

Respond to Domestic Violence

(at the Gallery Players Theater)

Director: *(to the actors)* Welcome back, everyone. This year our play is about a very important but difficult subject. Erica, you are going to play the mother. Asad, you are going to play a little boy named Billy. You are Erica's son.

Asad: How old is Billy?

Director: Seven. Oh! And that's your bear. Aleksy, you are Billy's father. You and Erica are married. Abdul, you are going to play Aleksy's father. Billy is your grandson.

Abdul: I play a grandfather? Very good!

Julie: Yumi, who do I play?

Director: Julie, you are Abdul's daughter. You are a nurse. There is one more character. Renata, you are going to play a police officer.

Renata: Don't worry, everyone. I'll protect you.

Aleksy: *(to Yumi, the director)* So, what is this play about?

Erica: It must be a story about a family.

Renata: But I'm a police officer. What's a police officer doing in a story about a family?

Asad: Yeah, what's going on here?

Director: You'll see. Everyone, read what I have given you. And learn your lines. Tomorrow, we'll practice it.

(at rehearsal the next day)

Billy: *(hitting his teddy bear)* You make me so mad! I'm going to teach you a lesson. You will never do that again!

Billy's Grandfather: Billy! Come here. Sit with me. Why are you hitting Mr. Bear? Isn't he your friend?

Billy: I'm playing a game.

Billy's Grandfather: A game? What game?

Billy: The bear is Mommy, and I am Daddy.

Billy's Grandfather: So then, why are you yelling at the bear... I mean, Mommy? Why are you hitting her?

Billy: Mommy made me mad.

Billy's Grandfather: Billy, you shouldn't hit people.

Billy: But Daddy does. Daddy hits Mommy when he's mad.

Billy's Grandfather: Daddy shouldn't do that.

Billy: Well, sometimes Daddy gets really mad.

(Billy's Mother enters.)

Billy's Mother: Hello, Grandpa.

Billy's Grandfather: Hello, my dear.

Billy's Mother: Billy, honey, go get your bag. We have to go home.

Billy's Grandfather: So, uh, how are you?

Billy's Mother: Oh, I'm fine.

Billy's Grandfather: Is everything okay?

Billy's

Mother: Yes, yes. Everything is fine. Come on, Billy, hurry up.

Billy's

Grandfather: Are you sure that you are okay?

Billy's

Mother: Yes, I'm fine. Don't worry about me. I am just tired. I have been working overtime this week. Billy, say good night to Grandpa. *(to Grandpa)* Thank you. See you tomorrow.

Billy's

Grandfather: Wait! You forgot your bear. Be nice to the bear.

(The director and actors discuss the scene.)

Director: Okay, stop. That was great. Erica, what are you thinking?

Erica: Well, I don't think the grandfather should let the mother go.

Director: Why not?

Erica: Because I think her husband is hurting her. He is abusing her. It's dangerous.

Julie: Yes, and it's not good for the child.

Aleksy: I agree. I think the grandfather should talk to her, tell her what the little boy said.

Renata: But that's not easy to do. What's he going to say? "Is my son beating you?"

Abdul: The grandfather needs to think about this. Maybe he should talk to someone. Get some advice.

Director: Maybe that is a good idea. Let's try it out.

(rehearsal)

Billy's

Aunt: What's wrong, Dad?

Billy's

Grandfather: I am worried.

Billy's

Aunt: About Billy?

Billy's

Grandfather: He was punching his bear.

Billy's

Aunt: You know how boys are. He was probably just playing a game.

Billy's

Grandfather: He said the bear was Mommy, and he was Daddy.

Billy's

Aunt: He probably saw it on TV. Dad, you're not going to ask your son if he's beating his wife. You don't know that for sure. Look, their marriage is none of our business.

(The director and actors discuss the scene.)

Aleksy: Excuse me, can we stop? I think Abdul needs to say something to the mother.

Abdul: I agree. He has to talk to her.

Director: All right. I will add these suggestions to the script tonight.

(at rehearsal the next day)

Billy's

Mother: Billy, say good night to Grandpa. *(to Grandpa)*
Thank you. See you tomorrow.

Billy's

Grandfather: Before you leave, I need to ask you a question. And I want you to be honest. Billy, go play in the other room, okay?

**Billy's
Mother:** What is it, Papá?

**Billy's
Grandfather:** This is not easy for me to ask. But yesterday, I heard Billy say that Daddy hits Mommy. Is this true? Is my son hitting you?

