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# BLINDSHOT

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## EXCERPT

The night air was fresh, filled with the rich scents of the forest that wrapped the Carignan family property, Valhalla, in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Paul Carignan, family man, father of two, successful corporate financier, walked to the woodpile near the west wall of his cherished Valhalla, went down on one knee and sorted through logs to find just the right ones for this evening's fire.

A rifle shot sounded from far off in the woods. A flock of crows scattered up and away. Paul's vision blurred. He tried to shake it off, dropping the logs. The biggest one fell hard on his ankle but a sudden sensation in his abdomen preoccupied him more, burning to his lower back, intensifying. He lost his breath as he looked down at himself. He slid his hands into his clothes to his mid-section, pain spreading, throbbing through his veins like a freight train. He felt the warm wetness creeping to his legs, confirming the incredible.

He had been shot. He fell over. With a gasp, his spirit tore out of him, flying up, chasing the frightened crows and disappearing beyond the valley and over the dark woods. The wound burned like nothing ever had. Thoughts assailed him. What if he were to die right now, on this evening, by this bullet? What would his boys, Jack and Noah, do? They were still so young, with much to learn. What would Catherine do? She was barely getting through their pending divorce. Deep down, he still loved her. They had lost their way, their passion fading, as with so many couples they knew who had children and demanding careers. He had sought passion from another woman and had surprised even himself with his unfaithfulness. He would never have the chance to redeem himself now, not to Catherine, not to himself. All seemed to be over, here and now, by this bullet that had pierced him in the dark. Maybe he was getting what he deserved? But who had shot him? Why? The possibilities swirled in his panicked, weakening mind. He had been a tough business adversary to many over the years. His penchant for taking over flailing manufacturing companies, restructuring and reselling them, or sometimes liquidating their parts, had pushed many good people aside, destroyed careers of veteran entrepreneurs, broken partnerships, and set industry veterans adrift. He had taken no prisoners. That was just his way and he had made it work for his benefit. It was easy for Paul to imagine a great number of enemies who might want him gone. Blood poured from his gut.

"Catherine!" he shouted, but it came out a whisper. She was nowhere near, and no matter how much he yearned for her to be right there, ready to help, from however deep in him this came, it wouldn't matter. Catherine wasn't there, and she would never know how often he thought of her. She would never know and might scarcely believe that he had always thought of her and not his girlfriend, Anne, as his soulmate. Anne was young and striking, but hadn't Catherine been his muse, his guide, with him through the lean years and the greater part of his life. Together, Paul and Catherine had overcome myriad obstacles and produced, in their view, two of the greatest people on the planet. Jack and Noah were amazing boys. He wondered now, as he bled, if he had done all he could for them. Had he even told them often enough how much he cared? His mind raced to remember precisely, but his energy dropped.

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