

SWEET CHARIOT

by

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(FIRST DRAFT - 29 PLAYS LATER DAY 1: THEME "STRING")

ANNA - MARRIED TO CHARLIE

BINDI - FRIEND OF ANNA AND DONNA

CHARLIE - MARRIED TO ANNA

DONNA - FRIEND OF ANNA AND BINDI

SCENE 1

SOUND OF CHILDREN RUNNING ABOUT

DONNA: Bindi, it was gorgeous. She was still in the coma when she gave birth. They didn't know what to call the baby.

BINDI: Was it a boy or a girl?

DONNA: A gorgeous little girl. Such a sweet little thing. She knew it was her mother even though the mother was unconscious but she knew. You could see the connection. They clung to each other, she clung to her mother. [ASIDE] Daniel, stop that right now. [SOUND CHILD GRUMBLING]

BINDI: They let them stay together?

DONNA:: What else could you do? The moment when, this is after months, her eyes flicker, cos of the kid, and the eyes, it's like she knows she's there.

BINDI: Did she know?

DONNA: I don't know. She must have done. [ASIDE] Mary, I can see you. Stop it. [SOUND OF CHILD] [TO BINDI] Like just cos you're in a coma it doesn't mean you can't hear anything.

BINDI: What, coma patients can hear?

DONNA: They must do. But it wasn't the hearing, it was the skin, the touching, the closeness of the child.

BINDI: That's amazing. So she woke because of the child?

DONNA: She brought her out of the coma.

BINDI: How long was she under?

DONNA: Long. Twenty months. But, you know, she woke holding the baby, and she knew, she didn't know, but she wasn't surprised. [ASIDE] Daniel, seriously! [SOUND OF CHILD] Come here. Aren't you gorgeous? Aren't you! Daniel, tell Auntie Bindi your news. Daniel won the spelling competition at school.

BINDI: Oh Daniel, that's great!

DONNA: He's got some smarts from somewhere cos they're not from me and not from his bloody father for sure. He's going to be amazing, I can tell.

BINDI: They're both amazing. That picture Stella drew of you was brilliant.

DONNA: They're both something. It's great to have that, to think: this, this is so great, and it's mine.

BINDI: They're your children, Donna.

DONNA: Oh, Bindi! It's like life, meaning. If you weren't still... well.. You might.

BINDI: I'd like to meet someone and you know, but what if they're not right, and what if the child turns into like We Need To Talk About Kevin?

DONNA: I don't think that's- what's it- genetic. Not like a serial killer. How many teenage serial killers can you think of?

BINDI: Yeah but if, I won't meet anyone so it won't happen.

DONNA: Be hopeful! I think having children is an absolute social good.

BINDI: : I'd really like to, Donna. But it's never gonna happen.

DONNA: Aww, look at Mary. She's going to be a model, she's got the cheekbones already.

BINDI: Yeah.

DONNA: She'll be a right one when she's a teenager.

BINDI:: Hmm.

DONNA: It's amazing isn't it. Sometimes I just feel blessed. Absolutely

blessed. [ASIDE] Oh Daniel, you're going to trip up, love.  
Come here..

[SOUND FADE]

SCENE 2

SOUND OF (ANNA'S) GARDEN

[SOUND OF WINE BEING POURED]

BINDI: When! When!!!! Anna, that's far too much!

ANNA: I'm going to get you drunk, Bindi dear. I can tell there's  
something on your mind and I want you to tell me what it is.

BINDI: I'll forget my own name if I have another glass this size.

ANNA:: Cheers! [THEY CLINK]

BINDI: Thanks, Anna. This is really nice, what is it, a gazebo?

ANNA: It's all right, isn't it? Charlie put it up. It's good cos it shelters you from the sun in summer and the rain in autumn and in winter you can set fire to it to stay warm.

BINDI: Oh, it's lovely. The house looks great too!

ANNA: It's getting there. Charlie's raise, and my promotion have helped a lot.

