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Kill Shot: An American Assassin Thriller (A Mitch Rapp Novel)

By Vince Flynn



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Vince Flynn's intensely suspenseful #1 *New York Times* bestseller puts the young, hungry, and lethal superagent of American Assassin in the crosshairs even as he kills with impunity.

In the year since the CIA trained and then unleashed him, Mitch Rapp has dismantled, kill by untraceable kill, the network of monsters behind the Pan Am Lockerbie terrorist attack. The hunt leads to Paris, where a deadly trap is sprung as the bullet leaves Rapp's silenced pistol—followed by the discovery of nine bodies, including Libya's oil minister, in one of the city's finest hotels. Washington wants no part of the international crisis, and Rapp is deemed a liability by Stan Hurley, one of his handlers. But as he slips outside their control to operate on his own, it will soon become clear that nothing is more dangerous than a wounded and cornered Mitch Rapp.



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Editorial Review

Review

"The voice of today's postmodern thriller generation, Flynn has never been better." --"Providence Journal"

"There's a reason [Vince Flynn] is No. 1 on the bestseller list." --The New York Post

"Flynn is a master -- maybe 'the' master -- of writing thriller novels in which the pages seem to turn themselves." --Bookreporter.com

About the Author

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Vince Flynn (1966–2013) created one of contemporary fiction's most popular heroes: CIA counterterrorist agent Mitch Rapp, featured in thirteen of Flynn's acclaimed political thrillers. All of his novels are *New York Times* bestsellers, including his stand-alone debut novel, *Term Limits*. The Mitch Rapp story begins with *American Assassin*, followed by *Kill Shot*, *Transfer of Power*, *The Third Option*, *Separation of Power*, *Executive Power*, *Memorial Day*, *Consent to Kill*, *Act of Treason*, *Protect and Defend*, *Extreme Measures*, *Pursuit of Honor*, *The Last Man*, *The Survivor*, *Order to Kill* and *Enemy of the State*. *American Assassin* will be released as a major film in 2017.

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Kill Shot

CHAPTER 1

PARIS, FRANCE

RAPP secured the gray nylon rope to a cast-iron vent stack and walked to the edge of the roof. He glanced at the balcony two floors below and then looked out across the City of Light. Sunrise was a few hours off and the flow of late-night revelers had faded to a trickle. It was that rare moment of relative inactivity that even a city as vibrant as Paris fell under once each day. Every city had its own unique feel, and Rapp had learned to pay attention to the ebb and flow of their natural rhythms. They had their similarities just like people. For all of the hang-ups about individuality, few understood that for the most part, people's actions were habitual. They slept, woke, ate, worked, ate some more, worked some more, ate again, watched TV, and then went to sleep again. It was the basic drumbeat of humanity the world over. The way people lived their lives and met their basic needs.

All men also had their own unique attributes, and these often manifested themselves in habits—habits that Rapp had learned to exploit. As a rule, the best time to strike was this witching hour, between dusk and dawn, when the overwhelming majority of the human race was asleep, or trying to sleep. The physiological reasons were obvious. If it took world-class athletes hours to warm up before a major event, how would a man defend himself when yanked from deep sleep? However, Rapp could not always choose the appointed hour, and occasionally a target's habits created an opening that was so painfully obvious, he simply couldn't ignore the opportunity.

Three weeks earlier Rapp had been in Athens. His target walked the same bustling sidewalk every morning from his apartment to his office. Rapp had considered shooting him on the sidewalk, as there was plenty of cover and distraction. It wouldn't have been difficult, but witnesses were always a concern, and a police officer could always stumble by at the wrong moment. As he studied his target, he noticed another habit. After arriving at work, the man had one more cup of coffee and then went down the hall with his newspaper and took a prolonged visit to the men's room.

Other than catching people asleep, the next best thing was catching them with their pants down. On the fourth day, Rapp waited in the middle stall of three and at the appointed hour his target sat down on his right. Rapp stood on the toilet seat, leaned over the divider, called out the man's name, and then after their eyes met, he smiled and sent a single 9mm hollow-tipped round through the top of the man's head. He fired one more kill shot into the man's brainpan for good measure and calmly left the building. Thirty minutes later, he was on a ferry slicing through the warm morning air of the Aegean Sea, headed for the island of Crete.

