

**“Since when do Immortals need an excuse to kill Watchers?”**

**Annelise snapped.**

**“It was just evening the score for what those people do to you people.  
I would’ve done the same,” she finished, coldly.**

Aghast, Duncan did a double take.

“Kill Watchers—what are you saying? What score are you talking about?”

“I know now who’s responsible for what happened to my brother,” she continued. “Connor promised he would help me free him—he’s on his way there now, but I know it’s a trap. You’ve got to help me, Duncan. Take me to Connor before it is too late for both of them.”



Follow Solo

**Highlander *Imagine***  
**Code Name: Immortal**

An **RK Books** production  
[www.RK-books.com](http://www.RK-books.com)

ISBN: 978-0-9777110-6-2

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Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Jones, Wendy Lou

Highlander *Imagine*: Code Name Immortal by Wendy Lou Jones  
Fiction: Historical | Mystery Detective / Historical | Romance / Action & Adventure

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017963943  
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**Highlander *Imagine* Series**

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**RK Books**

Rochester, Minnesota U.S.A.

First printing: January, 2018

Front cover photograph from Davis-Panzer Productions Inc.  
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# **Highlander Imagine**

## **Code Name: Immortal**

Book III in the Highlander Imagine Series

A NOVEL BY

**WENDY LOU JONES**  
**&**  
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Book II  
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Beyond Infinity**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to gratefully acknowledge and thank the following individuals and companies for their contributions to this work:

**Mariel Bordoni**, artist and owner of Lilen Hué Collies Kennel & **Leonardo Javier Silicani**, Aeronautical Technician, for their assistance with topographical information of the area around Charles de Gaulle Airport, flight path and other technical details for the opening section of this book.

**Andy Sloane**, for his invaluable assistance with Highlander locations – who was where, when, and why in parts of this story.

Sword information and photos provided by **Cold Steel**. Find these quality products and more at **ColdSteel.com**

**Blake Iverson**, for his legal advice and suggestions throughout the creation process.

**Nicole Chaplain-Pearman**, for her editorial assistance.

**Christina Beer**, for her editorial work and advice.





## Prologue

Outside of a chain-link perimeter fence, Adrian Wells watched silently as an airbus turned onto a distant taxiway at the Charles de Gaulle Airport. Picking up speed, it receded further from view as it joined the other flights already taxiing toward the runway.

The sound of a car approaching caused Adrian to lower his binoculars for a moment. Sweeping his collar-length, dark brown, straight hair aside, he focused on it. As it slowed, then came to a halt near where he was standing, he returned his attention to the airbus. A car door slammed followed by footsteps—as they neared him, he began to speak.

“I missed Connor MacLeod by a little over an hour, Egil, did you know that?” he said in almost a monotone voice, never once glancing back.

Egil Andersson swallowed what he had planned to say to his superior, stopped abruptly and tensed noticeably. Waving his hands in a gesture of frustration, he began spewing accusations at Helmut Cannon’s blunder. Egil’s body language and verbiage were both lost on Adrian.

“Helmut was supposed to get his ticket number and flight schedule—he obviously can’t even do that right. I told you he’s not a man you want on this or any other assignment.”

“He’s still a foot-soldier and a sympathetic pair of eyes. Tools come in many shapes and sizes,” Adrian replied in a patronizing tone, as he adjusted the focus once again.

“He doesn’t have the brains or the stomach to do what needs to be done. That was obvious from his last botched job.”

“Oh, he got Connor’s flight information to me—if that’s what you’re referring to.” Out of the corner of his eye, Adrian peered around his binoculars and back at his associate, for just an instant.

“The problem was that it was all old news by the time I received it. Helmut failed to consider just how unpredictable a MacLeod can be. He rebooked onto an earlier flight at the last minute.” A faint smile settled on his lips. “Fortunately, we all have cell phones these days and I was able to make secondary arrangements regarding Connor’s new departure plans. Relax, Egil, our plans have just hit a small speed bump, that’s all. It’s not the end of the world. Connor will be back in Paris soon enough.”

