

1982

## Anonymous

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*Allegan High School*

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ANONYMOUS

by Ruth A. Hill  
Allegan

She went there hoping to meet someone. She went there hoping to talk to someone--anyone at all. She ordered a cocktail, although she didn't want one. She ordered one as an excuse to talk, sitting at the bar. Talk. Fine someone to listen, she thought. Someone. Anyone.

She made a few uneasy attempts at conversation: the man and the next man--none of them wanted to talk about life; not one found time between a drink and many cigarettes to talk, to slice through the layers of silence...of emptiness.

God, this is really quite cliché--talking to a bartender. Really cliché. Talking to the bartender. Repeat--don't. Got to quit repeating the branded thoughts. Got to quit. Control. Must have control at all times.

She needn't have worried about the bartender. He didn't want to talk. He didn't want to listen. Blankness. Nothingness. Not even feigned interest in those eyes. Failure. Emptiness again... emptiness always. Hired help--not worth the time anyway, she thought. She knew these were her mother's thoughts as they jumped up and down inside her head. She wondered why this was, but finally decided that it didn't matter. Hired help, she thought...but didn't believe. Hell, she started to say, I can always try again. But she didn't. He was down at the other end, serving. And she was where she was--sitting, listening to the scene being acted out around her and wishing she was part of it.

But of course she wasn't. You're never going to live on the inside. Never. Stop it! Got to stop. Never, the rain inside pounded. Outside...throwing stones against the wind...against the drenching tides. Outside. Outside. Oh God, somebody talk. Oh please...

She felt like crying--like falling. No one talked and no one listened; their lips moved and their ears recorded only what they termed substantial.

I'm here! her lips formed, but when she opened her mouth the words refused to leave the cave. So instead she strained to remember the principles of good conversation, the ones she learned in Personal Management courses in high school; the classes her mother made her take so that she could become "a real lady." Questions, ask the Right Questions. Take Interest. Charming--remember the Charm. Smile--Be Approachable. One mad rush....

Slow down, slow down--got to slow down. Musn't look rushed.

Remember what happens when you rush. Wearing those condemning eyes and slanted expressions, they look...and the whispers. The breathy whispers poking holes in the silence, letting the oxygen through... losing it in chatter and gossip and shopping lists written for one.

She thought about her apartment. Two dark rooms, with white curtains that somehow managed to reverberate the darkness of it all.

She thought about her mother, dead five years--or close. The time half-slithered, half-dragged as she thought about life...as her mind skipped rope past high school, past success, and past Personal Management.