

## KIRKUS REVIEWS – FEBRUARY 1, 2013

**HOLD FAST [STARRED REVIEW!]**

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**Category:** Fiction

Eleven-year-old Early Pearl holds fast to her family's dream of a home of their own even after her father disappears, their apartment is ransacked, and she and her brother and mother are forced to move to a shelter.

Taking her title from a Langston Hughes poem, the author of *Chasing Vermeer* (2004) weaves a moving story of homelessness, family, and the love of words and books. This mystery opens promisingly with a wintertime bike accident, a man's disappearance and a series of numerical coincidences. A warm family circle of four is broken; there's a violent burglary; the three remaining flee to Helping Hand. Early and her 4-year-old brother, Jubilation, play at being spies, but the fifth grader does real detective work, researching in the Chicago Public Library, where her father worked, and enlisting the help of some sympathetic adults. Gradually she, and readers, come to realize that her dad has been caught up in an international crime operation and that all of them are in danger. Early's family reads; her father is such an admirer of Langston Hughes that the poet's *The First Book of Rhythms* is a family treasure and plays a vital role in the solution of this intricate tale. Chapters are identified by word definitions (possible clues) and line patterns reminiscent of those in Hughes' book.

Enthralling and satisfying. (*Mystery. 9-13*)