

# PAEDO in the pound shop

## Lindsey and her little girl were in the middle of a busy store, but a dangerous predator was lurking...

**A**s I locked the front door behind me, my children jumped up and down in excitement, then we headed to the bus stop. 'Party, party!' they chanted.

It was New Year's Eve and I'd planned a celebration at home for some friends and my daughter Abbey, five, and son Dillon, four.

First stop was Primark to get the kids their party outfits, then it was off to Iceland for nibbles.

Our final stop was the pound shop. 'I just need some paper plates,' I told the kids, who made a beeline for the book section.

As I walked down the aisle, I looked over my shoulder and saw them reading to each other. 'Are you OK?' I called out.

'Yes,' Dillon replied happily. After finding the plates, I headed back to the kids. But when I got there, Abbey was nowhere to be seen. 'Where's your sister?' I asked Dillon.

He shrugged and carried on looking at his book. 'Stay where you are,' I ordered.

I ran up and down the aisles, frantically searching for my daughter. 'Abbey!' I shouted. 'Abbey, where are you?'

'Nothing. Where on earth was she?' 'Abbey!' I yelled, panicking. Suddenly, I heard a tiny voice. 'Mum,' she sobbed. Turning round, I saw a woman walking towards me with Abbey.

I threw my arms round my girl. 'I thought I'd lost you!' I told her. I looked up to thank the woman, but she'd already disappeared.

As we walked back to Dillon, Abbey was still crying. 'What's wrong, darling?' I asked. 'A man touched me,' she wept. I felt my stomach lurch. Had I heard her right? 'A man touched

you?' I repeated. Abbey nodded, her bottom lip trembling. 'Where did he touch you?' I asked. 'My minnie,' she whispered. I gasped. 'Minnie' was our word for her private parts.

None of it made any sense. I'd only taken my eyes off her for a few minutes. 'What did the man look like?' I asked quietly.

Between her sobs, she described a man with grey hair, glasses and wrinkles.

I looked around but I couldn't see anyone fitting that description. 'Right, let's go,' I told Abbey. I grabbed her hand and Dillon's and took them home.

As soon as we walked through the front door, I dumped the shopping. Then I cancelled the party and began to get the kids ready for bed.

How could anyone do such a vile thing to my little girl — and somewhere I thought was safe? When Abbey took off her leggings and T-shirt to put her pyjamas on, I stifled a cry. She had a big red scratch on her stomach. 'How did you do that?' I said quietly.

'The man did it,' she replied. 'Did you see the man, Dillon?' I asked gently.

'Yes, Mummy,' he replied. What had this man done to my daughter? And how had he done it when I was just yards away? I felt a wave of consuming anger. 'Can Dillon sleep with me tonight?' Abbey asked.

'Of course he can, love,' I said. When I went downstairs, I poured myself a glass of wine



We'd stopped off for party plates

to the back of the shop. 'That's not all...' the police officer said. 'We looked at footage from the town centre and it looks as if he'd been following you for at least an hour.'

It made me shudder to think of him preying on my daughter. Later that day police released the CCTV footage. It appeared on the news and made front page of the local newspaper.

Seeing his picture, Abbey's face crumpled and she burst into tears. It was soul-destroying to see my normally happy little girl feeling so distraught.

'Why did he touch me, Mummy?' she asked. I didn't know what to say. I had no idea why anyone would do anything so sick to a five-year-old. 'Because he's a very naughty man,' I told her.

The next day, eight people came forward to say they recognised my daughter's attacker. One was a public protection officer from probation services. He said the man was 53-year-old Stephen Reynolds, a known paedophile.

Reynolds' past offences included taking photos of children in the changing rooms of the local leisure centre. Within hours police tracked him down to his parents' house, where he was arrested.

Eventually, Reynolds, of Lechlade, Gloucestershire, appeared before Swindon Crown Court, where he admitted sexual assault. I couldn't take my eyes off him. He looked so relaxed and carefree.

I heard that he'd been outside the Early Learning Centre for 20 minutes, staring through the window. He'd spotted me and the children, then followed us around town before striking in the 99p Stores.

CCTV footage of him assaulting Abbey was shown in court. It was shocking to see Reynolds right behind me in the shop. It tore me up. If only I'd turned round, I'd have seen him.

I forced myself to watch as the film showed Reynolds crouching down next to Abbey and Dillon, then him leading her to the back

PAEDOPHILE



Reynolds was caught on CCTV

We were followed



'Film showed him leading her away'



He took my girl's innocence

by the attack. Dillon has become more protective over his sister — whenever we're out, he sticks to her like glue.

Recently, Reynolds appealed his sentence and it was cut to four and a half years. I was livid when I heard the news.

I never want another little girl to go through what my daughter has been through, which is why I am naming and shaming Stephen Reynolds.

I'll do everything in my power to stop him from preying on someone else's child. If the pound shop isn't safe, nowhere is.

LINDSEY TURNER, 26, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE



The sentence was reduced

Do you have an incredible story to tell? Write to us at: that's life!, FREEPOST LON12043, H Bauer Publishing, London NW1 1YU. Or e-mail stories@that'slife.co.uk. We pay up to £1,000 for every story we print.

STORY HOTLINE 020 7241 8082