



Her roommate, a biologist named Carrie, stirs in the overhead bunk. Jaylen is careful to stay as quiet as possible, for she's learned that Carrie is a light sleeper. In addition to her dorm mate, there are only about seventy other people on the whole base. It's like one giant family—and since they're basically in the middle of nowhere and depend on one another for many things, it's a giant family that needs to get along.

Jaylen thinks about her parents and her younger brother, who still lives at home. She hasn't seen them since she left and misses them very much. She talks to them on the phone, and they e-mail her a lot. But it's not the same as being there in person. She knew that would make this trip difficult, but she didn't realize just how much. She's made some friends at the station, but people come and go all the time because their projects end or they rotate out.

The easiest way for scientists to travel around Antarctica is by airplane.



She manages a tiny smile when she thinks about this coming Friday. The base is holding a party in the dining hall. There's one every month, and they're a lot of fun. Each has some silly theme—this time it's Big Band Night—and everyone does their best to dress accordingly. The party will have music and dancing and lots of food and drinks. Alec, the chef for the whole base, promised to make chocolate cream pie, Jaylen's favorite dessert. She continues to be surprised by how many different meals Alec manages to dream up—and how good they all are.

People at McMurdo Station enjoy themselves during the annual "Icestock" concert, held every year on New Year's Day.



She takes out her tablet and begins reading a novel she started last week. It's set in the Hawaiian Islands, a place she hopes to visit someday. For now, the descriptions of the warm beaches and gentle breezes in the story will have to do. It helps her escape this frigid world for a little while. She is still fascinated by Antarctica and has no regrets about working here, but she wouldn't want to live here all the time. She has discovered that she and her roommate, along with almost everyone else on the base, are in complete agreement on this.

Living in Antarctica is always a challenge. Here, a person sets up a tent in the blowing snow.

The Land and the Sea



THE CONTINENT OF ANTARCTICA IS THE SOUTHERNMOST region on the planet, located in the heart of Earth's Southern Hemisphere. It shares this hemisphere with four other continents—all of Australia, the majority of South America, and portions of both Africa and Asia. The nation closest to Antarctica is Argentina, with Argentina's southernmost city, Ushuaia, lying roughly 770 miles (1,240 kilometers) to the north of Antarctica's northernmost area, the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula.

The Antarctic Circle

Almost all of Antarctica lies within an imaginary circle at about 66.5°S latitude known as the Antarctic Circle. This circle represents the latitude south of which the sun is above the horizon for at least twenty-four hours in a row once a year, and below the horizon for at least twenty-four hours in a row once a year. So at the Antarctic Circle, the sun never sets on one day, about December 21, and the sun never rises on one day, about June 21.

Opposite: An icebreaker ship plows through ice drifting through the water near McMurdo Sound. Icebreakers create safe routes for other boats.