

## **Songbirds: Charity Begins At Home Part 4**

**By: Dino Mahoney**

### **Characters**

Serena: Serena Lau is 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 that charity begins at home.  
Mrs Lau: Serena's mother is a good hearted woman.

### **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 and on TV appealing for money.

School friends Serena, Agnes and Fanny have left school together and are walking along the street when a charity collector approaches them. Serena gives all the money she has and walks all the way home to Lam Tin .

Walking home in a heat wave Serena gets ill and has to be admitted to hospital. Agnes and Fanny say that they will visit her after school. But after school Fanny makes an excuse and Agnes wavers before finding herself once more in the fruit and dessert cafe with Fanny where they decide to pray for Serena rather than visit her.

In the hospital Serena is very upset that none of her friends have come to see her. Serena's mother goes out to check if she has a text from Agnes. Outside she sees there is no text and phones Agnes, even though Serena expressly asked her not to. Agnes makes up an excuse saying that she and Fanny were on their way to the hospital but Fanny became unwell on the mini-bus and they had to return home.

Serna's mother returns and tells her daughter there was a text from Agnes and tells the story of Fanny being unwell on the mini-bus. Serena is impressed that Fanny had tried to visit her even though she was herself unwell and calls Fanny a 'saint.'

Meanwhile Fanny is gossiping about Serena and her mother to her mother. Then the phone rings. It is Serena's mother. Furious Fanny's mother picks up the receiver.

### **Scene 1: Reprise:**

(SFX: School bell rings the end of day)

Agnes: It's three thirty and I told Serena's mum we'd go and visit Serena... she's at Queen Elizabeth hospital.  
Fanny: Actually Agnes... I haven't being feeling very well to-day. You see... it's my time of month.

Agnes: Oh, I see. Don't worry Fanny... I understand. Okay, well anyway, let's at least walk with to the MTR station together.

(SFX: Ambient street sounds)

Agnes: It's so hot.

Fanny: I know Agnes... it makes you feel so thirsty.

Agnes: I'd love a nice cold drink.

Fanny: Would you Agnes?

(Ambient sounds inside fruit and dessert cafe)

(SFX: Slurping up a cold drink through a straw)

Agnes: Mm... that was delicious. And how was your sweet bean curd Fanny?

Fanny: It was nice... thank you Agnes.

Agnes: Is your tummy feeling better?

Fanny: Yes, a bit better thank you Agnes.

Agnes: Good. Mm, that was so good I could have another one.

Fanny: Why don't you then? (SFX: Fade)

(SFX: Slurping up a cold drink through a straw)

Agnes: Mm, that was heavenly. Look! That girl's eating Belgian Waffles with ice cream and chocolate sauce. My favourite. I wonder if I've got time to have one. (SFX: Fade)

Agnes: Mm, that waffle was pure heaven!

Fanny: Right... well I'd better be getting home and you'd better be getting yourself to the hospital to visit Serena.

Agnes: What time is it? (looking at her watch) Four thirty! I said I'd be there between four and four thirty!

Fanny: How long does it take to get there?

Agnes: I'm not sure... I haven't been there before... I'm not even sure where it is or how to get there. (Slight pause) Unless... (Slight pause).

Fanny: Unless what Agnes?

Agnes: Well Serena's mother said Serena would be in hospital for two or three days... so I could go tomorrow. I think I'll do that.

Fanny: Okay Agnes..... I hope poor Serena is feeling better.

Agnes: Poor thing. (suddenly remembering) Wait a minute!... tomorrow I have my piano lesson after school!

Fanny: Can you change the time?

Agnes: Not really. Are you going to visit Serena in hospital tomorrow Fanny?

Fanny: I'd like to but I've promised my mother we'd go to visit my aunt.

Agnes: (Sighs) Well... Serena's mother did say Serena would be in the hospital for three days... so we could go the day after tomorrow.

Fanny: That's right. And in the meantime I know something we can do for Serena.

Agnes: What's that Fanny?

Fanny: Pray for her Agnes. Pray that our dear friend gets better soon. (SFX Fade)

## Scene 2

Serena: (Crying quietly)  
Mrs Lau: What is it Serena? What's wrong? Are you in pain? Are you uncomfortable? Do you want me to call a nurse?  
Serena: (Trying not to cry) No it's okay thank you mummy.  
Mrs Lau: What is it Serena? Come on, tell me.  
Serena: (Trying not to cry) They said they'd come.  
Mrs Lau: I know they did sweetheart.  
Serena: I mean Agnes told you she'd come didn't she?  
Mrs Lau: Yes she did.  
Serena: And she was going to tell Fanny and they were both going to come together.  
Mrs Lau: That's what she said. Shall I call Agnes on her mobile phone and see what happened?  
Serena: No... no don't phone mum... I don't want them to feel that they have to come and visit me.  
Mrs Lau: Agnes may have phoned or left a text message... but they're very strict in this hospital about keeping mobile phones turned off so I don't dare keep mine on in case I get into trouble... Why don't I go outside and see if she's left a message. Shall I?  
Serena: (Slight pause) Okay... but mum... if Agnes hasn't left a message don't phone her will you.  
Mrs Lau: Not if you don't want me to Serena.  
Serena: No don't... please mum.  
Mrs Lau: Okay... now I won't be long... here... drink some more water before I go... the doctor said you were to keep drinking as much water as possible.  
Serena: Okay.  
  
