

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 397 (which corresponds to Litir 701). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Christmas is almost on us again. And here is a Christmas story for you. It's from Highland Perthshire. Its name is 'Christmas Dance'.

Two young lads went out on Christmas Eve. They were going to get a bottle of whisky – on the other side of the hills. They got the bottle. But, when they were on the way home, a blizzard arose. They sheltered under a bank.

There was a hole there. They heard melodious music coming from the hole. 'Can you hear that, friend?' said one of them. 'We'll scarper. It's the fairies.'

'Wait until we see them dance,' said the one who had the bottle of whisky. But the other one was afraid. He didn't want to go into the hole. The one with the bottle, however, he was willing enough. He saw the fairies dancing. He jumped in among the dancers.

His companion at the mouth of the hole was getting fed up of waiting. He entered the hole. He saw his friend. He was dancing. 'Come away!' he said.

'Take it easy,' replied the dancer. He didn't want to leave.

Tha an Nollaig gu bhith oirnn a-rithist. Agus seo stòiridh Nollaig dhuibh. Tha e à Gàidhealtachd Siorrachd Pheairt. 'S e an t-ainm air 'Dannsa Nollaig'.

Dh'fhalbh dà ghille òg air oidhche na Nollaig. Bha iad a' dol a dh'fhaighinn botal uisge-bheatha – air taobh thall a' mhonaidh. Fhuair iad am botal. Ach, nuair a bha iad air an rathad dhachaidh, thàinig cur is cathadh. Ghabh iad fasnadh fo bhruaich.

Bha toll an sin. Chuala iad ceòl binn a' tighinn às an toll. 'An cluinn thu siud, a charaid?' thuirt fear dhiubh. 'Teichidh sinn. 'S e na sìthichean a th' ann.'

'Fuirich gus am faic sinn a' danns iad,' thuirt am fear aig an robh am botal uisge-bheatha. Ach bha an t-eagal air an fhear eile. Cha robh esan airson a dhol a-steach don toll. Am fear leis a' bhotal, ge-tà, bha esan deònach gu leòr. Chunnaic e na sìthichean a' danns. Leum e fhèin a-staigh am measg nan dannsairean.

Bha a chompanach aig beul an tuill a' gabhail fadachd. Chaidh e a-steach don toll. Chunnaic e a charaid. Bha e a' danns. 'Thig a-mach!' thuirt e.

'Dèan air do shocair,' fhreagair an dannsair. Cha robh e ag iarraidh falbh.

The other lad went home. He told his companion's relations what had happened. They were thinking that he had murdered the other one!

He asked them to wait a year. If his friend had not appeared, he himself would be going into the hole.

The months went by. His friend did not appear. At the end of the year, at the following Christmas, the lad took the relations of the friend who had had the bottle, to the hole. They heard music. The lad entered the hole by himself. His friend was still there. He was still dancing. He didn't look tired. 'Come out,' shouted the lad.

'Take it easy,' said the other.

But, in the middle of the reel, the lad took hold of his companion. He pulled him out of the hole. His relations took him home. After a year of dancing, he was no worse off than when he started!

Dh'fhalbh an gille eile dhachaigh. Dh'inns e do chàirdean a chompanaich mar a thachair. Bha iad a' smaoineachadh gun do mhuirt esan am fear eile!

Dh'iarr e orra feitheamh bliadhna. Mura robh a charaid air nochdadh, bhiodh e fhèin a' dol a-steach don toll.

Chaidh na mìosan seachad. Cha do nochd a charaid. An ceann bliadhna, aig an ath Nollaig, thug an gille càirdean an fhir, aig an robh am botal, don toll. Chuala iad ceòl. Chaidh an gille a-steach don toll leis fhèin. Bha a charaid fhathast ann. Bha e fhathast a' danns. Cha robh e a' coimhead sgìth. 'Thig a-mach,' dh'èigh an gille.

'Do shocair,' thuirt am fear eile.

Ach, ann am meadhan an ruidhil, ghabh an gille grèim air a chompanach. Shlaod e a-mach às an toll e. Thug a charaidean dhachaigh e. Às dèidh bliadhna de dhannsadh, cha robh e càil na bu mhiosa na bha e nuair a thòisich e!