

## **Songbirds: 'Charity Begins At Home' Part 2**

**By: Dino Mahoney**

### **Characters**

Serena: Generous, compassionate, selfless and giving.  
Agnes: A bit thoughtless, self-centred, greedy and easily influenced.  
Fanny: Nice but secretly mean, self-centred and greedy, she always puts herself first.  
Steven: Fanny's younger brother  
Mother: Fanny's mother. She believes in only helping family members.

### **Synopsis**

It is high summer and the effects of the Asian tsunami are still being felt and charity organizations are still out in the street appealing for money. Serena gives all the money she has and decides to walk all the way home to Lam Tin. But on the way home she gets sick and has to be admitted to hospital. But will Fanny and Agnes visit her?

### **Scene 1**

(SFX: Ambient street sounds)  
(SFX: The rattling of a collection moneybox)

Serena: Hey Agnes... Fanny... look... they're collecting for victims of the tsunami. I must give some money.  
Agnes: Me too.  
Fanny: I've already given some money.  
Serena: I have too Fanny. But I want to give more. I think I'll put all the money I have on me in the box... I'd rather give it to the poor people who have lost their family and homes than spend it on myself.  
Fanny: But how will you get home Serena?  
Serena: Walk.  
(SFX: A lot of coins being dropped into the box)  
There.  
Collector: Thank you.  
Serena: Okay... goodbye. See you tomorrow.  
Fanny: Okay, bye Serena.  
Agnes: She's going to get so hot and sweaty walking home.  
Fanny: I know... I'm almost fainting with the heat. I need a cold drink... an icy watermelon juice or...  
Agnes: A mango slush puppy.  
Fanny: Let's go.

(SFX: Fade in to sound of slurping up the last part of a drink through a straw.)

Agnes: Mmm Fanny... that mango slush puppy was divine.  
(SFX: Slurping up the last part of a drink through a straw)  
Fanny: Mmm... that watermelon juice was heavenly.  
Agnes: Oh look! Fanny... they sell waffles. (Reading) Belgian waffles with  
ice cream, strawberries and chocolate sauce. Yummy. Yummy.  
Fanny: Shall we?  
Agnes: Why not?  
Fanny: And how about having some iced apple tea to go with it?  
Agnes: I love iced apple tea. (SFX: Fade)

(SFX: Door opening and closing)

(SFX: Background sound of TV in the background)

Fanny: Hello mum.  
Mother: Hello Fanny. Just in time. (Louder voice) Steven! Turn the television  
off now... dinner's ready.  
Fanny: Mmm... the fish looks lovely mummy.  
Mother: Yes and I got it half price.  
Fanny: Really?  
Mother: If you go down to the fish market late you can get some real bargains.  
Steven: Wa! I've just been watching pictures of that big wave on TV.... It's  
amazing... this huge wall of water came in and swept everyone away.  
Mother: (Irritated) That again! It gets on your nerves the way you still can't  
move after all this time with somebody somewhere asking you for  
money.  
Fanny: I know... they were collecting money outside the MTR and in the  
streets on the way home.  
Mother: It gets on your nerves.  
Fanny: I know.  
Steven: Hey Fanny... Stop taking all the best bits of fish.  
Fanny: Shut up Steven.  
Mother: In life you've got to put you own interests first Fanny... that's my  
philosophy... always put number one first. If you don't... people take  
advantage of you. Charity begins at home Fanny... that's what I say...  
Steven: Mum! Fanny's eaten all the fish and I've hardly had any!  
Fanny: Shut up Steven.

## Scene 2

(SFX: Telephone rings)

Fanny: Hello?  
Agnes: Hi Fanny... it's me, Agnes.  
Fanny: Oh hi Agnes.  
Agnes: Guess what?  
Fanny: What?  
Agnes: Serena is in hospital.

Fanny: Oh no!

Agnes: Her mother phoned me.

Fanny: What did she say?

Agnes: Well after walking all the way from Wong Tai Sin to Lam Tin in that blazing heat Serena got home and collapsed.

Fanny: Oh no!

Agnes: She was dehydrated and suffering from exhaustion.

Fanny: That's terrible.

Agnes: She'd been ill last week and she was still weak.

Fanny: It was madness to walk.

Agnes: Of course it was.... (Pause) Serena's mother upset me a bit.

Fanny: Upset you? Why Agnes?

Agnes: She wanted to know why I'd let Serena walk home.

Fanny: It's not your fault she walked home! You tried to stop her! We both did! But she insisted! That's typical Serena, if she decides to do something nothing will stop her.... and her mother should know that too.

Agnes: I know.

Fanny: It's ridiculous to say it was your fault..