Egil’s loud *humph* made it clear he didn’t share Adrian’s point of view.

“The moment that plane lands at the Edinburgh Airport, Connor will be up and gone before we get one of our Watchers on him.”

“He won’t leave this country—accidents happen. He’ll be back down on the ground soon enough.”

“But he’s already heading into the air, how—”

Egil’s speech stopped abruptly as Adrian’s last comment sank in. His eyes followed the plane. There was a long pause before he spoke again.

“He’s an Immortal—he’ll survive anything you’ve arranged. What do you hope to accomplish?”

“Call it an inconvenience,” Adrian’s smooth voice replied as the airbus sailed down the runway and into the sky.

“Get a couple of our people out in the field along this flight plan,” and reaching into his jacket pocket, he handed Egil a folded piece of paper. “Have them track him back to Paris, but don’t let him see them—not yet.”

“What makes you think he’ll be back?”

“His girlfriend is still in Paris, somewhere. A woman in distress is all it will take to reel him in.” Adrian’s index finger tapped pensively on the side of his binoculars.

“Send Helmut back out after her,” he finished.

“Are you serious? He lost track of Connor’s car and it was bugged. I’ll pick up James and we’ll round her up fast—”

Adrian lowered his binoculars and turned abruptly to face Egil.



“Horton is my little tin soldier to command. I’m assigning Helmut to you. Don’t worry, Egil, he won’t tax your patience much longer. Remember, some tools are disposable. Who knows, picking up that sweet, young, stiletto wielding girlfriend just may be the last job he does for our special brotherhood of Watchers. You’ve got other business to attend to back at headquarters.”

Checking his watch, Adrian returned his binoculars to his eyes and scanned the sky.

A small, distant flash of light went all but unnoticed just before the plane nosed toward the ground. Adrian punched a button on his watch—his smile broadened.

“You know, I own quite a bit of corporate stock in that airline and I think I made a great investment.”

Egil swallowed hard—his eyes lingering momentarily on that fateful spot in the skyline where the plane had once flown.

“Won’t a plane crash ruin your portfolio?” Egil asked, trying to keep his voice even.

Adrian shook his head. “When planes fall, so do share prices. It’s a great time to buy. Consider it an insider’s investment tip.” He folded his binoculars away.

“In any game I play, Egil, no matter the outcome, I never lose,” he finished quietly.

Egil glanced back to the sky briefly.

“How many people were on that flight?”

Adrian shrugged. “Does it matter? There’s another one-hundred or so waiting in the lounge to take their place on another of my stock options.”

Egil didn’t respond as Adrian walked back to his car.

“MacLeod is mine,” Adrian said, pointing a black-gloved finger toward Egil as if it were a gun. “Always remember that. He took something from me—from my family—almost a decade ago. I want him, body and soul,” he finished with a faint chuckle.

“I have something special in mind for that Immortal.”



## Chapter One

Swiftly, Annelise raised her hands—her steel-black Beretta locked in her grasp. Instinctually, her eye focused down the length of the barrel intersecting with the gun's sight and framing the moving face before her. In that instant, her finger tightened mercilessly on the trigger. Every recoil of the barrel, every flash of deadly fire from its muzzle, brought forth an almost passionate exhilaration from the pit of her bosoms as she watched the shifting face of Jacques Vemas—Western Europe's Watcher and Coordinator, meld into the face of Jack Shapiro—Europe's ruling council member, finally forming the all too familiar face of Joe Dawson—her most recent assailant. Each face slowly distorting with every new hole—the body flailing and turning this way and that as the spent shells were ejected and another round took its place. The image flipped back and forth until it finally became a clown, a hideous laughing clown.

*God, how I hate clowns,* she thought as the blood-drenched body finally fell. Only then did she allow herself to exhale, only then did she focus beyond the now empty space in front of her barrel—to her brother beyond in the distance.

