

# TEMPUS INVESTIGATIONS

A FICTIONAL TV-SHOW

By Claus Holm

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*Claus Holm asserts his moral right to be identified as the author of this book.*

“That which is alive hath known death, and that which is  
dead can never die, for in the Circle of the Spirit life is naught  
and death is naught. Yea, all things live forever, though at  
times they sleep and are forgotten.”

– H. Rider Haggard, *She*



## ***The TV Show That Never Was***

*Every year, people all over the world wait for the renewal schedule with a fearful kind of anticipation. In an age where TV means more to us than ever before, there are more and more fans who every year wonder if their favorite show will re-appear after the summer, or if it will join the hundreds of other shows that each year are cancelled and forgotten.*

*Many people, frustrated with losing their favorite show, take to imagining what would have happened if the show they love had been kept on the air. Some of them go one step further, and begin writing stories, scripts or even novels about their favorite characters. This is generally referred to as fan fiction.*

*But what if your show never existed in the first place? What if you made up the show from the beginning?*

*Tempus Investigations never aired on any channel and it most likely never will. When you read it though – try to imagine you’re sitting down to watch a new show, with all the anticipation and excitement offered to the fall schedule every year. Imagine the first chapter of each story as “the teaser” – the short piece of show that comes before the first block of commercials. Imagine an intro, with a catchy theme playing somewhere between chapters one and two. Imagine every chapter break ending with exciting music as the screen fades to black for another quick word from the sponsors. Imagine credits rolling at the end, showing you who helped produce the episode. And imagine every episode with a different director, giving it a slightly different feel than the others.*

*Put your feet up. Are you sitting comfortably? Then turn on your mental TV and let’s begin.*

Tempus Investigations

# HOW LIKE A FALLEN ANGEL

“When angels go bad they are worse than anyone else.  
Remember Lucifer used to be an angel.”

— Neil Gaiman, *Neverwhere*

Tempus Investigations

Tempus Investigations

# WINTER

# 1.

Jim Corrigan lit a cigarette and thought about death.

The office was quiet, as it usually was at two in the morning. He was sitting behind his desk, legs propped up on the edge of it, and leaned back in his office chair. The smoke from his cigarette curled up towards the ceiling in a slow spiral, and when he exhaled, the blue puff seemed to float in the lamplight like fog.

He had spent a lot of nights like this, for a long time. Sleep often eluded him for days, and he spent the time smoking, sometimes drinking, and usually reading. He almost never watched TV – the mindless chatter of it gave him a headache.

The dark corners outside the lamplight were filled with spirits. They tended to slide in and out between each other, making it difficult to say exactly how many there were. It was only when he called them by name, or spoke directly to one, that it would take a more permanent and identifiable shape. At this moment, they were no more tangible than his cigarette smoke. Right now, he hadn't called any of them. They were simply drawn to him, to a place where they knew they could be seen. Most times, he tried to ignore them.

Death was on his mind a lot, and not just because of the spirits filling up every corner of his house and office. It seemed to always come in the winter, when the anniversary of his own death – if you could call it that – was nearing. He got depressed, and tended to ignore his secretary Mercedes advice to eat, sleep and cut back on his smoking. He always chuckled at

the last one, though. What concern was lung cancer to a man who couldn't die?

He changed his leg's position on the desk, and lifted up his book again. The world of Tolkien always seemed to fit the long nights, so he was on his probably fiftieth read through of *The Lord of the Rings*. He was about to turn the page, when the phone rang.

Jim looked at it, puzzled, then at his watch. The numbers read 2.05 AM. At this time of night, it could be one of two things. Bad news...or a client.

He picked up the phone and held it to his ear. "Tempus Investigations, Corrigan."

The voice on the other end was deep and rough, and he instantly recognized it. Inspector Roger Charles of the San Francisco Police.

"I had a hunch I'd catch you at the office. Having another sleepless night?"

"What can I do for you, Roger? I doubt you're just calling to check up on my sleeping habits?"

