

The Ballad of Bill Suiter

Bill Suiter is a name difficult for me to remember
Even when he was lying in the woods just up my road
His eyes popped out by a bulldozer tread
That caught him across the bridge of his nose,
There in the dark shadows of Freedom Township.

He might have been mildly surprised, this Suiter
At two ambulances, three wreckers, and one tractor
Arriving to compete for the privilege of lifting that
Second-hand yellow machine off his sad face and dealing

With his poor mangled body. The neighbors were surprised
And I, too, at the traffic on our little dirt road.
So I followed one of those wreckers, walked
Down that muddy track into the woods,

Stood in the gloom of Saturday evening
With the skinny crowns of the partly logged-off forest
Towering eerily into the night sky above the flashlights
And the voices and the white, solemn, scared faces.

I heard the young fellow who had hooked the chain on the log
That flipped the bulldozer when it backed down the slope
Telling his friends about it quietly, sadly, puzzlingly.
I watched them winch the killer machine creakily upright.

I saw that no one quickly volunteered to drag those
Tragic remains free, but Leonard finally did it.
Well, I thought, it's his woods.
I left and went home to change my clothes,

Already late for some kind of business somewhere.
I forgot Bill Suiter's name along the way.
I was only able to tell my wife,
It's a name too difficult for me to remember.