Abject joy—it welled up like an artesian gusher overloading her senses as she tossed her gun aside and ran headlong to embrace him.

Bars that had imprisoned him melted away like raindrops, his outstretched arms reaching and encircling her tall slender torso—tangling carelessly in her long blond, shimmering hair. Pulling her close—his face angling toward hers—overjoyed in the first second, seeking forgiveness for the foolishness of youth that had led him to the fate he had just been liberated from, in the next.

*By me—your sister!* her mind screamed. *Twelve long years of my life given preparing for this day, this moment—now it's over and I've won!* The thoughts echoed as loudly as if she had shouted the words. In that instant, her eyes became torches of angry, accusing fire from her soul.

*My time of youth was lost—spent in sacrifice and training for you.*

*“His eyes are seeking forgiveness in yours,”* her subconscious thoughts prodded. *“You can't be angry, Annelise—it was the indiscretion of his youth that let him slip into the beguiling grasp of the Watchers—you must forgive him.”*

Her stomach tightened convulsively—*Watchers*. That word was like a curse to her.

That benign word conceals an organization of leeches using pure subterfuge—of international spies, each playing pawn against pawn with their espionage counterparts—the Immortals.

Her eyes softened and she stared back.

*Why couldn't you have listened when I begged you to stay in school? Why wasn't a university degree good enough? Why wasn't a family that was whole and loving enough for you? Why did you have to go and think you could save the damn planet?*

The sound of a firm rap on glass somewhere outside of her thoughts jolted Annelise awake. Her mind and eyes struggled to regain their focus in the misty gray light of the Parisian morning. Her dangling hand groped in the same instant for the Beretta just under the edge of her seat.

A second rapping sound, this time beside her head, caused her to look quickly in that direction. Her hand froze—her fingers on the butt of her gun as she recognized the sight of a Paris police officer just outside her car door. She gasped a breath and let the gun slip from her fingers back into its holster then fumbled for the window knob instead.

“This is a no parking area,” the officer said in a near monotone voice, then paused. “Madam, are you alright?” He stared intently at her face—her hair, now scattered in a dozen uncombed directions—the sallow color of her cheeks—her disheveled clothing.

Annelise noticed the expression on his face and pulled herself together, forcing a wan smile.

“I'm fine, officer. I have been driving for some time. I was just tired. I pulled over to rest so I wouldn't cause an accident. I'm sorry, I'll move the car.” She reached to turn the key in the ignition as the officer held out his hand for her to wait. He bent down and scrutinized her for a moment longer.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” he asked slowly, his eyes sweeping the interior.

Annelise’s voice slipped smoothly into a purr.

“Yes—I’m alright. I—I had a disagreement with my boyfriend last night. I think it’s time I went home. He’ll be worried.” She lowered her eyes. “May I go?” she asked in a meek tone of voice.

The officer nodded and moved away from the car as she turned the key in the ignition.

Annelise drove blindly for several blocks before pulling into an empty space. Killing the engine, she rested her head on the steering wheel then took several deep breaths, giving herself time for reality to fully sink in.

*You’re lucky your training is instinct now, Annelise, she reminded herself, or you would have just pulled a gun on a police officer.*

*“If you had, you might as well have shot him and dumped him in a dumpster under one of these complexes,” her subconscious mind replied in counterpoint. “You couldn’t be in any worse of a situation than you’re in right now.”*

*Funny how my damn inner voice is always right, she thought.*

Sitting in her rental car, staring at the cold gray mist of morning—once again she realized she was far from alright. Somewhere on the streets of Paris where she had spent yet another night, Annelise felt rather small.

*How many nights have I been running from the Watchers?* After she had attacked those who had tried to trap her—she had simply run. Before escaping, she had stabbed Joe Dawson—one of the USA coordinators. *Was he dead now?* she pondered. She hadn’t hung around to hear his last breath. She could only guess. It didn’t matter, she knew they were looking for her—she had stolen that Watcher’s notebook—a man who was on a special assignment.

