

My Husband's Wife

MFA Thesis Screenplay Summary

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My Husband's Wife is an 8-part series set in a Christian polygamous cult in rural Ontario. Inspired by my upbringing, *My Husband's Wife* combines drama, horror, and romance to explore the dangers of blind faith and the virtues of fighting for a better life.

17-year-old Maryline is the volatile sixth wife of Reverend Truelen, the leader of the cult. She was forced to the altar when she was 13, and since then has struggled to accept her role within the cult. Maryline rails against the restrictive expectations of her gender: to simply be a wife, her role to bear as many children as possible. To cope with her abusive household, she uses knowledge of plants to heal the women of the cult in secret. Women are forbidden from any role that is not an agreeable daughter, wife, or mother, so Maryline risks her safety trying to save the other women. Maryline is not content to heal in secret, though. She plans to demand to be made the cult's Healer, risking damning herself in this life and the next.

Then, her husband marries for the seventh time. Angellee is nothing like Maryline's other sister-wives. She is sneaky and irreverent. A kindred spirit who wants more from life. Despite attempts to resist her, and despite being taught that loving another woman is a grave sin, Maryline falls in love with Angellee. Maryline realizes her life will never be her own if she stays in the cult. Maryline and Angellee plot to escape, despite knowing that if they are caught they may be killed.

Meanwhile, in the town closest to the cult, a young police officer named Tali begins an investigation to the cult. She's convinced the cult is responsible for disappearances that span decades. Including, the disappearance of Tali's cousin. Using her role as an officer to covertly look into the cult, she ends up finding much more: a town-wide conspiracy to protect the cult, one that involves Tali's own family.

Maryline and Tali cross paths and their goals align. Tali will help Maryline and Angellee escape if Maryline will help Tali take down the cult. But fear can be stronger than love. Devotion can be distorted into control, belief into imprisonment. Maryline's story is about making choices, and the last choice she makes is the hardest: love in captivity, or mourn in freedom.

My Husband's Wife asks: what is the difference between making a selfish choice, and the choice that will save your life? One person's definition of damnation could be your salvation. Taking that chance, making that choice, is an act of true faith and love.

Scholars, researchers, and fellow filmmakers who wish to read *My Husband's Wife* can contact gradfilm@yorku.ca. Please explain your interest, and confirm that it is for personal / private research purposes only.

