

Thesis Screenplay Summary for *White Bear*
Helen Kingston – MFA Film

Anchorage, Alaska. A charismatic Church leader makes a rousing speech about the successful growth of their religious organization. The audience rise in a standing ovation. Brie Demott remains seated. She has to be reminded to participate by her husband Zach. Brie is called on stage to receive a medal for her progress in the Church and the leader reminds the audience how honored they are to have Brie, the grandchild of one of the organization's founders, in their midst. Looking out into the auditorium, Brie searches for a face in the crowd. Brie is surprised that her sister Paige would skip the event. Brie goes outside to call Paige but there is no answer.

Brie checks on her son Oscar, taking a toy tiger out of his hand while he sleeps. We see Brie "purify" three Church members. This involves them making statements whilst hooked up to a range of monitoring equipment, with Brie assessing the veracity. A member of church senior management watches through one-way glass. Brie discovers that her sister is having a forbidden relationship with a man outside of the Church. Brie goes to Paige's apartment and it is evident her sister has not been there in a long time, and that she left in a hurry. She finds a postcard with the address of Ray, her sister's boyfriend. Brie also finds a listening device, and is shocked to realize that the Church are monitoring her sister as a potential defector.

Brie's husband Zach returns home to discover their house ransacked. He finds Brie, manic and searching for evidence of Church surveillance. She has also forgotten to pick Oscar up from school. Zach dislikes the attitude she expresses towards the Church and arranges a meeting for her with the Church leaders. They reassure Brie that her sister voluntarily checked herself into the Church treatment centre. Brie realises they are lying and steals a security pass to sneak into the centre. She finds her sister is being held against her will and subjected to psychological torment by Church members, including her husband. Brie kidnaps her son from the Church school and sets off to get help rescuing Paige.

Zach and the Church are hunting Brie down and she is forced to abandon her car. She and Oscar must now find a ride to the frozen North of Alaska, where Ray works on the oil fields. Oscar struggles in this strange world, a world outside his experience. An oil truck driver takes pity on them. When they arrive in Deadhorse, a bleak community in North Slope Borough, Ray is out on the rig. They wait for him. Ray returns, but he is overtly hostile to Brie. He endured months of hassle from the Church in Anchorage, which ultimately drove him to 'disappear' into the North. Brie begs him to help rescue Paige but he refuses to get involved. While they argue, Oscar faces great danger when a Polar bear comes into Deadhorse. Brie shoots the bear dead. Oscar is traumatized by the experience and phones his Dad. The next day as Brie gets ready to go to the police about her sister, Zach arrives.

Brie is separated from her son and taken to the treatment facility. Brie undergoes the Church's full "purification" treatment, a brutal and humiliating forty days of interrogation. At first she cooperates, hoping to collect evidence and use this as leverage to get herself and her sister out of the Church. But then an encounter with Paige delivers a blow; her sister refuses to leave. Brie can see her sister has been brainwashed. After her darkest moment, Brie decides to leave the Church alone. She goes through the official renunciation process, which involves the entire community turning their backs on her, including her husband, her sister and her son. But Brie has used the Church's recording device against them, and has the evidence to create a public scandal, unless they allow Oscar to live with her. Brie and Oscar start a new life outside the Church, and months later, Paige turns up on their doorstep, and is welcomed in.

For more information about this screenplay, please contact the Graduate Program in Film at gradfilm@yorku.ca.