

red lights alone

by strannikov

red lights alone no deaths abate—

life slammed closed
a sight for intransitive eyes
of neighbors—about thirty-nine—
transfixed or something much akin.

Will and I
tossing baseball two blocks away
when a clanging *whack!* stopped us still
to hear a metallic squeal slide.

before five
glancing down Academy Street
sloping west to where the tracks crossed
twisted tangled metal on wheels.

we saw smoke:
no dugout, but we stashed our gloves
and the baseball somewhere close by
then west on Academy Street.

west we stalked.
most of the trailer had remained
but shuddered sideways in both lanes,
chassis, engine, cab strewn down tracks.

in its ditch
the rig smoldered black diesel fumes
fire truck and crew hosing to cool
rescue squad approaching the cab.

not to die
would have meant his not being there
extricated, peeled from his shell
the last womb he ever crawled in.

fit to die
mouth gaped red, each nostril each ear
trickled out blood and brain, could not
command the feet not to point down.

the last sight
I saw a white kerchief touched red
a brave, futile attempt once, twice
from which breath no more returned.

soon installed were the crossing gates:
red lights alone no deaths abate.

