

Silent Gun  
by Wenlai Han '23

My father was excited to be chatting with two police officers, Mr. Sonny Patsenhann, and his partner, about Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and Teresa Teng. As their interpreter, I was wondering how soon we could start eating the dim-sum dishes. Only my mother was still upset from the emotional trauma that our family had just gone through.

*4:30PM, Unknown Street, LA*

The moment I saw my mother step out of the police car, I was relieved.

After dialing 911 for help, I had tried calling her three times, but there was no answer. With her carrying one big suitcase, two backpacks, and a handbag, not knowing the name of the hotel I booked and being unable to speak English, she might get lost, robbed again, or... The scenes flashing through my mind horrified me, much more than when the robber had pointed a gun at my father and me minutes before.

*4:15PM, Unknown Street, LA*

“Don’t move, or I will shoot you!” shouted the robber with desperation in his voice.

“Give me back my phone, I will give you money!” My father tried to negotiate, placing himself between the robber and me.

“No, no, just don’t move!” yelled the robber.

As the robber backed away and fled, I stood there in a daze.

*4:10PM, Vermont Subway Station, LA*

Everything happened so fast. The subway reached the next stop, and as the door opened, a man grabbed my father’s phone and ran. Without hesitation, my father chased after him. Before the doors closed, I instinctually followed. My mother was left behind with all our belongings.

“Catch the robber!” I screamed to the empty streets, running after my father and the robber.

Eventually, the robber was out of breath and stopped running. But my father and I were not tired yet — fortunately or unfortunately, my family runs five miles three times a week. As my father was gaining on him, the robber pulled out a gun, which seemed to say “Silence” ...

***Present***

Since that day, I have had a few realizations that have changed how I understand my family and the world around us.

If it were not for that robbery, I would never have known how brave and agile my father is, or that he would risk his life out of love for me. I would never have found out how smart,

determined, and gritty my mother is. Left alone at a subway station, she climbed dozens of stairs with heavy luggage, asked strangers to call the police, and finally found us at the scene of the crime. Most importantly, I realized how much I care about and love my family, even if they sometimes nag or annoy me.

The second thing I realized is that you must always keep your wits about you. Before the robbery happened, I noticed the robber's abnormal behavior, pacing back and forth in the subway car with a broken phone in hand, pretending to make phone calls. However, I was not alarmed. Since the robbery, I have learned to be aware of my surroundings wherever I go, to keep myself and whomever is around me safe.

After coming back to China, I was asked if America is safe and Americans are friendly.

I am not in a position to judge that. Yet, the truth is, the robbery did happen. The thief was not caught, although policemen showed up within two minutes of my call and searched for hours. The two officers invited us to dinner, to show us friendship and compassion. During the dinner, the officers tried to use chopsticks to show respect for Chinese dining customs, and we did not encounter anything unpleasant during the rest of our trip.

I still dream of studying in America, and I am not discouraged by a small robbery. The help and support my family received strengthened my belief that the majority of people are kindhearted.