

# 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.

