

A Walk through the Halls: The Assignment

Teen Voices in Verse



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OPENING:

Mr. Winogard: Mary Ann? (Pause) Mary Ann? Your attention please!

Mary Ann: huh?

Mr. Winogard: Mary Ann.

Mary Ann: Yes, Mr. Winogard?

Mr. Winogard: This is exactly the type of inattentive behavior that got you in trouble in the first place. I am waiting for your explanation of this paper.

Mary Ann: uh, right. I think...

Mr. Winogard: Please don't take all day about it, Mary Ann.

Mary Ann: No, uhm, sorry. You see... well, last week, uhm...

My Heart is in My Throat
-Erin B. Henry

**Excuse me while I clear my throat-
I might pause with uncertainty
and turn a little red
but please remain seated,
I'll be with you soon.**

**Excuse me while I clear my throat-
you may hear a few squeaks and cracks,
and see me shake uncontrollably,
but please remain seated,
I'll be with you soon.**

**Excuse me while I clear my throat-
I may close my eyes and look
invisible, but I am still here with you.
I have never done this before,
I have never sung a song
my song
of inner hopes and fears.
They may seem silly, childish, inscrutable,
and may take me a minute, year
but please remain seated,
I'll be with you soon**

Mr. Winogard: I am waiting, Mary Ann. Any excuse? Any at all?

Mary Ann: (sigh) No.

Mr. Winogard: Well, then. I think the alternative assignment is more than fair.

Mary Ann: No, wait. Mr. Winogard, the assignment is way too big, and, uhm, to be fair, you really cannot make me do it.

Mr. Winogard: Well, Mary Ann that might be the longest statement that I heard you speak, and unfortunately, you're right; I can't make you do anything. However, if you want to get into college, if you want to pass this class, you'll take this opportunity to re-earn credit for this plagiarized paper, your obvious negligent behavior during the Socratic Seminar, and your lack of homework completion.

Mary Ann: But writing about the whole high school experience? How am I supposed to do that? How am I supposed know what high school means to everyone? And you are only giving me one day.

Mr. Winogard: That's the beauty of this assignment. You are going to take Atticus Finch's line "You have to 'walk in somebody else's shoes' in order to really understand someone" to heart. After all, what is history but a study of past contemporary problems? And, I think you'll agree that it is extremely generous on my part not to just take this paper to the principal and have you expelled. Don't you agree?

Mary Ann: uhm...

Mr. Winogard: (continuing almost without interpretation) For the this assignment, I want you to learn about your classmates and their experiences by "walking around in their shoes" and then writing about their lives. Hopefully, you'll gain some perspective and compassion in addition to improving your writing skills. Now, I think you should get to your next class, don't you?

Mary Ann: (walking out of the room) Yeah, right. I hate this school. I should have told him off. I should have. What gives him the right to tell me what to do? As if I plagiarized. I never cheated on anything big. I should have told him that. I should go back in there and tell him. Now I have to get up in front of the class and read off some stupid paper.

Andrea: Overheard Winogard. Completely unfortunate.

Mary Ann: No way am I going to do Mr. Winogard's stupid project. I should have said *something*. Andrea, why didn't I say *anything*? It was all in my head. All the words were there! I could have said...

Etiquette Of Dreams

-Myrita Craig

Why is it so hard to be a teenager?
Supposedly, these are the best years of
life
If this is the best I can get
Well, I'm screwed
I want to be a REBEL WITHOUT A
CAUSE
I want to break all the rules
Just to say I did
I want EVERYONE to know
I AM NOT AFRAID
I want to run away, and be on my own
Take care of all of my wants and needs
Not what others want and need from me

Why does society try to impose
Its goals and expectations on me??
What about what I want to do with my life?
It is mine, isn't it...
How many of your goals are actually
yours?
What do YOU want to do when you "grow
up"?
Who knows better than you?

