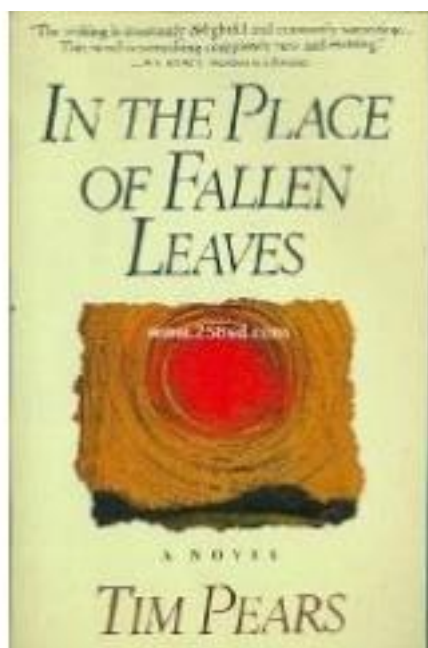


In the Place of Fallen Leaves



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出版者:

出版时间:

装帧:

isbn:9781556114724

CHAPTER ONE
Morning
It was the summer the world stopped turning on the spiral of
history the summer we spent waiting for the world to begin
again when the sun hung above the village and poured a hot
glue that slowed everything down. This isn't nothing said grandmother in June recalling the
drought of 1976 when the earth swallowed lambs and the
electric summer after the war when people got shocks off each other whenever they touched. By August though both those things had already happened and even she had to admit it was worse. Shadows were pushed back into awkward corners and ~ was there I first noticed things being moved around as the spirits of the house made space for themselves in their diminishing refuge. Gradually though objects themselves took

on
 a life of their own and moved without the spirits helpi¼Œ rising
 from the surfaces of furniture through empty air that the heat
 had squeezed even gravity out of.
 Mother was unablei¼Œ eventuallyi¼Œ to ignore the autonomous
 flight of pillows on the landingi¼Œ and salt and pepper pots that
 raced each other across the kitchen table. But she couldn t tell
 anyone because the same thing was said to have happened
 around Rosemaryi¼Œ an aunt who d thrown herself into the
 quarry pool long before I was borni¼Œ so the village was
 deprived of another exorcismi¼Œ last seen when one of the
 newcomer families claimed that their brand-new house was
 possessed by an incubus who was tampering with the chil-
 dren s dreams. A large crowd had gathered with candles. At
 first they felt let down as the Rector simply traipsed through
 the house with his mind on other thingsi¼Œ and whispered some

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