

Thesis Screenplay Summary for *The Madisons Lost at Sea*

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As a child Winifred Madison was shipwrecked with her family on a deserted island. Twenty years later her life is still defined by the fallout of that experience; the struggle to survive, the fame she found upon rescue, and the way her story was co-opted by her father John Madison for his best-selling children's book *The Madisons Lost at Sea*.

Estranged from her family, Winifred is drawn back in when John tells her he is dying of cancer and asks to see her again. But it turns out a family reunion isn't all John had in mind; he's spending his dying days mounting a stage adaptation of his book. John is desperate to secure his legacy, and he wants Winifred to help him do it.

Winifred agrees to help, but on one condition; that she receive the rights to the *Madisons* story when John dies. She goes to work promoting the show, but in doing so is forced to confront the painful memories of what her childhood on the island was really like. Meanwhile her sister Anna, jealous of Winifred and suspicious of her intentions, discovers that John has lied to Winifred about the book rights; he has no plans to give them to her.

Anna tells Winifred their father is lying. In retaliation, Winifred uses a television interview to finally tell the world the truth about what their life on the island was really like. With John's neglect and abuse revealed, interest in the stage play perversely skyrockets. Winifred and her sisters, brought together by the revelation of John's actions, decide to change the play at the last minute so that it reflects the truth of their experiences.

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