

# The Years Went Softly By

by [David Wiener](#) (May 2025)



Woman at a Window (Caspar David Friedrich, 1822)

A long time ago  
When we were very young  
(Godalmighty, we were very, very young!)  
In the apartment below us  
There was an old lady.  
A widow, I'm pretty sure.  
She Came  
From back east somewhere, I think, and the son had rented  
The studio unit just below us  
And set her up there.  
Near-total strangers, just a neighbor, we knew her only to say  
Hello every now and then.  
When her door was open  
In the warm weather  
You could catch a glimpse of her Revere Ware pots and pans,  
her stacks of magazines, and things that old people use.  
And on her walls  
Old, old pictures  
When she and her kids were young.  
Every morning, we heard bustling around  
Her little tea-kettle whistling  
And being taken off the fire.  
And she would sit and sip at her big window  
And watch the world go by.  
She watched the trees, she watched the cars, my wife going off  
to work, and the kids on their way to school.  
A nurse stopped by every day.  
And every week, the ladies who cleaned.  
A friend stopped in,  
The phone would ring,  
And the years went softly by.  
Once, when my wife took a day off, she saw me as I was taking  
down the trash and said:  
"I missed my friend this morning—is she all right?"  
"Oh, she's fine! Just playing hooky from work." (It was a

rotten job.)

“That’s nice,” she said, “time off is nice.”

We wished each other a lovely day and she closed her door.

About a year later

The apartment was vacant

And the years went softly by.

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**David Wiener** has written cover, feature, and interview articles for various performing arts magazines including *American Cinematographer*, *Producers Guild Journal*, *Cahiers du Cinema*, and *The Journal of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain*. His plays have been produced in London, India, Canada, Australia, Mexico, and the U.S. and have been published three times in the Smith & Kraus “Best Plays” one-act anthology series. He In 2007, he completed a Literary Internship with La Jolla Playhouse and went on to work as that theatre’s Dramaturgy Associate during the 07-08 season.

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