

Train Wreck With Suicide

To think what he must have thought. The train's lamp first distant
star, then moon,
then looming all at once.
But that is too much, a stretch.

At first they can't even find a body, the car crushed to a puzzle, cops
all over it,
Hazard lamps urging them on & on & on.

Then someone points into the wreck.
Others peer & nod as if they've seen something trivial, a dead cat.
More arrivals: an ambulance lurches up the hill, a tow truck, a cub
reporter, thankful
for this story.

What work's done is done alone. Bearable this way, efficient.
Even our crowd, off to one side, seems necessary.
A young cop eyes us, saying nothing, though I rehearse my answer, a
nonchalant *oh*,
I live here,
But I'm lost as to why I stay.

For an hour. Quick really, so much to think of: crushed glass like
sherbet; half-mile
of cars (fresh-minted trucks, by-products of corn) going north.
Crossing bells still ringing: *great*, I think, *death-knell*;
Until the Norfolk Southern truck, the gate arms lifting in relief.

Necks crane when a gurney's lifted down. But there's nothing, a
shape wrapped
& strapped,
Then slid into the ambulance, the wheeled legs snapping back into
place as a cricket's
do, taking flight.

This done & the tow-truck hauls away the wreck.
The train's dragged off by another, & our crowd dissolves into ritual:
a dog is walked,
used cars revved in the lot,
Lamps coming on behind curtains.

Something of this turning away is grief, I hope, because we suffer of
the dead only
scattered things:
Windshield glass in bunches, grape-green, broken rail ties, sheet steel
twisted into
leaf-shapes,

And trapped in the branches of the railroad a livid moon,
And, from the corn refinery, the sweet-sick smell of syrup.