



Foo Fighters

"Everlong"

*The Colour and the Shape*

05/1997

Roswell / Capitol

# Everything Could Never Be This Real

E. Kristin Anderson

Sometime in 1998 I watched Dave Grohl fumble with a pile of firewood as it turned into nun chucks so he could rescue his girlfriend/drummer from a pair of rockabilly axe murderers in the sort of lucid dream of a music video that reflected all too closely my lucid dreams. I held close the wonder, as sleep had always been difficult for me, a source of anxiety that won't fit in my hands.

Sometime in 1998 I walked into Newberry Comics, sucked in the smell of incense and alternative records, and with the deep shame that only a teenager can feel, my best friend and I bought two copies of *The Colour and the Shape*, wondering if the two cashiers who checked us out had noticed our identical purchases. We felt like reverie, CDs in paper bags, money gone, Dave Grohl's voice pinging down our spines as if he were still trying to answer the telephone.

Sometime in 1998 I read the blue and red liner notes over and over until I could see the words on the backs of my eyelids—words like a waking slumber that filled me up in the way only a poem can. These were my poems, and every time I read them I saw some new specter of truth. This was the sort of force that not only filled my belly, but filled stadiums. I tried to figure out why Dave Grohl chewed gum while he sang. I tried to figure out how his grief and rage ricocheted in my sternum.

Sometime in 1998 while I was at school my mother examined my record collection for flaws and pulled *The Colour and the Shape*; I found myself subject of an inquisition regarding the word "fuck," as if a sixteen-year-old had not heard the word "fuck," as if a sixteen-year-old could explain anything to her mother, as if a sixteen-year-old had the foreknowledge that she would be explaining her vulgarity for the rest of her life, out of her head.

Sometime in 2000 Dave Grohl ran by me with his guitar, playing as he moved through the Civic Center, the rest of the band remaining on stage. I don't remember the song he was playing, the specific guitar riff. I remember that he was real. Sometimes the only real. His sweat and my sweat swallowed into the same air.

Sometime in 2000 I wrote my college essay about fear and Foo Fighters and suicide. My mother told me to trash it. There was a special shame for the mentally ill, for the suicides of my generation, for the abandoned wants of the women and men who came before me and the abandoned wants of the self, the next year somehow unavailable, a new bitterness born.

Sometime in 2000 I felt the reverberation of that first chord colliding as if for the first time. How that song on that album was the only thing I needed to drink or eat or touch endlessly to keep my blood red. My ribs would vibrate and my skin would chill and Dave Grohl's mouth would open wider than I thought possible for the mouth of a human man.

Sometime in 2000 I swallowed out of the air something so deep it never came out. I feel it in my guts when I can't breathe, like a scar. I feel it in my guts when the phone rings.

I softened into "Everlong" in the only way a teenager can. Young ears and young despair and young desire. Here is when a song defines you. Here is where it can be this good again. I wished for Dave Grohl's giant music video hands. Anything to steady me in this house.

There is a tattoo in the middle of my back that looks like the meteorological symbol for hurricane that I drew on the back of a test while thinking about "Everlong." A made-up word. I am thirty-five and the tattoo is scarred and wrong and the man responsible was watching *Apollo 13* as he sank the ink into my skin. He told my boyfriend that I was "a tough one," not crying. I wasn't even there, just a wisp of an idea of a girl, wearing her work khakis and a paper napkin pressed to the wound.

This year while visiting my childhood home for Christmas my mother puts on a recent recording of Saturday Night Live. Foo Fighters play "Everlong." My mother asks me, or maybe my father, "Which one is David Grohl?" and I pray to be in a room by myself so that I can have an unadulterated religious experience. I'm still in my parents' living room.

This year, in a Lyft on the way home from the pharmacy, "Everlong" plays on the radio. I tell the driver it's my favorite song, and he turns it up, thinking I want to hear it better, not that I want to tell him about it. About Dave Grohl, the man I used to refer to as Dave to high school friends. As if he were a friend.

This year I think I might hear—for the first time—a few of the words Dave Grohl whispers over the bridge in "Everlong." I tell myself that can't be right. I tell myself that I've always known that this string of words is both played backwards and kept a secret—protected like a prophecy or a poison. I don't Google it.

This year is a fire I can't put out with the weight of my own body with the weight of any body. Either side of my bedroom window is a nightmare that can't be smothered, only stoked. I throw my fat into the flame and play the record and sing into the dark, waiting for the grief and the hope and the song to take my breath.