. That's how she learned he was there.

* * *

He seemed a man of habit to her, watching as she could his entrances and exits, his head always turned down, his pace slow, his attention his own. He walked from garage to garden, worked, brought home what must have been food each night in what looked like the same paper bag.

After three or four weeks, a woman came up to her at the garden one day with a clipboard in her hand.

—I hear he's moved in with you; that right?

—Not with me. In my garage. And he isn't there now, she added. I'm never sure when he'll be around.

—He sleeps there, though, the other woman tried to confirm.

—Usually, I think, she answered. I see the bulb sometimes in the ceiling and sometimes a flashlight.

—That's with you. Then he's no longer homeless, the woman said to her, making a note on the clipboard.

—No, I guess not, she answered.

She paused.

—Is that a problem? Him having a place, working here?

—Just keeping track.

* * *

She and he learned each other's rules. The first few days, she left him food outside his door in an insulated picnic container—a full plate, a thermos with coffee or tea, milk in a jar. She would find the container on the back step later the same night, the food untouched, with a scrap of paper he'd torn from somewhere and a word or two on it.

—Thanks.

—Don't bother yourself.

After the fifth night of her persistence, just

—No.

She shifted from china to a metal plate, abandoned the meals, and instead left portions of unprepared food from the refrigerator or pantry wrapped in foil—chunks of cheese, partial loaves of bread, a package of salami, a paper bag of apples or mandarin oranges or sunflower seeds mixed with walnuts and raisins. These would disappear, the empty plate returned clean to the top step a day or two later, no note. She assumed he ate it all himself but was never sure, and eventually came not to care. Once, perhaps tired, she left her own note:

—A thank you might be nice.

The next day her note was on the plate, a "Yes" below her handwriting in the formal block letters she'd come to know as his. She left an extra towel and washcloth in the washroom for him, but he carried in his own over his shoulder when he came into the house for his showers—more of a rag, really, the ends frayed, the strands of yarn tangled around each other. She soon realized he must have used the rag on the sink and floor after he washed or shaved, around the tub and in the drain. He left the room spotless, no hint of the bits of dirt that he seemed always to carry around on himself somewhere, in his nails, darkening the creases at his finger joints, in the ridges of his shoes—dust that settled on him leaving a trace of silt on anything he touched.

* * *

Temporary, the word she used when she told friends about him or when they noticed him working in her garden while they sat over tea. In need. Some friends worried out loud if she wasn't nervous about having him there. She'd tell them about Bobby and the broccoli, let them see that he, after all, didn't seem to worry about the two of them being near him and he didn't pry into their lives. She didn't work too hard trying to get people to understand, but just watched how they did try to. They were her friends, after all, had their own gardens. She ran into them every week at the farmers' market, gave to the same good causes. Usually they'd just look at him a second time, his pants soiled, his hair hanging long, his face dark from his hours outside, and bend back a little uncomfortably to the table, the tea.

She knew he was home when she saw the light go on in the garage. Most nights he would come outside briefly, move to the two raised beds she had had built in her backyard. He walked along the edges, pulling weeds, rubbing his hand over the soil, sometimes watering a little, before heading back into his place for the night. Without asking, he started digging up a small square patch of the clayish ground, came home one night with compost and seeds, and started his own patch of peppers that he worked each day. He covered another section of the yard with flattened cardboard boxes. Bobby rushed in, all but feverish, explaining to his mother what lasagna gardening was and how all the weeds would disappear by spring. The boy would often join the man late in the afternoon, the two of them bending alongside each other, the man with his knife, the boy with his trowel, as the days grew longer, warmer, drier.

She would forget about him altogether for hours, then suddenly notice him again, the way you do a certain leaf or lock of hair or book on the wrong shelf, out of place. Bobby took more of an interest, rushed home from school those first weeks especially to be around him. The boy was disappointed when he'd find him absent, knock on the garage door day after day until some mumbled answer allowed him to open it once again.

There was a small shelf of sorts that extended out from the wall in the garage where the man set a cup and dish, fork and knife and spoon. A razor and toothbrush, each in its own glass, shaving cream and toothpaste, occupied the bracings in the wall. And there were always a couple of books piled one on another, never more than three, the titles shifting as he found new ones in the discard boxes in back of Bailey's Used and New over on Fourth.