"That's right. There's been a murder. An awful one. I'd appreciate you coming down and taking a look."

Charles' voice sounded hesitant. It was one thing to call in an outside consultant for a police matter, but quite another to call in San Francisco's resident spirit watcher. Jim wondered if Charles had cleared this with his superiors, but decided it didn't matter. It wasn't so much about the money, as it was about the work.

"Where?"

"Market Street, not far from the water. You'll know it when you see it."

"Are you going to tell me anything about it?"

"Not in the slightest on an open line. Get down here and take a look, and we'll talk."

“All right.” Jim looked at the map of the Bay Area he kept on the wall of his office. “I should be there in about twenty minutes, give or take.”

“I’ll let them know you’re coming.”

Charles hung up, and Jim looked at his glass of scotch on the desk. He considered downing it, but decided against it. He didn’t want to smell like a distillery when he showed up. From his desk drawer, he pulled a bottle of mouthwash and took a swig from it instead. He sloshed it around in his mouth as he got up, and spat it out in the sink in the corner. He grimaced, and took his cigarette pack from the table. He put on his coat and hat, and stuck the pack in the inner pocket of his coat.

He knew he looked like a private eye from an old Bogart movie, but he didn’t care. Usually, it actually seemed to help people believe he was what he said he was. Besides, he had dressed this way for a long time and it suited him.

He took a last puff on his cigarette and put it out in the ash-tray on the desk, before turning off the lamp and heading for the door.

When he walked out of the office, the spirits shifted and swirled but didn’t follow him. He saw several of their eyes look at him with sadness in them, as if they were worried for him. He doubted that was the case, though – they were probably just interested in having someone who could see them, and it didn’t matter who it was.

On the street, Jim pulled out his keys and stepped to the building’s parking lot. His car, an old but reliable Ford, was parked in his slot where he had left it. On the lot’s other end, several young men were gathered around the low wall there, smoking and talking. They didn’t seem bothered by the slightly cold night air at this time of year. Jim looked over at them, stopped, and shook his head.

Behind one of the boys stood the spirit of a teenage girl. The girl kept pulling on the boy’s hand, who of course didn’t notice

it. Every time the boy lifted his hand holding the burning cigarette – which Jim doubted was tobacco – the girl’s face contorted in the hopelessness of her attempts failing. She looked over at Jim, her eyes large and pleading. She had been around fifteen when she died, and looked skinny and pale - even for a spirit.

Jim sighed, and looked back at her. He didn’t have time for a big moral lecture, and he doubted these kids would be interested in hearing it, if he had. However, there was something about the girl that made him decide to pitch in a little bit. He put the keys back in his pocket and walked towards the three boys.

“Hello boys,” he said, raising his hands out of his pockets to show he was unarmed.

The three men, two African-American and one Caucasian, looked up at him surprised. They didn’t look exactly like gang members, but also not like the type of boys he would have hoped his sister - or, for that matter, Mercedes - brought home. The boys all seemed to turn their backs to the wall, as if for protection. One of them had something in his hand that looked like a switchblade, still closed.

“Relax, and put that away. I’m not going to make any trouble. I’m just going to say something to you...and leave. A friendly message.”

He pointed to the black boy with the spirit at his elbow. “You. I’m guessing you used to have a little sister?”

The boy widened his eyes.

“How’d you...”

“That doesn’t really matter. What matters is this: Your sister died because of something with drugs. I’m guessing she either got a hold of something contaminated, or she got involved with someone who was into the drug environment. Am I right? I’m guessing the first is closest to the truth.”

“Did he know Jasmine, man?” the other black boy asked.

"I didn't, no. But I have a message from her to you. She really would like you to stop smoking dope, kid. She's been trying to tell you, but you're not listening. She's worried about you, and doesn't want you to end up like her. So do yourself, and her, a favor and quit. Because until you do she can't rest easy."