I confuse myself to no end...
So, how can everyone else tell me
What is best for me?
Do they actually know?
By telling me what I HAVE to
Accomplish,
They're pushing me closer and
Closer to the edge
One of these days I just might
"Take the Plunge"

I want to break out of
SOCIETY'S RULES
Why must there be an
"Etiquette of Dreams"?
The dos and don'ts to
Childhood fantasy
Why do others tell me
What my definition of success should be?
What if I don't want money
Or a big house
Or a stable job in CORPORATE
AMERICA???
What if I want to be
A rebel
A wanderer
Or a mysterious vagrant
Who travels with the world on her
shoulders?
I may not want what others want,
But at least I know one thing,
I will not let others tell me what my dreams
should be!

Andrea: Yes, well, that is more my style than yours. Don't let it get to you. Anyway, just stopped by to let you know I'm bouncing.

Mary Ann: What?

Andrea: You know my motto.

Andrea Pulovsky Period 1, Room 102
-Mel Glenn

Hey man, after first period, I'm history.
Gone.
I'm outta here, real quick.
About one period a day is
All I can stand of this place,
While the teacher is goin' on
About some compositions or somethin'
I'm planning my own agenda:
Go out for breakfast,
Do a bit of shoppin',
Catch a late-mornin' nap,
Watch my soaps,
Maybe invite my boyfriend over
Before my mother gets home from work.
Hey man, the day's all right,
If you don't let school interfere with it.

Andrea: *(cont.)* As it is third period, I'm way behind on my schedule. I got to get going.

Mary Ann: You can't leave me! My life is falling apart.

Andrea: Oh, please. Don't over dramatize. You are going to do the assignment because you always do. You didn't say anything because you never say anything. Oh, brace yourself, here comes Jane.

Mary Ann: *(groans)* Not today.

Jane: Oh, look who it is- the delinquent and the mute.

Mary Ann: What do you want, Jane?

Jane: I heard you had a little problem in Winogard's class. I told him he should just expel you. It would be a favor to the rest of the school.

Mary Ann: You set me up?

Jane: Why Mary Ann, I don't know what you are talking about. You lay in the bed you make.

Andrea: Beat it.

Jane: Tsk, tsk, tsk. Such manners. Oh, Andrea I'll be sure to tell Todd you said hello (*laughs & walks off*)

Mary Ann: Pay no attention to the idiot.

Andrea: (*to Jane's back*)

The Anger Inside Me Amena Dean

When the anger inside me is shown,
You start to moan and groan.
Why do you have to act this way, you say?
Someone else says "Oh, maybe she's having a bad day."
The day doesn't have to do with the way I act.
But the way you're acting, you just might get smacked.
I walk away, not paying attention to you.
Then you act like a big person and your little friends
start to laugh and coo
But don't worry, because they'll soon get smacked too.

Sometimes I imagine the beast within me.
Is it a white tiger, or a gray wolf, I can't see.
But if I had to choose, that's what it would be.

Have you ever seen me cry, and if you're lucky act shy?
I know I act tough and try to hang out with the guys.
But they don't want a girl around.
They try to act cool and tell me not to make a sound.
All I do is stand there and stare.
The way they talk, it seems like I'm not even here.
Not even here, far away in space...
But that's not how I am, and that's not the case.

The anger inside me seems like a spreading fire.
You are the one that starts it, you liar.
Ongoing, everlasting, spreading by the minute.
But the biggest fire, my heart, don't try to win it.
Because you won't like the beast within me, whatever
It may be.

Andrea: (*cont.*) No, no, no. I'm not going to let her get to me. Mentioning Todd was a cheap maneuver, and if she can't come up with something better than that, well, anyway. She's a nobody.

Mary Ann: (*sighs*) She's a nobody with a great wardrobe and perfect hair.

Andrea: See, this is why I leave after first period.

Mary Ann: (*looking after Jane*) Don't you wonder, though, what it would feel like to be her?

Andrea: No.

Mary Ann: All that confidence, surety of self.

Damn, I Look Good
-Miriam Stone

Tried on a dress the other day,
Showed off my skin
In just the right way,
Rolled off my hips
Like fingertips,
Legs long,
Heart strong,
Cascading hair falling
Just to where my back
Lies graceful, smooth, bare,
Elegant shoulders,
Slender wrist,
Temptress in a dress
No one can resist.
Supercilious walk,
Suave talk,
This coquette can get
Any man she's set
Eyes upon—
A female Don Juan.
The best, I confess,
Cannot help but obsess
Over me,
Devil walking
In one hell of a dress.

