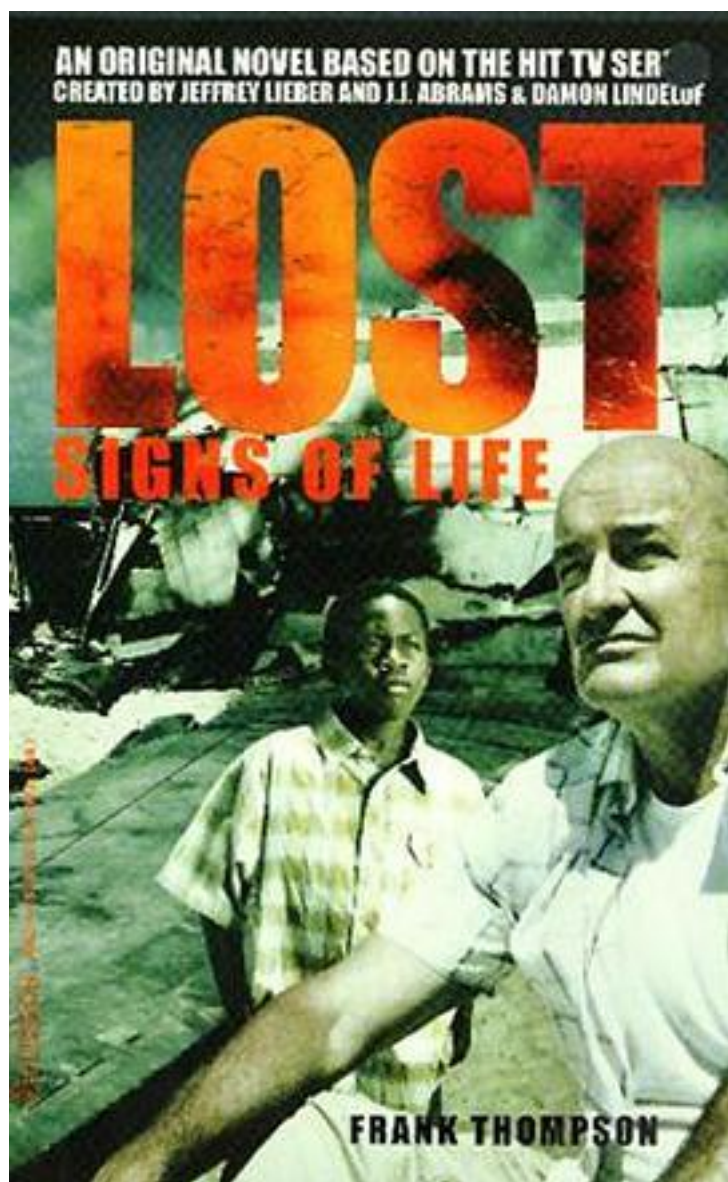


Lost



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At the flat in Weatherall Walk there was no milk in the fridge, no ice in the tiny freezer unit.... The better furniture was hung over with drop cloths, the leather-bound books evacuated from their shelves.... Unconnected wiring threaded from walls, and a smell of lazy drains, something rotting, unfurled from the sewer all the way up to this flat. Winnie wrenched open a window. But no sign of John? Winifred Rudge, a bemused writer struggling to get beyond the runaway success of her mass-market astrology book, travels to London to jump-start her new novel about a woman who is being haunted by the ghost of Jack the Ripper. Upon her arrival, she finds that her stepcousin and old friend John Comestor has disappeared, and a ghostly presence seems to have taken over his apartment in the nineteenth-century rowhouse once owned by Winnie's great-great-grandfather. Is it the spirit of this ancestor, who, family legend claims, was Charles Dickens's childhood inspiration for Ebenezer Scrooge? Could it be the ghostly remains of Jack the Ripper? Or a phantasm derived from a more arcane and insidious origin? Winnie begins to investigate, but John's erstwhile girlfriend, Allegra, is aggressively unhelpful, and his downstairs neighbor, the cat-obsessed Mrs. Maddingly, is growing stranger by the day. Gripped by inspiration and desperation alike, Winnie finds herself the unwilling audience for a drama of specters and shades, some from her family's peculiar history and some from her own unvanquished past. In the spirit of A. S. Byatt's "Possession," with dark overtones echoing from "A Christmas Carol," *Lost* presents a rich fictional world that will enrapture Gregory Maguire's eager audience.

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