BINDI: : Oh!! I always knew you'd turn out well. When we were at school I always looked up to you. I wished I could have been you.

ANNA: It was so good to get back in touch after all that time.

BINDI: That was five years ago!

ANNA: What, the wedding?

BINDI: Yes!

ANNA: It can't be. Bloody hell.

BINDI: Such a beautiful wedding. You looked so beautiful, you both did, the whole red thing, and, ah...

ANNA: I thought you'd have...too, by now... I'm sorry.

BINDI: It's not that, it's just. Do you remember Donna?

ANNA: Donna the Gaya Theory?

BINDI: The what?

ANNA: Donna the earth mother?

BINDI: Oh! The child catcher!

[THEY LAUGH]

ANNA: How's she doing? What's wrong, Bindi?

BINDI: Nothing. I mean, we were talking and she's got all this, all this life. It's just so.. And you, you've got all this, and Charlie and everything and your career. And I've got, not any of that.

ANNA: You've got a great life! We're all jealous of your freedom! You're so.. Independent.

BINDI: Oh GOD!

ANNA: Seriously. Is that what's bothering you. Drink some more wine, here. You big silleh.

BINDI: It's not. It's just, seeing Donna with all those children.

ANNA: Are you still thinking about it?

BINDI: Not that, I don't know. Yes. But I haven't got anyone.

ANNA: Oh, you could walk for thirty seconds round the block and I'm sure some handsome fella...

BINDI: I don't really want anyone. But I want a baby.

ANNA: I used to want to, but as you know I can't. Even if, Charlie, well, he's got sperm doing pressups but Big Mama Nothing here.

BINDI: But it doesn't seem to have affected you. As a couple I mean. In fact it seems to have made you stronger.

ANNA: We're good. There are other things you know.

BINDI: God, how would I know.

ANNA: Darling...

BINDI: I'm desperate Anna! To raise a new life, to feel it inside you, growing...

ANNA: Yes, it's...

BINDI: Oh God sorry Anna, I didn't mean..

ANNA: It's okay Bindi, I don't...

BINDI: I mean, you could adopt or something couldn't you.

ANNA: We've thought, well, Charlie and I have been through everything, and what we'd really like is... Do you want a top up?

BINDI: What? [SOUND OF WINE] Anna! Thanks, anyway.

ANNA: Is this wine all right?

BINDI: It's... what were you gonna say?

ANNA: When?

BINDI: Just now?

ANNA: Nothing. Do you need some more nibbles? These are \*so\* good!

BINDI: About Charlie? Does he want one?

ANNA: Want what, dear?

BINDI: A child.

ANNA: A child.

BINDI: A little... you know...

ANNA: We both would. See, that's why... Cheers! [CLINKS GLASSES] That's why, what we really want is to just find someone, but not a stranger, but someone close to us, and they could, you know, use the - the issue. The seed.

BINDI: The seed!?

ANNA: Charlie's seed. His sperm, his gymnastic sperm. To have a baby. And we could sort of be godparents, and the child would obviously not be ours but it would be close by, and we could still have our careers, and she could, whoever, have, have a child. Everyone wins.

BINDI: No strings attached eh?

ANNA: Well, I mean, Charlie and I are strong enough.

BINDI: Oh come on!

ANNA: I mean it! We've talked it through. We've worked it out. Charlie fathers the child, she has it, and genetic destiny is.. Fulfilled.

BINDI: Haha, well, Charlie's a stunner I must admit. How's his...

ANNA:: Oh! You're outrageous! [PAUSE] Amazing! [THEY LAUGH] [MORE WINE POURED]

BINDI: Oh, I'd love a baby. A family. A life like that. You and Charlie,

Donna and her menagerie, I just. I wish.

ANNA: Bindi. Have you... I mean, would you ever...

BINDI: Would I what? I think - [SOUND] - Is that you ringing?