* * *

The man strayed, disappearing for a day or two, sometimes a week or longer. There were months when she ignored him completely, or just thought of him as one of the many neighbors she barely nodded to on her way through the day, down the street, in and out of her car. Bobby turned into Bob, then Robert, then Robby as he moved through

grammar school, drifted into high, to his bagging job at Safeway, and off to college. She tried to keep a record of the man's wandering a couple of times—found a small book and made notations of the days he was there and the ones he was absent, seeking pattern. But it was not a code she could crack. She never knew if he'd be there from one morning to the next, to help with chores or not, to care for the garden or not. The months when she was more curious than she felt she had a right to be, and anxious about if or when he would return, she would find herself in front of a window wondering where he was, who he knew, what prompted his wandering. She tried to pry answers out of Bobby, thinking their murmurs behind the garage door might include exaggerated stories of his escapades. But Bobby had little to report, save the way the man taught him to turn a trowel to move under a root, told him strawberries shouldn't be planted where you harvested peppers the year before, showed him the spinach seeds that eventually went alongside the chilis. Once the man told Bobby he had left to look for a friend; another time said he had gone south to warm up. As he grew older, Bobby lost interest in the garage guy, as he took to calling him. When the boy thought of the man at all, it was the way he might a pet goat, content with the grass for feed, a small bit of story for friends who might notice him. The garage was his, by territorial imperative it seemed, if for no other, more sensible reason one could talk about.

Over the years, the man would sometimes leave the washroom after a shower and forget to put his T-shirt back on. Or she would look out her bedroom window at night and see him peeing in the far corner of the yard. She learned not to worry about lowering the shades if she was dressing or not, dressed or not, in her nightshirt or only shorts. There were other men who came and went in her life—one was there more than a year, half-weeks (he worked in another city and only came for long weekends). The men didn't seem to register with the man in the garage nearly so much as on her son, but she thought she noticed an accommodating shift in his timetable of showers.

There was an afternoon when she and the man were both working in the garden. He was in his characteristic squat. Shadows from the plum tree made creases across his face and softened the line of his nose. She stopped watering, put down the hose, came over to him, and put her hand out partway. He looked up, not surprised, took her hand firmly just below the wrist between his thumb and forefinger, and put it over his face as he used to his own at night. His lips traveled across the palm, not so much a kiss as a crawl, over the skin slowly like a child inching along a rug. Then he quietly let go, looked up at her, and lowered his head to return to his digging. She stood there a moment longer, reached across to his black hair, combed back from his forehead, touched it, let her fingers rest there. She started to move her hand down across his face but for some reason stopped at the hairline, pulled away, and stood for just an instant longer before she backed off. The afternoon went on; the moment was never repeated.

* * *

It was while her son was still living at home that she noticed the man's knife, stuck vertically into an edge of a raised bed. The wooden handle was cracking. The original rivets securing the blade had been replaced by bolts and nuts. She held it, felt the blade shimmy as she tried to lift it out of the soil. So she went to a hardware store, found a flat-bladed tool that looked like his, carbon steel, bought him a new pair of suede gloves. She tied them together with string and left them on his cot with a note: "I don't know your birthday, but this is a present. Polite people don't return presents. Please don't hurt my feelings by returning these." He didn't. But she never saw either gift again.

* * *

Early on, she'd wanted to fix up the garage. She waited fifteen years. When he disappeared for a few days, she called in Will and Frank, who did odd jobs for her, and they stuffed insulation into one wall, covered it with drywall, laid linoleum over half of the concrete floor, screwed several small shelves into the walls about chest high. She bought a metal twin-bed frame, a thin mattress, and a piece of three-quarter-inch plywood, and folded up the green canvas cot. She put new wool blankets at the foot of the bed. When he returned, she watched from the kitchen window. He put one leg through the doorway, stopped. She came silently out the back door of the house, still drying her hands on the kitchen towel. He looked her way for a moment, his eyes traveling past her as they always seemed to. She opened her mouth to explain, but he turned his back, went out the alley gate. She ran after him, called to him, pleading at first, then angry, slapping the dish towel against her thigh.

—Please wait, damn it. Damn you. I just want to help. What's wrong with that?

He stopped and turned to look at her.

—Why can't I do something in my own garage? Do something for you? Not ask?

He just stood there, as if the answer were obvious, the question not worth asking.

—You're impossible. This is impossible. Don't come back if you feel like that.

He didn't, for almost a month. Meantime, she had Will and Frank tear it all out—the drywall, the insulation, the linoleum, the shelves. She gave the frame and mattress to Goodwill, sent the blankets to the shelter, opened up the cot, and went back to work. She put his stuff where she'd found it, left it all so that if he did come back, he could retrieve it in the dark.

The garage light went on late one night as she was reading in bed. She found jeans and a sweatshirt, and knocked quietly on the door before she slowly opened it.

—I know you don't want to be beholden.

He was rolling out his bag along the cot. He looked up at her, nodded, and looked down. After a moment, she turned to go, thinking that was all she would get from him. She was startled to hear him say to her back,

—I never wanted for anything.

She turned around then.

—A little comfort won't hurt you.

He looked up at her again, nodded again, pulled a toothpick from his mouth.

—Perhaps, he said.

She thought there might be more, but there wasn't. She waited a moment, surprised at how she'd learned to wait him out over the years, how he'd taught her.

—This won't go away, you know, she tried to explain, extending her arm in an arc to include the garage, the empty space around his cot.

—I won't go away, she continued. Even if you smile.

He put the toothpick back in his mouth and scratched a little more dirt from the bottoms of his shoes into the old metal pan he kept for just that purpose.

