

# She's 15 and she's a KILLER for hire

Meet the teen assassin who murdered 30 men. With the same knife

If a guy spilled his drink on you, what would you do? Laugh it off? Or follow him outside, pull a knife from your pocket, and slit his throat? Catarina\* from São Paulo, Brazil chose the last option. Killing a random man who knocked some brandy on her. She was just 15 years old.

Growing up in one of the world's most violent slums, Catarina survived by learning how to fight. By the time she was 13, she could knock out a guy twice her size and outrun anyone who gave chase. She was tough, sassy and *really* angry. Seeing that São Paulo was corrupt, she took the law into her own hands. Over two years, Catarina murdered 30 men.

Some of her victims were well-known gangsters. Others were just men who got in her way. One of her victims was a paedophile. "I killed him because he messed with girls aged nine and ten," she said, without flinching. She killed every victim with the same knife and almost always slashed their necks. And she enjoyed it. "I liked to see the blood flow onto my sandals," she admits.

Not only was Catarina a criminal, but she was breaking stereotypes, too. Women in her community typically stayed at home to look after the family. Men could treat them however they wanted. But that wasn't the life Catarina wanted.

### Hit and run

Catarina claims that she initially chose her victims because they offended her. But according to sources it wasn't long before others heard of her activities, and soon she was being hired to commit murders for gangland bosses. Tall, slim, fragile, young and seemingly innocent, with a disarming smile, she was the perfect assassin. Few would ever suspect that she hid a knife in her pocket.

Catarina took her hit seriously. Killing was her job. Cold, calculated and

meticulous, Catarina never messed up. Nobody saw her coming. And nobody saw her leave.

In Brazil children younger than 18 are immune from prosecution – whatever their crime. So becoming a paid assassin was

the perfect job for Catarina. The

worst punishment she could expect was being locked up in a reform school, but she'd soon be let out because of overcrowding: "If it paid well, I would kill for anybody." She gave all the money to her family.

But she couldn't avoid the repercussions of her actions forever.

When she walked down the street, she saw missing posters stuck up on the walls. People were looking for the men that she had killed. And Catarina's family were aware of her job. Her parents were sick with worry.

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On one occasion, for reasons unknown, she stabbed her cousin, right in front of her grandma.

### Confessing her sins

As her 18th birthday drew closer, Catarina also began to worry. She was terrified that if she was caught, any punishment would be too much for her family to bear. So when she was arrested for fighting, she decided it was time to confess to her crimes. She told police she'd killed 30 men, detailing 11 of them. "I didn't have the courage to hold a gun, but I can hold a knife," she admitted.

Catarina's concern for her family convinced her to hand herself in. "I promised my parents that I would confess before I became an adult." She desperately didn't want to be tried as an adult. If she was, she risked life imprisonment. Or public execution.

As Catarina's story became big news, everyone was stunned. How could *a girl* commit so many killings without being caught once? Teenage boy assassins are rare, but a teen girl assassin was a first. Soon police became convinced that she hadn't been acting alone. Some of the victims were too important within certain crime groups for her to have just randomly picked them off. Catarina reluctantly admitted that she had received help, but refused to identify anyone else. She insists she did it all: "for money, revenge and to do justice."

Now dubbed 'The Kitty Cat Criminal' in Brazil, it appears Catarina is awaiting her trial – as an adult. Officials want to sentence her like this due to the severity of her crimes, her lack of remorse and disregard for authority. So will the teen assassin soon be facing justice herself?