ANNA: Must be Charlie, he always rings about now.

BINDI: Aww.

ANNA: Look, Bindi. I'll be back in a minute, right. I've got an idea.  
Can you fetch us up another bottle of red, I've got something  
I think I should run by you, okay? I'll be back in ten minutes,  
promise...

[SOUND FADES OUT OVER BINDI AGREEING]

[MUSIC]

SCENE 3

SOUND OF BINDI'S KITCHEN

[SOUND OF DOORBELL]

ANNA:                    Bindi!

BINDI:                    Thanks for coming round, Anna.

ANNA:                    You look amazing! It really suits you.

BINDI:                    What, this?

ANNA:                    Not the dress, silly!

BINDI:                    Well...

ANNA:                    Motherhood! You're so big!

BINDI:                    I feel it.

ANNA:                    Huge in fact. You'll be six feet wide by the time you pop.  
Who'd have thought. Such a cute little thing.

BINDI:                    Well, Charlie is I guess. .. I mean. How is Charlie?

ANNA: :                    Fantastic. He's really excited. So am I! It's exciting! You  
must feel fab!

BINDI: Yes. Oh, Anna, it's so amazing. So, so amazing.

ANNA: Shh, hurry up and pour that tea. [POURING SOUND] So. Charlie and I had an idea actually. Just a little one.

BINDI: Right?

ANNA: To help you out, when the baby comes.

BINDI: Help me out?

ANNA: Sure, it's a lot of money, and time, and, and hard work, really hard work, bringing up a baby, especially alone.

BINDI: I'm ready for it, Anna. I've always been. I know what I'm doing.

ANNA: No, of course you do darling, of course you do. I can tell you're going to be a sensational mother. Look at you, you're glowing. You've got a glint of Charlie in your eye.

BINDI: In *\*my\** eye? What the.

ANNA: Oh you know, the baby's eye. In your eye.

BINDI: The baby's eye in my eye?

ANNA: Yeah...

BINDI: That's absurd

ANNA: Oh, Bindi you know what I mean. That glint of... of motherhood! I don't know, it's so great! But it's gonna get hard. I mean, it's not like you earn a fortune as such, I mean you do really well, and this place is great! But it's hard times out there, and for a single mother. To be earning and saving and all that.

BINDI: Anna, what are you getting at?

ANNA: I've had, Charlie and I have had a little idea. Hang on, are we still going out? I want to tell you about it. To help you out. You know, Charlie talks about this baby a lot, and I think, there's definitely something to be said for, let me rephrase it...

[FADE OUT WHILE TALKING]

[MUSICAL THEME GOING FROM HAPPY TO TRAGIC]

#### SCENE 4

#### SOUND OF HOSPITAL

DONNA: Bindi!

BINDI: [WEAKLY] Whhh. Wha... Donna?

DONNA: Yes, Bindi, it's Donna, I came as soon as I could. I just heard. The nurse let me in.

BINDI: What. Who told you.

DONNA: Are you okay? Oh, you should have called me. Ages ago. For heaven's sake, I could have helped you.

BINDI: Where are the kids?

DONNA: Kids? Oh, I called up a favour from a colleague. I'm here now. What can I do?

BINDI: Nothing. I-

DONNA: I'm here now Bindi.

BINDI: Donna I didn't ask you to-

DONNA: It's the least I could do. Tell me everything that's happened and...

BINDI: I don't want to-

DONNA: Bindi, I'm your friend. And I'm a mother, and as your friend

and as a mother, I want to help you. To make-

BINDI: [STARTS CRYING] Donna-

DONNA:: Oh Bindi! Honestly it's nothing! [MORE BINDI CRYING]  
Anything, come on- I know!

BINDI: You don't know!

DONNA: What, but I-

BINDI: You don't. Know.

DONNA: Shhh, come on. Bindi. Complications are common, and  
science is brilliant. It sounds to me like you'll be absolutely-

BINDI: Donna! Please, Donna.