(SFX: Serena having a few gulps of water)  
  
I can't drink any more.  
Mrs Lau: That's okay... at least you've had some. Now I'll take myself outside and see if Agnes has left a message for you.  
Serena: Don't be long will you mum.  
Mrs Lau: No Serena... I'll check and be straight back.

## Scene 3.

(SFX: Ambient sounds outside the hospital)  
  
Mrs Lau: (To herself) Okay... let's turn on my mobile phone and see if Agnes has left any messages. (SFX: Beeping sounds from her mobile)  
Okay... mobile switched on and.... (sighs) no messages. Hmm... I'm sure they're must be an explanation

(SFX: Pushing buttons as she dials Agnes' number on her mobile phone)

(SFX: Street sounds. SFX: Agnes' mobile phone starts ringing)

Agnes: Hello..... Oh hello Mrs. Lau.... How's Serena?..... Um, well... actually I was just going to ring you.... you see.... well what happened was that... um... we were going to come to the hospital... in fact we were on our way but, well...um... you know how hot it is to-day and well... it's Fanny's time of the month and the air-conditioning on the mini-bus had broken down and Fanny started feeling faint and the driver was terrible he kept turning corners really fast and we were all falling about all over the place and in the end we had to get off the mini-bus and I had to take Fanny home... I'm sorry I hope you understand... Yes, yes of course... thank you.... Tomorrow? Well... um... actually tomorrow might be a bit difficult as well.... I have a piano lesson after school... yes... Fanny?.... um... I'm not sure but I think she said something about visiting her Aunt..... Yes.... Poor Serena...yes, yes I know... I'm really, really, really sorry Mrs Lau... I know... I'm sorry... yes I can imagine... sorry.... Yes I will... sorry again and give all my love to Serena please... yes... thank you Good bye Mrs Lau.

#### Scene 4

Fanny: Mmm, what are you cooking mum, it smells wonderful.  
Mother: Butterfly prawns, salt and pepper squid and snow peas with garlic.  
Fanny: Delicious... can't wait.  
Steven: Fanny.  
Fanny: What do you want Steven?  
Steven: My computer's crashed.  
Fanny: I'm not surprised the way you use it.  
Steven: Can I use yours for five minutes... I've got my essay on a floppy disc so I just need to...  
Fanny: (Cutting him off) No.  
Steven: (Upset) Oh come on Fanny!  
Fanny: (Cutting him off) Steven... you have destroyed your computer... you are not going to destroy mine as well!  
Mother: Your sister's talking sense Steven... Can't you borrow someone else's... what about Phillip?... phone him up and see if you can use his.  
Steven: (Angry) Huh! Thanks for nothing Fanny!  
Fanny: (Annoyingly serene) You're welcome Steven... Can we have dinner now mummy? I'm starving, I haven't eaten a thing since lunchtime.  
Mother: It's nearly ready.

(SFX: Fanny's mobile phone ringing. SFX: Fanny on other end of phone)

Fanny: Hello.

Agnes: Hi it's me... (groans) Guess what?  
 Fanny: What Agnes?  
 Agnes: Serena's mother called me.  
 Fanny: And?  
 Agnes: Wanted to know why we hadn't gone to the hospital to visit Serena.  
 Fanny: What did you say?  
 Agnes: Well I told her we were on our way to the hospital... we were in a mini-bus and the air-conditioning had broken down and... and it was your time of the month and you felt really faint and so we had to get off the mini-bus and I had to take you home.  
 Fanny: I see... so you blamed it on me.  
 Agnes: No, not really... well I said it was your time of month but... well... I felt a bit mean not going and I couldn't tell her I'd... well... you know... I couldn't say I didn't go to the hospital because I was sitting around drinking cold fruit drinks and eating waffles could I?  
 Fanny: So Serena's mother made you feel guilty again.  
 Agnes: Yes, yes she did... I felt really guilty.  
 Fanny: She's always doing that to you isn't she.  
 Agnes: Yes I suppose she is.  
 Fanny: It's not fair... you were going to go to the hospital but you decided not to... What right has she got to make you feel guilty about that?  
 Agnes: I know, I know.  
 Fanny: And now she's putting pressure on you.  
 Agnes: She asked if we were going tomorrow.  
 Fanny: You see! More pressure! What did you say Agnes?  
 Agnes: I told her I had my piano lesson... and then she asked if you were going.  
 Fanny: Me?  
 Agnes: Yes.  
 Fanny: What did you say?  
 Agnes: I said I wasn't sure if you were going but I said I thought you had to visit your Aunt after school.  
 Fanny: Well I do.  
 Agnes: Anyway... I thought I'd better phone and let you know.  
 Fanny: Yes, thank you.  
 Agnes: And Fanny... don't forget... if she asks tell her we were on our way to the hospital to see Serena when you felt faint on the mini-bus and I had to take you home. Okay?  
 Fanny: (Sighs) Okay Agnes... anything to help you out.  
 Agnes: Thanks Fanny.  
 Mother: (Calling) Dinner's ready!  
 Fanny: I've got to go now my dinner's ready.  
 Agnes: Mm, what are you having?  
 Fanny: Butterfly prawns and salt and pepper squid.  
 Agnes: Yummy... do you want to invite me to join you?  
 Fanny: Another time maybe Agnes.  
 Agnes: I was only joking.... Your mum is such a good cook.  
 Fanny: I know.  
 Mother: (Calling) Fanny... come along... your dinner's on the table.  
 Fanny: Talk to you later Agnes.

