

Second Page of a Letter Dated March 7, 1983 (Found in an Old Bible)

me with a broken arm, and Ronnie with a concussion, too. I told the cop it was a sledding accident. He looked at our name like he knew, but you weren't there so he couldn't see your knuckles, and it was just my word he had to take. You were still gone when we got home. Put Ronnie to bed and turned on the twinkle lights. Set your mother's Perry Como record on the player, then plucked each red glass bulb from the tree and stepped on them one by one. I walked across the boxes, too, the packages I had wrapped in newspaper funnies that afternoon. Fell asleep on the couch, your bottle of bourbon empty between the cushions, and the next morning, I hid the bottle in the crisper with the pumpkin roll. When you asked, I told you Barney must have chewed up all the ornaments and smashed Ronnie's gifts. I blamed the dog and the full moon. Even when you took Barney out back and the shotgun woke Ronnie, who (and we laughed about this later) thought you shot Santa, I couldn't tell the truth. You never looked at me close enough to see the cuts on my feet.

But, baby, I'm sorry I ruined Christmas.

Love, Charlene

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