



## On the outside

*Amid all the fun and excitement that was going on around him, Simon was worried. He couldn't remember a time in all his fourteen years when he wasn't worried about something.*

*By Maureen Hickey*

Simon watched them turning the tap on the barrel of beer and offering glasses filled with the golden liquid to the adults. He was even allowed to have a go at turning the tap himself and bringing down the glasses to the people sitting at the white iron tables at the end of the garden.

But amid all the fun and excitement that was going on around him, he was worried. He couldn't remember a time in all his fourteen years when he wasn't worried about something. This time he was worried about how long this wonderful holiday in Ireland would last.

His friend Ian had told Simon how the party would be. Ian's dad would ask all his friends, and their wives and children

would come too. His dad would cook steaks and hamburgers and his mum would have salads and sweets made beforehand. There would be loads of minerals and crisps and peanuts and you could take as much as you liked.

After the barbecue was eaten, the session would start. His dad's friend Michael would play the piano and anyone who could play a guitar would bring it along and the music and singing would go on till after midnight. The kids were always allowed to stay up late.

Now it was happening just as Ian had said it would. The barbecue was eaten, the women were stacking the dishes into the dishwasher and the men were strumming the guitars.

Simon had made more friends this summer than ever before. All the kids wanted to play soccer and Simon was a good player so he was very popular. They played in the field behind Granny's house.

Granny's house was beautiful. She had a big garden which she liked to take care of herself. Grandad was a builder and before he got sick he did lots of things to improve the house so that it was more beautiful than all the lovely houses that surrounded it.

The very first home that Simon could remember was a bare flat in Dublin. The flat was at the top of a very high building and Mum seldom took Simon out. When the social worker, who called