

sun on
poor
 house
 square

something
small ear
 to wear
 windmills

kitchen
 farm
 idols
 hanging
 the
 parlor
 has photos
 too

village sq.
 surely
 something
 grows
 there
 sun
 & shadow
 green insect
 tapping
 at the
 leaves

relevant
pearly
 jokes
 laugh
 outloud

inmate
 of sewers
 & ribbons
 a cage
 for
 mice
 & cockroaches

-- Gloria Kenison

Millis MA

KEEPING A HOLD ON HIMSELF

A man found that by clasping his hands at the fingers he could hold himself together. "All my life," he said, "I have searched for a way to hold myself together."

But in this position he found it difficult to scratch. If he released his hold on himself he could not stay together. If he stayed together he could not scratch.

So he hired a young boy in the neighborhood to scratch for him. "Not there," he would say to the boy. "A little lower. No, to the right. And not so hard."

The man itched so deeply the boy could not reach the spot. Soon the man, refusing to give up his hold on himself, interviewed new scratchers. But none of them could satisfy the man's incredible itch. None could scratch deeply enough.

The man, exhausted from interviewing, decided to quit this silly search for an adequate scratcher. "After all," he would say, "is it not enough that I have finally found a way to hold myself together?"

But the itch changed from simple annoyance to deep tickle. And the man, refusing to give up his hold on

himself, began to laugh. Soon his laugh was so loud he kept the neighborhood awake. His laugh was so loud and hard his fingers began to sweat and slip apart. The neighbors worried.

If the man's hands should come apart, won't he become a threat to everyone around him? Shouldn't they see to it that this man, grown mad under the weight of his deep itch, be restrained from harming others?

So they secured the man's fingers together with tiny ropes and threw him in his basement where he could laugh as loud as he wanted and still keep a hold on himself.

THE PAST

A mud worm enters my ear and finds an empty cave. He goes to work on the walls, leaving long mud lines. He drags his body in circles, leaving a print of an antelope, a shovel, and a wheel. He works his way across the cave, rubbing his chin until he invents light and places some at intervals along the wall.

Later the same day, after the mud worm has crawled through a rear door, a crew of anthropologists enters my ear. They find the cave. They find an antelope, a shovel, a wheel, and ashes on the floor. They pull out their picks and dig just beneath the surface of the wall, putting parts of my brain in sacks.

Flashbulbs pop in my ears

A SHADOW'S LOVE

-- for Susan

My shadow is missing. I've tried walking through noon sunshine or standing between a spotlight and white wall, or strapping metal reflectors to my waist. But I haven't received even a collect phone call from my shadow.

I think of foul play. One morning someone digging a long narrow hole on the west side of the sidewalk and kidnapping shadows as they drop by.

I can picture a night train with one dark room, filled by shadows. And my shadow, taught a love of the good life, taken to a city where it waits on some back street under, maybe, a streetlight, to sell itself.