Andrea: Stop being foolish. I'll tell you what it is like to be her.

Barbie Doll

Marge Piercy

This girlchild was born as usual
and presented dolls that did pee-pee
and miniature GE stoves and irons
and wee lipsticks the color of cherry candy.
Then in the magic of puberty, a classmate said:
You have a great big nose and fat legs.

She was healthy, tested intelligent,
possessed strong arms and back,
abundant sexual drive and manual dexterity.
She went to and fro apologizing.
Everyone saw a fat nose on thick legs.

She was advised to play coy,
exhorted to come on hearty,
exercise, diet, smile and wheedle.
Her good nature wore out
like a fan belt.
So she cut off her nose and her legs
and offered them up.

In the casket displayed on satin she lay
with the undertaker's cosmetics painted on,
a turned-up putty nose,
dressed in a pink and white nightie.
Doesn't she look pretty? everyone said.
Consummation at last.
To every woman a happy ending.

Mary Ann: She's the result of a happy ending?

Andrea: I rest my case. Now, are you ditching or what?

Mary Ann: I can't, not if I want enough material for this extra assignment. You know, a real friend would help me out.

Andrea: blah, blah, bladdity, blah.

Mary Ann: Oh, look there's Rob with his football buddies.

Andrea: Ah yes, I can practically hear their tiny brains whirling.

Zombie Jocks

-John Grandits

Trophy, trophy, trophy, trophy.
Zombie jocks, we want the trophy.
Trophy, trophy, give us trophy.
Give the zombie jocks the trophy.

Football, baseball, we will win 'em.
When we wrestle, we must pin 'em.
Soccer, hockey, we will skin 'em.
On our bikes, you bet, we'll Schwinn 'em.

Don't like music, art or science.
We prefer the Rams and Giants.
Don't like movies. Don't like dancing.
Don't like dating or romancing.

Trophy, trophy, trophy, trophy.
Zombie jocks must have the trophy.
Shiny, shiny, pretty trophy

With our names engraved on trophy.

Mary Ann: You're so cynical. Can you hear Rob? What's he saying?

Rob :

Brad McCall -Varsity Letter: Basketball

-Mel Glenn

I race downcourt, Cut To My Right, then Left, let dribble crossover to my a

Andrea: Clearly, a man of few words and fewer thoughts.



Mary Ann: Andrea! How can you say that? Just look at him. He's like a god.

I Want

Rebecca Furnell

I want you like a lemonade
wants another sour lemon
I want you like a drinker wants
another glass of gin
I want you like an astronaut
wants to set foot on the moon
I want you like an addict wants
another shot of sin

when you look at me, I can't look back
I turn away and grin
When you touch me, I can't touch back
but you know I really want to

You're a daisy chain
behind a windowpane
I'm like a spoiled child, always wanting more
don't close the door
I wanna walk with you across the beach
I wanna hold your hand, but I can't quite reach

Andrea: You don't want him. Looks aren't brains.

Mary Ann: He talked to me once. (Sighed)

A Bad Hair Day
-Miriam Stone

The day I met you
Was a bad hair day.
This one piece of hair
Just wouldn't stay!

You must have noticed,
You must have seen,
Because although you weren't rude,
And although you weren't mean,

You were just a little distant,
Your mind in another place,
You weren't interested in me,
I could see it in your face.

So after a handshake,
A talk for a while,
You excused yourself
With a pleasant smile.

But what would have happened
If my hair looked good,
If it wasn't sticking up,
Had stayed down like it should?

Would we have talked longer?
Would you have flirted more?
Asked me to a movie
As you walked me to the door?

Maybe we would date,
You would give me a ring.
Soon we'd be married,
Have kids, the whole thing!

Or maybe we would just
Have shared a night of fun.
But it could have been love.
You could have been the one.

But instead you turned away,
Moved on to another girl,
And again we are two strangers
Floating in this world.

It's scary to me
That my future could lay
On one piece of hair
That just wouldn't stay.

Andrea: Trust me. You don't want him to notice you.

Mary Ann: What do you mean?

