

A Friend at the End of the World

When my best friend
Gabe told me of his insomnia
and his anxiety
because the president
in 2016 was just elected,
he was worried about being
an out, gay Asian man
under the new presidential regime,
and I thought to say,
anxiety sometimes produces
paranoid visions
but instead, I shared
I've also had trouble sleeping
because I kept thinking
at night how the Japanese
were the only people
ever interned in camps, and the fact is
Gabe, you and I could pass as Japanese
like everyone else who has our eyes
could look, to those unfamiliar,
like Japanese, and I told him
as a sad joke,
if it comes to that,
Gabe, if the country
that is reluctant to call us its own,
displaces us from our homes
and puts us in the desert somewhere,
if it comes to
history repeating itself,
either with others
from Mexico, or from
the Middle East, or from anywhere
beyond, Gabe, if what comes around
will come around again, and
if we find ourselves in the same camp
when the apocalypse comes
for not everyone but for just me, you,
and others like us
who are already in the dark,
already at the edges,
Gabe, would you be my friend
and sit with me
when we try to capture a lizard
and roast it for dinner and
ask how our ancestors
could make cuisine from
pig's blood and chicken feet,
and we'll laugh about

how we're whitewashed,
no Americanized, because
Gabe, America is now larger than white people,
and when our existence is denied entry
into consciousness,
our lives will break open,
become visible
on desert horizons where
once a people who looked like us
survived, when their country
wanted them to disappear.

And Gabe, you laughed, and said
yes, I'll be your camp friend, and
when we're there, promise,
we'll laugh to keep
from crying.

--Leiza Castillo