DONNA: Absolutely fine, nine times out of ten, this...

BINDI: You're too late, too late. You're too late, Donna.

DONNA: Too late? What, you mean...

BINDI: [CRYING, BARELY COMPREHENSIBLE] it was Charlie's  
genes, it was genes, it was some genetic condition, on the  
father's side, it was Charlie, Donna, it was all Charlie...

DONNA: Does he know? What was it? Does..

BINDI: Charlie doesn't know and Anna doesn't know and I don't know and it was the father's side it was the genes Donna and they didn't even notice it and then it was too late and

DONNA: Can't they- I mean, couldn't couldn't they - Bindi, what happened? It can't have been Charlie or you, don't blame yourself, come on, Bindi, please...

[FADE OVER DONNA]

[TRAGIC MUSIC INTO ABSTRACT ART MUSIC]

## SCENE 5

SOUND OF MUSEUM OR SOME PUBLIC PLACE

ANNA: Charlie! I'm going to the cafe.

CHARLIE: Look at this, Anna. Look at the foreshortening on the limbs. It's a classic Renaissance technique.

ANNA: I know, it's beautiful. Charlie, stop it, you can't take photos in

here. Sorry, sorry, he's putting it away. Charlie.

CHARLIE: It's all right, it's just a photo. Look! Look at the detail on the Cherubim there.

ANNA: They're Seraphim aren't they?

CHARLIE:: Are they? Are you sure?

ANNA: Charlie.

CHARLIE: Did you know that when the Jewish religious mysteries were translated into Greek there wasn't a word for cherubim, so they just took the word kheravim and it went through four languages, and became cherubim, but it's not a literal translation of anything. Just imported, isn't that fascinating?

ANNA: I think we've had enough of babies for now.

CHARLIE: Cherubim aren't babies, Anna.

ANNA: Fine, cherabim, seraphim, kherabim, caravan.

CHARLIE: They're not babies.

ANNA: Fine. Are you coming?

CHARLIE: I'm still looking at this. No, I'm coming, of course I'm coming. What time is it? Are you still going to your thing?

[FOOTSTEPS AND FADE OUT]

SCENE 6

SOUND OF BINDI'S HOUSE SAME AS SCENE 3

BINDI: Oh Charlie...

CHARLIE:: Bindi...

BINDI: Do you think...

CHARLIE: God yes.

[SOUND KISSES, START OF SEXUAL MOVEMENT]

BINDI: Charlie, do you think she knows?

CHARLIE: Who knows?

BINDI: Anna. Does she suspect?

CHARLIE: No, no. Mmm. [KISSES] She doesn't, she's nothing.

BINDI: She's what-

CHARLIE: I don't care any more.

BINDI: What do you - Stop. Look, Charlie, Stop. Stop it.

CHARLIE: All right, what?

BINDI: You said this wouldn't be a thing.

CHARLIE: It's fine, I mean it's fine. Anna and I are fine.

BINDI: You're not fine, you're pushing your relationship onto me.

CHARLIE: I'm not.

BINDI: You are, the further you slip from her the more you're here.

CHARLIE: Well what's wrong with that.

BINDI: We can't do that, Charlie. For God's sake. We're not supposed to.

CHARLIE: Look, Anna doesn't have to know. I'm not going to tell her, are you?

BINDI: Charlie, it's not about Anna. I mean it is about Anna, but this is about, we're not supposed to. This is something else entirely.

CHARLIE: This is great, come on.

BINDI: Yeah, it's all right. I'm not your fucking mistress Charlie.

CHARLIE: Oh come on. We like, last year, you're definitely not my mistress, I mean, you, we had a...

BINDI: This is so weird.

CHARLIE: It's not weird. It's weird right now, but it's not weird. We have a bond. We have shared experience.

BINDI: A shared bloody, I dunno, swingers bloody fornicating pool, something.

CHARLIE: Come on, I really like you.

