

## Wilderness House Literary Review 11/2

*Tom Sheehan*  
**Degrees of Silence**

Silence comes  
out of bullets  
that rot in the Earth  
or a bucket  
of live grenades  
some meek hero  
threw overboard  
in the Leyte Gulf.

Silence is  
a wet stone  
without a carved name  
taking storm knives  
in a mile-wide  
cemetery in  
the Philippines  
or bones  
in a Kwajalein cave  
coming up white as  
good teeth  
in a hard jaw.

Silence is  
a grasped photo,  
old black & white,  
gone still  
in a dead hand,  
the smile carried off.

Silence is  
a big RBI some kid  
drove home in Kansas  
in '41 and a father

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remembers the ball  
going like a bullet  
into left center.

Silence is  
a brother swimming  
100 miles off  
a New Zealand beach  
saying your name,  
through salt  
in his teeth,  
one last time.