

YELLOW PASTELS

VIRGINIA SOILEAU

The wooden box has weakened;
its clasps hang loose, the corners chipped,
and the faded musk of pine
leaves only a flicker of a memory.
Stained, marked, its contents caressed
by fingers stolen away too soon.
Inside, soft pastels lay silently waiting,
each smear across the lid a tribute,
each autumn color like the last leaf of Fall,
slowly blowing across a canvassed surface
to lay brittle and broken—Summer's shroud.

Your life transcended into those pastels,
a vibrancy unbleached by illness.
Fragile fingers cherished brilliant yellows.
You slipped away, drop by drop,
like rain splattered across sunset reds.
As the cancer left you dimpled and scarred,
white, frothy rapids wound through healthy hills.
When you no longer had the energy to fly,
sketches of mallards winged through finger-smudged clouds.
In a quiet room, greens rustled from the canvas
as willow branches chimed in a lake-blue wind.

An entire life of dreams is held within this box.
My thumbs rest on the rusted clasps,
the closest I can ever come to holding your hand.

YOUR PRAYERS MEAN NOTHING

MASON PELLEGRINI

Arthur couldn't wrap his mind around what he was seeing. His worst fear had been realized. Tears pricked his eyelids. "It was your son that did this," his wife Maria said, standing near the doorway of the garage sobbing, still wearing her dressing gown. She let out a wail of anguish.

Arthur said nothing. He looked over the scene in his two car garage once more. The window had been busted out, the drawers in his tool box were all open, the door of his Buick was open, with the center console and glove box open. Their contents were thrown all over the interior of the vehicle. All of his air tools and power tools were gone. The meat freezer was open with all the steaks missing, and the ice inside was beginning to melt into a dirty puddle on the concrete floor. This couldn't have happened more than five hours ago. They had taken his laptop, which he had been using to tune his car. Even his 26-gallon air compressor had been stolen. It must have been a hell of a job ripping those bolts out of the concrete to move the damn thing. Arthur realized that this was just what Maria had been afraid of happening all of these years. He felt a tear run down his cheek as he squeezed his wrench so tight his knuckles turned white.

"Art, talk to me goddamnit! We can't just let him get away with this! He can't just do this because he blows all his money on dope and borrows from people that he can't pay back," Maria said.

"Maria, I know we have to do something, but I don't think it was him that did this. He hasn't fallen this low yet," Arthur said and turned around to look at his wife. Arthur put his big hands gently on her shoulders, looking down from his abnormally tall height.

"Arthur, the kid's a criminal and a cheat. We should be calling the cops on him right now," Maria said and shrugged Arthur's hands off of her. She began backing away from him.

Arthur's face involuntarily twisted with disgust. "We're not in-