

The New Criterion

Poems

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Amicus

by [Karl Kirchwey](#)

These mornings, I wake feeling as if, during the night,
I had been tried by a jury of my peers
and found—*But wait, fellow citizens! Fifty-two years
and no appeal? Is there no merciful alternate?*

All those I have loved come by in a long parade,
their faces strangely tender, etched and grave
with my own lost intent and their belief.
Through half-closed eyelids I see those who have died,

glaring or bashful in the little tea-lights of my sleep.
Oaring the thick medium time, they seem to yaw
toward me in a sort of pregnant slo-mo,
but I can never read their straining lips,

and when dawn strands ...

Karl Kirchwey is the author of five books of poems, including *The Happiness of This World: Poetry and Prose* (2007).

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