

# HOLLYWOODLAND by Andy Froemke

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**Title:** Hollywoodland (Based on true events)

**Genre:** Historical Murder Mystery

**Logline:** A limited series on the murder of silent film director William Desmond Taylor and the glamorous cast of suspects headlining the case in the Roaring Twenties. Detective Ed King, the Sherlock Holmes of the LAPD, sets out to piece together the truth amid sex scandals, blackmail schemes, police corruption, a family cover-up and a deadly drug ring.

**The tone** is *BROADCHURCH* meets *MADMEN*. This is a mix of the stylized glamour that Hollywood projected and the dark intrigue behind the facade. In the early days of the silent film era, Hollywood was a place to start over, to make a name, to become somebody. That meant everyone had a past. Everyone had secrets. And some of those secrets were worth killing for.

February 1, 1922.

William Desmond Taylor has less than ten hours to live.

William is a handsome Irish actor who's risen to become one of Hollywood's top directors in a few short years. He's well respected, intelligent, and cultured. But, like so many others in the film colony, he has secrets at a time when the press is starting to expose the seedy underbelly of Hollywoodland. A string of high profile indiscretions has the fledging film industry in full damage control. Another scandal could be devastating to their soaring profits.

So, when William receives a note that says "I know who you really are," He realizes he's being blackmailed, but by who? It could be Edward Sands, his ex-valet who made off with a large sum of William's money a few months ago. The police are after Sands, but can't locate him. As the day goes on, William grows increasingly worried about what exactly his blackmailer knows.

Is it that William has been having an affair with the rising starlet, Mary Miles Minter, who's half his age? When William meets up with the young actress on the studio lot, he tries to keep his distance, but her mother suspects the relationship isn't over. There's clearly an animosity between William and Mary's mother, but how far would she go to protect her daughter's career?

Another actress, Patsy Palmer, spies William and Mary together and keeps a close eye on them. She's desperately trying to claw her way to the top and will do anything to get what she wants. However, the lack of progress is taking its toll. Discouraged by her inability to get the big parts, she seeks solace in drugs and falls in with a group of blackmailers that want to use her past relationship with William to get extortion money.

As the day unfolds, another note. The blackmailer communicates the price, \$5,000. William secures the funds and waits. He tries to get a hold of the woman he's in love with... Mabel Normand. She's a free spirit he's having a difficult time taming. A fiercely independent actress, she has dated powerful directors before and been hurt by them. So, she keeps William at arm's length. She has her own secrets.

As the sun sets on the film colony, William retreats to his bungalow. He pulls out a wooden box and puts the extortion money inside. He closes the drapes. A gunshot. The next day, William is found dead... the victim of a bullet to the chest. Detectives arrive on the scene. Who killed William Desmond Taylor? It will become one of the most enduring unsolved mysteries in Hollywood.

As the series progresses, Detective King, the Sherlock Holmes of the LAPD, will team up with Detective Winn, his muscular and slightly corrupt partner, to pursue both the killer and the dark puzzle that is William Taylor. The potential cast of killers includes: his ex-valet, three starlets he had relationships with, a mother of one of the starlets, an actresses' jealous boyfriend, William's production designer and possible gay lover, a blackmail ring, and his own house servant.

Trying to sort out fact from fiction in a town built on make believe, the Detectives are faced not only with the fledgling movie industry's interference, but also a D.A. that's tampering with evidence and movie moguls that want to hide their dirty laundry. All this, while the Detectives peel layer after layer from the facade of William Desmond Taylor... a dead man who's a missing person with a faked identity.

SERIES NOTES: This series will ultimately explore identity, a topic extremely relevant in an age of Facebook that has engendered careful crafting of how people want to be viewed publicly. This isn't a murder mystery about solving the case (although by the end everyone will have their own idea who did it). This is a murder mystery about not solving the case. This is Citizen Kane. It's a reverse murder mystery. In the sense that we go from a straightforward looking murder where the killer seems obvious to a web of tangled threads that are impenetrable. The more you know, the further away you get from the solution. William Desmond Taylor, at the end of the day, is as unknowable as his killer. His death doesn't lead inevitably toward a solution... it leads to more and more questions. He's a rabbit hole. The murder case is a rabbit hole. Each time you think you've found something, it unravels and leads someplace else.

Now, pit that cypher (William Desmond Taylor) against a Detective who is a mystery solver. He's Sherlock Holmes. He's used to facts that lead to a logical conclusion. He can solve anything. What he doesn't realize is he's in a placeless place, searching for a dead man who's a missing person with a faked identity. By the end, he's going to realize that this is too big... it's the Chinatown moment. He has his guess, but it's just a guess. Because, evidence was taken away, the crime scene was trampled, no one's telling him the truth, his own department is covering things up. At the end of the day, Hollywood and everyone in it is just an illusion.