

TANGERINE TREE PRESENTS

THE SACRIFICE

AN ICE COLD LOVE STORY



A FILM BY
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- **Project title**

THE SACRIFICE

- **Logline**

At the edge of a melting world, a seasoned Arctic explorer witnesses the extinction of his beloved North Pole, whereby the landscape's collapse is bound to his own. Unraveling the thin line between passion, obsession and self-destruction.

- **Synopsis**

The Sacrifice unfolds the story of Marc Cornelissen (1968-2015), who died falling through unexpectedly thin Arctic ice. Using his own archival footage, filmed over 20 years, we see how Marc develops an extreme affection for the North Pole. In the nineties he is among the first to witness the melting ice caps. After becoming a father, his determination to save the white world for his daughter escalates into a blinding obsession. This fixation alienates his family as the North Pole's irresistible pull leads to the inevitable, ultimate sacrifice.

- **Project description and approach**

Marc's story is a unique psychological study of a man who was among the first to observe the climate crisis firsthand. Constructed entirely from over 200 hours of footage captured by himself across twenty years of expeditions, alongside intimate home videos, television appearances, and personal diaries. This rare access allows us to tell Marc's story from his own perspective with great intimacy—an experience where *Fire of Love* meets *Grizzly Man* on the ice.

The narrative is woven through two distinct storylines:

1. The white world (North Pole): We observe Marc's transformation from a naive, enthusiastic student into a seasoned guardian of the North Pole. He gets deeply connected to the Arctic. Through his lens, we see him blossom; it is the only place he truly feels alive.
2. The grey world (domestic decay): This storyline tracks Marc with his wife, Marijke, and their daughter, Jill. We witness his shift from a cheerful, present father to a man obsessed to the bone. At home Marc struggles with the mundane; even when present in body, his mind is already charting the next expedition.

Interweaving these worlds is a poetic layer: **The Voice of the Arctic**. This personification of the Arctic speaks to Marc through the howling wind and the haunting cracks of shifting ice. It is a mystic whisper only Marc can hear—an irresistible pull demanding his return.

The film develops as a classic three-act story. The film opens with a flash-forward to the fatal moment in 2015, gripping the audience before cutting back twenty years. We see Marc preparing for his first expedition. The inciting incident occurs when he is left entirely alone by a fellow expedition member; in that total solitude, a profound bond with the Arctic is forged. Yet, as Marc thrives in the white wilderness, a new challenge emerges at home: he becomes a father.

Rather than slowing him down, fatherhood makes Marc even more determined. His return to the ice appears to be an escape, but he is actually driven by a desperate need to save the "White World" for his daughter. As he documents the rapid decay of the ice, the decline of the Arctic

mirrors his own psychological transformation. His mission escalates into a blinding obsession. He becomes a media spokesman and a scientific activist, but his crusade comes at a devastating cost. His marriage is on the verge of collapse and his daughter struggles with anxiety. He faces an impossible dilemma: choose his family, or keep fighting for a doomed North Pole? The Voice of the Arctic proves too strong; he must return.

The final act unfolds the fatal 2015 mission. The farewell is uncharacteristically heavy; against his nature, Marc retraces his steps for a second kiss. A month later, he falls through unexpectedly thin ice. He fights the freezing water for twelve minutes before the camera finally switches off—pulled into the abyss by the very force of nature to which he devoted his life.

In the epilogue, we enter the present. Jill, now a mother herself, reads a recently discovered letter from the archives titled: "*In case I'm no longer here.*" Written a year before Marc's death and never before read by his daughter, this heartbreaking moment finally brings closure.

The Sacrifice explores the razor-thin line between passion and obsession. It illustrates solastalgia—the existential distress of a vanishing home—and asks a universal question: what are you willing to lose to protect what you love?

- **Director's intent**

Many climate documentaries focus on the "what"—the statistics, the rising sea levels, and the melting gigatons of ice. *The Sacrifice* focuses on the "who." By centering the narrative on a lone soul totally captivated by the North Pole, we transform an abstract global crisis into an intimate, visceral experience. We aren't just watching the ice melt; we are watching a man witness the extinction of his own environment in the broadest sense.

As the frozen world retreats, his psychological stability is tested, creating a high-stakes narrative tension whereby the landscape's collapse is bound to his own. This destabilizes his reality and causes a profound shift in his psyche. We choose to link the landscape's collapse to the protagonist's state of mind because environmental decay is never just a physical event; it is also a psychological one. We don't want to explain; we want the audience to feel. To immerse. By binding his state of mind to the ice caps, we expose the "solastalgia" Marc suffers from—the visceral distress caused by negatively perceived environmental change—that many feel but cannot articulate. This connection forces the audience to stop viewing the Arctic as a distant data point and start seeing it as a vital part of the human psyche.

- **Countries of filming**

The Netherlands, Canada, Greenland, Norway

- **Estimated release date**

January 2028

- **Project length**

90 minutes