She lowered her eyes, picking up the stick again, but just studied the pointed end, holding it out in front of her like a tiny sword. I wanted to say it again, *Mom*; it had felt good on my tongue and lips, but I didn’t want to push it. Instead, I reached out and pressed the pad of my index finger against the point of the stick.

"Renata? I need to talk to you. There’s something I need your help with."

Renata kept looking at the stick, and I looked at it, too. It was creating a minuscule hole in the soft flesh of my finger as I pressed harder and harder. The stick joined our hands on the smooth, brown arborite of the table top, and as I stared at it, I felt the far-off flutter of a wing. Black, its weight shutting off my air supply. I took short, furtive sniffs through my nose, afraid that even those would break the spell, not let me say what I had to.

Suddenly Renata’s head jerked up, from my hand to a spot over my head. I turned. Jerry was in the doorway. He was good at that, appearing in doorways.

Without taking her eyes off Jerry, Renata said, "Well, Jacinda, I need some help, too. With supper. If I don’t get a start on it I’ll be late for my shift." She sort of hoisted herself out of the chair, even though she’s really thin, and then slowly walked to the sink.

Jerry followed her. He put his hand on the watermelon, then looked at me.

"Should we have this for dessert?" he asked.

I shrugged, looking at Renata, standing still and straight, her hands flat on the counter on either side of the sink. I saw that her pink dress was creased across the seat, and the ends of her apron were tied at the small of her back in a loose, lopsided bow. Even without lifting my eyes from the bow, I could tell that Renata had turned her head and was staring at Jerry again. I kept my gaze on the bow, and took a slow, deep breath.

I had gone to the edge of the diving board and was looking over. There was no room to turn around.

*Illuminate* (i loo me nat) v. 1. To give light to; light up. 2. To shed light upon; clarify. 3. To enlighten, as the mind.

Supper had the flavour and consistency of cardboard; all the swallowing was affecting my taste buds, too.

"Pass the butter, please," I said to Renata. As she handed it to me, I asked, as casually as I could, "How much longer will you be on nights?" I set the butter dish down and pressed the tip of my knife into the soft yellow rectangle.