

## Three Poems

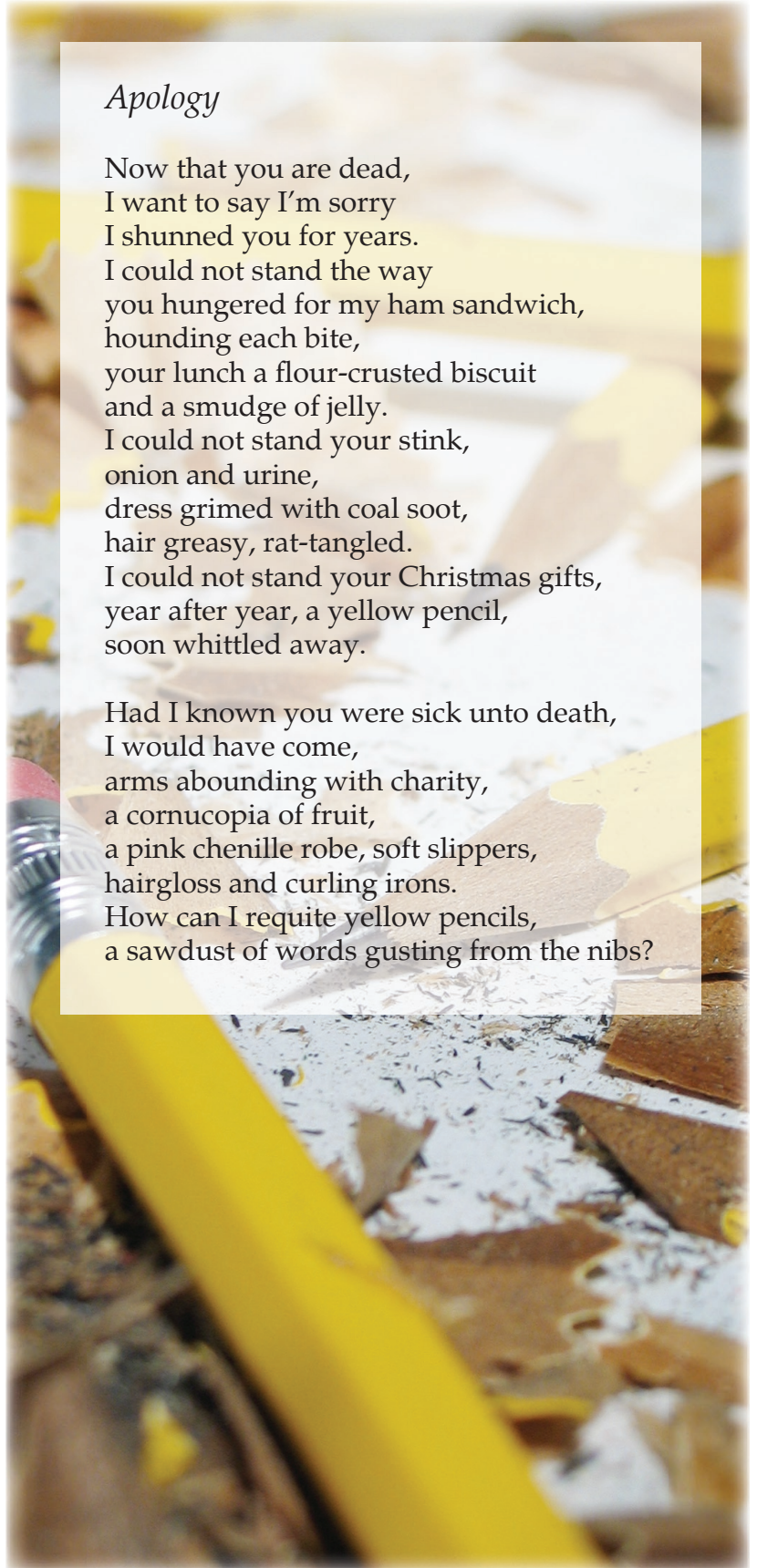


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### *Apology*

Now that you are dead,  
I want to say I'm sorry  
I shunned you for years.  
I could not stand the way  
you hungered for my ham sandwich,  
hounding each bite,  
your lunch a flour-crusting biscuit  
and a smudge of jelly.  
I could not stand your stink,  
onion and urine,  
dress grimed with coal soot,  
hair greasy, rat-tangled.  
I could not stand your Christmas gifts,  
year after year, a yellow pencil,  
soon whittled away.

Had I known you were sick unto death,  
I would have come,  
arms abounding with charity,  
a cornucopia of fruit,  
a pink chenille robe, soft slippers,  
hairgloss and curling irons.  
How can I requite yellow pencils,  
a sawdust of words gusting from the nibs?





## Elizabeth Howard

### *Concords*

As I sleep in my bed,  
my body rises,  
a wraith floating through the dark house.  
It descends the stairs,  
catches a sleeve on a splinter,  
a shred of blue dangling like a spider's lifeline.  
It pinches a finger in the door hook,  
gathers grapes in the arbor,  
sucks the juice.

I awaken in my bed,  
a blood blister on my pinkie,  
lick my lips,  
the sweet cordial of Concords.

### *No Consolation*

My son was born to trouble.  
He come into the world  
fighting and scratching, lying and stealing.  
Cross-grained. Full of hate.  
Nothing we tried set him straight.  
Nothing teachers tried.  
Nothing the law done to him.  
Not even, the preacher praying over him.

When I heard a old lady gunned him down  
in her bedroom midst her strewed underwear,  
I wept. Kept on weeping.  
Not for him. I'd already wept all the tears  
I had for him and his pitiful life.  
I wept for the years of dread, shame, guilt.  
What we might have done, but didn't.  
What we did, but shouldn't.

People came, bearing flowers and food.  
But they brought no consolation.  
I will go to my grave asking what if...?

