

45 MINUTES ONLY: BRANCA KRINGAS

While I was paying at the checkout at the supermarket, my son Damian was holding on to my skirt. As I reached to get the change, I felt Damian let go of my skirt. When I turned around, he was nowhere in sight.

I was in a panic and said, 'Where is my son, where is my son'? The girl at the checkout closed the till and started looking with me. We couldn't find him anywhere. The girl went and called the manager. I told him my son's name was Damian, he is one year and 10 months old. He is wearing a white t-shirt and blue shorts and sandals.

The manager went back to his office and called the police. He came back and told me the police is alerting every policeman in the area. I felt panic, fear and complete helplessness.

I saw a bus pull out and I thought, oh my god, and went and looked under the bus. He wasn't there. I was in a very sad state.

The Woolworths manager said they found your son. They are taking him to the Rose Bay Police Station.

As I parked at the station, I saw a police van with two policeman and a little figure sobbing between them. His nose was running down to his mouth and around it. When he saw me, he hugged me and said 'mama, mama, mama'. We went inside the police station. The policeman said, 'What do you think lady, 45 minutes only and we found your son'. 'Excellent, Officer, and thank you very very much', I said.

I was holding Damian and walking towards the car, thinking the ordeal is over. But it wasn't. I had nightmares that Damian was on a high rock, and I couldn't reach him. Damian was running very far, and I couldn't catch him.

A problem was created. Damian wouldn't leave my sight. When he was about four years' old, I was offered a very good job, which I couldn't refuse. Damian, on the other hand, was unhappy about it. He didn't like the kindergarten.

One day, I picked him up and he was with a little girl. She said, 'Damian is my friend' and Damian said, 'Chloe is my friend'. At Christmas, I was watching Damian and Chloe singing in the choir and I thought, the 45 minutes of panic, fear and helplessness was finally over.