She wasn't ready to let it rest.

—I don't know what you think you're doing on this planet.

She didn't expect an answer, but he looked up comfortably, even a little surprised that she was confused, and said, politely,

—I tend to things.

—To what, she barked back, trying not to show her surprise.

This time, he stared beyond her, as if the answer were there, in the night, if only she'd thought to look. Then he shrugged his shrug, looked down, said,

—Things that need tending to.

She didn't answer this time, startled still by his ways.

—It doesn't matter, he said to her surprised face, and lapsed back into his scraping.

She looked at him a moment longer, at the top of his face as he stared down at the dirt along the border of his shoe, and thought she'd never seen a face like his, so vacant of attention it would sometimes seem to her that he must be living in some elsewhere she knew nothing about.

She wasn't ready for his voice as she turned to go and heard, softly, behind her,

—I think you meant well.

She didn't look back this time, just shook her head to one side, then the other, walked to the house, and went back to bed.

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It was shortly after that talk when she woke up one morning sure he was gone. She was wrong. When she went out to look, she found his toothbrush and cup, dish and books, where they always were. His sleeping bag lay on the cot, and later that afternoon she heard the back gate open and saw him as he went through the garage door. But her feeling about his imminent departure persisted, even as the days moved into weeks and nothing changed. Then one day he didn't return, and another. His bag was gone. After a month, she was sure she never would see him again, and this time she was right, though his things remained, like a museum display, for most of that year. It was almost Halloween before she decided to take back her garage. She folded the cot, found a crate for his belongings. Though she'd seen his things for years, she was surprised by how little he had: the toothbrush; the dish, cup, and

two glasses; the metal pan; three books and a stack of magazines more than a year old.

The pictures were inside the magazines, one per page, like pressed flowers. Every photograph was of the boy, most when he was a child, some later as he grew up: Bobby digging, squatting, playing with something in his lap, sitting on the back stairs, adjusting his bike helmet, talking to someone on the phone. All in the daytime. They stuck to the glossy surfaces of the articles and advertisements, came off with print or the faded colors of an illustration superimposed on them. She saw her son reshaped by a ragged mountain, caught inside a tree trunk, through an overgrown package of Kools, the cigarettes stuck invitingly out of the torn top of the package. She counted 212 photographs before she stopped and simply tore them out, raggedly, angrily, less patient as the pile grew around her. She wondered if the man had more photos of her son than she did. Certainly he had more unposed shots, capturing Bobby unawares, turned to the side, poring over his work or play. Not the holiday and birthday albums she'd collected. All distant, from a wide-angle lens. Through the window, she realized, looking around for a vantage, trying to understand the blurriness. She didn't find a camera and had never seen one in her other bits of snooping, so she decided he'd done his work with disposables, one after another, with never a word to her. Or to Bobby either, she imagined, though she never asked him.

She stormed through the garage for several minutes, crying and screaming at the man not there to hear her, feeling invaded for the first time in all their years together. When she could stop, she went back to the small window that looked out on the lawn, his porthole. "I tend to things": she remembered the phrase. And eventually, over the next weeks, took comfort in it.

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After she removed the man's things, she would bring out a chair, sit and watch the sun cross the garage floor through the side window. She'd look at her own house and imagine him watching her from this distance. She thought that some nights she might see her own shadow faintly upstairs in her bedroom, moving from dresser to mirror to bed, in a rhythm so constant she could count it out by heartbeats.

She waited until Bobby was off to college before she had the garage redone as she'd planned to long before the man came. Downstairs was one large open room with a kitchen split off by glass tiles and an eating counter. She built a loft with a small washroom and a bed beneath the slanting roof, and moved in there herself. She rented out her house to a young couple with a little girl of five whom she got to know well over the next years and who called each Christmas to say hello, long into her teens. That family stayed four years, until they could afford a place of their own, and were followed by three other families, all young, each with a small child she watched grow larger, older, less interesting to her with the passage of time. One moved across town, another went off to a job in Tennessee, the third left when the parents divorced. She found she had less and less to do with each family in turn and more and more felt their intrusions. When the last one moved out, she moved back into the house and began to redesign it, room by room, removing the old furniture and other keepsakes to the garage, where they piled up haphazardly, covering all traces of the man.

Paul Skenazy taught literature and writing at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He revised and expanded a novel by Arturo Islas after Islas' death (*La Mollie and the King of Tears*), co-edited a collection of essays on San Francisco fiction and a selection of interviews with Maxine Hong Kingston, and has published books and articles on James M. Cain, Dashiell Hammett and other noir writers, as well as hundreds of book reviews. He currently serves on the editorial board of *Memoir Journal* and is putting the finishing touches on two novels, *Still Life* and *Scorpion Queen*.

WARREN CHANG

Flower Girl,
Entrance to Holman Highway, 2012
Oil on Canvas, 30 x 36 in

courtesy: the artist