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Joanna Lumley in the Land of the Northern Lights

By Unknown

The far north.
Quite overpowering.
Vast expanses, silent fjords.
Fairy tale mountains.
It's just fabulously beautiful.
The land of the magical Northern Lights
is somewhere I've longed for all my life.
It is quite incredibly cold!
Well, I suppose, it's Arctic!
'As a little girl, I lived in the
steamy heat of tropical Malaysia
'and, wonderful as it was,
I used to yearn to be cold.
'Putting on a cardigan
was a huge treat.
'I'd never even seen snow.
'But my storybooks were full
of snow queens and trolls
'and now I'm entering that world. '
It's fantastic! We're so far north.
Can we get further north?... I think so.
'This is the journey
I've always dreamt of making. '
I feel I've come into another world
now. No people, except you... and us.
'And if we're very lucky, we might see
the elusive Northern Lights themselves.
This programme contains
some strong language
'My Arctic odyssey begins
one chill dawn in early March.
'I'm already 900 miles north
of my home in London. '
Is this us? 'An eight-hour journey
lies ahead to get to the Arctic Circle.
'And I'm heading there on
Norway's real-life Polar Express. '
It's really fresh here, bits of snow
blowing in as I look out.
They say don't stick your head
out of the window.
One of the most exciting things
about going on a trip is packing.
This lovely old suitcase,

which came from my childhood...

All our luggage was marked the same way. Mum used to stencil "Lumley" on it and paint the corners red so that we could see them on the quayside, ready to board ship. You never flew in those days.

So I'd pack up things that were essential on every trip.

In here I have oil-based pastels, and a lovely little drawing book with coloured pages so you can draw in different colours.

These I got here. Chocolates!

A lovely old guide book. It's called The Land of the Vikings. Beautiful old maps.

Look at that!

'But if it wasn't for one item in my case, I wouldn't be here at all. '

This is the book Ponny the Penguin. This is when I first heard of the Northern Lights.

I was a little child in Malaya, six or seven years old.

It's written by an Australian, Veronica Basser. So the lights were the Aurora Australis, not Borealis.

And there was this picture which haunted me

of a sort of rippling curtain and a little tiny penguin. Anyway...

There's Ponny. "Suddenly the sky was lit up by long, searching fingers of pale, primrose light "which traced patterns across its inky blackness. "

That stayed with me for ever and ever and

I couldn't believe I'd get to growing up and leaving school and getting married and having granddaughters and still not have seen

what Ponny the Penguin saw, so this is a lifelong ambition and my only dread is that we won't get to see them.

'To give myself every chance,

I'm going to travel ever northwards,

'spending my nights staring up

with hope at the dark sky

'and filling my days with as wide a range of experiences of Norway's far north as possible. '

This is going to be the furthest north I've ever got and about as far as you can get without being Ranulph Fiennes.

Looking at this extraordinary backbone of Norway, which is like a huge spinal cord, we're about there and travelling on up.

And it's just... just thrilling and always the pull of the magnetic north, the most senior point on the compass.

What I love is always knowing where the north is. This is important, wherever you are, otherwise you just feel foolish. At the moment, I am heading and travelling due north.

'I could just clatter across the Arctic Circle on the train, 'but actually I'm going to do it in real style. This is, after all, the realisation of a lifelong dream. 'This is not your average taxi rank at the station.

'I'm in the hands of Tore Christiansen and his 11 sled dogs. ' Good morning. I'm Joanna.

How nice to see you, Tore.

These are wonderful dogs. What kind are they? Alaskan huskies. Alaskan huskies? Yes, so...

They like to run.

They like to run? Yes.

This has been the most extraordinary journey, racing along in this beautiful little sled with Tore shouting instructions to these 11 fine huskies. They don't like stopping to rest.

They just want to be on the journey.

When we're running over virgin snow, their footprints are blue.

Pale blue.

It's the most extraordinary way to cross the Arctic Circle, but I haven't crossed it yet!

