

The Book of Susannah 12

Susannah reflects on her decision to skip karaoke, feeling no regret as she prefers solitude over forced social performances. She considers the awkwardness of singing with her whole family, recalling the tension with her sister Laura, who had recently yelled at her. Susannah muses on the nature of karaoke, believing that genuine emotion in performance outweighs technical perfection. This introspection reveals her detached mood and discomfort with family dynamics, underscoring her preference for authenticity and personal space over social expectations.

As Susannah lounges alone, she ignores texts from her sister Ruth, responding only with ambiguous emojis that leave interpretation open. Memories of her childhood and the origin of her imaginary friend, Bogomil, surface, hinting at the emotional impact of her parents' divorce. Despite acknowledging how much better her life seems now, there is an undercurrent of unresolved sadness. Her solitary dinner and aimless TV watching emphasize her isolation and emotional distance from those around her.

The unexpected arrival of Mr. Anabin with Laura's forgotten guitar introduces a moment of connection amidst Susannah's solitude. His gentle suggestion that Susannah keep the guitar safe reveals his quiet concern and a subtle encouragement for her to care for herself. Susannah's gratefulness and plans to repay his kindness show her appreciation for this small gesture of kindness, which contrasts with her otherwise withdrawn state. The snow and the cold exterior further frame this brief human warmth.

Finally, Susannah carefully stores the old guitar in the hall closet, tenderly tuning and singing to it, as if comforting both the instrument and herself. Her improvised song acknowledges the guitar's shortcomings and the familial changes affecting it, symbolizing lingering attachments and transitions. The chapter closes with another doorbell, suggesting ongoing interruptions in Susannah's quiet world, leaving readers

with a sense of anticipation and unresolved tension.