



*Her hand moved with the speed of a striking cobra. The gun spit twice.*

## Gats in the Hat

By CARLOS MARTINEZ

*Author of "The Black Widow," etc.*

*Harry Grant was the mobster of a hundred molls—but two can make plenty trouble if they're the least bit jealous.*

“L AY off; lay off,” said Harry Grant. “You ain’t buying me any automobiles or country homes, and I can’t help being what I am!”

The pale blonde with platinum-colored hair stared at him with eyes that were hot with desire. Then her lips curled wistfully as she pulled his curly head down to her while her fingers made little circles in his ear.

“I’d buy you anything if you would take it,” she whispered. “I want you all to myself, Harry!”

“In this racket it’s a short life and a merry one,” said the man. “I know I’m fickle, and any good-looking frail can get a rise out of me. That’s why I don’t settle to one. I’d get my light blown out sure as hell!”

He was a good-looking chap in his late twenties, with brown eyes and curly black hair, and the tall, muscular figure that women talk to themselves about when they are alone. When he smiled his full lips disclosed even white teeth set in a jaw that was

strong and determined looking, and to further demoralize the ladies, Nature had given him a cleft in his chin which is the mark of muscular pulchritude in any language.

“It’s the jane over on the West Side,” cried the blonde. “Her and that damn red hat give me a pain!”

“Now, listen, Greta,” he objected. “Carmen ain’t a bad sort at all. She’s as dark as you are fair, and Harry Grant’s two little girlfriends are certainly good-looking women!”

Her eyes blazed dangerously. “Someday I’ll kill you,” she said quietly.

He got up from the couch then, and stood looking down at her with thoughtful eyes. Suddenly his hand darted inside his coat and appeared with a dull blue automatic. Her eyes grew wide as he thrust it toward her, but he turned the butt and pushed the gun into her hand. Then he stepped back and turned his left breast to her.

"It's jake with me," he said quietly. "I've got too much sense to tell any woman I could be true to her, and I might as well be dead as to have some dame telling me what to do. Go ahead and shoot!"

For a long minute she stared at him, and then her glance fell to the gun in her hand. She threw it suddenly on the couch and pulled him down to her as she burst into tears.

"You know I can't do it," she wailed. "I love you too much!"

**H**IS hands soothed her as she continued to sob, and then he picked up the rod and returned it to his shoulder-holster. Handing her a silk handkerchief from his breast pocket, he gently disengaged her arms and rose to his feet.

"Be your age," he chided. "I'm no bargain, and you know it. I'm just honest, which is something you can't get accustomed to!"

"Let me buy you a new car for being a bad girl," she pleaded. "That old crate you drive around is awful."

"That old 'Doosie' can make ninety miles an hour," he defended. "I don't like new cars in my business."

"I could make you a Big Shot if you weren't so stubborn," she pouted.

"I'm too lazy to be a Big Shot," he grinned. "Takes too much time and energy. I'm just a Vagabond Lover, and I never will amount to a damn!"

"That's the most dangerous game in the racket," she snapped. "Making love to many different women!"

"Not as long as you are honest," he corrected. "And I just can't help it. I love 'em, and they like it, and that's that!"

"Please love me a little, Harry," she pleaded.

"I'll be seeing you tonight," he said. "Got some unfinished business uptown right now."

He held her in his arms for a moment as he kissed her pouting lips, and she closed her eyes the way women always do, and crushed him fiercely to her breast.

"You are mine," she whispered. "All mine!"

"Yours and who else's?" he bantered. "Now you get yourself all beautiful for tonight, and wear that clinging white thing that I always like. I'll be seeing you, baby."

For a long time after he had left the apartment she lay with brooding eyes that did not see. At last she reached out a rounded arm and took a telephone from under a silken doll. Calling a number, she continued to brood while waiting for her connection.

"Poppy?" she whispered into the mouthpiece. "Took you a hell of a while to answer. Get up here to my place as soon as you can!"