'The Arctic Circle, like the Equator, is an imaginary line right around the roof of the world.

'It marks the point at which you are so far north that on one day a year, the Winter Solstice, 'the sun never rises, while at the height of summer it never sets.

'As well as being imaginary,
the trouble with the Arctic Circle
'is that, because the Earth shifts slightly
on its axis, it has a habit of moving.
'I need to find 66 degrees
'the precise latitude for
the Arctic Circle this very day,
'as supplied to me
by the Greenwich Royal Observatory.
'Bearing due north, I hope orbiting satellites tell my
fancy satnav GPS machine when I hit the right spot. '
Oh! Stop, stop, stop!
Just here.
So...
I could put this down here.
Stay, scarf. There.
There. Stay, scarf.
There.
Arctic Circle.
Seven...
I've walked into the Arctic Circle!
That's just... That's just the ordinary
world. And this is the Arctic Circle!
And that...
.. is due north.
Ohh.
I think this is quite incredible.
That's due north.
Excellent job, dogs!
'I'm in the Arctic now
and for the rest of my journey north
'I can obviously call myself
an explorer, not a tourist. '
'It's time to stop hurtling around and
give myself a chance to stand and stare.
'I've chosen a region renowned for some of
Scandinavia's finest scenery and richest fishing waters -
'the Lofoten Islands,
'but I'm drawn mainly by the charm
of a name on the map.
'It's not A, but "Aw". And it's not the first,
but the last letter of the Norwegian alphabet.
'Arriving by night, A certainly
feels like the back of beyond.

'Cloud cover rules out any prospect
of seeing the Northern Lights. '
This is right out over the sea.
'Retired schoolmaster and local bigwig Otto Schotz
shows me to my own rorbu, or fisherman's cottage. '
Oh, how wonderful!
Why did you choose Norway
and this Nordic Norway?
I must tell you. I've had a dream
all my life of coming to the north.
When I was a child, I had this idea
of seeing the Northern Lights.
And in my books I could read about the
snow and the north and I longed to go there.
And, in fact, once, as a child,
out in Malaysia, for the coronation,
when the Queen was crowned in 1953,
my sister and I dressed in fancy dress and here is
me, seven years old, dressed as a Norwegian girl.
My mother made fancy dress costumes
for my sister and myself.
She plaited our hair very carefully
to look like little Norwegian girls.
Do I look like a Norwegian girl? Yes, I think
you already here dream about the Nordic countries.
You can see it?
I can see it in your eyes.
Do you think I may have
Viking blood? Yes, that, too.
Are you a Viking? I think you are. Yes,
I must have Viking blood in me, yes.
Well, this is just fantastic.
It's so beautiful.
'One thing that didn't feature in my
childhood dreams of the north was dried fish.
'So what's this swinging ominously
in the middle of the room?'
Yes, this is a cod. Yeah. But this is
a special cod. Yeah. Called king cod.
King cod? Yes.
They wanted it to tell them the weather.
How? How did it do it? Did it...?
Before the weather changed,
it started to turn out.

People could read out from that indications
of storms and other changes in the weather.
Such a fish, would it hang
in every rorbu? Yes.
In every rorbu and in many homes.
They also brought luck.
It's dark outside, but tomorrow
I can't wait to see where I am.

GULLS CRY:

Astonishing!
Well, this is just unbelievable. It's
just... It's just fabulously beautiful.
All through the night, I could
just hear this water dashing under
and the seagulls crying and crying.
'Time to explore A
'and an unmistakable smell
is luring me uphill.
'This is as strange a sight
as you'll ever see -
'thousands of headless cod
hung up on poles. '
Do you speak English? Sorry?
No? English?
Polish. Poland.
You're Poland? And you? Poland.
Three Poland? Yes. 'It seems in Norway, like
in the UK, it's the Poles who do the work,
'but I've never seen Poles
on poles before. '
Um, how many fish?
I don't know. You don't know.
'Within a month, nearly five million
cod will be hung out to dry here.
'We know the Vikings invaded Britain with
Lofoten dried fish in their knapsacks.
'Back then drying was about the only
option for preserving protein.
'It's more of a surprise to me that this delicacy
remains one of Norway's most profitable exports. '
Smells of fish, but not a bad smell. Just a
pretty sort of all-pervasive aroma of fish.
Thank you. Spasibo.