Andrea: Everyone's talking about Jenn and Rob.



Mary Ann: Well, I don't listen to gossip. You know how rumor works.

Rumors

-Erica Sutherland

People I've never seen before
Go around and talk
Spreading these horrible words
Everywhere they walk
I hear them, and wonder
What did I do so wrong?
To make these people hate me
And call me words so strong
I don't deserve to be called a slut
I'm not a bitch
And I'm not a ho
Obviously people just don't care
And don't take this time to know
They only see this person
Through everyone else's lies
But they won't take the time
To look at me
With their own eyes

Andrea: So, you don't want to know?

Mary Ann: (pause) Tell me.



Andrea: Well,

The Last Word
-Jenn Reid

He said
You were drunk.

You passed out.
 you slut.
 I knew what you wanted;
 I know everything about you.
 Don't I?

I knew you once

I can't stand you.
You're ruining my life
 Making such a big deal of
One stupid night

Whenever I see you on campus
 You squirm inside, don't you?
 Why are you so uncomfortable?
 Why are you crying?

No matter how hard I try,
I'll never understand.

All the control
 Is mine now, isn't?
 I didn't just invade your body,
I invaded your life.

I can't
 Believe this,
 You're overreacting!
 I never meant to hurt you.
I didn't do anything wrong!
You never said no!

She said
 You were drunk
 I was drunk
 I drank so much
I passed out.

I knew you once—
 I never thought you'd do this.
 I don't know who you are now.
I can't stand you.
You are ruining in my life.

One stupid night—
 One I'll never forget,
 Thanks to you.
 I don't know who to blame
 For any of this.
 You haunt me

Whenever I see you on campus,

No matter how hard I try,
I'll never understand
 Why you felt you had the right
 To do what you did
 And now you have
 All the control.

--My life
 Will never be the same
 It's not fair—
 You can sleep with the lights
 Off.

I can't

I didn't do anything wrong!
I never said yes!

Mary Ann: I had no idea!

Andrea: Better to find your white knight elsewhere.

Michael: Who needs a white knight?

Mary Ann: Michael!

Michael: Hey, girls. What's happening?

Mary Ann: a whole lot of mean.

Michael: Ah, hence the need of a knight. Who's being mean?

Andrea: Jane got Mary Ann through Winogard

Michael: *(jokingly, exaggerating lilt in an obvious attempt to lighten the mood)* So, Jane's black wizard, Winogard, cursed the Lady Mary Ann. And once he left the field of battle, the evil queen descended upon the wounds? Alas! the Tragedy, the sorrow!

Mary Ann: So, are you going to rush in and save the day.

Michael: Let me at them. *(Raises his fists)* I'll take them down. They might hit me, but I won't back down. Not at all. I might bleed, but I won't fall back.

Mary Ann: *(sarcastically)* My hero.

Andrea: You're not a knight; you're a jester, and the last place a joker should be is in a battle. You'll get hurt. Then you'll get taken to the nurse's office.



Michael: Ah, the nurse's office. (*dramatically*)

In The Nurse's Office

- Kathi Appelt

In the nurse's office blood runs down his face
From the jagged cut above his swollen eye.
Tears and blood together, salty red embrace

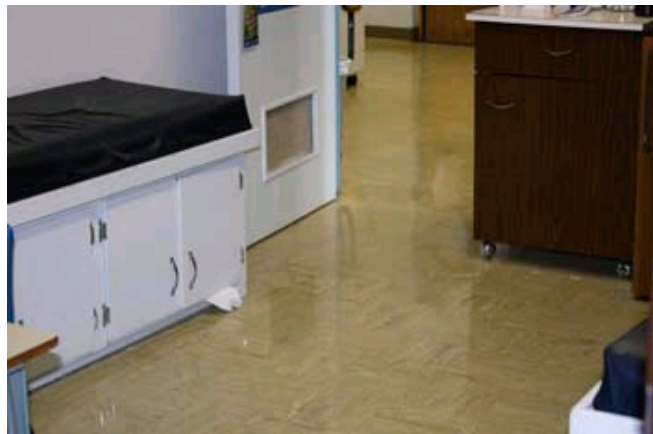
He couldn't see it coming, the knotted fist, the chase
That sent him spinning, spinning, face toward the sky.
In the nurse's office blood runs down his face.

