

# *Sketch*

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## Dark Leaf

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# Dark Leaf

William Kershner

## **Abstract**

Fall in Tennessee is the smell of dark tobacco being fired for market...

Kate always listened to Charo and me. She was used to being told that it was silly to spend all her money on an ungrateful, no-good husband. But always she knew she "must buy" — he needed so much, and the past had nothing to do with it.

But bring him to America? This seemed like too much. She traced the window pane, and I knew she was thinking of it, too. When she finally turned around, she brushed the hair back from her face, and smiled the gentle smile which always said that, if I really knew what it was like, I would approve, too. Her explanation was simple — "I must write a letter to my husband."

— *Martha Elder, S. Sr.*

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## *Dark Leaf*

FALL IN Tennessee is the smell of dark tobacco being fired for market.

The smoke of the sawdust burning on the earthen barn floor drifts upward through the tiers of dark leaves, absorbing the rich sweetness of the tobacco before slipping out through the eaves to join the smoke of other barns.

It is as if a million cob pipes have joined to make a smooth sensual aroma that is all about and nowhere, an aroma that congregates to be visible as a blue haze in the quiet low places in the late afternoon. It is the smell of tobacco and burning hickory, and at the start of the firing time the hickory is predominant, but as the days move on, the tobacco smell moves in, and as the firing time ends, the hickory is gone and the tobacco is the victor.

The farmer sniffs and notes the progress and is content — the hunter smells it and the hunt is made better — the hiker pauses to appreciate and is rejuvenated.

Fall in Tennessee is not turning leaves or possum dogs sounding down the hollow, or the sudden cool solidity of the air — it is this smell — a fragrance that makes the old men nostalgic and the young men glad for the falls to come.

— *William Kershner, S. Jr.*