HE REPLIES IN POLISH

What's that?! It might be something terrible! Goodbye, guys.

'As I was pottering around, I bumped into a man who turns out to be A's lord of the manor, 'Sigur Elingsen'

I am born here. Yeah?

So I'm the fifth generation and my grandson is going to take over. He's working in the summer. The seventh generation on this spot.

When you say working here, you own this? Yes.

You own A? A and Tind!

And Tind! Yes.

And how many rorbu do you have here?

Because the fishing is good. Yeah.

We are the closest spot to the Gulf Stream and that's where the best fishes are.

This has been going on for hundreds of years. More than that. Really?

'Fish facts are fascinating, even for a fake fur-wearing vegetarian like me 'who doesn't even feel comfortable with leather.

What about the catch I'm after, the Northern Lights? Will I see them, do you think, here?

Not now.

I think it's not cold enough.

And, eh...

No, it must be colder. Yeah. And then it's flashing all over the sky.

It's absolutely marvellous. Is it?

The great thing about A seems to be, probably because we're so far up, the light comes in a different way.

So colours seem really... fresh washed.

Everything seems so clean and sharp.

And the other thing I love is the conjunction of colours.

They have these dark red houses with the most beautiful, light, warm, sax-blue window frames and corners.

And then white round the windows to bring in as much

light as possible. It's a fashion going out in England.
A lot of people have brown wood round the windows.
Don't do it! Paint your brown windows white.
You'll have a much happier life.
I'm going to do the boulders now.
I want the white to look white,
so I'll give it more energy.
This is a very cloudy, stormy sky
with that slightly yellowish green.
I think there always comes a time in anything
you do, like drawing and painting, or acting,
when you think, "Will I ever be good enough
to please myself, let alone anybody else?
"Will I ever come up to scratch?" Or people lean
over you and go, "Aren't his eyes more like...?"
"Yes, I know. I'm dealing with the eye later."
" I can't bear being judged on things like this.
They're only for fun and if it pleases you,
which it might not, try to make it please you.
Try to do things that please you. And
if it's not good enough, get better.
This isn't going to be exhibited
anywhere. Except on the television!
'If there is one image and one word
synonymous with Norway it is fjord.
'Otto whisks me away
into a world of romance.
'Fjords like these are
so quintessentially picturesque
'that they've come to define
our romantic vision of the north -
'sublime, savage
and quite overpowering. '
These mountains are quite wonderful. They
look like fairy story mountains, don't they?
As though they'd have trolls in them. Many
fairy tales are connected to them. Giants.
And many trolls.
And there, you see, the top there.
That was a beautiful lady.
It's quite cold out here.
'In the 19th century, this type
of scenery inspired writers,
'artists and composers like Grieg to

write down folk tunes and fairy tales
'and paint the landscape.

'In doing so, they helped forge
a national identity for Norway,
'and an image of the north that
struck a chord with people like me,
'a seven-year-old with
my story books in tropical Malaysia.

'Artists today remain inspired
by the Lofoten Islands.

'I'm off to visit the studio
of one of them, Thor Essissen. '

How do you do? How lovely to
meet you. Welcome to my gallery.

It's fantastic! It's my life. I have
all things here. Yes, you do. You do.

This is one of the most beautiful parts of
the world I have ever been. Isn't it? Here.

All I can say, yes!

I am so lucky.

You're a lucky man, a good man.

'Thor's every bit the modern artist,
'assembling his art from anything and everything.