He takes the first blow, the stumbles, falls apace,
"fight you stupid coward!" the ragged taunts rush by,
Tears and blood together, the salty embrace.

He lurches into darkness, false as midnight's grace,
Fluorescent lights blast in and out, comets gone awry.
In the nurse's office blood runs down his face.

She softly dabs his bruises, the wounds she can't erase,
Sobs gather in his stomach, she'll never see him cry.
Tears and blood together, salty red embrace.

Skin and bone and sinew, one body in one place;
Stars swim behind his eyelids, if only he could hide...
In the nurse's office blood run downs his face,
Tears and blood together, salty red embrace.



Andrea: Dream on.

Michael: Ah, Mary Ann, I would offer my services, but alas, as Andrea points out, I am but the jester. (*chuckles*) Seriously though, I sympathize with your teacher troubles.

“T.C. Tyler - Period 1, Room 102”
- Mel Glenn

Winograd's a real jerk.
Every Friday we write compositions
On another boring topic.
Think he reads them?
No way.
He just returns them a month later
With a little check on the bottom.
Once, in the middle of writing a composition,
This time about my future goals and aspirations,
I indented and wrote down
My mom's recipe for chili,
Did he notice?
Are you kidding?
The little check mark appeared at the bottom.
I could have a cookbook by the end of the term.

Michael: Now, if only I could figure out how to turn on the oven...

Andrea: (*warningly*) Michael...

Michael: (*solemnly*) No more bad puns. (*overly dramatic*) Lady Mary Ann, wilt thou take my arm as we meander to class.

Mary Ann: I hardly know what to make of such an escort sir.

Andrea: Honestly, Michael. You are slinging it a bit thick today, aren't you?

Mary Ann: Nonsense. Michael made me feel better. He's always good for a laugh or two.

Michael: You would measure my worth in chuckles?

Joker

-Michael Tobias Bloom

You would be surprised
To know that the funny man
Is also the sad man
Like a clown fallen from his stilts.
 But this is his career
 Never will a joker feel secure in a serious environment
 He will keep telling jokes
 Never will a joker be secure in his insecurities
 He will keep telling jokes.
In the process of getting out of a hole
A hole I dug for myself
A bottomless pit
I will die...
Like the product of a pun
A misunderstanding.
The saddest joke...
 A clown lying by his stilts, full of regret.

Mary Ann: *(surprised and concerned)* Michael?

Michael: Ah, well, then. I bid you both adieu. *(exits into classroom)*

Mary Ann: You think Michael's going to be okay? I never seen him so sad, vulnerable almost.

Andrea: I don't know.

Mary Ann: His comedy makes him difficult to know or understand.

Andrea: Are you going to write a sad soliloquy? Play a pity song on a violin?

Mary Ann: *(softly)*

Genius Child
Langston Hughes

This is a song for the genius child.
Sing it softly, for the song is wild.
Sing it softly as ever you can—
Lest the song get out of hand.

Nobody loves a genius child.

Can you love an eagle,
Tame or wild?

Wild or tame,
Can you love a monster
Of frightening name?

Nobody loves a genius child.

Kill him--and let his soul run wild.

Andrea: Dramatic to the last. You are too soft-hearted by half. As his grades can attest to, he's not a genius, nor for that matter, is he a child. He'll be fine.

Mary Ann: *(unconvinced)* Perhaps I better go check.

Andrea: *(desperately)* You are not going anywhere. Here comes Todd! Where is a girls' bathroom when you need to hide?

Mary Ann: the hallway over.

Andrea: *(a hiss)* Don't leave me.

Todd: Hey, Mary Ann, Andrea...how have you been?

Andrea: Fine.

Todd: Mary Ann, can you give us some space.

Andrea: Mary Ann and I are walking here. Why don't you go walk with Jane.

Todd: uhm, Mary Ann? Please.

Mary Ann: *(pause)* Five tiles. That's all the space I'm giving you.
(takes five steps back)

Andrea: *(exasperated)* What do you want, Todd?

