

On her knees, staring at shit, was pretty much how Penny Hitch had seen herself dying. If not so literally. The inevitability of it was more irritating than scary.

Maybe it wasn't shit shit. Or maybe it was. These were sewers. Or sewer-adjacent. A wide space, with grimy stone walls, a wide channel of unspecified liquid flowing in front of her, and metal walkways slick with something she'd be better off not thinking about.

The sewage treatment plant wasn't far away. Maybe this was the wash off from the place. The water may not be the source of the smell she'd sooner wasn't the last thing in her nose when she died, but she hoped she'd be dead before she went in the water.

Given how Callum Moloney waved his small blade near her face, she didn't see much chance of a quick death. Or a clean one, by any definition.

The idiot liked his knives. He claimed it avoided bullets being traced to a particular gun. Knives were cheaper, so he'd simply discard them after use, confident of not being traced. She was sure it was more of a style thing for him though.

His light blond hair was not a good mix with the receding hairline. In certain lights it vanished, and he got upset when you pointed it out.

'Nothing to say?' he asked. That irritating grin said he thought he had the better of her. The irritating part was he did. 'Usually we can't get you to shut up. Not scared, are you?'

'Some of us aren't used to the smell,' said Penny. There was little fear in her voice, contempt crowding out what little she felt. 'I mean your aftershave, in case that wasn't clear.'

He grinned, unusually willing to let her have a few jabs. 'That's more like it. That's more like the Penny I'm happy to finally get to deal with.' He glanced at his backing group.

Matty paced back and forth, grinning and tittering. His gun bounced casually against his leg. He wore a cheap suit – that may be improved by being down here – and a cheaper t-shirt, of the type usually worn by a fourteen-year-old girl with questionable taste in music. He was an imbecile, but trigger-happy enough to make people reluctant to point it out.