That goes for his studio and even his outfit,

'but he's just as much inspired
by nature as the Romantics.

'It's the quality of the light here
that most inspires him. '

Tell me, describe for me
the Northern Lights.

I can try! Will you try?

Maybe four weeks ago

I went around the little sea here
in the night.

And so I see
red and green, little light,
is coming.

And I stand up and see
and so the light come, come, come!

And around me.

I have never seen it before.

I stood after it, three minutes.

How extraordinary. I see nothing more.

It touched you? It came? Yes, yes!

So near me, I think.

I think so.

But I be not afraid. No.

I want more than anything to see the Northern
Lights. Have you seen it? Never. You will see it.

For sure? Yes.

I promise!

'Despite Thor's promise, as night
fell the clouds came in again. '

The truth is I'm passionate
about finding out about the north
and the Arctic Circle
and the Norse people and legends,
but what's really driven me is the
idea of seeing the Northern Lights,
something I've longed for for 55 years of my
life. I've dreamt about seeing the Northern Lights.
I just can't bear the thought of going
home without seeing them on this trip.

'My bags are packed,
spirits a bit low.

'As the film crew sort their equipment,
I take one last stroll around A.'

Look, look, it's gone.

Ah!

It's gone now.

I'm so sorry, we just...

I was calling you. It was just here.

Just a great big sort of pale...

rainbow, sort of coming from nowhere.

Right across the sky,

like a vapour trail.

It was the most extraordinary thing.

It kind of...

It kind of... sort of broke a bit,
sideways like that.

It was just... right across the sky.

I think it's gone now.

I'm so sorry you missed it.

I saw it. We'll see them again.

'We sat up half the night waiting for
the reappearance of the "Tricky Lady",
'but she doesn't show her face again
all night.

'As I move ever northwards, and across to the
mainland, I leave coastal Norway far behind.
'The landscape, culture, history and people
where I'm now heading couldn't be more different.
'This endless expanse of Arctic
tundra is the ancestral homeland
'of the indigenous people,
the Sami.
'Kautokeino is the most Sami town
in Norway. '

Good morning. Morning. 'Its mayor, Klemet
Erland Haetta, kindly agrees to meet me. '
How good to meet you. I expected a much
older mayor. You are very young for a mayor!
Now you are in Samiland.

It's thrilling. You see.
It's fantastic. And this beautiful belt
and skirt. What are these? Sealskin?
This is skin from reindeer.
Reindeer skin. And this is also.
So we have white reindeer
and more black reindeer.
And this beautiful pattern -

can I touch it?
Was this made for you?
This is made for me. Very important.
Yes. You can see when you are
unmarried, then it is round.
When you are married,
then you've got... Square? Yeah.
So I'm in with a chance. No...!
Yes, shall we go to the church?
How lovely!

CHURCH BELL RINGS

'We do go to the church.
'I'm lucky, not just with my choice
of guide, but with my time of arrival.
'The run-up to Easter is THE Sami season.
Bells are summoning everyone to church.
'Heading there with the mayor means, within minutes,
I've been introduced to all of Kautokeino's society. '
This is my cousin.
Lovely to meet you. And you.
'This is the time for weddings, partying

and basking in the year's first sunshine
'with the mercury soaring
to a balmy minus five.
'The festivities kick off with the
town's annual confirmation ceremony.
'Today, around 80,000 Sami people
live across Arctic Scandinavia.
'Until recently,
they were commonly known as Lapps,
'inhabitants of a region
the world called Lapland.
'Reviled as little better than
savages, they suffered for centuries,
'but Sami identity and language
are now enjoying a renaissance.
'There were no roads here until the
'and broadband internet and they enjoy one of
the highest standards of living in the world.
'Yet close to half Kautokeino's
families still depend on reindeer.
'The mayor introduces me to one of
the top herders, Mikkel Isak Eira,
'who lives a life utterly different from his
grandfathers'. He invites me to join him for a day. '
Do I need to wear a helmet?
Yes. Here is your scooter. Wow.
Do you drive with a scooter before? No. When
you start, you must... Only take this key.

