

*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