Fate had brought her to the same spot as he had stood. She had witnessed his death and was at his side the moment he had died. She had learned only a little from that sparsely written book she had taken off his body—little that she didn’t already know about these hideous people. Still, they would never find that book, or her. She would make certain of that. That would be just one more piece of evidence in the end—another nail in their coffin when she brought that organization down.

Her brother was still out there somewhere and sitting in her car wasn’t going to bring her any closer to finding him.

*Connor MacLeod is still my best hope. He is an Immortal, he knows where their headquarters is located.*

Raising her head, she brushed her hair aside and exhaling, sat back in her seat.

*Connor—I took off without so much as a word to him. Where is he? What is he doing? Is he still looking for me?*

A quick count of the days told her it had been over two weeks since she had fled.

*How long would he search before giving up? How much attraction do I still possess to him?*

She wet her lips. The stark, cold reality of the situation prodded her like a sharp stick.

*A mistake—I should have doubled back to him the first night. I should have recruited him to protect me—told him it was muggers—or even said something about the—*

She fumbled for the words that would make the best impression, *extremists—terrorists—kidnappers.*

That final word was the one that brought the mental machinery to a screaming halt.

*Instead of waiting and hoping to do it all yourself, I should have now told him that I needed help. That is the reason we weren’t getting close. Finding and freeing my brother must come first.*

“But would he have rallied to your cause, Annelise?” she asked herself out loud.

*“You bet he would!” her mental counterpoint shouted. “What have you been reading from those Watchers—those spies who have been keeping notes on him? He is a noble champion when given the right cause.”*

“You fool,” she whispered in reproach. “Why have I been such a fool?”

*Go back and deal with the devil, girl*, she told herself firmly as she smoothed her hair in the mirror and rummaged in her purse for the spare apartment key he had given her. *You've been in bed with him many times before. How hard can it be to crawl back in—for the time being*, she reminded herself.

Connor slid into his seat and snapped the seatbelt across his lap as the pilot continued his welcome announcement.

"...and we're expecting clear, sunny skies on arrival at Schiphol Airport. Folks, before we can push back from the gate, we'll need everybody in their seats as quickly as possible..."

Connor tuned him out as he gazed absently out of his side window.

*I could possibly find every Immortal in this city inside of two weeks, yet I couldn't find Annelise*. That single thought had been like a nagging, festering sore for more hours than he could remember. Again, he found himself mulling over it endlessly in his mind. His gaze shifted back into the plane as the last passenger dashed through the doorway and a crewmember moved to secure it.

"Our captain is eager to get this Airbus on its way...we ask that everyone please find their seat as quickly as possible and..."

*Where did that woman go? Why didn't she tell me what was going on inside her head before she left?* Connor agonized further. His thoughts paused briefly and he glanced up at a man in his mid-30s who had stopped beside the empty seat next to him.

A full head of light brown wavy hair, touristy summer nondescript clothing, and an overfilled backpack, he had paused. Eyeing the empty seat, he set his backpack in it, then reached into his pants pocket for his ticket. As he fumbled with the folded paper, a flight attendant quickly approached, glanced at his ticket then pointed several rows behind Connor. Grabbing his backpack, the man moved on.

"...we'll need everyone to raise their seatbacks and place their tray tables in the upright and locked position..."

As he left, Connor leaned back against the wall almost sorry not to have company on this short flight.

*Maybe it would have distracted me from dwelling on this. I can't seem to get it off my mind.*

"*She did tell you, Connor old boy*," his subconscious mind chimed in, sparring once again with his mental monolog. "*You just didn't want to listen. She said it over and over— every time you tried to get close.*"

The flight back to Scotland would route him through Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport in a little over an hour—just long enough for a good nap.

"But what was it with her?" he whispered to himself under the droning monolog of the flight attendant. "Did she ever really say?" One moment, his mind's eye saw her arms around him—the next, there seemed to be an invisible wall between them. *What made it happen?* he pondered.