**Billy's
Mother:** Hitting me? My husband loves me. He is a good man. You know how he is. He just gets angry sometimes.

**Billy's
Grandfather:** And what does he do when he gets angry?

**Billy's
Mother:** *(crying)* What am I supposed to do? I feel so hopeless.

(The director and actors discuss the scene.)

Renata: What an awful situation. What can she do?

Aleksy: She has to call the police. She has to call 911.

Renata: But if she calls 911 or goes to the police, the family will have more trouble.

Aleksy: Then she needs information. She needs to find out what she can do. And who can help her.

Renata: Where do you get information about things like this?

Director: She should call 311.

Renata: 311? This is a family problem. Can 311 help?

Director: I called 311 when I was writing this play. They can help. The City has programs for families who need help.

Julie: Who's going to tell the mother about it?

Director: You are, my dear.

(rehearsal)

Billy's

Mother: Leave my husband... Where am I going to stay? I can't live alone. I need my husband.

Billy's

Aunt: You won't be alone. We're here for you. Please, think about your child.

Billy's

Mother: But I can't do this. I can't break up my family. Billy needs his dad.

Billy's

Aunt: This can't go on. You have to do something before it gets worse. I see this all the time at the hospital. I'm afraid for you.

Billy's

Mother: You don't understand. I can't go to the police. I don't have my papers. There's nothing I can do.

Billy's

Aunt: You can do something. Call 311. There are people that can help you... people you can talk to. Please.

Billy's

Mother: I can't do this.

Billy's

Aunt: 311.

Director:

That was wonderful.

(rehearsal)

Police

Officer: Please ... sit down. Do you want to report a crime?

Billy's

Aunt: Not exactly. We have a friend. And we think her

husband is abusing her.

Police

Officer:

You have come to the right place. It is my job to help women like your friend. Can you tell me what's going on?

Billy's

Aunt:

He doesn't let her see her friends. And her husband takes all the money from her paychecks.

Police

Officer:

Well, those are often signs of trouble.

Billy's

Mother:

But ... She doesn't have her papers. She doesn't know what to do. She is scared.

Police

Officer:

Your friend doesn't have to worry. She does not need to have papers. Here in New York, we help everyone.

Billy's

Mother:

She doesn't want to make trouble. She doesn't want everyone to know about her problem.

Police

Officer:

Many women have the same problem. Trust me. I have seen all types of people in her situation. Here, take this information. *(handing Billy's Mother a pamphlet)* Domestic violence is a very serious problem. And there are no easy answers. But it will not get better. She has to do something about it.

Billy's

Mother:

Thank you very much.

Police

Officer:

You can tell your friend to come see me. I'll be here for her. Or she can go to any police station in the city. There, someone like me can help.

(The director comments on the scene, and Renata, the actor who

plays the police officer, talks about her real life situation.)

Director: That was terrific. I really like what you did. Renata, what is wrong?

Renata: Everyone told me to mind my own business.

Director: What are you talking about?

Renata: They said I should not talk about this.. that it would bring shame to my family. But this is happening to my sister. My own sister is suffering because her boyfriend is.. Her boyfriend.. But now, I know how to help her. She does not have to be afraid anymore. Thank you, Yumi. Thank you, everyone, for showing me what I can do.

(rehearsal)

**Billy's
Father:** You. What are you telling my wife? Are you trying to break up our marriage? Going to the police? You're my father!

**Billy's
Grandfather:** Yes. And I'm also Billy's grandfather. I will not allow you to hurt your wife and your child.

**Billy's
Father:** This is my family! It's none of your business. You are destroying our family. Our name.

**Billy's
Grandfather:** No! You are. Your actions are hurting our family. Your mother and I did not teach you to act this way.

**Billy's
Mother:** And Billy is my son. I will not raise my child in a home where people hurt each other. Where he sees and hears it. You must choose. If you want to keep your family, you must stop this.

**Billy's
Grandfather:** My son! If you do not stop this, you will lose



your family. You will be alone!

(to the audience, after a performance of the play)

- Abdul:** Domestic violence affects people of every nationality. It happens in every community. Rich. Poor. It can happen to anybody.
- Erica:** It is not your fault. If you are a victim of domestic violence, do not feel bad about yourself. Do not be ashamed.
- Julie:** If you are here on your husband's visa, there is help for you. But you have to ask for it.
- Aleksy:** Domestic violence is a crime. In New York City, everyone can get help. If you do not have papers, if you are undocumented, do not worry. The City will help you.
- Asad:** For information and advice, call 311. For emergencies, to get help right away, call 911.
- Renata:** Violence against women and children can be stopped. It won't be easy. But people working together can make it happen. What can you do?

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of the City of New York.**

