

A friend for Ellen

Ellen Morrissey is walking in the Malvern Hills. She is with girls from her new school. They are here with their teachers for four days of walking. They walk in the day and at night they sleep in a hostel.

The Malvern Hills are beautiful, but Ellen is sad. She is thinking about the hills of Ireland. Ellen is from Ireland, but now she lives in England with her mother. Ellen loves Ireland. Her father lives there. Her mother never speaks about him.

Where is he? Ellen thinks. *What is he doing now?* Then she thinks, *Here in England I have no friends.*

It is past ten o'clock at night. In the hostel, the girls are sleeping. But Ellen is in the sitting room. She is alone with her guitar. Ellen likes playing her guitar. She writes songs.

My guitar is my friend, she thinks.

She starts to play her guitar and starts to sing a song. It's Ellen's song.

Green hills of Ireland

Green hills of home

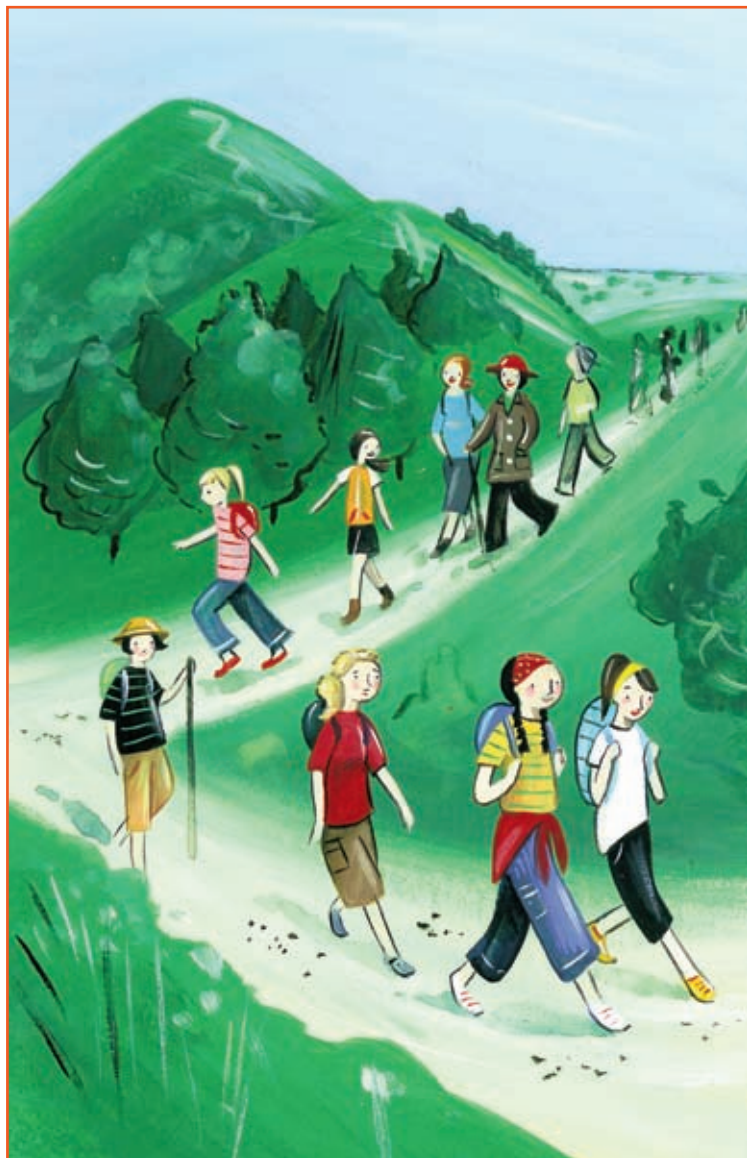
Here I can't see you

Here I'm alone...

'That's a beautiful song.'

Ellen looks around. A girl is standing behind her. She is from the school, but Ellen doesn't know her.

'Do you like it?' Ellen asks her.



'Yes, I do,' says the girl. 'It's beautiful. But it's sad. Are you sad?'

'I'm sad tonight,' says Ellen. 'I'm thinking about my father. He's in Ireland.'

'Are you Irish?'

'Yes. My name's Ellen.'

'I'm Holly,' says the girl. 'You play the guitar well.'

'I'm not bad,' says Ellen.

'No, you're good,' says Holly, and she sits beside Ellen.

'Can you play the guitar?' asks Ellen.

'No, I can't,' says Holly. 'But I'm a good singer. I like singing, but I don't know that song. Can you teach it to me?'

That's my song, Ellen thinks. *It's only for me. I don't want you to sing it.* But she doesn't say that. She smiles and says, 'Yes, I can teach it to you. It's called *Green Hills of Home*. Listen.'

Ellen starts to play the guitar and sing. Holly listens and then she starts to sing too. She has a beautiful voice.

I can't sing like that, Ellen thinks. *I don't have a voice like that.*

'Is that your song?' asks Holly.

'Yes, it is,' says Ellen.

'It's beautiful,' says Holly.

The two girls sing *Green Hills of Home* again. Their voices are very good together. Ellen and Holly sing other songs. Soon other girls come into the sitting room and listen to them.

'You're good, you two,' they say. 'Sing us another song.'

So Ellen and Holly sing another song. The other girls clap.



Then the door opens. It is Miss Colvin, one of the teachers. She is angry.

‘What are you girls doing?’ she asks. ‘It’s eleven o’clock. Go to bed – now!’

The other girls leave the room and go to bed. Ellen and Holly start to leave too, but Miss Colvin stops them. Now she isn’t angry. She smiles at the two girls.

‘Your name is Holly, I think,’ she says.

‘Yes, Miss Colvin,’ says Holly. ‘I’m Holly Tyler.’

‘And you’re a new girl,’ Miss Colvin says to Ellen. ‘What’s your name?’

‘Ellen Morrissey, Miss.’

‘Well, Holly and Ellen, you sing well,’ says Miss Colvin. ‘Sing another song for me.’

And Ellen and Holly sing *Green Hills of Home* for Miss Colvin. She smiles again.

‘That’s a beautiful song,’ she says. ‘I don’t know it. Is it an Irish song?’

Ellen wants to say, *It’s my song*. But she doesn’t.

Holly looks at Ellen and starts to speak. ‘Miss Colvin, that song is –’

‘Yes, it’s Irish, Miss Colvin,’ Ellen says.

‘Well, it’s beautiful,’ Miss Colvin says. ‘And you girls sing well together. I want to listen to you again. But not now. Go to bed, both of you!’

And Ellen and Holly leave the room and go to bed.

Ellen isn’t sad now. She smiles.

Now I’ve got a friend, she thinks.