Agnes: She kept saying, 'Why did you let her walk... you're her friend... you knew she was ill,' she made me feel really guilty.

Fanny: That's so unfair... it wasn't your idea that she walks home.

Agnes: I know.

Fanny: Poor Agnes.

Agnes: I know... she upset me.

Fanny: She doesn't sound very nice.

Agnes: Anyway she told me Serena's in Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Fanny: For how long?

Agnes: The doctor told her mother it could be for two or even three days.

Fanny: Oh dear... but I guess she's best off in a hospital... at least they can look after her properly.

Agnes: We should go and visit her Fanny.

Fanny: Yes, I suppose we should.

Agnes: I was thinking... Shall we go tomorrow after school?

Fanny: We could do. How long for?

Agnes: I don't know... we can see how she is.

Fanny: Because if she's suffering from exhaustion it might be best if she doesn't have any visitors... visitors can make you tired.

Agnes: But it might cheer her up to see us.

Fanny: But if we do go we should only really stay for a short time.

Agnes: That's true.... Maybe for just an hour.

Fanny: An hour's quite a long time for a sick person.

Agnes: Well... half an hour then.

Fanny: When you think about it thirty minutes is still quite a long time you know.

Agnes: Well even if we just popped in for ten minutes... just give her a bunch of flowers, have a little chat and leave.

Fanny: They say not to take flowers to the sick.

Agnes: Really? But I thought that's what people always took when they were visiting someone in hospital.

Fanny: You see the flowers suck up all the oxygen... and the patient can't breathe.

Agnes: Oh dear... well we could take chocolates then.

Fanny: Mmm... maybe that's not such a good idea either... chocolate can tickle your throat and make you cough.

Agnes: What can we take her then?

Fanny: I think just seeing us might be enough, don't you.

Agnes: Yes, I suppose so.

Fanny: You know hospitals are full of super-bugs don't you Agnes?

Agnes: Super-bugs?

Fanny: Yes, if you catch a super-bug there's nothing you can do about it.

Agnes: How come?

Fanny: You see those hospital super-bugs can't be killed with penicillin or antibiotics.

Agnes: Really?

Fanny: No. And they're very easy to catch.

Agnes: I know we could wear masks.

Fanny: We could do... but you can catch a super-bug in a hospital just from touch... if you touched the bed or a cup or a railing or something.

Agnes: We could wear masks and gloves!

Fanny: And then there's that smell you always get in hospitals.

Agnes: I know! I hate that smell... and you always smell it whenever you go into a hospital.

Fanny: It makes you feel sick and dizzy doesn't it?

Agnes: I know, let's sprinkle perfume on our masks so we won't smell that nasty smell.

Fanny: We could do.

Agnes: Okay, well... let's see what happens... Serena's mother said she'll phone me tomorrow so we can take it from there.

Fanny: Okay.

Agnes: Well, I suppose I'd better be getting on with my homework.

Fanny: Yes, me too.

Agnes: Poor Serena. I feel terrible.

Fanny: Don't Agnes. It wasn't your fault and don't let her mother try and put the blame on you.

Agnes: Okay, thanks Fanny... you've made me feel a bit better.

Fanny: Good.

Agnes: Goodbye Fanny.

Fanny: Goodbye Agnes.

### Scene 3

Mother: Whom were you talking to on the phone Fanny?

Fanny: Agnes. She phoned to tell me Serena is in hospital.

Mother: In hospital?! I'm not surprised... walking all that way home in the glaring heat... it's no wonder. She should have known better.

Fanny: And Agnes said Serena's mother was trying to blame us.

Mother: Blame you?! What's it got to do with you for heaven's sake?!

Fanny: Well she said we should have stopped Serena walking home.

Mother: What a stupid thing to say.

Fanny: She said we knew that Serena had been ill last week and we should have known that it was dangerous for her to walk all the way home to Lam Tin in such a hot day.

Mother: Well what were you expected to do? She should know how headstrong her daughter is... if that Serena makes up her mind to do something nothing will stop her... she's as stubborn and pig-headed as her mother!

Fanny: Agnes is quite upset about it.

Mother: I should think she is... poor girl.

Fanny: Agnes said Serena's mother wants us to go and visit Serena in hospital tomorrow.

Mother: What about your homework? You can't go off visiting when you've got homework to do.

Fanny: I know.

Mother: Tell her you can't go.

Fanny: But Agnes is going.

Mother: Well let her go... you come home and get on with your homework. If you fail your exams Serena's mother won't care... all she's interested in is her daughter, not you.... And remember Fanny... always look out for number one... put your own self-interest first... charity begins at home Fanny... if Agnes wants to waste her time visiting Serena then let her... you come home and get on with your homework and I'll make you a nice dinner.

