

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 340 (which corresponds to Litir 644). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I'm going to finish the story The Awisks or The Three Soldiers. The soldier was going to The Kingdom of Coldness. He was searching for his sweetheart. He was in the second old man's bothy. The old man was combing his beard with a clump of pine.

"What a rough comb you have!" said the soldier.

"I have none smoother," the old man replied.

"I have better," the soldier said. And he gave him the second curry comb.

"I know where you're going," said the old man. "Stay the night here. You can leave in the morning."

Next day, the soldier was leaving. The old man said to him, "My brother will put you on the right road. He is a distance of a year and a day from here. But I'll give you a ball of thread. Throw it in front of you and it will take you there today."

The soldier left. He was throwing the ball of thread in front of him. At dusk he reached a bothy. There was a grey-haired old man there. He was combing his beard with a brush of blackthorn.

"What a rough comb you have!"

Tha mi a' dol a chur crìoch air an sgeulachd *Na h-Amhaisgean* no *Na Trì Saighdearan*. Bha an saighdear a' dol gu Rìoghachd na Fuarachd. Bha e a' lorg a leannain. Bha e ann am bothan an dàrna bodaich. Bha am bodach a' cìreadh fheusaig le badan giuthais.

"Nach garbh a' chìr a tha agad!" thuirt an saighdear.

"Chan eil nas mìne agam," fhreagair am bodach.

"Tha nas fheàrr agamsa," thuirt an saighdear. Thug e dha an dàrna cìr-eich.

"Tha fios agam cà'l thu a' dol," thuirt am bodach. "Fuirich an oidhche an seo. Faodaidh tu falbh anns a' mhadainn."

An làrna-mhàireach, bha an saighdear a' falbh. Thuirt am bodach ris, "Cuiridh mo bhràthair air an rathad cheart thu. Tha e aig astar latha is bliadhna às a seo. Ach bheir mise dhut ceirsle snàtha. Caith romhad i agus bheir i ann thu an-diugh."

Dh'fhalbh an saighdear. Bha e a' caitheamh na ceirsle snàtha roimhe. Aig ciaradh an fheasgair, ràinig e bothan. Bha bodach liath ann. Bha e a' cìreadh fheusaig le sguab droighinn.

"Nach garbh a' chìr a tha agad!"

said the soldier.

“I have none smoother,” the old man replied.

“I have better,” the soldier said. And he gave him the third curry comb.

“I know where you’re going,” said the old man. “Stay the night here. You can leave in the morning.”

The next day, the old man said to him, “You have to make a distance of seven years and seven days. But I’ll give you a staff. It will take you at a speed of a mile a minute. And an eagle will take you to the Kingdom of Coldness.

He gave a loud whistle and an eagle appeared. “When you reach The Kingdom of Coldness, you’ll have to kill a giant,” the old man said.

The eagle picked up the soldier. He put him down in The Kingdom of Coldness. The soldier killed the giant outside the King’s castle. The daughter saw him. She shouted to the King, “Oh, father, that’s the soldier that saved me from the awisks.”

There was a great wedding. And the soldier lived happily in The Kingdom of Coldness for the rest of his life.

thuirt an saighdear.

“Chan eil nas mìne agam,” fhreagair am bodach.

“Tha nas fheàrr agamsa,” thuirt an saighdear. Thug e dha an treas cìr-eich.

“Tha fios agam cà’l thu a’ dol,” thuirt am bodach. “Fuirich an oidhche an seo. Faodaidh tu falbh anns a’ mhadainn.”

An làrna-mhàireach, thuirt am bodach ris, “Tha astar seachd latha ’s seachd bliadhna agad ri dhèanamh. Ach bheir mi dhut lorg. Bheir i thu astar mìle ann am mionaid. Agus bheir iolaire thu do Rìoghachd na Fuarachd.”

Rinn e fead mhòr agus nochd iolaire. “Nuair a ruigeas tu Rìoghachd na Fuarachd, bidh agad ri famhair a mharbhadh,” thuirt am bodach.

Thog an iolaire an saighdear. Chuir i air tìr e ann an Rìoghachd na Fuarachd. Mharbh an saighdear am famhair taobh a-muigh caisteal an Rìgh. Chunnaic an nighean e. Ghlaodh i ris an Rìgh, “O athair, sin an saighdear a shàbhail mi bho na h-amhaisgean.”

Bha banais mhòr ann. Agus dh’fhuirich an saighdear gu sona ann an Rìoghachd na Fuarachd gu deireadh a bheatha.