

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 703 (which corresponds to Litir 1,007). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I'm continuing with the story 'The Three Bog Cotton Shirts'. The daughter of the king was at the house of the old man. Her brothers were living in a cave. 'I have a slender hempen string,' said the man. 'Take hold if it. If you go on the wrong road, I'll pull on the string.' In this way she found the cave.

There was a table within, with three cups on it. They were full of wine. The girl put her late mother's ring in the smallest cup. She went and hid under a pile of bird feathers.

Her brothers entered in the form of grey dogs. They threw off their coverings. They were men again. They drank the wine. The youngest found the ring in his cup. 'This is my mother's ring,' he said. The lads searched the cave and found their sister.

The girl asked if there was a way to free them from the spells that were on them. 'Yes,' they said. 'Make a shirt of bog cotton for each one of us. Keep silent until you put the shirts on us. We'll then be free from the spells.'

She went to a moor. She filled three bags with bog cotton. She saw a

Tha mi ag innse dhuibh na sgeulachd 'Na Trì Lèintean Canaich'. Bha nighean an rìgh aig taigh an t-seann duine. Bha a bràithrean a' fuireach ann an uamh. 'Tha sreang chaol chainbe agam,' thuirt an duine. 'Gabh grèim oirre. Ma thèid thu air an rathad cheàrr, bheir mise draghadh air an t-sreing.' Mar sin, lorg i an uamh.

Bha bòrd na broinn, le trì cupannan air. Bha iad làn fiona. Chuir an nighean fàinne a màthar nach maireann sa chupa a bu lugha. Chaidh i am falach fo mheall de dh'itean eòin.

Thàinig a bràithrean a-steach nan coin ghlasa. Thilg iad dhiubh an cochail. Bha iad nan daoine a-rithist. Dh'òl iad am fion. Lorg am fear a b' òige am fàinne na chupa. 'Seo fàinne mo mhàthar,' thuirt e. Rannsaich na gillean an uamh agus lorg iad am piuthar.

Dh'fhaighnich an nighean an robh dòigh ann airson an saoradh bho na geasan a bha orra. 'Bha,' thuirt iad. 'Dèan lèine de chanach an t-slèibhe airson gach duine againn. Cùm sàmhach gus an cuir thu na lèintean oirn. Bidh sinn saor bho na geasan an uair sin.'

Dh'fhalbh i gu sliabh. Lion i trì pocannan le canach an t-slèibhe. Chunnaic

rider coming towards her. He was a king, and he wasn't married.

He fell in love with the girl. She wouldn't say a word to him. But she agreed to marry him and they went to his kingdom.

Every day, she would spin and weave the bog cotton in silence. She gave birth to a son. The midwife kept vigil for him, without a wink of sleep. But, after a week, she was too tired. She fell asleep. A great hand came in through the window. It took the baby with it. But the queen said nothing because she wanted to free her brothers from the spells.

When the midwife awoke, she was upset. She killed a cockerel. She wiped the blood of the cockerel on the queen's mouth. She went to the king. 'That woman is evil,' she said. 'She ate her own baby.'

But the king did nothing. 'She is just foolish,' he said. I'll bring the story to a conclusion next week.

i marcaiche a' tighinn dha h-ionnsaigh. 'S e rìgh a bha ann, agus cha robh e pòsta.

Ghabh esan gaol air an nighinn. Cha chanadh i facal ris. Ach dh'aontaich i a phòsadh agus dh'fhalbh iad don rìoghachd aige.

Gach latha, bhiodh i a' snìomh agus a' fighe a' chanaich ann an sàmhchair. Rugadh leanabh-gille dhi. Rinn a' bhean-ghlùine caithris air, gun norrag fhaighinn. Ach, an dèidh seachdain, bha i ro sgìth. Thuit i na cadal. Thàinig làmh mhòr a-steach air an uinneig. Thug i leatha an leanabh. Ach cha tuirt a' bhanrigh càil oir bha i airson a bràithrean a shaoradh bho na geasan.

Nuair a dhùisg a' bhean-ghlùine, bha i troimhe-chèile. Mharbh i coileach. Shuath i fuil a' choilich air beul na banrigh. Chaidh i far an robh an rìgh. 'Tha am boireannach siud olc,' thuirt i. 'Dh'ith i a leanabh fhèin.'

Cha do rinn an rìgh dad, ge-tà. 'Chan eil i ach gòrach,' thuirt e. Bheir mi an stòiridh gu ceann an-ath-sheachdain.