BINDI: Oh for... that's the stupidest thing you could say right now.

CHARLIE: Really. Look, Bindi. It was my child too. It's my tragedy too. Mine. Don't you-

BINDI: Oh come on. Big fat turkey baster in a bloody body, that's what she called you isn't it. Turkey baster guy.

CHARLIE: That's really cruel Bindi. It was more than that and you know it.

BINDI: Charlie, leave it.

CHARLIE: No. You wanted it to go on even before all this. When you

knew it had worked and you were carrying my child, you wanted to carry on. That's genes, that's genetics. That's psychoanalytic theory of attachment and relationships and..

BINDI: Genetics? What shit. You and your wife have the bloodiest stupid ideas of genes and...

CHARLIE: It's known, enjoyment and shared empathy, I mean, the friendly, love bit, improves the chances of conception.

BINDI: Charlie, seriously.

CHARLIE: It's true!

BINDI: You are a dick. Literally a dick. Why did I want you to impregnate me? Or was it all your wife's idea? And why the hell, why, why am I doing this again, why did we start this, this is insane-

CHARLIE: Bindi! We needed, we both needed something - after the child - after the - it's not wrong, I mean there's Anna, but she's, she's just so, so I don't recognise her. It's gone cold. It's all gone cold. I don't know. There's still something with you, I think.

BINDI: This was insane. We shouldn't have, why did we do this? What was I thinking?

CHARLIE: Bindi, please.

BINDI: Genetics. Genes. Father's side, what the.

CHARLIE: Bindi, come on, it was a one off. One in a thousand. A hundred thousand. Why not try again?

BINDI: No, no, no, no, no. You can't bring a baby back to life by making another baby.

CHARLIE: Bindi, shh. Come on. Bindi....

[FADE OUT TO CRYING]

[INDUSTRIAL NOISE TYPE MUSIC]

## SCENE 7

### SOUND OF CAFE

ANNA: Bindi.

BINDI: Anna.

ANNA: I came.

BINDI: Thank you. Do you want to sit down?

ANNA: I can't stay long. I've got classes all evening and I need to

get an early night.

BINDI: It won't take long. Do you want -

ANNA: I'm fine.

BINDI: Okay. [ASIDE] Actually, can I change that to a Bellini?

ANNA: You're looking well.

BINDI: Thank you. You're... you're muscular. Is it all the...

ANNA: Just a bit of gym. Keeps you trim.

BINDI: [ASIDE] Thanks. Can I pay after? [TO ANNA] Mmm, I love these.

ANNA: I'm not drinking myself these days.

BINDI: No, I shouldn't be really.

ANNA: Oh.

BINDI: No. I mean. In my condition.

ANNA: You're... in your condition?

BINDI: Yes.

ANNA: You're pregnant? Again?

BINDI:: I am.

ANNA: Oh. [PAUSE] That's wonderful. Congratulations. And well done. Well done. Such great news. Perhaps I will have that drink.

BINDI: I'll call the waiter.

ANNA: No, don't. I mean, what are you. How are you. Who is.

BINDI: It's someone you don't know. Just another friend. A friend of a friend, really.

ANNA: Well who is it? Whose is it?

BINDI: Just like I say. Didn't mean to actually. Again. After before.

ANNA: An accident? How? You have a boyfriend?

BINDI: No, just, you know how things are

ANNA: I've been married for seven years, how could I possibly know how things are.

BINDI: And Charlie. I wanted you to tell him. If you want to.

ANNA: Pfff. You'd have more luck telling him.

BINDI: Wh... are you- having.. difficulties?

ANNA: You know, Bindi.

BINDI: I wish we had stayed close. I'm sorry about everything.

ANNA: Oh. Oh. Bindi. Bindi, it's not that. To be honest I feel estranged from everything, everyone.

BINDI: I'm sorry.