Fanny: But I've told Agnes I'm going now.

Mother: Say that you're ill... I know... tell her you've got your monthly stomach pains.

Fanny: Yes I could say that I suppose.

Mother: Say it. She won't know.

Fanny: And I don't like hospitals.

Mother: Horrible places... full of nasty germs.... and very smelly. And when you visit someone in hospital you have to start buying things... flowers and chocolates and all that nonsense...and why should you waste your money?! They take the flowers away once the visitors have gone and the nurses eat all the chocolates... Why should you waste money on chocolates that the nurses are going to eat?! They're a lazy lot of good-for-nothings those nurses... all they do is hang around gossiping and waiting for visitors to bring the patients chocolates.

Fanny: You're right mummy... I'll tell Agnes I can't go because of my monthly tummy pains.

Mother: Huh! The cheek of Serena's mother saying it was your entire fault! If her silly daughter wants to give all her money away and walk home in the boiling sun that's her problem! Anyway, all the money people are giving away to the so-called tsunami victims is really going into their own pockets.... everyone knows that. Charity?! Huh! It's just an excuse to rob us all.

#### Scene 4

(SFX: Steven banging hard on the bathroom door)

Mother: Steven... Stop that banging!  
Steven: Fanny's been in there for nearly an hour now!  
Mother: She's having a bath.  
Steven: I know... but I want to go to the toilet.  
Mother: Hold it.  
Steven: I can't!

(SFX: Steven banging hard on the bathroom door)

Mother: Steven... you'll knock a hole in the door and then who's going to pay for it?!

Steven: (Shouting through door) Fanny... hurries up! I want to go to the toilet!

Fanny: (Voice muffled as it is coming from the other side of the bathroom door) I'm having a bath, go away!

Steven: But you've been in there for over an hour!

Mother: Come away now Steven... she's a girl... girl's take time to have their baths.... She's not like you in and out in two minutes with the dirt still behind your ears.

(SFX: Steven banging hard on the bathroom door)

Steve: Open this door!

Mother: Steven! Look! You're making marks on the bathroom door, now you stop it!

Steve: She knows I want to go to the toilet but she's deliberately taking her time!

Mother: Just wait a few more minutes Steven... don't be so impatient.

Steve: Impatient?! It's been a whole hour... more than an hour! She just doesn't care!

(SFX: Steven banging hard on the bathroom door and shouting through it)

Right! You just wait till I'm in the bathroom if you wanted to use the toilet!

Mother: Do you want to go to number one or number two?

Steve: Two!

Mother: (Calling through door) Fanny?! Fanny have you nearly finished dear?

Fanny: (Through door) I'm still washing my hair mum.

Steven: Washing her hair?! How long does it take to wash your hair?! Two hours?!

Mother: She's got longer hair than you Steven. (SFX: Tapping on door)  
Fanny... could you put a towel around your head and pop out a minute so Steven can go to the toilet?

Fanny: (Through door) It's all covered in shampoo.

Mother: (Through door) Well give it a quick rinse and wrap a towel around it... Sorry dear but he's desperate and I don't want to have a mess on my hands.

(SFX: Bathroom door opening)

Fanny: (No door so normal clear voice) He's a pain Mum... every time I have a bath and wash my hair he wants to use the toilet.

Steven: Get out the way.

(SFX: Bathroom door slamming shut)

(Shouting through door) Alright... you don't have to push. (to mother) Honestly mum he really gets on my nerves.

(SFX: She bang hard on the bathroom door and shouts through it)

Fanny: Hurry up in there... and don't stink the place out!

#### Scene 4

(SFX: School bell ringing for the end of day)

Agnes: Right... let's see... three thirty... I told Serena's mum we'd go and visit Serena at four to four thirty... she's at Queen Elizabeth hospital in a ward on the fourth floor. What do you think Fanny? Shall we go by MTR or catch a mini-bus?

Fanny: Actually Agnes... I don't know if you've noticed but I haven't been feeling very well today.

Agnes: Really Fanny? Why, what's wrong?

Fanny: Well, it's my time of month.

Agnes: Oh I see... I see.

Fanny: So....

Agnes: Don't worry... I understand. It just means I'll have to go to see Serena by myself.

Fanny: Sorry Agnes... you will explain to Serena, won't you?

Agnes: Of course.

Fanny: And send her all my love and say I really hope she gets better soon.

Agnes: I will.

Fanny: Don't forget will you?

Agnes: I won't.

Fanny: Okay... bye Agnes. (Half to herself) Oh, my poor stomach. (Groans)

**The End**