ENGINE STARTS:

And here it stops. OK.
'Unlike me, Mikkel Isak's son
is no learner driver. '
How old is he?
He is four years and five months.
How long has he been driving? About one year.
So he started... When he was three?! Yes.
Can you tell in English,
one, two, three?
No! No.
Emil, do you like to drive?
Yes. Yes.
'Hey, I'm not proud.
'If it takes a four-year-old

to teach a grandmother, so be it.

'I bet he can't do country dancing which I was pretty good at aged four years and five months!'

Is Emil coming with us today?

No. I will bring him

to the kindergarten. OK. Yes.

Just a quick snowmobile ride, teach an older person how to ride, then off to kindergarten!

Yes. Pretty much puts things in perspective.

'Mikkel Isak may have all the mod cons, but he still lives a semi-nomadic life, following his reindeer on their annual migration to coastal pastures. '

'The migration

is still some weeks away,

'but even in winter, when the reindeer are nearby, they roam free,

'so we don't know

exactly where we'll find them.

'I've been told that it's the height of bad manners to ask a Sami how big his herd is.

'Let's just say Mikkel Isak's would be hard to miss. ' Look at that.

That's my reindeer herd.

Look at that!

Mikkel Isak, they look fantastic!

Will you do it for me? Yes.

I've got mad old woman's eyes!

Oh, no, I can see now.

Oh, they're so beautiful!

And what a big herd! Isn't it?

Now, some have got antlers and some haven't. Which is which?

Females get the antlers and the males don't in winter. The females get them? The females, yes.

Usually, the male has the antlers and the female looks a bit humble. Here, the men look a bit humbler.

Some of them are pawing. Is that...?

Yes, they find the "moos". Moss?

Moss, yes. Look at them

digging like that! Yes.

And this is how the Sami have lived for thousands of years.

Yes. Travelling with the herds? Travelling to the winter place and in summer time, to the coast. Now we're gonna try to catch one. Catch one? Yes, with my lasso and I will show you the ear mark. You've got your own mark on these? Yes, I use the lasso to catch them. This is like rodeo, like a cowboy. Yes. But you're a reindeer boy. Yes.

ENGINE ROARS:

Joanna! Come and help me.
Oh, look!
And here you see... Yes. The ear.
When she was a calf, I do it. Yes.
That's your mark. Yes, it's my mark.
It says "Mikkel Isak". Yes.
It's a female. Six, seven years old.
She's beautiful. A big one too.
She's lovely. You caught her just so easily. Yes.
I've done it before. You're a bit of a champion reindeer boy.
Is she OK? She's very OK. Good.
She's not afraid. No.
And the herd is just quietly grazing there. Yeah.
How fantastic!
Thank you so much. That's OK.
'When he travels with his herd, Mikkel Isak still stays in his lavu, the traditional Sami tent.
'He's invited an elder there to introduce me to the yoik, a unique form of Sami song. '

SINGS YOIK:

'Ante Mikkel Gaup is one of Kautokeino's most revered yoikers.
'And the yoik is much more than music to the Sami. '
That was lovely.

REPLIES IN SAMI:

'Ante Mikkel explains that Samis have always yoiked.
'Not just with people,

but directly to animals and nature.

'The most important thing, he stresses,
is that Samis don't yoik ABOUT something.

'They bring its very essence
into the yoik.

'It turns out there's no set time for a yoik.
It happens whenever the moment feels right. '

SINGS YOIK:

That's wonderful.

He's yoiking about me. Yeah.

Some person.

How I am and what I do.

And it's about me.

Ante Mikkel, will you tell me...

Do you yoik the Northern Lights?

SPEAKS IN SAMI:

'Ante Mikkel surprises me by saying
he does not know a Northern Lights yoik
'and one shouldn't even talk
too much about them.