ANNA: Why are you sorry, Bindi? I'm not. If I could go back, but on the other hand, sod it. Things happen, and what happens happens and if it doesn't work out then you've tested the strength of character and you know, and forget it. You can't keep chasing happiness when bad things keep happening, forever.

BINDI: But good things happen.

ANNA: For how long.

BINDI: But Anna.

ANNA: I'm so sorry Bindi. Look, I'm really happy for you. I'm really thrilled. I'm a bit stressed, Charlie is... I don't know where he is. Honestly you'd better tell him yourself. He's... he's always... he's always...

BINDI: Are things?

ANNA: Bindi.

BINDI: Anna, no.

ANNA: Bindi, tell me.

BINDI: Tell you what? There's nothing to tell.

ANNA: Who's the father, Bindi? Here you are and you're drinking bellinis, what the hell, put that down. Put it --

[SOUND OF THE GLASS SMASHING]

BINDI: A guy! Just a friend. Noone. No one important, just like a turkey baster.

ANNA: WHAT?

BINDI: Like a turkey baster guy. No --

[SOUND OF CLATTERING CROCKERY]

ANNA: You! You and Charlie! All this time! Knocked up! Knocked up. Again! My bloody husband, my perfect bloody husband.

BINDI: I didn't mean it, I just wanted a baby

ANNA: Fornicating bastard. Jesus, and I fucking put him forward for the job. I set him up, I set myself up.

BINDI: It was an accident.

ANNA: How long? Since the birth? Since his mutant gene offal got thrown in a bucket?

BINDI: Anna, Please. Let me go.

ANNA: Slut. User. And I set you up. And I set you up. [ASIDE] It's fine, I'm letting her go. No, it's fine. I'm sorry about that. I'm going yes.

BINDI: Anna. I have to tell you something.

ANNA: Do not talk to me, Bindi.

BINDI: Anna, it wasn't about you. He still loves you.

ANNA: You think... Do you really think I care? You can have bloody sprogs with half of Finchley if you want, you can bottle up the fetuses and put them in a freak museum and you can both charge entry because I'm going to have you. This is just the beginning.

BINDI: Anna it was your idea in the first place.

ANNA : And you just fell on his dick.

BINDI: I was so grateful.

ANNA: And I was an idiot. No strings. No strings, and one dead marriage later. It was perfect, so perfect. And I wanted everyone to know, to know how much I loved him. I wanted him to be there, in the future, smiling with someone else's eyes.

BINDI: Anna. How could it be, how could it be perfect? If you did that?

ANNA: Yes. Yes, you were necessary. You were a vessel. To stave off the barrenness, the barrenness of our barren marriage. Pretending it was a perfect marriage, and trying to be smug to try and help you out, to help out some charity case.

BINDI: Anna!

ANNA: Why did you do this to me, Bindi? You took away everything.

BINDI:: Anna. I thought we were friends.

ANNA: Everything.

[FADE OUT]

[MUSIC: SWEET CHARIOT]

SCENE 8

SOUND OF CHARLIE'S OFFICE IN  
BACKGROUND OF PHONE CALL

[VOICEMAIL BEEP]

CHARLIE: Hi, it's Charlie. I just heard. Call me.

[VOICEMAIL BEEP]

CHARLIE: Hi, it's Charlie. Will you call me?

[VOICEMAIL BEEP]

CHARLIE: Can you call me please? Are you there? Will you pick up?  
Call me, okay.

[VOICEMAIL BEEP]

CHARLIE: Hey, call me, it's going to be okay. I'll call back in a bit. Call

me.

[VOICEMAIL BEEP]

CHARLIE: Look, I've just spoken to Donna, and will you please pick up.  
Come on, please. Something, don't do this.

[VOICEMAIL BEEP]

CHARLIE: Come on, answer the fucking phone. We need to talk. We  
have to talk. We absolutely have to talk. Don't do this. Come  
on. Come on, please. Please. [etc]

[EXTREMELY LONG FADE OUT]

[END]