"You know exactly when and why it happened—the moment you got close—too close—she always backed away," he mumbled.

*Had he really pushed her that hard?* Rolling his eyes to the ceiling, he continued his recrimination.

*Come on now, you know you did—you never stopped speaking about making the two of you into one. And you know why you were doing it—your cousin and his recent marriage. You wanted the same closeness, the same feeling in your life as he has had with Tessa all these years—as you had with Heather a long time ago.*

"And why the hell not?" he whispered softly as he casually glanced to the side, to a couple with a child. "Why should I be any different from Duncan?"

Seating himself several rows behind Connor, the passenger tossed his backpack on the unoccupied seat next to his, unzipped the top and was discreetly reaching for his small, Watcher's Notebook when another flight attendant floated by, motioning that she wanted the item stowed right now.

Opting to leave the book inside until later, he quickly pushed it under the seat in front of him before buckling up.

Connor's mind drifted back to a certain conversation he had had with his cousin when—sick of the Game, Duncan had retired to the home he had built on Holy Ground.

*"You can't stay out of the Game forever, Duncan."*

*"I know, not forever, but for a time—I need time—time away from the fighting, the killing, and the hate in mankind. There has got to be something more in my life than that. What is the point of living forever if there isn't?"*

"Good point," Connor whispered. "What is the point if we can't find time to let love into our lives?"

Rolling the Paris newspaper up in his hands, he shoved it forcefully into the seat pocket in front of him. He had thought the complimentary newspaper would distract him from his nagging thoughts of Annelise and the worry of the past couple of weeks—it hadn't.

He closed his mind to the recent thoughts and his ears to the sounds of the engine warming up under the wing next to him. Settling back into a comfortable position between the seat and the window, he let the droning voices relax him into a catnap as the plane prepared to taxi down the runway.

Lightning flashed.

Connor's head and arms were thrown into the seat in front of him, jolting him awake. Screams resounded throughout the cabin, oxygen masks swung wildly as the plane yawed violently and smoke wafted from the direction of the cockpit. Bottles of water were flung against the forward bulkhead as Connor grabbed the latch on his seatbelt, flipped it open then half-fell, half lurched into the aisle. The plane teetered once again as a strange sound was heard coming from one of the engines. Out of his peripheral vision, Connor registered the mother doubled over her infant, trying to afford him as much cushion as her body could offer this young life in a plane crash. White-knuckled, he tried to slow his forward momentum by clinging to anything in his path.

The cockpit door swung with the motion of the plane—fabric from the gaping hole in it embedded in the back of a flight attendant lying sprawled in the first-class aisle.

Connor's foot slid roughly over a bloodied leg stump and he fell headfirst into the forward bulkhead before grabbing the door and sliding into the cockpit.

Blood splattered the walls and windows—body parts smeared and littered the instrument panel and floor.

*The seats have been blown away by small explosives—a small hole in the floor, under where the co-pilot's seat once was, is depressurizing the plane.*

Amidst flashing lights and blaring warnings, Connor swept the pilot's head and arm off the forward controls, braced his knees against anything that would give him leverage, and grabbing the yoke, pulled it back as hard as he could. The rapidly expanding view of the ground sank below the blood-splattered window as his hand fumbled for and found the fuel dump switch.

Another alarm—an engine has stalled.

His mind raced as the plane shook then pitched again.

*What happened? Must be the damaged control panel or something outside has happened to a plane engine—an explosion under a wing?* He didn't have time to analyze it

Flipping several other switches didn't silence the alarms.

*Dammit—we should be climbing—I can't raise the nose fast enough, she's too sluggish.*

Connor reached for yet another switch as the sight of a small town fanned out and grew quickly before the window.

*Oh no, we aren't going that way!* he thought frantically as his foot reached for a pedal. To his relief, the plane responded. Veering away from the houses, it brushed the tops of the tallest trees lining the

edge of a wide expanse of field. His hands tightened in a crushing grip on the yoke and he focused on nothing else. The nose then the wings of the plane struck first one tree then another. Connor was thrown over the control panel and into the window as the plane plowed through the thin grove and onto the meadow. The last thing he heard was a woman's scream.

