

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 218 (which corresponds to Litir 522). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I'm telling you a story – Black-haired John of Lewis, the Sailor. John was on a ship for five years. He was getting a halfpenny at the end of the first month and two halfpennies at the end of the second month. His wages were going to double every month. He was going to get a fortune. But the ship folk [owners] didn't have enough money.

“What shall we do?” said the captain.

“On his last day,” said a man who owned the ship, “keep away from land. Give these three bags to the lad. Ask that he goes to sea.”

The final day came. The ship was at sea. The captain gave the lad the three bags. One of the bags was full of gold, one was full of silver and the other one was full of copper. The lad left in a raft.

John spent three days on the raft. He reached land. He took the three bags to the upper part of the shore. He hid them in the sand. He walked all night. But he never saw a house or a person. At daybreak he reached a large house. He went inside.

A good-looking woman was there. John told her that he was a

Tha mi ag innse sgeulachd dhuibh – Iain Dubh Leòdhasach, an Seòladair. Bha Iain air long fad còig bliadhna. Bha e a' faighinn bonn-a-sia aig ceann a' chiad mhìos agus dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos. Bha an tuarastal aige a' dol a dhùblachadh gach mìos. Bha e a' dol a dh'fhaighinn fortan. Ach cha robh airgead gu leòr aig muinntir na luinge.

“Dè nì sinn?” thuirt an sgiobair.

“Air an latha mu dheireadh aige,” thuirt fear leis an robh an long, “cùm air falbh bho thìr. Thoir na trì pocannan seo don ghille. Iarr air falbh gu muir.”

Thàinig an latha mu dheireadh. Bha an long aig muir. Thug an sgiobair na trì pocannan don ghille. Bha fear de na pocannan làn òir, bha fear làn airgid agus bha am fear eile làn copair. Dh'fhalbh an gille ann an ràth.

Chuir Iain trì latha seachad air an ràth. Ràinig e tìr. Thug e na pocannan gu bràigh a' chladaich. Chuir e am falach iad anns a' ghainmhich. Choisich e fad na h-oidhche. Ach chan fhaca e taigh no duine. Aig beul an latha ràinig e taigh mòr. Choisich e a-steach.

Bha boireannach dreachmhor

sailor and that he had swum to land from a ship that went down. The woman gave him food and drink. But she asked him to leave. “Seven robbers live here,” she said. “They’ll be back soon.”

“I don’t care,” said John. The robbers came. “We’re robbers,” said one of them, “and we won’t let you leave alive.”

“I’m pleased,” said Black-haired John. “I was a robber. I’d like to work with you.”

“Okay,” said the other robber. “Each man will take his own road. The one that brings home most plunder over three nights will be the leader of the rest.”

Black-haired John saw his opportunity. On the first night he returned with a bag full of copper. On the second [dara and dàrna both mean “second”] night, he returned with a bag full of silver. On the third night, he returned with a bag full of gold. What plunder! John was now the leader of the others. But we haven’t reached the end of the story yet....

ann. Thuir Iain rithe gun robh e na sheòladair agus gun robh e air snàmh gu tìr bho long a chaidh fodha. Thug am boireannach biadh is deoch dha. Ach dh’iarr i air falbh. “Tha seachd robairean a’ fuireach an seo,” thuir i. “Bidh iad air ais a dh’ aithghearr.”

“Tha mi coma,” thuir Iain. Thàinig na robairean. “S e robairean a th’ annainn,” thuir fear dhiubh, “agus cha leig sinn às thu beò.”

“Tha mi toilichte,” fhreagair Iain Dubh. “Bha mise nam robair. Bu mhath leam a bhith ag obair còmhla ribh.”

“Ceart gu leòr,” arsa robair eile. “Gabhaidh gach fear a rathad fhèin. Am fear as motha a bheir dhachaigh de chreach thar trì oidhcheannan, bidh e na cheannard air càch.”

Chunnaic Iain Dubh a chothrom. Air a’ chiad oidhche thill e le poca làn copair. Air an dàrna oidhche, thill e le poca làn airgid. Air an treas oidhche thill e le poca làn òir. Abair creach! Bha Iain a-nise na cheannard air càch. Ach cha do ràinig sinn deireadh na sgeòil fhathast...