

# The night I was ambushed in my car - by a 13-year-old with pigtails

**I**T WAS seven o'clock on Tuesday evening when four children attacked me. I'd never met them before, never set eyes on them. I had just parked my car, a geriatric red Volkswagen Golf, in the King's Road, by the World's End estate. I was meeting friends, and was wondering whether I'd get a ticket for parking there. Just then, a young girl with pigtails crossed the road, walked between the rear of my vehicle and the one behind it, and delivered a forceful kick

An ordinary evening on a busy London street turned to terror for **CAROLINE PHILLIPS**

to the back of my car followed by smashing her hand on the rear windscreen.

What on earth did she think she was doing, I asked, as I wound down the window.

She glowered and spat in my face. She was with her friends, who closed in

on the car. They were aged about 13, two of each colour and two of each sex. The four of them set to, kicking my vehicle, spitting on it and rubbing the greasy white paper containing the remains of their half-eaten fish and chips on the windscreen and side windows. I felt like a trapped pigeon.

I'd had only four hours sleep the night before, had worked all day, packed for three weeks abroad and moved flats in the preceding 24 hours. I must have been a victim

in waiting. It felt as if the busy street and peopled pavements were empty. I felt humiliated like a kid who has been picked on in the playground and doesn't want the grown-ups to see. But nobody came forward to help. The passers-by just passed by.

I was too scared to get out of my car in case the children started to assault me. So I drove round the corner, past La Famiglia restaurant, down graceful residential streets of stucco houses and to a parking space in a quiet

road. I'd driven in a huge U-shape and had left my assailants way behind in the main road. I turned off the ignition and my lights.

As if from nowhere, the gang of four immediately reappeared. All I registered was shock, I couldn't believe it.

They nonchalantly closed in on the car with malice in their faces. The ringleader was the girl; she had a hard yet pretty face, and blank eyes. The boys stood back for a few seconds and watched her,

then followed her lead in repeatedly kicking the body work and smearing the glass with their food graffiti, their contorted faces pictures of aggression. When I asked them to stop they stood back and took vicious aim with food from their hands and mouths. Again and again they spat and kicked.

I was encircled, and panicking, yet it is difficult to drive off when you have a child each side of the car.

I was armed with a portable phone and for a

second I thought I might ring the police, but the girl's eyes followed mine as I looked quickly through my briefcase. And then I was frightened that they might smash the window and reach in and steal it, like adolescent destroyers.

I drove off blindly, not looking to see if anything was coming, and they jumped nimbly out of the way, smashing my wing mirrors and then running after me. They caught up with my car as I waited for a gap in the traffic on

the King's Road, and I was so frightened I drove straight into the main road without looking.

How sad to be terrorised by children out playing. But these days 10-year-olds kill.

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