Proposal to Myself

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HEIDI CHARLTON

Proposal to Myself

I will complain, yet praise;
I will bewail, approve;
And all my sour-sweet days
I will lament, and love.

—George Herbert, "Bitter-sweet"

You'll snap at your mother when she asks, "How was your day?" You'll ignore your brother when he tells you what he made in art class today, and you'll be watching MTV so you won't see his face fall when he realizes you're not listening. You'll forget your best friend's birthday and then lie about it. You will go on a date with your boyfriend instead of having lunch with your grandmother, but you'll be pissy the whole time because he insulted your driving. You'll decide to spend the summer in Detroit, and your dad will tell you that you're selfish, but your best friend will remind you that she'll still be around when you get back. You'll lie to your parents about Spring Break and then deal with the fallout for the next six to nine months. You'll break someone's heart and not care; you'll check your watch as you listen to him sob.

But you'll also cancel your date to have lunch with a friend who just got dumped, and you'll send your grandmother a bouquet of pink carnations. You'll let your brother eat ice cream in your car on the last day of school, and you'll cradle that screaming baby, even though she has smudges on her cheeks and lice in her hair.