

*The Sangsters*

*(Efter Turgenev)*

The pub hud a speerit o competeetion that nicht. In the neuk the auld boys – Johnny Like, Puggle and Frank – were playin doms. Davie the barman an Big Chuck were canglin about the fitba. There e'en seemed tae be a pingle about Mary an Wull's uisual seelent bousin.

Gin the fitba blethers rin oot o steam, Chuck gesturt tae the laddie at the puggie. 'D'ye think he mails his bandit winnings hame tae Italy?' Big Chuck said.

Davie leukt blank. 'Italy?'

'Aye. Rome. He's Romanian, is he no?'

Davie shak his heid. 'Aye, Chuck. Romanian. Fae Romania. No Rome.'

Chuck pullt oan his pint. 'Same thing.'

Davie laucht. 'Jist as weel ye're the best at the singin.'

There wis a still lik in a cowboy pictur gin John Wayne swaggers in, spoilin fur a fecht.

'Except Puggle,' said Rambo frae the end ae the bar.

'Away,' said Davie.

'Aye, Puggle's the best sangster in the toon.' Rambo poppit anither crisp in his mooth as if that endit the argiment.

Heids turnt. That wis it. Gauntlet thrawn doon, blethers ednit, doms gem ower. Davie pluggit in the karaoke machine. Folk bocht rounds. A got anither pint even tho hid wark in the mornin. A cawed up a nip tae.

The rules were aefauld. Yin sang ilka sangster. Abody in the pub votit exceptin the sangsters. Winner got a pint an a nip o their chyce.

Big Chuck wis first. *Suspicious Minds*. Davie noddit wi appruival. An Chuck wis braw. In fact he wis byous, magneeficent. Muckle range, unco timin. Niver misst a note. Wit ye'd ca maistry o his airt. As the sang gaed oan ye coud hear his cruinin growe mair peuchle; his beamer gat ridder an his vyce gat stranger, biggin tae a huge climax that fillt the hale pub.

He swaggert back tae his stuil whaur Davie dichtit his bree wi a cloot, lik a coarner man at the boxin. Folk noddit, an whispert ruise.

Syne Puggle tottit up tae the mic. The tuin ae *My Way* startit up. A wis feckly feart fur the doddery auld fellae.

A wisnae share he'd even manage tae see the wirds oan the screen. It didnae mitter; he steekit his een ootthrou. His vyce wobblt an wavert tae stert wi an ye jist aboot hud tae streen tae hear. A leant in, in a dwaum. As he got gaun his vyce filled oot wi a douce pouer that gien auld cliched wards unco wisdom. An eemage cam intae ma heid – an island lang syne, a puffin, a Tammie norrie, wobblin alang oan the grund then flaffin intae flicht an bein cayrriet bi thermals an wund, soarin an swoopin wioot a flap o its weengs. Auld Puggle's singin cairiet us aw alang tae somewhaur baith cauld an warm, dowie bit blythe, ferlie yet lang-kent.

A wis aboot greetin.

Oan his hintmaist note, A lampit oot, hauf pint still oan the bar an leggit hame. A near fleetit aw the wey.

**Word count - 498**