The boy's mouth hung open like a fish. His eyes probed Jim's face to find out if he was lying, or pretending in some way. Jim made sure to keep his face straight.

"That's all, kid. It's your call. Jasmine's message has been delivered. Have a good night."

He turned around, when the boy's voice sounded.

"Wait...mister...?"

Jim turned back. "What?"

"How did you know that? How did you know she OD'ed?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you. But if you still doubt me, she died wearing a black or blue shirt that had a silver dragon on it and jeans with little designs on them. Am I right?"

The boy nodded, his two friends both taking a step forward. "How'd he know that, man? Did he kill her or something?"

Jim sighed. "No, I didn't kill her. Don't think like that. She just wants you to not make the same mistake she made. What's your name, kid?"

"Tyrone." The boy's skin had gone an ashen color now.

"Tyrone, your sister's been standing at your elbow for a long time now. Her spirit, anyway. If you want her to get some peace on the other side, you throw that butt away, go home, and clean up your act. Stop smoking dope. Whether you do or not doesn't mean shit to me, but you might give her a peaceful rest. That's all I'm saying. Good night."

Jim headed for his car, leaving the three boys behind him, all speaking at the same time. None of them came after him, but when he looked back, he saw Jasmine smile at him over her brother's shoulder. Tyrone looked at the butt in his hand, and then threw it down to the ground.

Jim got in and started the car. He turned on to the street and headed east.

## 2.

Jim's first thought was "*She looks like an angel*". It was an easy thought to jump to, one which the killer had obviously done a good job creating. She was lying face down in a dumpster, at the back end of a narrow alley. The dumpster smelled fairly strong of trash, but Jim could still smell the bay from just a few hundred feet away.

The girl was wearing a white dress or robe, and her feet were bare. Across her back, something long and white seemed to unfold and spread like wings, up over her shoulders. Every trace of blood had been cleaned off the white clothes, but Jim was sure it had bled a lot when it had happened. He had read about this, but never seen it.

He straightened up from his bent-over position, and walked a little closer to the girl. Without caring too much about the chain of evidence – at this point, he knew the lab boys had already done all they could. He knelt and let his hand touch the soft membrane of the wings. He was right. It was indeed the girl's ribs and lungs that had been spread out, creating the illusions of wings.

"It's called 'the blood eagle,'" Inspector Charles' voice came from behind him. He was climbing up onto the dumpster, and crouched on the edge. Not bad for a man of his considerable weight, Jim thought.

"I've heard of it. It's an old Norse method of torture."

“Torture is about right. Except in this case, we are not yet sure if the mutilation was done before or after death. We hope to God it was after.”

Jim felt sick to his to his stomach. “What have you got so far?”

“The girl is Mary Louise West, fourteen years old. She was at a church choir rehearsal at eight PM, left to go straight home. She only had a few blocks, and it was in a nice part of town. She never made it. Lab boys say they think she died sometime around ten or eleven, giving him a little less than an hour to get her here before she was found by a night janitor emptying the trashcans. He called us.”

Charles wiped his face with his hand. “Who in the hell would do something like that? She’s just a little girl!”

Jim nodded. “Roger...can I have a minute? If you want me to help you with this...”

“Yeah. Yeah, of course.” Charles cleared his throat. “I’ll be over there, looking over her stuff.”

“Her stuff?”

“She had a purse, which was left next to the dumpster. It’s being dusted for prints right now.”

Jim knew that would be useless but didn’t say it. Someone who did a thing like this, with this kind of detail, would not leave something as sloppy as prints. He would be far too careful for that.

Charles climbed down. His suit jacket crept up when he climbed, and he shook it back in place with a grimace. Jim closed his eyes for a moment, concentrating.

“Mary Louise West...” he whispered. “If you’re still here, show yourself.”

He opened his eyes, looking around. The alleyway was surprisingly free of spirits, normally they cluttered like spectators when someone died.

“Mary Louise West...” Jim whispered again. “If you hear me, come to me. Tell me what happened to you.”