Todd: I have been thinking about us: what we were, what we had. I mean,

Julia

Todd VanderWerff

What did we have?

**We had some pretty good times.
and some great conversations
about politics and the meaning of life
and
GOD
(in all capital letters)
although we never once discussed
emotions.
(But lord could you make me laugh.
Like a downpour.)**

And I ended it all

**Because of a cheap two-bit
SLUT
(In all capital letters)
who liked to make me feel overly important
and hated your guts
for some reason
until she won.**

I miss you.

Andrea: You miss me. *(pause)* What am I supposed to do with that information?

Todd: uhm, I'm hoping you'll take me back.

Andrea: Take you back? After what you did, with her?



Todd: Please Andrea? I'm nothing to Jane. I know that now. It was a game she played. All I ever had was you. My father liked Jane, approved of her in a weird way. You see...

What I Am
(In the Eye of my Father)
Dwight Beavers

I am nothing in the eyes of my father.	beaten down from heaven by the shaft
When I get good grades he doesn't say	of my father. It feels like a bull whip
anything, not one good word. When I didn't	going across my back every time
get into the top high school he said I was	he puts me, beats me down, down.
nothing, never going to be nothing. I am	

Todd: (cont) First time he ever thought I was somebody was when I was with Jane, just because I had the homecoming queen. And it turns out, I never had her. I never meant anything to her.

Andrea: So, I should come back to you because you need a cheering section?

Todd: No, you should take me back because of what we had. Geesh, I apologized. What do you want?

Andrea: What do I want?

Untitled

Izzy

I want you, but I don't want you to just want me the way I want you. I want you to want me the way you want me, do you want that? And I don't want you to want me because I want you, but because you want me and need me. I need you, and I want you to want it in the way I want, and don't say I can't want to want you, because I want you, whether or not you want it, because I know you need me to want you, and I know you need to want the way I need to want you, and I always get what I want, because I need to want.

Andrea: *(cont.)* How can I make that any more clearer for you?

Todd: I get it. I do. I will do better this time. I swear it.

Andrea: I just don't know.

Todd: Will you think about at least?

Andrea: I'll think about it.

Todd: Right, okay. See you around. *(leaves)*

Mary Ann: *(catches up)* What did he want?

Andrea: Me. He wanted me to get back together with him.

Mary Ann: Are you?

Andrea: I just don't know. He cheated on me with Jane, and then he left me for her. I don't know if I can forgive him.

Mary Ann: Okay. *(pause)* Want to cut out?

Andrea: Definitely. But, what about your assignment from Winogard?

Mary Ann: I figured out what I am going to say.

Andrea: Really? What?

Mary Ann: I'm going to get up in front of the class and say:

Hallway Between Lunch and English
(Freud Can Kiss My Sexually Ambiguous Arse)
Danya Goodman

we all like to strut
(squeak of black boots on yellow linoleum)
and show our teeth
in primitive smiles
(crack of bubble gum
like sound of a slamming locker)
we put on our chatter
like red lipstick
with the same amount
of greasy enthusiasm
all our secret glances are pulled on
like a fishnet stocking over white thigh
oh the brittle irony
slips out
like smoke pouring from sultry lips
we are all armed
with our polysyllabic sabers
uniformed by our lust
united by our laughter
unique by our will
we march together toward
the war we cannot name
but at least we are dressed for it

Andrea: (*impressed*) Wow. Really?

Mary Ann: No.

Andrea: (*laughs*) What are you going to say?



Mary Ann: Hmm...

"The Sweet Age"
Glenessa Taylor

A period of sunshine
Without a trace of rain
What's often seen as joyous
Contains amounts of pain

Often called the sweet age
Can often seem so sour
Leaving a bitter taste
That hurts to devour

An age without logic and reason
Struggling to find your place
Trying to fit in the place
Of the body's urging race

Waiting to conquer the sweet age
To leave its anguish behind
To journey into easier times
With a lighter peace of mind.

Andrea: Not bad. Nice enough without being a complete sell out.
And it is already memorized. You going to say it proudly?

Mary Ann: I was thinking of mumbling with a sheet of paper in
front of face, praying no one throws things.

Andrea: Ah, there's the Mary Ann I remember.



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