**T**WENTY minutes later a pale, thin youth knocked softly at the door. She admitted him without a word, and motioned to an overstuffed chair. He sat on the edge of the cushion, his long fingers twitching as he clutched his hat. Finally the girl turned on him angrily.

"Here!" she snapped, and threw him a small folded paper. "Treat yourself to a snowstorm and see if you can stop that damn jerking!"

He took the little package and opened it with shaking fingers. Then he rubbed the fine white powder on the back of his left hand and sniffed eagerly. For a minute he closed his eyes, and when he again looked at the girl, the twitching had gone from his hands.

"Okay, Greta," he said quietly. "Who do you want bumped, and when do you want it done?"

"I'll blow you to hell myself if you ever peep!" she threatened. "It's Carmen O'Day, and the job is tonight!"

"How is Harry?" asked the man.

"You mind your business," she snapped. "I'll give you five grand to do the job right."

"I'd kill myself for five G's," he said huskily. "What's the lay?"

"Harry and I are going to the Green Mill tonight," said the girl. "That O'Day hussy will be there in her usual booth. Now listen."

He leaned closer as she lowered her voice, and as she talked his eyes lighted up, the iris nearly covering the dilated pupils.

"I have a key to that building across the street," she said. "The third window in the loft looks right into her booth. A good rifle, a silencer, and no one knows the diff."

"It's a cinch," he agreed. "That frail won't worry you any more."

"Here's a century," she said. "And here's a deck of snow to use just before you do the trick, and I'll kill you if you get snowed under before you do the job."

"Forget it," he said. "Business before pleasure. When I get those five G's, I'll take a little trip and get me a real sleigh ride."

**I**T was ten o'clock when Harry Grant led Greta across the floor and into a booth at the Green Mill. He had wanted to come sooner, but she had insisted that it wasn't swanky to arrive early, and had kept him at the apartment. He nodded to several dancing couples while they were waiting for dinner, and the girl busied herself with the highballs.

Her eyes flashed as a couple danced by their booth, and a dark-eyed girl in a vivid red hat waved her hand to Harry Grant.

"How's chances for the next dance, Harry?" asked the girl.

"About par," he smiled. "I'll be seeing you."

"I hope she breaks a leg," said Greta. "I wanted the first dance!"

"You said you did not want to dance until after dinner," he protested. "You're just jelly."

"Yes, I'm jealous," she admitted. "I don't like it when you have your arms around that snaky dame."

"She is rather willowy," said Grant. "But that's funny about my arms around her when I'm dancing."

He went to the booth that the girl Carmen always reserved alone, and led her out on the floor. He tightened his arm around the dark-eyed beauty as he noticed Greta watching him with smoldering eyes, and started a fast foxtrot step to which the girl responded perfectly.

"You shouldn't try to get Greta's goat," he scolded. "It makes her murderous."

"I can't help it because I like you, can I?" she asked.

"Me and a squad of eight men," he answered. "You are too good-looking for one man to hold."

"Stop fishing," she said. "You know you can have me whenever you get ready to quit fooling around."

"It's so much fun to fool around," he admitted. "I don't ever intend to quit."

"If you were not so damn honest about it, some dame would have shot you long ago," she said. "There's been a hundred wanted you, and you know it."

"More than a hundred," he teased. "And I loved every one of them."

HER eyes clouded suddenly, and he followed the direction of her glance. A young girl had entered the booth they had left, and on her head was the duplicate of the hat Carmen was wearing.

"I ought to slap her ears off," said Carmen. "That's my kid sister, and I told her she could not come here tonight, so she borrowed some of my rags and came anyway. Wait till we finish this dance!"

They whirled to the opposite end of the room, and as they started back, they could look right into the booth where the young girl was seated. She waved to them, and then began to sip the highball Carmen had left.

