

## **Songbirds: 'Charity Begins At Home' Part 3**

**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 that charity begins at home.

### **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 twenty dollars, all she has, and decides to walk all the way home to Lam Tin. But 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.

The girls enjoy their favourite desserts until it is too late for Agnes to go to the hospital. Agnes then realizes that she cannot go the next night either because of a piano lesson. In the end they decide to pray for Serena rather than visiting her.

Back home Steven asks Fanny if he can borrow her computer as his has crashed but she refuses.

### **Scene 1 Reprise**

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

Serena: Hey Agnes... Fanny... look... they're collecting for victims of the tsunami... I think I'll donate everything in my purse.

(SFX: Many coins going in to the box)

Fanny: But how will you get home Serena?

Serena: Walk..... Goodbye.

Agnes: Serena was ill last week and now she's walking all that way home in the heat.

(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.  
(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.  
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 tsunami thing again! It gets on your nerves the way they're still going on and on about it after all this time.  
Fanny: I know... they were collecting money outside the MTR and in the streets on the way home.  
Mother: I hope you didn't give them anything.  
Fanny: No I didn't.  
Mother: Good. They're all thieves... they take our money and spend in on themselves. In life you've got to put you own interests first Fanny... that's my philosophy... always look out for number one. If you don't... people take advantage of you. Charity begins at home Fanny... at home. (SFX Fade)

(SFX: Telephone rings)

Agnes: Serena is in hospital.  
Fanny: Oh no!  
Agnes: After walking all the way from Wong Tai Sin to Lam Tin she got home We should go and visit her Fanny. (SFX Fade)  
Mother: Who was that 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: 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. Tell her you can't go. If you fail your exams Serena's mother won't care... all she's interested in is her daughter, not you.... Remember Fanny... always look out for number one... put your own self-interest first... charity begins at home.

## Scene 2

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

Agnes: It's three thirty and 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 haven't been feeling very well to-day.

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

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

Agnes: Oh I see... I see.

Fanny: So....

Agnes: Don't worry Fanny... I understand. (Sighs) 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: (Groans) Oh, my poor stomach.

Agnes: You'd better get home and rest Fanny.

Fanny: I will.

Agnes: I'll walk with you to the MTR station.

Fanny: Okay.

(SFX: Ambient street sounds)

Agnes: It's so hot again to-day.

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

Agnes: I'd love a nice cold drink.

Fanny: Would you Agnes?

Agnes: A kiwi fruit slush puppy would be nice.

Fanny: Sounds good.

Agnes: But I won't have time... I've got to get to the hospital to see Serena.

Fanny: The smelly old hospital.

Agnes: Don't... it makes me feel queasy just thinking about it.

Fanny: I feel thirsty too.

Agnes: But you mustn't have cold drinks if you have an upset stomach.

Fanny: I know... but I could have a bowl of dow foo fa... sweet bean curd is very good for the stomach... very soothing.

Agnes: I love sweet bean curd!

Fanny: It's very soothing.

Agnes: I know... why don't we go back to that place we went to yesterday and have a sweet bean curd and then I could go on to the hospital to see Serena.

Fanny: Well... that would be nice... but have you got time?

Agnes: Yes... we won't be long will we.

Fanny: No.

Agnes: Okay... let's go then.

### Scene 3

(Ambient sounds inside fruit and dessert cafe)

