

**Make It Your Business
when you witness child abuse**

SETTING: City Hall Service Desk

[There is one person at the kiosk, TOMMY. He is finishing up a transaction, saying thank you to the kiosk attendant (XIAO LI).]

TOMMY: **Thank you, and have a nice day.**

XIAO LI: [Smiling.] **You're welcome. Have a good day, sir.** [XIAO LI is alert and friendly with clients.]

[As TOMMY leaves, the NARRATOR holds open the door for him and for people entering: an adult WOMAN (DAHLIA) holding the hand of a small CHILD (COLIN) and for a BYSTANDER (MARCUS) who joins the line behind them. The woman, DAHLIA, looks harried: she is moving too fast for the child to keep up and is tugging on their hand. Her purse is falling from her shoulder. She rushes to the kiosk to pay a parking ticket.]

COLIN: [Whining] **No, Mommy! Nuh nuh!**

DAHLIA: [Frustrated. Speaks abruptly] **Mummy has to pay a ticket. Just wait. Just be quiet for once.**

XIAO LI: [Still friendly.] **How can I help you?**

DAHLIA: [Trying to be polite and put her best face on in a moment of frustration.] **Yes, I have a parking ticket to pay?** [She fumbles one-handed in her purse, trying to pull out the ticket and her money, while still holding on to COLIN with the other hand. She drops things on the ground and has to pick them up. It does not look easy or comfortable.]

COLIN: [Lots of toddler noise and fuss.] **Bad mommy.**

[COLIN is dancing on the spot, trying to free the hand that's being held. DAHLIA is getting more and more agitated, trying to keep the child still while paying attention to XIAO LI.]

DAHLIA: [To XIAO LI.] **Yes, here, I think it's the right amount.**

XIAO LI: **Thank you. Give me a moment to enter the information and get a receipt for you.** [XIAO LI turns her attention to the ticket and the cash register, with one eye on the woman. XIAO LI is clearly keeping an eye on the child as well.]

[The child COLIN escapes DAHLIA's grip for a moment and plunks onto the floor. The child COLIN clearly has to up their game to get attention from these adults.]

DAHLIA: [Losing her cool, looks away from XIAO LI and crouches down to the child COLIN. She tries too forcefully to pull COLIN up to standing – COLIN flinches and **yelps** – and DAHLIA hisses quietly but angrily, with a clear threat in her voice...]

Stop it. Stop it now. Do you want a good spanking when you get home? Do you want me to get the wooden spoon and lock you in your room again? [She yanks his arm again.]

[The BYSTANDER MARCUS behind DAHLIA in line quietly leaves the line.]

COLIN: **No, mommy.**

[DAHLIA turns back to the kiosk and tries to put her polite face back on to get her receipt. XIAO LI is looking unhappy now and furrows her brow as she looks down to focus on her computer.]

NARRATOR: **Xiao Li looks upset, and she should be. Hurting or threatening a child is a form of family violence. Pulling hard on a toddler's arm can cause serious injury. Threatening a child that you will lock them in a room and hit them is not okay. Anyone who witnesses or suspects child abuse in any situation is *required* to report it to Child Protection Services or a peace officer.**

A small action to help someone who is experiencing family violence can make a big difference.

If you were Xiao Li, what could you do in this situation to address the violence and keep yourself and the people around you safe? Here's one option.

XIAO LI: [Looking up from the paperwork and getting DAHLIA's attention. Speaking evenly and calmly...]

Excuse me – can I make sure I have your license number correct here on the ticket? Is it PE 321?

DAHLIA: [DAHLIA is flushed but is trying hard to keep it together. She is flustered but replies...]

Yes, yes. That's the plate. It's my husband's car – and *he's* the one who got this stupid ticket in the first place.

XIAO LI: [Rings in the cash and gets the receipt.]
Okay, thank you for the payment. There is your receipt.

[She hands it to DAHLIA who leaves with COLIN. She refers to a list of emergency numbers and picks up the phone to dial the number for Child Protection.]

XIAO LI: [On the phone.] **Hello? Yes, I'd like to report possible child abuse I just witnessed. I think the child is hurt and in danger. I don't know the person's name, but I have her husband's license plate number...**

NARRATOR: [We're back to main scene where it was interrupted. The NARRATOR steps into the scene.]
Child Protection Services is required to assess every call they receive.

You are required to report child abuse, but there's more than one way to do that when you witness a situation you're concerned about.

XIAO LI: [Looking up from the paperwork and getting the DAHLIA's attention. Speaking evenly and calmly...]
I'm so sorry – the computer is not working. I can see you're in a rush. Can you sit down for a moment while I get some help?

DAHLIA: [DAHLIA is flushed but is trying hard to keep it together – she looks like she's about to cry, too. She says in despair...]
You've got to be kidding me!
[...but she starts to move to the seating area, dragging COLIN behind her.]

XIAO LI: [Sympathetically] **I know it's bad timing.**
[XIAO LI's eyes follow DAHLIA and COLIN until they are seated. We see her finger trace through a list of EMERGENCY NUMBERS posted by her phone, and her finger stops at the number for POLICE. She picks up her phone.]

XIAO LI: [On the phone.] **Hello? Yes, it's Xiao Li at the payment desk in City Hall? I need some help at the computer. Yes, please, as soon as possible. ... No, I'm sorry, I can't explain the problem. ... I don't know. ... Can you come? Right away? ... Oh, yes. Thank you.**

NARRATOR: **Remember, calling Child Protection or a peace officer when you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect is your *responsibility*, but if you feel**

safest calling police to help first, trust your instincts. And if you think someone is in danger, or if you are in danger, call 911.

NARRATOR: The kiosk attendant, Xiao Li, was not the only person to witness the family violence. If you were a passerby who witnessed an adult hurting and threatening a child, what could you do to address the violence and keep yourself and the people around you safe? Let's ask the person who was behind the woman and child in line.

[Turning to the BYSTANDER (MARCUS)]

Excuse me, I know you saw what happened in the lineup. What did you do?

MARCUS: [Turning to the NARRATOR, the BYSTANDER turns off the cellphone and replies, speaking directly to the NARRATOR.] Well, I saw that woman hurting her kid, and I thought I heard her say she was going to *lock him in his room and hit him with a wooden spoon*. It was pretty upsetting.

I mean, I *get* she was frustrated, but what she did? That ain't right. So I got out of line, and I found a quiet spot and called the cops – and child protection without, uh, being overheard.

NARRATOR: A small action might be all it takes to help in a situation of family violence. Recognize signs of violence and abuse. Consider what you can safely do. Reach out for help from community services like Family Violence Prevention Services. *Make it your business* to prevent family violence.