As she put the thin glass to her lips, her hand jerked violently and the glass splintered on the floor. The girl fell across the table as Grant and

Carmen raced to her side. Taking her shoulders, he pushed her back against the cushions, and his eyes hardened as he saw the crimson stain spreading across the left side of her low-cut gown. There had been no sound of a shot, but the girl was dead.

Carmen wheeled like a flash, and her eyes darted toward the booth where Greta was sitting. Her eyes showed their disappointment as she noted that it was impossible for Greta to even see the booth where the girl was killed.

"You have enemies," said Grant. "Somebody thought the kid was you in that red hat. Hold yourself together now, until we get her out of here."

Calling the manager, he informed him of the killing, and between them they carried the girl to a restroom. The dancers thought the girl had merely passed out from too much liquor and paid no further attention.

Grant hurried back to the booth where Greta waited impatiently. Her eyes snapped as she tried to control her jealousy.

"Where were you all this time?" she asked nastily.

"You will have to excuse me," he said in a low voice as he took his hat. "Carmen's sister came in while we were dancing, and took the booth. She had one of Carmen's red hats on, and somebody shot her. Used a rod with a silencer. I have to go along with the poor kid while she gets things attended to."

The hands of the pale blonde tightened under the table, and she bit her lips to control her agitation. She sneered as he held out his hand.

"God's gift to women," she said. "I guess I can take myself home."

"No doubt about it," he answered coldly. "I'm sorry you feel that way about it."

He left before she could answer, and hurried back to where Carmen was waiting. An ambulance would get the body of the girl, and in the meantime there were other things to do. Carmen was weeping violently now, and he led her out a side entrance, and put her in his car. Then he drove to her apartment.

"It was that dish-water blonde!" cried Carmen suddenly.

She stopped her pacing and faced Grant with flashing eyes. He looked at her in amazement, and then put his arm around her.

"Our booth was on the same side of the room as yours," he reminded her. "It couldn't have been Greta."

"I'm a woman, and I know," declared the girl. "She didn't do the shooting, but she had it done, and whoever fired that shot thought they were giving me the works."

"But anyone in the room could see you dancing with me," he objected.

SHE clutched his arm excitedly. "That's it," she almost shouted. "They were not in that room. We would at least have seen the smoke."

"You mean they were outside?" he asked.

"Let's drive back there," she said. "I want to see those buildings across the street."

Ten minutes later they were standing in front of the Club. Their booth did not face the front, and after looking all the buildings over, Grant led the way around the corner. The girl drew her breath in quickly, and pointed to a row of windows in the top floor.

"Five stories," she said, "and the Club is on the fourth floor. There's the window; the third from the end. A glass is broken out, and it looks right into my booth!"

"Let's go up there and have a look," said Grant.

"But the place is all locked up," she said.

"Come on," said Grant. "Being a gentleman burglar sometimes has it's advantages."

They crossed the street, and entered an alley which ran along the entire length of the old building. Grant worked but a few seconds on the lock of a small door, and then led the way to a stairway. Five minutes later they were in the loft.

"Look at the silk," said Grant.

"And Persian rugs," the girl added. "Say, this is somebody's whisper loft. This junk has all been stolen or I'm crazy!"

"That's none of our business," said Grant. "Let's get over to the windows!"

Shielding the flashlight behind his hand so as not to draw a wandering Flattie, they advanced to the front of the loft, carefully picking their way among the piles of silks. Straight to the broken window they crept, and Grant knelt down to look through the sash. The girl joined him and they found themselves looking right into the open window of her booth in the Green Mill!

"Don't move," he cautioned.

Sweeping the floor with his flashlight, he stooped and picked up a little square of paper. He looked at it a moment, and then held it to his nose.

"Cocaine," he whispered. "A snowbird did this job."

The girl reached down and handed him a mashed cigarette. It had not been lighted, but was twisted and bent as though by nervous fingers. He examined it very carefully, and then looked thoughtful.

"There's only one man I know of that uses Mahoff's?" he said. "It's a Russian cigarette, and he has them sent to him from the East!"