Lightning flashed.

A woman's voice—his mother was calling him.

“Connor—get those sheep into the pen before the storm hits.”

Staff in hand, the lad waved it high into the air to let her know he had heard. His hand pushed and patted first sheep then another as he hurried the animals into the sheltered pen near his family's hut. In the next instant, his hand was on the door.

The full-body aroma of fresh bread in the wall-nook, the savory odor of stew cooking in the kettle that hung over the open hearth's fire—it all filled him with warmth and belonging. His senses drew him inside—close by the fire where he felt the presence of his family.

Connor's eye opened just a slit—he raised his bloody head and took a deep breath. Pain grabbed his chest, preventing a second one.

*I died again—that feeling, I've felt it many times before. Where am I—is anyone nearby?*

Blood dripped from his face as his perception began returning. The smell of smoke along with the sounds of screams and shouts began registering in his mind. He winced as the control panel sparked by his face.

*I have to get up—get off this control panel—can't move my arm—my shoulder hurts too—must both be broken—has to heal—hurry up, you're an Immortal, dammit.*

Twisting, he rolled away from the window then fell off the panel and onto the lower blood-stained remains of the pilot. The pain was excruciating—he passed out.

Lightning flashed.

The sound of metal on metal rang in his ear. His sword was swept aside by a strong arm.

“Watch your arm, son,” his father, reminded him again as he roughly reached out and pulled his son's sword up high in front of his face.

“If you let it drop that way, you'll be losing something for sure.”

Connor nodded and corrected his position. His father readied his stance once again. *He had been sparring with this man for more than an hour, didn't he ever tire?*

*Time will come soon enough,* Connor reminded himself sternly, *when I will be expected to defend my clan. It's my privilege—I'm his son.*

Those final words echoed in his thoughts as a rough hand grabbed Connor, pulled him up and shook him.

“Come on—wake up—I need your help—I know you're an Immortal!” the voice shouted from somewhere outside of his darkness.

A word, *immortal*—it was the only intelligible sound that registered in what was functioning of his mind. He coughed.

*Smoke—a baby crying—where am I? A plane—get up, Connor—get that door open.*

His faltering hand groped out in front of him into a red, hazy field of view. It found a solid support—*it feels human.* A hand shook him roughly once again as a voice shouted, “It won't open. What am I supposed to do?”

Blinking, he tried to clear his eyes and saw—the Kurgan!

A broad smile spread across the face behind the gaping animal jaws as the man, whose Quickening he knew he had taken, leaned into Connor until they were eye-to-eye. He shook him once again.

“Connor,” the raspy voice whispered, “I'm coming for you.”

“It’s finished—it’s over and done with—it’s all in the past. Your Quickening is inside of me,” he whispered back, his voice breathy.

“*Indeed it is,*” the deep raspy voice chortled, “*but I’m not finished with you—each moment I’m inside you—listen to me roar. Your time is running out.*”

That cryptic statement filled Connor with a touch of foreboding.

An Immortal dies, once and for all, when their head comes away from the shoulders. The Quickening goes to the victor—it is finished.

He tried to pull away, tried to fight against the grasp.

“Please snap out of it and help us!” the desperate hand shook then steadied him once again.

Connor quickly brushed his face against the side of his overcoat then shook his head, clearing it. The image of the Kurgan faded into the frightened, bruised and bloodied face of a stranger.

“The plane is on fire! I can’t get the emergency door open—the latch won’t move, I need your help!”

Connor lurched unsteadily into him, as he did, his eyes swept the aisle.

*Passengers dead in the aisle—smoke coming from everywhere—I can barely see—where’s that crying baby?*

His hand seized the arm that was supporting him and he pulled the man around to face the exit door. Pointing to the emergency release, they both threw their weight against the door latch.

It opened.

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End of Sample Chapter

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