



The Boomtown Rats
"I Don't Like Mondays"
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I (Don't) Like Mondays

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What if you could go back again to when you were fourteen-thirteen-twelve-eleven-ten-nine-eight-years-old? How you (8) hated school already. The early morning wake-up, the Pledge of Allegiance, the straight back chairs, the failing mathematical tables, the popular girls who lived in big houses on the hill (you were not their kind), the playground rivalries, the *train-train*, your shyness an albatross, a great, big, heaving curse. How those boy crushes kept you buoyant, kept you afloat, light-headed, dizzy, drunk, distracted, butterfly-stomached, dry-mouthed, weak-kneed, like seeing Margot Kidder in that March 1975 issue of *Playboy Magazine* for the first time, offering some hope of being noticed, consumed, fallen head-over-heels with, hands held and lips kissed (no tongue) nothing more, no *Lolita*, not yet anyway.¹ How weekends were your refuge, your warm, soft womb, the cartoon characters, alarm clock paused, you (9) scrambling down hills and over dry creek beds, hours lost in books and dreaming. T. S. Eliot once said, "I always feel it's not wise to violate rules until you know how to observe them." And how you (10) just could not, could not fall in line or apply yourself, could not play the game or even half-heartedly pretend. How the hurts began to pile up at school, the slights from classmates, the inattention of teachers, the whole system set to bruise and batter those of us—lost shamans, cut off from our love lines. How you (11) had enough one day with that blond-haired girl and her insults and so you threw a punch and how it felt so good to see her stunned and crying, nose bleeding regardless of the head Principal's disappointment and detention. How the humiliations began to pile up like when you (12), egomaniac with an inferiority complex, tried out for cheerleading and forgot your cheer and stood shell-shocked while the whole room (you imagined) screeched and hollered. How you hadn't learned yet that hurt people hurt other people and the point of power is always within. How the fuck you's and the fantasies of revenge began to pile up. How you (13) swore at a teacher for calling you out and you stormed away, a raging inferno. How a joint you smoked during lunch break was laced with something mysterious and returning to school, head spinning and pale, you vomited in a hallway trash can under ugly, bright fluorescent lights. How those incapacitating migraines came and skipping school came and that vicious, vicious cycle between the desire to belong and the fear of joining came and how you, (14) bewildered latchkey kid, latched onto music, lived and breathed it like you soon began to live and breathe alcohol, cigarettes, and sex. Do you remember how all of the boys you offered yourself up to couldn't even save you? So you slipped in with the out crowd and pushed the others aside to keep from being hurt any longer. But what if you could go back to when you were fourteen-thirteen-twelve-eleven-ten-nine-eight-years-old again? What if you could start your day (life) over? Follow the rules this time instead break them? Forgive the early morning wake up, the Pledge of Allegiance, the straight back chairs, and learn your mathematical tables? What if that stunned and crying, bloody-nosed, blond-haired girl was really an angel or a long-lost friend? Would you be sorry and would your heart break then? What if all of your hates and resentments were semi-automatic rifles pointed directly at you? What if you discovered you'd chosen all of it, every last ounce of it? What if your great, big, heaving curse was a blessing, the albatross an olive-branched dove? What if you could truly understand that hurt people hurt other people and the point of power is always within? What if finding yourself meant learning to like Mondays again? Would you choose it?

¹ Variation on personal essay "For Anne Sexton" (forthcoming on Juked <http://www.juked.com/>). 29-35.