"Who is it?" asked the girl. "If it's a cokey, he was working for someone else. We can make him tell, or...?"

"Poppy Brandon," he whispered. "Now don't go off half-cocked. Let's get this guy where we can work on him!"

"He killed my little sister," said the girl as her eyes hardened. "After you get through with him, he gets the works!"

"Keep your head!" he snapped. "You want to get the Hot Squat?"

"Let's go," she said. "I'll promise to be good!"

"THERE he is now," said Grant. "Take the wheel and drive around the corner. I'll get out, and when he passes the corner, I'll stick him up. You keep the engine running, and we will take him for a ride!"

They had been driving to the little hotel where Poppy Brandon kept a room, when Grant saw him walking along the pavement. He slipped out of the driver's seat, and as Carmen took his place, he ran around the front of the car and took the right hand seat. A minute later she turned the corner, and he got out and flattened his body against the corner of the building while the car continued on for half a block.

Soon he heard the sound of shuffling feet, and drew his breath in sharply. He held his breath until the other reached the corner, and then stepped out and stuck his rod into the stomach of the skinny fellow.

"Elevate Poppy, and don't let out a squawk," he warned. "Down this way!"

Keeping his gun in the side of the addict, he took the thin arm and led the way to the waiting car. Opening the hack door, he thrust the snowbird in, and climbed in after him with the rod still buried in his ribs.

"Say listen, Harry," whined Brandon. "What's the idea making a play at me with your rod? I ain't done nothing!"

"You been stealing silk from me," said Grant. "I saw you come out of that building across from the club tonight, and that's my hideaway!"

"I swear to Heaven I didn't take nuthin'," said Brandon.

"What you doing then: Stooling for the Flatties?"

"I was just lookin' around," said Brandon.

"Yeah? Well, Poppy, you know what happens to a stoolie, don't you?" asked Grant. "I'm going to bump you off!"

"Wait a minute," pleaded Brandon. "I was doing a job tonight. Jeez, Harry; what would I do with a bunch of silk?"

"Sell it like I do," said Grant. "You snowbirds would do anything for a little powder!"

"I should bother about silks," sneered Brandon. "After tonight I can buy five grand worth of coke if I want it!"

"Who owes you five grand?" asked Grant. "Speak up fellow, or I'll give you the works!"

"Just a little deal I got on with Greta," admitted Brandon. "And you know damn well she always keeps her word!"

The car was well out in the country now, and suddenly the girl pulled over to the side of the road and applied the brakes. Then she snapped on the dome light, and turned around to face Brandon. His face turned a greenish pallor as his hands began to twitch.

"It's her ghost!" he screamed. "Why, I never miss, and I saw her fall!"

The heavy rod in the hand of the girl spoke once before Grant could interfere, and the killer fell forward with a little blue hole in the center of his forehead.

"Dump him!" she said. "He had it coming!"

Grant opened the door and pushed the body of the killer out into the weeds where it rolled down an embankment before coming to rest. The girl stepped on the starter, and driving to the next crossroad, she turned the car and headed back to town.

**T**HE next morning at ten, Grant pushed the button at Greta's apartment. Admitting him, he noted that she was dressed for the street, but he pushed past her and sat down on a low couch.

"I thought you were someone else," she said. "I am expecting a caller on business this morning!"

"I will leave when your caller arrives," said Grant. "Sit down; I want to talk to you!"

"Make it snappy," she answered.

She took a chair facing him where she could see the door, and on her lap the large bag she affected was clasped in her nervous hands. He smiled as he noticed the outlines of a rod through the fancy fabric.

"Going to turn the heat on someone?" he asked pleasantly.

"Mind your own business, Harry! I don't ask you to play my game. I wish you would run along until I get this little deal straightened out!"

"Don't you ever read the papers?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" she snapped at him.

"Police saw a light in the top floor of that building across from the Green Mill last night," he answered quietly. "When they investigated, they found a lot of stolen goods up there in the loft; bales of silk, Oriental rugs and the like."

