

# The Messenger

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## The Pole Barn

Schuyler Swartout

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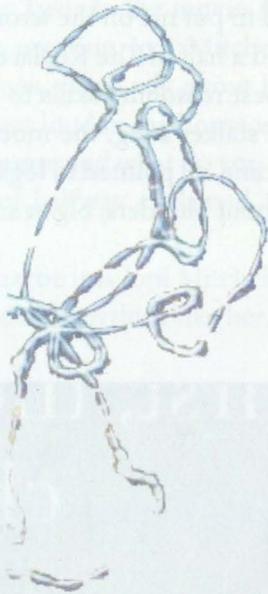
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THE POLE BARN  
*Schuyler Swartout*



Out of the pickup,  
I stop ten steps  
before the cavernous  
mouth, as if affixing  
a diving mask, as if bracing  
for a tornado overhead,  
ready to be swallowed.  
Dust here permeates  
the atmosphere –  
constant mist lethal  
as mine gas.

Then, into the spar-house,  
passing old gasoline  
tanks, old turpentine.  
Thin sun flits over slats  
in heaps in dark.

At the epicenter,  
jutting from canvas,  
the rickety, shook-down tractor.  
Machine in the beast,  
a beast of a machine,  
and I am about to stir its stomach.  
I think of it wild,  
a catfish, a boar  
waiting to gash out prey  
and I feel my sweat,  
and my thick spit,  
greasy, coats my throat  
and I step to mount the  
monster tires.