

December 2019

## A Martyr's Death (a zuihitsu)

Elizabeth Marcelli  
emarcelli20@jcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://collected.jcu.edu/jcr>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), [Photography Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Marcelli, Elizabeth (2019) "A Martyr's Death (a zuihitsu)," *The John Carroll Review*: Vol. 74: Iss. 1, Article 45.

Available at: <https://collected.jcu.edu/jcr/vol74/iss1/45>

This Poem is brought to you for free and open access by the Student at Carroll Collected. It has been accepted for inclusion in The John Carroll Review by an authorized editor of Carroll Collected. For more information, please contact [mchercourt@jcu.edu](mailto:mchercourt@jcu.edu).

# A Martyr's Death (a zuihitsu)

Liz Marcelli

*"When it is all over you will not regret  
having suffered; rather you will regret  
having suffered so little, and suffered  
that little so badly" –Saint Sebastian Valfre*

One of Flannery O'Connor's characters said she would die a martyr's death  
As long as it wasn't too painful, a quick swipe of the neck, blood flowing  
Like a river running from its source piling in heavy liquid heaps  
On the floor, and the onlookers sob at the sight, yet the body  
Doesn't feel pain for but a second, doesn't feel the anguish  
Of the aftermath, others stare at the body so lifeless, but  
Only a sharp knife, a quick swipe of the neck is all  
And warm sweet liquid is all  
All I feel when my mother's sweet tea  
Slides down my throat, in the hot blistering summer,  
Is dark fluid climbing down the tunnel of my being in rich  
Luscious beauty, and mom tells me that suffering is love and it  
Is the road to sainthood, and my mom rarely drinks the tea, she just  
Watches and smiles wider, an onlooker so displaced by watching my mouth  
Collect brown beautiful drops, talking about suffering and she never even tastes  
Tastes, Will tastes the spaghetti and smiles with leftover teeth when I  
Watch him he could be Jesus Christ or perhaps one of his apostles  
Late to the dinner party, so he has dinner in this homeless shelter  
Instead and draws two people kissing but tells me "Kissing,  
No, you have it all wrong," I have it all wrong, they weren't  
Kissing but the woman was breathing life into the man  
There were ribbons of colorful explosions bursting  
Out of her mouth feeding the man all the colors,  
Colors in her hair and the wind and the rest  
Is black like night but not like Will's eyes  
That showed his thoughts, he seemed so  
Pregnant with thought like some radiant  
Void of total-ness (all over) sucking  
Out the air between us; so much beauty  
Bringing me back to the licking of the waves,  
Lapping at the shore, beauty bringing me back to the tickle on  
My coarse, raw feet from the sand and let it burn me but not too much,  
Not too much, just enough, a quick heat for a pinch of pain people can see  
It hurts, I am strong enough to endure, Ah, everyone *LOOK at me I endure.*