

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