Most of the kills had been like that. Unsuspecting fools who thought themselves safe after years of the United States doing little or nothing to pursue them for their involvement in various terrorist attacks. Rapp's singular goal was to take the fight to these men. Bleed them until they began to have doubts, until they lay awake at night wondering if they were next. It had become his mission in life. Inaction was what had emboldened these men to continue with their plots to attack innocent civilians. The belief that they were secure to continue to wage their war of terror had given them a smug confidence. Rapp was single-handedly replacing that confidence with fear.

By now, they were aware that something was wrong. Too many men had been shot in the head in the last year for it to be a coincidence. Rapp's handler had reported the rumors. Most suspected that the Israelis had resurrected one of their hit teams, and that was fine with Rapp—the more disinformation the better. He was not looking for credit. In spite of his hot streak, tonight would be it for a while. The powers that be in Virginia were getting nervous. Too many people were talking. Too many foreign intelligence agencies were allocating assets to look into this rash of deaths among the world's most notorious terrorists and their network of financiers and arms dealers. Rapp was to return stateside for some rest and relaxation when he finished this one. At least that's what Rapp's handler had told him. Even after a quick year, however, he knew how things worked. Rest and relaxation meant that they wanted to observe him. Make sure some part of his psyche hadn't wandered down a dark corridor never to return. The thought brought a smile to Rapp's face. Killing these assholes was the most therapeutic thing he'd ever done in his life. It was more effective than a decade of psychotherapy.

He placed his hand over his left ear and focused on the tiny transmitter that was relaying the sounds of the luxury hotel suite two floors below. Just like the night before, and the night before that, he could hear the portly Libyan wheezing and snoring. The man was a three-pack-a-day chain smoker. If Rapp could only chase him up a flight of stairs, he might be able to accomplish his task.

Rapp followed a delivery van as it quietly passed beneath on the Quai Voltaire. Something was bothering him, but he couldn't place it. He scanned the street for the slightest evidence that anything was out of place and then turned his attention to the tree-lined walking paths that bordered the Seine River. They too were empty. All was as it should be, but still something was gnawing at him. Maybe things had been too easy of late, one kill after another, city after city, and not so much as a single close call. The law of averages told him that sooner or later, something would go wrong, and he would end up in a jam that might land him in a foreign jail or possibly cost him his life. Those two thoughts were always in the back of his mind, and depending on what country he was in, he wasn't sure which would be his preference.

There was little room for fear and doubt in what he did. There should be caution and a keen eye to detail, but fear and doubt could incapacitate. He could stand up here all night thinking up excuses not to proceed. Stan Hurley, the tough SOB who had trained him, had warned him about the pitfalls of paralysis by analysis. Rapp thought about the stern warning that Hurley had given him and decided it was more than likely his handler's anxiety. She had warned him that if the slightest thing didn't seem right, he was to abort the mission. An American could not be caught doing this kind of dirty work in Paris. Not ever, and especially not now, given the current political climate.

In the big picture, the target was a link. Another name to cross off his list, but to Rapp it was always more personal than the big picture. He wanted to make every last one of these men pay for what they'd done. Each kill would grow more difficult, more dangerous, and it didn't bother Rapp in the least. He welcomed the challenge. In fact, he took sincere joy in the fact that these assholes were looking over their shoulder each day and going to sleep every night wondering who was hunting them.

Rapp asked himself one more time if he should be concerned that the Libyan was traveling without security. There was a good chance that the man felt safe in his position as his country's oil minister. As an important member of the diplomatic community, he probably thought himself above the dirty games of terrorists and assassins. Well, Rapp thought to himself, once a terrorist, always a terrorist. Dress him up in a suit and tie and put him up in a thousand-dollar-a-night suite in Paris, and he was still a terrorist.