'Above all, he says,
one should not tease them.

'This has me worried. I've been talking about the
Lights non-stop ever since I arrived in Norway.

'Have I displeased
the Tricky Lady?

'I head away from Kautokeino.

'North, of course.

'This is the route to the coast that Mikkel Isak and
his herd will soon embark on. It will take them weeks.

'Me, a mere matter of hours.

'But overcast skies taunt me
yet again.

'In Alta, I'll be certain
of a magical night in the cold,
'but it won't be marvelling
at the Northern Lights.

'It will be indoors. '

Solvi, look at this!

'This is the Alta Igloo Hotel.

'Solvi Monsen is its manager. '

It's so weird.

Can you see my breath?
It's that cold,
but in a strange, dry way.
Yes, the temperature inside is about
minus 4. These huge ice doorways.
Ice animals. There's a penguin.
I think these are huskies,
wagging their husky tails.
Little bright faces, waiting for instructions.
Maybe this is a bit of the Northern Lights?
And snow bears. Hmm.
Look at this...
There's a little snow church
in here. Look at this snow church!
This is extraordinary.
We do weddings here.
Oh, how fantastic!
The Ice Hotel lasts
till about mid-April.
It melts completely? Yes, from
mid-April, it starts melting very slowly.
What if you have guests and it starts
to melt...? Look at this chandelier!
It looks as if it's made of crystal.
I know, but it's made of ice.
'It is, of course,
a charming, fairy-tale experience,
'until you realise that if it is a hotel,
that means you're meant to sleep in it. '
That is a glimpse that makes my heart beat
a little faster. Is that the bedrooms? Yeah.
Ooh, ooh! It's freezing!
Just to get my bed ready...
This has got somebody still inside it.
How awful, a little corpse is in this one.
No, just... just having a laugh!
OK, spirits are very high now.
Although I've sort of washed, I'll take my
trousers and top off and sleep in my underclothes.
But I've removed the maquillage
cos I like to go to bed fresh.
OK, guys, stick around if you want
to, but this is bedtime for me.
It's just the way I am.

I can't...
I can't go to bed in a hat!
Oh, God! This is the worst thing
I've ever done.
Anyway, come on. Let's just do it.
I can't really go on much more
without being rude.
This is what I've been wearing all day,
so that's not so rude. That comes off.
This is a nightmare.
Don't sleep in these socks. Even if
my feet aren't particularly sweaty,
they'll freeze to a crisp kind of cheese
crackers, so on with the cashmere socks.
Then the trousers come off, so you must leave cos
underneath it's quite tragic. Children may be watching.
Trousers... Don't watch me do the
trousers. Don't watch me do my trousers!
Everything is black under here.
It's my life really.
I wish I was a divorce lawyer.
I'd set up shop straight outside.
Some of you who are planning
a honeymoon... A honeymoon?!
This is getting silly. Here we are,
the gloves, the scarf, the hat...
The fleece. The cheese...
The... jacket, the jacket.
Is that comfortable? It's
a nightmare. What am I doing here?
My breath hanging in the air could
say it for me, but good night!
And if I'm not with you again,
remember, I thought the world of you.
Well, now...
I've just woken up.
This was such a good sleep.
I even took off my gloves.
And I even took off my scarf.
And I took off my... socks.
You see, it was warm.
It's been a great success.
I might not do it again.
Not because it was horrid,

