

"We're going too fast! Can't we slow down?" you call.

"No. We have hundreds of miles to go. We've got to get through the earth's mantle fast, or we'll be baked to death." Bruckner's voice is cool and reassuring. Maybe he knows what he's doing.

But every minute, the temperature rises. You begin to sweat. Whatever made you think you could survive such a trip? Sipping cold lemonade from a plastic bottle, you try to close your eyes and relax. Then it seems as if the Vertacraft is slowing, but you can't be sure.

Suddenly everything is still. The Vertacraft has come to rest. Looking through a porthole, you see that you have landed inside a large crater. Slowly you climb out of the Vertacraft and open the other compartment. Professor Bruckner's face is ashen gray. You feel for his pulse. Nothing. The strain of the descent must have been too much for his heart.