Rapp scanned the street and listened to the Libyan snoring like a pig. After half a minute, he made up his mind. The man would not see another sunrise. Rapp began to move in an efficient, almost robotic way as he went over his gear one last time. His silenced Beretta was secured in a shoulder holster under his right arm; two extra magazines were safely tucked away under his left arm; a double-edged four-inch combat knife was sheathed at the small of his back; and a smaller 9mm pistol was strapped to his right ankle. These were merely the offensive weapons he'd brought along. There was a small med kit, a radio that was tuned to the hotel's security channel, flex cuffs, and a perfectly forged set of documents that said he was a Palestinian recently immigrated from Amman, Jordan. And then there was the bulletproof vest. Wearing it was one of several things that had been beaten into him during his seemingly never-ending training.

Rapp flipped up the collar on his black jacket and pulled a thin black balaclava over his face. He hefted the coil of climbing rope, looked over the edge of the building, and said to himself, "Two shots to the head." It was a bit redundant, but that was the point, and the essence of what this entire exercise was about.

Rapp gently let the rope play its way out and then swung both legs over the lip of the roof. In one smooth move, he hopped off the ledge and spun 180 degrees. His gloved hands clamped onto the rope and slowed his descent until he had dropped fifteen feet and he could reach out and put one foot on the railing of the balcony. Holding firmly to the rope, he gently stepped down onto the small black iron grating. He was careful to keep himself off to one side despite the fact that the blackout drapes were pulled. Dropping to a knee, he took the rope and brought it around the railing so it would be available should he need to make a quick exit. He had disabled the lock on the balcony door when he'd planted the listening device two days earlier. If there was time, he would retrieve the device, but it was nothing special. Rapp always made sure to use devices that couldn't be traced back to one of the high-end manufacturers that Langley used.

He had the layout of the suite memorized. It was one big room with a sitting area on the left and king-sized platform bed on the other. Rapp listened to the noises on the other side of the doors. The prostitute was more than likely there, but Rapp couldn't hear her over the obnoxious snoring and wheezing of the Libyan. Everything was as it should be. Rapp drew his Beretta and slowly began to place pressure on the brass door handle with his gloved hand. He moved it from the three o'clock position down to five, and then it released

without so much as a click.

Rapp pulled the door toward him and swung it flat against the side of the building. He placed his free hand on the seam of the blackout curtains and pushed through in a low crouch, his pistol up and sweeping from left to right. It was six steps from the balcony to where his target was sleeping. The bed was up so high that the platform had a step that wrapped around three sides. A massive, gaudy mirror served as the headboard. The elevation put the target at waist height for the six-foot-one Rapp. With the tip of the silencer only four feet from the Libyan's head, Rapp stole a quick glance in hopes that he could locate the prostitute. The best he could do was get a sense that she was somewhere on the other side, buried under a jumble of pillows and blankets. He would never shoot her, but he might have to pistol-whip her in the event she woke up and started screaming.

Rapp moved a half step closer and leveled his weapon. He placed the orange dot of his front sight on the bridge of the man's nose and then brought the two rear dots into position. The pressure was already on the trigger, and without so much as the tiniest flash of hesitation, Rapp squeezed and sent a bullet into the man's head. The suppressor jumped one inch, fell back in line, and Rapp fired the second shot.

He looked down at the Libyan. The second shot had enlarged the dime-sized hole by half. Death was instantaneous, which meant that the snoring had stopped. In the new silence of the room, Rapp's eyes darted to the jumbled pile on the far side of the bed, and after three seconds of no movement he dropped to his knee and reached around the back of the nightstand. The fingertips of his right hand had just found what he was looking for when he felt the floor beneath him tremble. The vibration was intense enough that Rapp knew it could be caused only by one thing. He withdrew his hand, leaving the listening device where it was, and rose enough so that he could look over the bed to the hotel room's door.

There, in the thin strip of light under the door, Rapp saw one shadow pass and then another. He cursed to himself, and was about to make a break toward the balcony, when the door crashed open, flooding the suite with a band of light. As Rapp began to drop, he saw the distinct black barrel of a submachine gun, and then a bright muzzle flash.

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