A small white form seemed to seep out of the dark in the corner of the dumpster. The girl was looking smaller than her real life body. Jim was thankful that the spirit usually tended to look like the image the person had of him or herself, and not like they did when they actually died. If he had been forced to converse with torn-up bodies, he would have gone mad a long time ago.

“Mary Louise?” he asked, looking at the spirit. She nodded.

“Did you see the man who killed you?”

She trembled visibly, making the edges of her form look like smoke being blown by the wind. She nodded again, slowly.

“Can you tell me about him? I know it’s hard for you to talk, but if you can, it will help me catch him. It might mean he doesn’t hurt anyone else. Concentrate, and try to shape the words with your mind.”

He could tell Mary Louise was trying to summon the strength to communicate. It was hard for her, she was scared, and new at being dead. Jim had heard about the various stages of sorrow from a psychologist he had spoken to when his wife died, and found them silly. But he had his own stages of death. Fear, desperation, anger, reclusion, and finally acceptance and moving on. Some spirits never made this last stage. They would hang around the shadow world, watching the living and mostly resenting them, sometimes stalking their living friends and relatives. In rare cases, they might take to teasing living people as a poltergeist or haunting a house. Jim knew of a man who had haunted the subway system in New York City for fifty years, unable to move on because he loved to make the trains late by fiddling with the electronics. Fortunately, only a select few got that good and were able to manipulate the physical world. Mostly they were merely insubstantial, invisible ghosts.

“Tall...big...glasses...” Mary Louise whispered. Jim was impressed. She learned quickly. He twirled his fingers, urging her on.

“Tattoo...here...” she said, pointing to her neck where it met the shoulder. “Bird.”

That should be helpful, Jim thought. Glasses could be discarded, but a tattoo was harder to hide. Especially if it was visible outside of regular clothes.

“Anything else you remember?” Jim asked. He made his voice soft and comforting, as much as he could.

She shook her head slowly, then suddenly looked up and nodded. She lifted her hand to her mouth, and mimed biting into it.

“He bit you?” She shook her head, pointing to herself. He understood. “You bit *him*! Good girl. On the hand?”

She mimed blood running out of the hand, and then stopped the mime, pointing to her own smooth skin. She moved her fingers in a gesture that mimed something vanishing.

Jim felt a cold chill run down his spine. “You bit him and it bled, but then it stopped bleeding?”

She nodded again.

“And then...the wound closed and was gone?” Another nod.

“Thank you, Mary Louise. You’ve been a great help. I promise you, I will do everything I can to catch the man who hurt you.”

Mary Louise tried speaking again, but this time Jim couldn’t hear her. His lip reading skills, however, was good enough for him to recognize the words “*I want my mom!*” on her lips.

“I know you do, honey. But your mom can’t see you anymore, or hear you. Only very special people like me can. Your mom misses you very much, I’m sure of it. But if you hang around here too long, to watch her, you will be stuck here. You’ve got to move on, even though I know you don’t want to do that right now.”

She shook her head.

"I can't tell you what to do, but when you feel like you can move on, you should. Everything's better than what you've got right now. Thanks again, honey. I'll do my very best to get him."

Mary Louise sent him a final sad look, raised her hand in a gesture of goodbye and slowly faded away.

Jim got to his feet, and swung his leg out of the dumpster. Charles looked up at him as he climbed down.

"Anything? I mean, I don't know how you do this stuff, but..."

Jim lit a cigarette, and was not surprised his hands were shaking a little.

"I've already told you what I do, Roger. But you don't believe in spooks, remember?"

"I don't know what the hell I believe with you, Jim." Charles wiped his face again, this time with a tissue. "So did you get anything out of it?"

"You're looking for a big, tall guy with glasses, although that's of course not a sure thing. He's strong, and he has a tattoo of a bird on his neck, right here. I don't know what bird, but based on the cruelty of his act, I doubt it's a peaceful little sparrow."