She stared at him with hard eyes, as her face went suddenly pale, and her hand clutched the handle of the gun inside of her bag.

"Yeah?" she whispered. "Then what?"

"They are trying to find out who rented the loft," he answered. "They found a paper from a deck of snow, and they figure that Carmen's sister was shot from that window in the loft where the glass is broken out. Whoever had that hideout should have seen to the broken glass!"

"What's all that to me?" asked the girl. "Say, listen here Harry, are you trying to rib me along?"

"I'm just giving you a little tip," said Grant quietly. "I found this up there, and I have seen it often enough to know who it belongs to!"

He threw a bag over to her which was a duplicate of the one on her lap. She snatched it up quickly, and hastily looked through the contents. Then she looked at him as she held a little book in her hand.

"Did you look through this?" she asked in a strained voice.

"I wasn't interested," he answered. "But what if I had?"

"If you had I'd bump you off so quick—"

"And I'd sit here and take it, I guess," said Grant.

She looked quickly at his face which had hardened with anger. Running to his side, she threw her arms about him and flung herself down on the couch.

"I do love you," she cried. "Let's don't quarrel, dear. I'd do anything for you!"

He was glancing out the window indifferently, his hands at his sides. Suddenly he jumped to his feet upsetting her, and hurried to the door.

"Here comes that dick from Central Office," he whispered. "I don't want him to see me here. I'll be back later."

He hurried down the hall, and waited around a bend until the detective had entered the apartment, after which he slipped noiselessly down the stairs.

**"HELLO,** Greta," said the detective quietly. "Got a cigarette?"

She handed him a pack, and lighting one up, he dropped the pack carelessly in his pocket. Then he seated himself lazily on the couch and crossed his legs.

"What do you want, Terry?"

"You don't smoke Russian cigarettes," he said.

"No! Now that that's settled, let us get down to cases!"

"That loft of yours across from the Green Mill," he began. "A dame was shot in the Green Mill last night, and the bullet came from the loft."

"I was eating in the Mill at the time," she snapped. "What's the matter; ain't you getting enough grease?"

"Grease is all right on a little thing like smuggling and robbery," he said quietly. "But murder is something else again!"

"I didn't even know the dame," said Greta.

"But you know her sister," said the detective. "Seems like your sweetie was dancing with her, and they shot the kid by mistake!"

"I didn't have a thing to do with it, and you know it," she blazed. "You better run down another clue!"

"I will," he promised. "Don't try to leave town. Poppy Brandon was up here yesterday, and as soon as I find him I'll be back to talk to you!"

"I'll be right here," said the girl. "You haven't a thing on me and you know it. If you did, you'd take me in."

"I don't waste my time that way," said the detective. "When I pin a rap on somebody, it sticks!"

"Here's a box of matches to go with that pack of cigarettes," she said.

He looked at her queerly, and then threw the package of fags on the table. They upset an ashtray as they fell, and stepping forward he picked up the twisted end of a butt.

"Here's the kind I was looking for," he said. "Mahoff's, the kind Poppy Brandon smokes. See you later!"

The girl stood staring after him as the door slammed, and was still in the same position when Harry Grant turned the knob and walked in.

"How did you get in?" she asked.

"This key was in the knob," he answered. "I saw old Terry beat it, and figured everything was in the clear, so I came back!"

"Are you in love with that Carmen dame?" she asked.

"Sure," he laughed. "I'm in love with all the good-looking women!"

"Don't try to string me along," she cried. "You know damn well what I mean."

"I stick to any pal of mine that's in trouble and getting a raw deal," he said. "And Carmen got one!"

"Her sister got it," corrected Greta. "Too damn bad it wasn't her. I'm sick of seeing that red hat."

"Everybody knows that," said Grant. "It won't do Terry any good to look for Poppy Brandon," he added casually.

She was on her feet facing him, and her eyes were wild-looking with anger and fear. She clutched his shoulder and jerked him about to face her.

