



Depeche Mode

"One Caress"

*Songs of Faith and  
Devotion*

03/1993

Sire

# When this world is trying its hardest

K Weber

That lunch period a few days after my best friend said in science class that someone would surprise me was when it did and felt like two people in a room with our throats in lumps and a vending machine in the corner. I was a junior but fresh from summer and autumn's first tongues, but still shying from the light.

I didn't know you and then there's your arm, extended in front of everyone; twitching flannel with unbuttoned sleeves. There's your hand with a poem. I unfolded your words to discover thick forests and tunnels that might lead me into darkness. I was suddenly introduced to something evocative that put breath on my spine.

You saw something deeper just by passing me in the clover-shaped hallway. You wrote down my hair and voice and how I fascinated you. You were 15 running track and I was 16 weird and velvet. This beginning felt stark, intense like Depeche Mode should be playing in the background. Almost Christmas. Nervous when our hands met. Hand sweat. All evenings spent on the phone.

Hanging out: your waterbed or my television but always music. My first love. My first long radio conversation. Never static. Comfortable silences. Secrets. Sliding icy sidewalks in concert t-shirts and knit caps on snow days. Every road, every avenue a skating rink. We were together long enough to trade scents and a few homemade cassettes. We made it through Tori Amos's "Winter."

We both wrote constantly, humorously, romantically, inspired. Every day a dream day. I'd listen to The The and realize my life felt like it was being held by the hand and removed from my "Lonely Planet" as I slowly discovered an atmosphere that lured me closer to "Dogs of Lust." You brought me Dr. Pepper before homeroom. We passed notes and free verse and song lyrics to get us through classes.

I learned too much in those few months. Michael Stipe and Neneh Cherry made a song about sex education? You'd watch me practice with color guard in the small gym after school. Small of back so wet. I'd watch you run with other boys with long hair drenched and humid. You saw

me in my thermal underwear. I wanted my arms dangling around your skinny waist before hugging you on tip-toe, everywhere.

Your wide shoulders. You will always be my first mixtape. Just one caress from you was a fresh thrill. I was stunned with strange sensation the first time I heard "Leather." I enjoyed the laughter of the antics of "Maria's Wedding." The first song was a wooden song that could take or break me. I have always had bark like silver birch. You peeled all my best layers to appreciate what was worn underneath.

I remember the longest hug when our moms left us alone as our time zone spun into 1994 and some John Hughes movie lit up the dim living room as we didn't pay attention to it. That slow dance hardly swayed, made me dizzy. I locked my knees and held onto you for years that night. But our Ohio was a hole with a heart shape where our hometown throbbed red temporarily on a map.

Cincinnati shows and local bands. Frost so thick it hummed like drum's skin. We would never have the same last name, but they were almost anagrams. Then everything began to melt down to warped sound as spring bragged about newness. I started my first job. I was in love again with the excitement of being in love again. Firsts. Curious to know things beyond a world that was leaving me unimpressed, I guess.

I went to prom with someone else but spent all night at the after-party with you and then the carnival was over. I met someone with a strong jaw at a festival. He liked Nine Inch Nails and the plaid pattern of my overalls as I giggled and kicked my blue tights and Converse nervously in the dirt. Seemed so easy to fall for someone else then, in a length of time equal to a finger-snap. My first chance to break a good heart.

I've pressed rewind on your first tape and in my mind a million times.