but because it was such a palaver.
'I'm now right at the top
of the Norwegian land mass.
'I've had a fantastic time.
'It would be churlish
to dwell on regret,
'but as I reach the sea again, the road-hugging
fjords which give out on to the Arctic Ocean,
'the facts are that the land of the
Northern Lights has not quite delivered.
'To get help,
I bite the bullet and turn west.
'The city of Tromso boasts unrivalled
scientific credentials in studying the aurora.
'Maybe Professor Truls Lynne Hansen
of the Northern Lights Observatory
'can help me improve on that one
brief glimpse early in my trip. '
We went outside and I saw this
green slash across the sky. Yes.
And I thought how frightening
it must have been.
Long ago, were people afraid of the Northern
Lights? Yes, a bit. You shouldn't wave to it.
Some people still believe that.
And don't whistle to it.
It would come down and take you. If you
waved...? It would take you away from the ground.
Can you explain to me actually
what it is, what's happening?
It's fast electric particles coming in from
space and hitting the top of the atmosphere.
The energy of the particles is converted
into light. And that's what we see.
So they come from the sun?
We can make a drawing.
You must do it, you must show me.
We can make a drawing here.
If you have the Earth here and the rotating
axis that way, so this is the night side.
Night side, day side.
And the sun over here somewhere.
From the sun, there is a tremendous
wind blowing called the solar wind.

It'll hit the Earth's magnetic field.
It's a collision between the two.
That's where this huge clash,
this battle is taking place?
'As Truls' drawing gets more complicated,
I must admit I begin to panic slightly.
'Particle physics has never been
my strong point.
'But I now understand
that the Earth is a giant magnet
'and its North and South Poles attract electric
particles towards them with spectacular results. '
Like the moon and the sun and even a comet
is covering only a small fraction of the sky.
But the Northern Lights, it's all
the sky from horizon to horizon.
It's all over.
So it's so grand that way.
Truls, this is a book
I had as a child.
It had this drawing of the Southern Lights, I think,
because here is a penguin. We don't have penguins.
The penguin in Antarctica
will see the same as you see here.
Is that a good drawing? Yes, it is
a typical aurora that you will see.
This is what I wanted to see more
than anything - the curtain effect.
It's a folded curtain hanging down from space and
the electrons coming down along the lines here.
When it hits this atmosphere, it will emit
light, so this is a very correct drawing.
Truls, I just hope I get to see it.
I hope that one green flash isn't my only glimpse of
the aurora borealis. I really hope you get that glimpse.
Find a dark place with no disturbing
light and then look for it.
Just be patient, keep looking? Yes, keep
looking. Don't wave? In a clear sky, keep looking.

WHISTLES:

None of that? No, don't do that.
No, I won't. Then it will
take you away and keep you.

'It's now or never
to take Truls' advice.
'The weather near Tromso
is uncertain,
'but local guide Kjetil Skogli promises me we'll
find the lights, even if it takes till morning. '
I've just got to tell you what I've got on
- two pairs of socks, one thick, one thin, long johns.
On top, thermal long johns, a vest,
fleece trousers and salopettes,
then another top which is that top,
then on top of that, another fleece.
We're only halfway there because I've put on my
heavy-going, "freeze on Everest" mountain jacket.
And on my feet, I've got ice fishermen's boots
which have got soles this big. Fabulously warm!
And I've got foot warmers pushed in there, hand
warmers, then two pairs of gloves, two hats.
On top of that, I shall put on a
life-saving suit without which you die!
So... That's good.
And the other one. Lovely.
This is snug. It's not exactly what
I'd wear to the Oscars, but you know...
Yes, I know. Horses for courses. That's lovely.
You're well-prepared now. That's good. Thank you.
I can't see anything, Kjetil.
No, there's nothing yet, but there's good
activity in the magnetic field tonight.
So we just have to be patient.
So we just wait here. Yeah.
Good luck. Thanks, Kjetil.
'I stand in the pitch black...
'by the side of the fjord...
and wait. '

WIND WHISTLES:

Look, much brighter there.
Something's happening there.
Oh!
Look up here!
Look what's happening here!