Agnes: Mm... that sweet bean curd was so delicious.  
Fanny: It is good isn't it.  
Agnes: So smooth and creamy.  
Fanny: So settling.  
Agnes: How's your tummy feeling Fanny?  
Fanny: Much better thank you Agnes.  
Agnes: Good. Mm, that was so good I could eat it all over again.  
Fanny: Why don't you then?  
Agnes: What, have another one?  
Fanny: If you want one... well now that we're here.  
Agnes: What about getting to the hospital though.  
Fanny: It won't take you long to eat another bowl of dow foo fa.  
Agnes: That's true... if I ate it quickly... though it's a pity to hurry it... it's nice to eat it slowly and really savour it.  
Fanny: That's true.  
Agnes: Are you going to have another one Fanny.  
Fanny: Well... it depends. If you are Agnes then... well I suppose... just to keep you company.  
Agnes: Okay! Let's do it! Let's have another bowl of yummy sweet bean curd.  
(SFX: Fade)  
Agnes: Mm, that was heavenly.  
Fanny: Yes it was nice wasn't it.  
Agnes: You know I think that their sweet bean curd has become my favourite.  
Fanny: Really? More than the Belgian Waffles with ice cream and chocolate sauce?  
Agnes: Mm... that's delicious too.  
Fanny: It is nice.  
Agnes: Oh Fanny... I wish you hadn't mentioned the waffles.  
Fanny: Why Agnes?  
Agnes: Because now I want some.  
Fanny: Do you?  
Agnes: Well sweet bean curd is not very filling.  
Fanny: True.  
Agnes: I suppose we could... (trails off)  
Fanny: What Agnes?  
Agnes: Share one... I mean one Belgian waffle with ice cream and chocolate sauce and... two spoons.  
Fanny: We could do.  
Agnes: And I could eat all the ice cream so it wouldn't be too cold for your tummy and you could have more of the waffle and chocolate sauce.  
Fanny: But you know Agnes... after that soothing sweet bean curd... my tummy feels much better.  
Agnes: Does it Fanny? Then we could share the whole waffle ice cream and all.  
Fanny: But sharing can be so messy.  
Agnes: That's true.

Fanny: And it's not very hygienic.  
 Agnes: (A little put out) Oh.  
 Fanny: I mean we all have germs... I do as well as everyone else and it's better, as a rule, to keep one's germs to ones self if you know what I mean.  
 Agnes: Well I suppose we could each have a waffle.  
 Fanny: That would be neater.  
 Agnes: Shall we do that then?  
 Fanny: Okay. If you want to Agens. (SFX: Fade)  
 Agnes: Mm, that waffle is pure heaven!  
 Fanny: So which do you prefer... the sweet bean curd or the Belgian waffle Agnes?  
 Agnes: It's really hard to say... but on balance... I think I prefer... the Belgian waffle. How about you Fanny?  
 Fanny: The sweet bean curd.  
 Agnes: Yes the sweet bean curd is delicious isn't it... yes, maybe I prefer the sweet bean curd too.  
 Fanny: Right... well I'd better be getting home and you'd better be getting yourself to the hospital?  
 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: To Queen Elizabeth Hospital? I'm not sure really... I haven't been there before... I'm not even sure what MTR station it's near and I haven't a clue what bus or mini bus to catch.  
 Fanny: You could phone Serena's mother and ask her.  
 Agnes: She's probably not at home and she hasn't got a mobile.  
 Fanny: Phone Serena.  
 Agnes: You're not allowed to have your mobiles switched on in the hospital.  
 Fanny: I see.  
 Agnes: What a bore.  
 Fanny: (Sighs) Yes.  
 Agnes: (Pause) I know.  
 Fanny: What Agnes?  
 Agnes: Well her mother said she'd be in hospital for two or three days... so I can go tomorrow.  
 Fanny: That's true.  
 Agnes: Anyway, if she's suffering from dehydration and exhaustion a visit might tire here.  
 Fanny: It might, yes... yes that makes sense to me.  
 Agnes: So it's better if I don't go really.  
 Fanny: Probably.  
 Agnes: And I can phone up her mother later tonight when she gets home.  
 Fanny: Of course.  
 Agnes: She'll understand... won't she?  
 Fanny: She should do.  
 Agnes: Okay then... that's what I'll do.  
 Fanny: Okay... shall we go now.  
 Agnes: Yes. (Sighs) It's nice to be going home... I wasn't really looking forward to going to that smelly hospital... not in this heat.