Charles took out his notebook and jotted down Jim's description. "Great. Tall and tattooed. That's only a quarter of the people in the Bay Area."

"I know. But there's something you should know about this guy. Something you probably shouldn't put in your report."

Charles nodded. "What?"

"He's going to be hard to stop. He might be able to get up from a beating that would paralyze someone else. Even if you shoot him, he might still just keep coming."

"Are you saying Superman killed her?"

"I don't know what I'm saying. But if you manage to corner him, be very, very careful."

Jim straightened his hat, and blew smoke out of his nose. "How closely is the department going to watch you on this?"

"Well, the newshounds have already been here. The *Chronicle* was here within twenty minutes, in fact. I bet someone tipped them off. So we're probably going to get a lot of press. Why?"

"I'd like to conduct some investigation on my own, if that's okay with you."

"Jim..." Charles shook his head. "I can't tell you that's okay. You know that. You're not officially a cop, you're here exclusively as a consultant."

"Then consult me. Because I think something about this case might be hard for you guys to do without my help. I'm not asking you to deputize me or anything. Just...let things seep my way if you find out something. Okay?"

Charles grimaced. "I can't exactly say no, can I? When you just gave us the only lead we have to go off."

"I guess you can't. How were the fingerprints on the purse?"

"Non-existent. The clothes doesn't seem to reveal anything either. This guy's a fucking ghost."

"I wish he was. Keep me posted, Roger."

Jim turned and walked out of the alley, ducking under the police tape. A few camera phones clicked at him, but he turned his head away. He wasn't interested in getting recognized.

He threw his cigarette into a sewer grate and unlocked his car. Getting in behind the wheel, he sat for a moment, holding onto it and letting his eyes search the street.

A man who killed a little girl and made her look like an angel to mock a god who had done him wrong...or perhaps to spite that same god. A man good and experienced enough at what he did to not leave any tracks except in the spirit of his victim. A man who healed his wounds so fast you could see it happen.

The last part was the most important, because it might answer the question Jim Corrigan had asked himself for so long:

*Am I alone?*

Looking at Market Street in the glow of the street lights, he no longer thought he was.

### 3.

*The memories often came as dreams, on the infrequent nights where he managed to catch a few hours of sleep in his bed. They were always the same, always chronological, and always impossible to stop, even though he always tried to.*

*It was always December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933 in Chicago, the Windy City. Ginger and Jim were walking home from the Christmas shopping, the snow falling around them in a thick, white blanket. The wind coming in from Lake Michigan was cold as a knife, but when they walked close together, they barely felt it. Jim had his arm around her, Ginger's long hair looking almost radiant silver against her dark coat and hat. Snowflakes caught in it and made it shimmer a little.*

*They rounded a corner, talking about the musical they had seen the night before. Jim the dreamer always tried to stop them, to turn the other way, but Jim the young man with his arm around his wife didn't seem to react to the impulses from his future self. He pulled out a cigarette case, and was just about to light one, when the car parked by the curb in front of them opened its doors, and four men got out. They were all holding weapons, Jim knew, but didn't see at the time. Thompson sub-machine guns, caliber 45. Heavy, deadly and almost impossible to aim once you started firing.*

*The four men raised their weapons into firing positions, and now the young Jim was aware of the situation. He grabbed Ginger, tried pulling her back behind him. His service revolver was in his pocket, but there was no time to get it out.*

*The gunfire sounded like an explosion. The four men were firing into the shop window they stood in front of – Jim later found out it was a florist who had refused to pay the protection money to the mob – and the glass shattered with a sound like bells in the middle of the loud rumble. The gunman on the left was obviously young, and more inexperienced in the use of his weapon. Once he started firing, he lost his footing in the slippery snow, and he began to turn sideways. Had he been right-handed, the machinegun in his hand would have cut his own compatriots down, saving the world the expense of their trial and incarceration. Unfortunately, this particular gunman was left-handed, and so turned his fire towards the left. When you are firing and lose control like that, there are two things you can do. Stop firing and adjust your aim, or just keep firing and hope you'll hit something else that needs to be gunned down.*

