

The Chairs That No One Sits In
by Billy Collins

You see them on porches and on lawns
down by the lakeside,
usually arranged in pairs implying a couple

who might sit there and look out
at the water or the big shade trees.
The trouble is you never see anyone

sitting in these forlorn chairs
though at one time it must have seemed
a good place to stop and do nothing for a while.

Sometimes there is a little table
between the chairs where no one
is resting a glass or placing a book facedown.

It may not be any of my business,
but let us suppose one day
that everyone who placed those vacant chairs

on a veranda or a dock sat down in them
if only for the sake of remembering
what it was they thought deserved

to be viewed from two chairs,
side by side with a table in between.
The clouds are high and massive on that day.

The woman looks up from her book.
The man takes a sip of his drink.
Then there is only the sound of their looking,

the lapping of lake water, and a call of one bird
then another, cries of joy or warning—
it passes the time to wonder which.