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Extracts Booklet

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PASSAGE ONE

The following passage is an extract from the diary of someone travelling in the Arctic.

Monday 7 May
34 miles

5 Last night, I awoke in a daze with the sounds of the dogs barking and voices. Through the commotion I heard someone shout, ‘Polar bear!’ With those words I immediately felt a chill come over my body. A hundred thoughts raced through my mind. How close was it? Was someone hurt? I looked at my watch, which read 2.30 a.m. I jumped out of my sleeping bag, Ed was already out of the door. When I came out I saw the bear was close, but not so close that we didn’t have time to act. It was about fifty feet away and surrounded by the morning mist, making it seem somewhat mysterious. The low lying sun coated its white fur in a yellowish light, and its breath condensed
10 in the cold air. I rushed back in and grabbed my camera. Everyone was out of their tents in their underwear. Stetson had his boxer shorts on, a beanie¹ on his head and carried a shotgun! The bear stared us down, then started to run towards us. John fired a cracker shell into the air. These are projectiles like firework bangers that go off loudly and are very good for scaring bears away. The bear was a little startled and stopped its charge, but didn’t retreat.

15 The bear was magnificent. It was the size of a truck but as agile as a cat. We could see it smelling the air and checking us out as it walked closer. When it got to about thirty feet away one of the Inuit² guys (Lukie’s brother-in-law) shot another cracker shell into the air. There are two cracker shells in the gun intended to frighten the bear, but they have enough power to kill a person. The rest of the shells are live ammo. After this shot was fired the bear was startled but charged forwards
20 again with real purpose. It looked hungry. It was a large male bear and they don’t scare easily. After a moment of thought it ran towards the tents again. At this point Stetson shouted, ‘Get it out of here!’. He could tell the bear was ready to attack and was showing all the signs of dangerous behaviour. He fired some shots into the air and so did Lukie’s brother-in-law. The bear luckily moved back a little, still eyeing up its targets.

25 The Inuit are polar bear hunters by culture and one of them now ran towards the bear firing live shots just by it. The bear ran away and just melted into the snow around it. Wow, what a feeling: scared, exhilarated, awed! What an impressive creature! It moved with such grace and power but, however harmless it could seem, you could tell it was a stealth bomber – sleek and beautiful but deadly.

30 The sky was clearing and the sun only sinks below the horizon for about an hour at this time of year. The light of the sky remains bright for 24 hours. So we could see the bear in its full glory. What a great memory. I kept thinking: what if it had managed to get in? What if we hadn’t woken up?

¹ beanie: a soft, warm hat

² Inuit: the native people of northernmost North America

PASSAGE TWO

The following passage is an extract from a website aiming to raise awareness about the threat of global warming to polar bears.

Polar Bears In Danger: Global Warming puts the Polar Bear at Risk of Extinction



Perfectly at home in one of the world's most forbidding environments, polar bears spend most of their summers roaming the Arctic on large chunks of floating ice. They drift for hundreds of miles, finding mates, hunting for seals and fattening themselves up for the winter. Without these thick rafts of sea ice, the world's largest bear could not survive. Yet at this moment, the polar bear's
5 Arctic habitat is literally melting away beneath it due to global warming.

Over the past three decades, more than a million square miles of sea ice – an area the size of Norway, Denmark and Sweden combined – have disappeared. Scientists predict that 80 percent of the summer sea ice that polar bears depend on for survival could be gone in 20 years, and all of it by 2040. As a result, the world's polar bears could face global extinction by the end of this century.

10 Evidence of the dire impact of global warming on polar bears continues to increase. That evidence includes polar bear drownings, cannibalism, starvation, reduced cub survival and disruption to the building of dens.

- Polar bears are one of the world's strongest swimmers but four were found drowned in the Bering Strait. Scientists believe that as many as 27 may have perished.
- 15 • Two female polar bears were found starved to death, without any fat stores on their bodies.
- Newborn cubs were crushed to death when their snowy dens collapsed from unseasonable rains.
- A majority of pregnant polar bears in Alaska are now digging snow dens on land rather than on sea ice.

20 In 2006, the threat of global warming to polar bears prompted the World Conservation Union, one of the world's leading environmental bodies, to add the bears to its "Red List" of threatened wildlife. The world's polar bear population is now in serious decline.

25 Under pressure from a lawsuit filed by environmental groups, the U.S. Government announced in December 2006 that it was formally proposing to protect the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act – a crucial first step toward saving the bear from the ravages of global warming. But that doesn't mean the government will finalise that life-saving step, much less enforce it.

PASSAGE THREE

The following passage is an extract from an internet advertisement for a polar bear hunting expedition.

Polar Bear Hunting

We are one of the world's leading agencies for organising expeditions to hunt caribou, wolf, musk ox and bear. We are now offering polar bear hunts from Holman, North West Territories. This hunting is done from outpost camps in prime areas, which may be up to 100 miles from the nearest Inuit community.

- 5 The polar bear hunt could be considered the toughest hunt left in North America and possibly in the world. You will be challenged to your limits. 10–14 days living on the “Top of the World” with nothing between you and the elements except what you are wearing and a light canvas tent. This experience can only be described as challenging.

- 10 Still the majority of our hunters succeed in having the opportunity to take a trophy home. All of our Holman hunts now involve charter flights, because our experience has shown that, as we get further from the community and local hunting pressure, there is an increase in the number of bears seen and the size of the animals is larger as well. We are very excited about our efforts to increase the overall quality of this hunt. In 2004, 16 out of 17 hunters killed bears.

END