



## *Lost Sister Lyric: As If You Were Here*

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*for Christine*

**L**OOK AROUND, CHILD. IF IT FEELS like a piece is missing, a beat of heart, a flash of mind, maybe it is. I can tell you this: it's as if the sky holds one less star, a bright and crackling one. But we go on, we go on, as if you were here.

As if you were here, growing up in the lolling Midwest, tiny three-room schoolhouse, K-6, recesses on swings while singing "Hey, Hey, Good Lookin'," dreaming of the cutest boy, and winning a spelling bee contest.

As if you were here, listening to our German mother's funny attempts at saying "job," which came out as "chob," or "north" as "nort."

As if you were here, playing Ollie Ollie Oxen Free, throwing the

volleyball or tennis ball over the rooftop of our little house in our little town to see who could catch it on the other side.

As if you were here, riding the bus to the next big town for junior high. You, being a year older, would have watched out for me, or I would have watched you and, I think, we both would have had our rebellious years.

As if you were here, when little brother got his arm caught in the wringer washer. We would have scolded him in unison, giggled in earnest when we walked away.

As if you were here, sitting on the front lawn playing our 8-track tapes far too loudly, and getting told by an unseen neighbor to "Turn it down!"



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As if you were here, taking Spanish and home economics in high school, volleyball and basketball. Archery. We would have helped and competed and nudged each other on.

As if you were here, Dad teaching us to drive a mini-bike, a motorcycle, and a manual transmission car. I can drive anything now. Could you?

As if you were here, hearing Mom say, “Get out of my kitchen!” while she made rouladen, purple cabbage, and sauerkraut with ribs. It was her domain, and the food was exceptional.

As if you were here.

We would hate and love social media together, waste too much time on Facebook and complain about the evils of X. We would grieve about politics, injustice, and far too many school floors pooled with blood. We would argue and agree, hug and disagree. Things would be different, but never worse, only better.

If you were here, I wouldn't feel this emptiness and a constant wondering if Grandmother should have given me

up and kept you instead, in Germany where orphanages spilled over with children born to unwed mothers and American servicemen.

If you were here, I wouldn't feel so lucky for having been the kept one (though they say you were lucky with the ones who kept you too).

If you were here, I wouldn't have to miss you every single day, because you would be the press of a cellphone, a few hours' drive, a look in the mirror.

We would admire boots and leggings, and drink Starbucks in excess. Compare notes and music and philosophy, theology.

I would have teased you, and poked you, and seen the mole on your back before it carried you off to where we'd never have the chance to meet.

I'm not sure how to think of you—by the name you were given or the name you acquired. I'm not sure how to keep you alive when all I have are a few old photos and the fading memories of those who loved you. If only you were here. ❄