Agnes: Okay... bye for now Fanny.  
Fanny: Bye.

## Scene 5

(SFX: Ambient sound hospital ward)

Mrs Lau: There, you see Serena.  
Serena: What mum.  
Mrs Lau: There was a message.  
Serena: (Brightening) Really?  
Mrs Lau: From Agnes... they were on their way but Fanny became ill.  
Serena: Oh dear... I'm so sorry. Is she alright now?  
Mrs Lau: It was her time of the month and the mini-bus had no air conditioning and she felt faint and they had to turn back.  
Serena: Poor, poor Fanny... and how sweet of her to try and come and see me when she wasn't feeling well herself.  
Mrs Lau: You see... they were coming.  
Serena: How could I ever have doubted them? Agnes and Fanny are two of the sweetest friends any girl could ever have.  
Mrs Lau: Yes... well.... Now stop fretting and get some rest.  
Serena: I already feel better. Did you ring Fanny to see how she was?  
Mrs Lau: NO... no I didn't... I just got the message and I came straight back to let you know.  
Serena: But you must ring her for me mummy... ring her and see how she is... I would hate to think of dear Fanny suffering on my account... to think, it was her time of the month and on such a hot day to get on a mini-bus just to come and see me... Fanny's a saint mummy... a saint.  
Mrs Lau: Now then Serena... stop talking and get some rest... the doctor said you need lots of rest and here... drink some more water... he said you need to drink as much water as possible.  
Serena: I will mother... and you know... just thinking of dear, brave Fanny fills me with strength and the desire to get better. (SFX: Fade)

(SFX: Fade up to)

Fanny: There was no way I was going to that stinky hospital.  
Mother: I should think not Fanny... why should you go and visit that silly Serena... It's all very well having big ideas about helping the poor children and all the rest of it but she's ended up in hospital which costs the government... our government, not their government, a lot of money... and she's given her mother a big headache.  
Fanny: And Serena's mother keeps phoning Agnes and making her feel guilty about not visiting Serena in hospital.  
Mother: Huh! I hope Serena's mother hasn't been phoning you Fanny!  
Fanny: No she hasn't... not yet anyway.  
Mother: If Serena's mother phones you here let me talk to her... I'll give her a mouthful... how dare she pester sensible girls who just want to go home and do their homework! (SFX: Fade out)

(SFX: Fade up)

Serena: But you must ring Fanny for me mummy... ring her and see how she is... I would hate to think of poor dear Fanny suffering on my account... to think, it was her time of the month and on such a hot day to get on a mini-bus just to come and see me... Fanny's a saint mummy... a saint. (SFX: Fade out)

(SFX: Fade in)

Fanny: Serna's just a show off really... she likes to give her money away in front of everyone so we will all think she's a saint or something... well I don't think Serena's a saint... I just think she's silly.

(SFX: Echo)

Serena: Fanny's a saint mummy... a saint. (SFX: Fade out)

(SFX: Telephone ringing)

Fanny: Well don't just sit there Steven... answer the phone you lazy idiot!

Steven: But it will be someone for you... you know it will.

Fanny: Answer it! Mum! Tell him!

Mother: Come along Steven... answer the phone... there's a good boy.

Steven: (Sighs) (SFX: Picking up phone) (Fed up voice) Hello..... Yes, hold on. (To Fanny) Told you... it's for you.

Fanny: Who is it?

Steven: I don't know. Some lady.

Fanny: Lady? Ask her who it is.

Steven: You ask.

Fanny: (Angry) Steven!

Steven: (On phone) Who's speaking please? (To Fanny) Mrs Lau... she says she's Serina's mother.

Mother: How dare she ring you here! Right... I'm answering that. Give that receiver to me!

**The End**