Fanny: I hope poor Serena is feeling better.  
 Agnes: Poor thing. Still, she's in the best place if she's not feeling well and they say Queen Elizabeth is a very good hospital.  
 Fanny: That's true... and I'm sure they're really looking after her well.  
 Agnes: And her mother's there with her.  
 Fanny: And you're going tomorrow aren't you Agnes.  
 Agnes: Yes... yes I will go tomo... (suddenly remembers) Wait a minute... tomorrow I have my piano lesson after school.  
 Fanny: Do you? Can you change the time?  
 Agnes: Not really.  
 Fanny: I see.  
 Agnes: Are you going to visit Serena in hospital tomorrow Fanny?  
 Fanny: I'd like to I really would but I've promised my mother we'd go to visit my aunt tomorrow after school. We made the arrangement a long time ago and I haven't seen my aunt in ages. Apparently she's really looking forward to seeing us... she lives in an old persons home. I suppose I could try to...  
 Agnes: No, how can you... if you're aunt has been looking forward to seeing you she's be really disappointed if you cancelled at the last minute. (Sighs) Well... Serena's mother did say she'd be in the hospital for three days so we could go the day after tomorrow.  
 Fanny: Yes, yes of course.  
 Agnes: So shall we leave it at that for now?  
 Fanny: I think so. Anyway, I know one thing I can do for Serena tonight.  
 Agnes: What's that Fanny?  
 Fanny: Pray for her Agnes. Pray that our dear friend gets better soon.  
 Agnes: I'm going to pray for her too.  
 Fanny: We can both pray for her... and two prayers are more powerful than one.  
 Agnes: I know, let's pray at the same time... say at ten o'clock.  
 Fanny: Okay.. let's both pray for Serena at ten o'clock.  
 Agnes: What time does your watch say now Fanny?  
 Fanny: Twenty to five.  
 Agnes: Okay... I'll put mine back a minute so our watches are exactly the same... so when we pray at exactly ten....  
 Fanny: Serena will feel the full force of our prayers.  
 Agnes: Good. I feel a lot better now. Come on Fanny, let's go.

#### Scene 4

(SFX: Door opening and closing)

Fanny: Hello Mum.  
 Mother: Hello Fanny. How was your day?  
 Fanny: Good. And I did what you suggested.  
 Mother: Did you. Good girl. Um... remind me... what was it that I suggested?  
 Fanny: Saying that I had my periods so I wouldn't have to visit Serena in hospital.

Mother: Oh yes. Good! Good I'm glad. Why should you drag yourself all the way to see Serena in some germy hospital just because she was stupid enough to make herself ill.

Fanny: Agnes didn't go either.

Mother: Sensible girl.

Fanny: But we're going to pray for Serena, tonight at the same time.

Mother: No harm in that... praying doesn't cost anybody anything and if it works all to the good and if it doesn't well you can't say you didn't try.

Fanny: Mm, what are you cooking mum, it smells delicious.

Mother: Butterfly prawns, salt and pepper squid and snow peas with garlic.

Fanny: Delicious... I can't wait.

Steven: Fanny.

Fanny: What do you want?

Steven: My computer's crashed.

Fanny: I'm not surprised the way you use it.

Steven: I've got this really important essay I have to give in tomorrow and I need to print it out.

Fanny: So why are you telling me... get on with it.

Steven: But I told you, my computer's crashed.

Fanny: That's your problem Steven... not mine.

Steven: I only need to borrow 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, don't be so...

Fanny: (Cutting him off) You have destroyed your computer... I am not having you destroy mine as well!

Steven: Don't be mean Fanny... this is important... it won't take long I can have it over and done with before dinner.

Fanny: (Spelling it out) N-O spells No!

Steven: Mum, tell her.

Mother: I know nothing about computers Steven sorry.

Steven: But mum, I only need it for a few...

Fanny: (Cutting in) Mum computers are very sensitive... Steven is clumsy... he's broken his computer by being too rough and I don't want him to break mine.

Steven: I won't!

Fanny: It's expensive to repair computers.... And you don't want to have to pay for mine to be repaired as well as paying for Steven's.

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 borrow his.

Steven: (Angry) Huh! Thanks for nothing Fanny!

Fanny: (Sarcastic) You're welcome Steven. Now shall we have dinner... I'm starving.

**The End**