

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/2

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THE SOUND OF SILENCE

THE NIGHT WAS STILL. She lay on rumpled sheets with her hands pressed flat over her ears, her breath caught half way in her chest and waited. It always came – except for when it didn't. Time marked its slow passage by the sound of a solitary bark, an empty can echoing down a street – silence. Her hands slipped as sleep took over from tension, breath now rising in steady waves. The ratta-tat-tat pierced through, catching her off-guard. Her soft insides expanded then folded in on themselves. The night sucked into her empty belly with a force that took her breath away. Her hands now pressed over her silent mouth. She curled her knees up into her chest and thought, *how many can there be left*, as sound punched through the uneasy night. Sleep came – unnoticed – unbidden. In her dreams blow-flies fed off blood-stained walls, their child-like bodies' grotesque as blank-eyed they gorged, their blue-black forms glistening in the heat. Grey morning light. Scarlet red blood. Blue black death. Mantra. The night beat at her brain – grey, scarlet, black, again and again and again. In the morning there would be no bodies, just the stains they left behind. Afternoons were worse. She pushed away the thought as she twisted in her cotton night-dress, around and around, unable to escape. She woke limp, stale with sweat. Silence filled her ears as cool grey light tore away the mask of night to reveal another day.