“In Response to Executive Order 9066: All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers”

by Dwight Okita

Dear Sirs:
Of course I’ll come. I’ve packed my galoshes
and three packets of tomato seeds. Denise calls them
love apples. My father says where we’re going
they won’t grow.

I am a fourteen-year-old girl with bad spelling
and a messy room. If it helps any, I will tell you
I have always felt funny using chopsticks
and my favorite food is hot dogs.
My best friend is a white girl named Denise —
we look at boys together. She sat in front of me
all through grade school because of our names:
O’Connor, Ozawa. I know the back of Denise’s head very well.

I tell her she’s going bald. She tells me I copy on tests.
We’re best friends.

I saw Denise today in Geography class.
She was sitting on the other side of the room.
“You’re trying to start a war,” she said, “giving secrets
away to the Enemy, Why can’t you keep your big
mouth shut?”

I didn’t know what to say.
I gave her a packet of tomato seeds
and asked her to plant them for me, told her
when the first tomato ripened
she’d miss me.