"Just what do you mean by that?" she snapped. "How do you know Terry is looking for Brandon?"

"Heard him say so," said Grant, shamelessly. "He won't find him, so you might as well take your hat off and make yourself comfortable."

"What do you know about Brandon?" she asked.

SHE had again seated herself, and her hands were playing with the catch on her bag. Her eyes were boring into his with a dangerous insistence, and he knew that at any moment she might go for the rod within her purse.

"I asked you once before if you didn't read the papers," he said. "Brandon was picked up this morning with a slug in his brain!"

She sighed with evident relief as he watched the effect of his words, and her whole body seemed to relax. She took off her hat and tossed it to a chair, and for the first time that morning, she smiled at Grant.

"That little deal is off then," she said. "I never did like to do business with any one that used junk!"

"That saves you just five grand, doesn't it?"

The blond leaped to her feet as the low feminine voice broke in to spoil her newfound peace. The first thing she saw as she swung toward the door was a red hat, and as she fumbled with her bag, the other girl rasped out an order.

"Hold it! Now sit down there in that chair again!"

As she looked into the ugly bore of the gun in Carmen's hand, Greta sat down suddenly. Her face was twisted with the rage she could not conceal, and the muscles in her jaw stood out in little ridges.

"How the hell did you get in here?" she hissed.

"This was in the knob," said Carmen. In her hand she held a small key.

"What the hell!" Greta glared at the key for a moment, and then her eyes shifted accusingly to Grant. "That's some of your work, you damn burglar!"

"What's a few keys between good friends?" said Grant. "You won't need them where you're going!"

"You mean I'm on the spot!"

"Poppy Brandon did a lot of talking last night before he kicked off," said Carmen. "He was going to collect five grand from you this morning for a little job he did for you. And when he saw me he went nuts, and said I was a ghost, because he had burned me down himself!"

"If I'd wanted you out of the way, I'd have done it myself, said Greta, "You're screwy; both of you!"

"Just the same, when Terry gets back here you are going to take the rap," said Carmen. "It's the hot seat for you, Dizzy, and if it were not for Grant, I'd burn you down myself!"

"Friends," sneered Greta. "One way or the other, I burn!"

Her hands moved with the speed of a striking cobra, and as her rod came out of the bag spitting flame, the gun in the hand of Carmen spat twice. As the blonde sagged and fell back among the cushions of the overstuffed chair, the girl with the red hat wavered on unsteady legs, and then crumpled slowly to the floor.

Grant jumped to his feet and knelt at her side as the hall door opened, and he was holding Carmen in his arms when Terry bolted in like a frightened horse. Then he, too, knelt beside the wounded girl.

"She's dead," whispered Carmen. "Tried to hold her for the hot squat, Terry, but she drew, and I let her have it!"

Her head fell back as she spoke, and the detective reached for her wrist, felt for the pulse,

and then dropped the lifeless hand. The red hat was pushed down on the girl's forehead, and he pulled it off and threw it on the floor.

"That damn red hat!" he muttered.

"I'll keep it always," said Grant.

The detective looked at him coldly as he closed the eyes of the dead women, and in his voice there was nothing but contempt.

"Those two dames killed each other because of you," he sneered. "And then Carmen clears you with her last breath."

"I loved her," said Grant.

"Her and a hundred others," said Terry. "Here's your souvenir. Now get the hell out of my sight!"

Harry Grant took the red hat and hurried away.

*NEXT MONTH*

## DEATH ROLLS THE BONES

By JACK DARCY

*"Will you shoot fifty grand against me?" asked the moll.*

*"Don't do it, Benny—she's nuts," they said. Fat Benny picked up the dice. . . .*

## SHE KNEW ALL THE ANSWERS

By THEODORE ORCHARDS

*"Listen, Punk," said Jenny, "you're monkeyin' with a handful of clouds. What makes you think that I—the Big Shot's moll would go for a cheap racketeer like you. . . ."*

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