*Ginger was hit with eight shots, three of them fatal. Jim didn't even have a chance to scream her name before the bullets hit his own body. He had no idea how many bullets hit him, since later he was told that he must have been so incredibly lucky not to have been hit at all. He knew it wasn't so. He felt the bullets go in, hitting his chest, his arms and legs, throwing him to the ground and plowing through the snow until he came to rest up against a streetlight. The cold from the snow seemed to make his entire body freeze up, he ordered his body to get to its feet, to draw the pistol from his shoulder holster and fire...but it did not respond. Only the cold and the dark seemed real. And then...the darkness was all around him.*

*This was the point that Jim would always wake up, soaked in sweat, his mouth open in a silent scream. His hands would slide over his chest, his arms and legs, searching for the holes that weren't there. But he knew there were more to the experience than he could remember.*

*When he had been in the hospital, and they had told him that he had gotten off without a scratch, when they told him that*

*Ginger had died almost instantly and he himself had gotten off without even a paper cut, he felt angry. Betrayed. It had been his place to die, his time. Yet, he lived.*

*As time went by, Jim found that many things were not what they had been. He now healed damage to his body at an incredible rate. A surface wound would close in seconds. A deeper wound, like a gunshot, would close in minutes, the bullet or fragments being spat out one by one, like little wet afterbirths. The one time he decided to try and see exactly how much his ability could handle, and where he had not cared if he lived or died anymore, he had jumped in front of a freight train. He had felt the pain of the impact, and had woken up a while later with a splitting headache, his clothes torn to shreds and ‘Chicago Passenger Rail’ almost stamped into his forehead from the locomotive. That had taken a few hours to go away.*

*The spirits had not shown up at first, but it hadn’t taken them long. First one, then two and finally they were everywhere. He suspected that he at first had dismissed them as figments of his imagination, until they became too obvious for him to ignore. The spirits didn’t usually talk, but would gesture, or beckon him closer, trying to make him understand. It was, however, almost impossible to speak to the mute ones, when you didn’t know what questions to ask. In a murder investigation, however, they were valuable clues that helped him solve multiple cases. He was promoted, celebrated, and he knew none of it was earned.*

*As time went by, he found out he also lacked another vital component in his life. He no longer aged. The first few years, he could explain it with good genes and a healthy diet (something people who knew him well would say was silly, considering his three packs of Marlboro a day), but eventually he decided he had to move on, leaving his job, his friends, and his life behind him. People had begun asking too many questions, and the best way of getting rid of questions was to start over.*

*Life had taken him many strange places over the years. Places that still filled both his living and sleeping mind. He had been*

*in Berlin in 1944, sent as a secret agent to steal an Enigma machine. He had been in Korea, Indo China, Cambodia and in Vietnam. And in between, he had travelled around America, trying to find a place where he could be left alone.*

*In 1985, in a Greyhound terminal in Kansas City, he had stood for a long time, holding his suitcase in his hand and wondered where to go next. The radio in the terminal was playing, and the voice of a young man told the listener that in San Francisco, the streets were filled with gentle people with flowers in their hair. He had heard the song before, but he took it as a sign. And the city by the bay had been the home he had looked for. He had set himself up as a private investigator with "psychic powers", as his ad had said in the yellow pages, and had managed to help many people who had problems with spirits. Jim couldn't force the spirits to cross over, only tell them that it would be a good idea. Sometimes, he wasn't even sure that was true. Since his own experience with death and now his inability to die, he had felt a cold hate against whatever power had done this to him. He despised religion and all the people believing in a God looking out for them or claiming that the deity needed the help of the worshippers. Whoever or whatever had forced him to go through endless life without Ginger did not deserve his thanks or his help. He had always wondered if whatever power had brought him back had done so for a reason.*

*And if there had been others.*