for as long as I can remember—and this is the way she's always dealt with things. By ignoring them. Maybe it's because she's been on her own, except for me, pretty much all of her life, and there was never anyone else for her to talk to.

But even now that she's had Jerry around for almost two years, things still haven't changed much with the way we try to communicate.

Renata's OK, as far as small things go, but keeps quiet on anything large and frightening. This is how I see it—she must think if the scary stuff is pushed to some far, webby corner of her cranium, shrouded and silent, then perhaps it doesn't really exist, and can't be turned into a fact.

Maybe it works sometimes; after all, what's scaring me hasn't become an actual fact.

But it's only a matter of time.

*Chimera* (ka mir a) n. An absurd creation of the imagination; a foolish or horrible fancy.

School starts in eight days. I know I should be getting out my supply list, should go and try to find my gym clothes at the bottom of my closet, should get my hair trimmed, should do all those back-to-school things that some people say they enjoy. But I can't seem to get motivated; like I said, all I've been doing is the dictionary thing.

The most interesting word I found last night was *chimera*. I had a rush of hope; maybe what seems to be happening is all a chimera, just the old imagination working overtime.

I held on to the word, whispering it over and over as I tried to fall asleep after Renata had left for her shift at the Muffins Day 'N Night over on Provencher. I kept my eyes fixed on the lamp beside my bed, the pink glow through the faded shade. I leave it on now, the nights Renata works.

As I chanted it, my word took on the pulse of a prayer, the syllables moving in rhythm with this summer's night sounds—the rising and falling murmur of the television in the living room, the slow ticking of the rain off the eaves outside my window, and the stealthy rush, then triumphant clang as the trains coupled in the yards across the river.

And even though there wasn't any air coming in through the screen, just that musty, underground smell. I kept the blankets wrapped around me, and I held on to my word for all the comfort I could wring out of it.

*Realization* (re el i za shen) n. The conversion into fact or action of plans, ambitions, fears, etc.