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When Everyone Goes Away

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WHEN EVERYONE GOES AWAY

When everyone goes away to other planets
I'll stay in the abandoned city
drinking a final glass of beer,
then I'll go back to the town I always return to
like the drunk to the tavern
and the boy to ride horseback
on the broken seesaw.

In town I'll have nothing to do
but put fireflies in my pockets
or walk along beside the rusted rails
or sit on the battered counter of a store
to talk with old pals from school.

Like a spider that goes back and forth
on the same strands of its web
I'll walk slowly through
the weed-infested streets
looking at the collapsing dovecotes
until I get to my house
where I'll shut myself in to listen
to records of a singer from the thirties
not caring ever again to look
at the innumerable paths
traced by rockets in outer space.

translated by Carolyn Wright