

The pilot's upper body shook, as if the controls were manipulating him rather than the other way around. Except for the turbulence, they were barely moving now, trying to hover over the peak. Suddenly, the world disappeared as they passed through the ice plume. They were flying blind at the very edge of the atmosphere.

A sudden drop and bump drew screams from both Cahills.

"What happened?" Dan wailed.

"You wanted the summit; you are there," the pilot informed them. He indicated the altimeter: 29,035 feet. There could be no higher reading. Not on earth.

"We — we made it?" Amy stammered. She had fully expected to be smashed to pieces far below.

"*Vite!* Hurry!" he ordered. "We have five minutes at the most! I cannot shut down the engine for fear it will not restart!" With a pop, he opened the bubble.

Amy and Dan wasted precious seconds unclipping their belts and struggling out of the A-Star. They'd had a zero percent expectation of making it this far, so there was no concrete plan of what to do now.