MUSIC:

Edvard Grieg
We've got one, two...
We've got three kind of... bands.
Three falling curtains of green.
Just curling round
over the mountain.
Look at that!
Well, this is...
This is different from the green
stripe that I glimpsed down at A.
Standing here underneath this,
I feel a little bit like...
the illustration of Ponny the Penguin
who just stood humbly at the side,
her little flippers down,
just looking up.
This is the wonder of the world.
This is it.
I might just have to lie down
and stare up at this.
Oh, look at this!
And it just keeps changing
and changing.
I can't believe I'm seeing this.
It's fantastic.
And it's coming again.
I have been waiting... all my life
to see the Northern Lights.
And now I am seeing them on a scale
that is beyond description.
I'm as happy as can be.
Look, it's starting
just behind those little cottages.
Just below the moon and above
the mountains. Look at that!

SHE GASPS:

And all the way through it, you can
see stars shining through it.
And this little moon
is shining so brightly,
so it doesn't seem to affect
the moonlight, it's just...
It's extraordinary.

It's so exciting.
It's so immense.
This is the most astonishing thing
I have ever, ever seen.
I have a funny feeling
it sort of knew.
I know this sounds a bit mad...
It does sound a bit mad.
But it feels as though it knew
that we wanted to see it so badly.
And instead of just giving
a little strip of light
or a little bit of green and I would
have been so grateful for that,
we've got the whole business.

MUSIC:

This is terribly, terribly moving.
Thank you.
Thank you!
I think I can die happy now,
actually.
I don't intend to die just yet.
But when I do die, I'll die happy.
'I was still alive in the morning
'and quite utterly,
dazzlingly happy.
'My land journey north through Arctic
Norway has ended in the best possible way. '
PILOT MAKES ANNOUNCEMENT
'But I'm not going home.
'The strongest point on the compass
still pulls me northwards.
'My final destination,
far north across the Arctic Ocean,
'is the most northerly, permanently
inhabited place on Earth.
'Spitsbergen is the largest island
in the Svalbard Archipelago,
'a vast wilderness of mountains,
glaciers and permafrost.
'It's a natural habitat
for the polar bear.
'Hardly so for people. '

This is the Captain. Latest temperature in Longyearbyen is minus 16 degrees Celsius.

PASSENGER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oh!

Wow!

Um... Maybe on second thoughts,

I...

This is like breathing knives,

but...

Here goes.

'Apart from the cold and the latitude, there seems nothing that unusual about downtown Longyearbyen,

'home to 1,800

of Svarbard's 2,500 people.

'But I'm not convinced that the world's most northerly kebab van does a roaring trade.

'People have been living and working in Svarbard for more than 400 years.

'Whalers, hunters and trappers came first,

'seeking valuable oil, blubber and furs.

'For the last 100 years, it's mainly coal-mining that has drawn people this far north.

'But to get the true measure of one of the world's most isolated and extreme environments,

'I'll need to leave town tomorrow and head north for the last time. '

'It's not yet 5am and my journey is ending at its coldest and wildest.

'From October to February, there is no light here at all.

'But by April, the sun will shine round the clock.

'And even here, plants will find the energy they need to grow again.

'I want to catch the sunrise and steal a quiet moment. '

Well, it's minus 26 and it's my last day in the Arctic.

It's such a very, very extraordinary place to be.

It's just completely...

.. spectacular and hostile.

At least, hostile to man because
it's so hard to exist here, I think.
And it's so fragile.
And it isn't really the place for
men. I know men have lived here.
But we're not built to live here.
'I've reached the sea
one last time.
'Despite being this far north,
'the fjord here has not frozen,
'still benefiting from the warmth
of the Gulf Stream.
'Finally realising
my childhood dream in Malaysia,
'pulled by the strongest point
on the compass,
'was more amazing
than I could ever have imagined.
'But here,
the north at its very essence,
'is where my Arctic odyssey ends. '
That's the north.
That's 620 miles to the North Pole
and after this, there is nothing.
There might be a few scientists and
some explorers, maybe some hunters,
but there are no more towns, no more
villages. Nobody lives up there.
This is as far as I can go.
There is nothing
between me and the North Pole.
That's rather wonderful.