

## A story from Ballinskelligs

(approximately as told to D. de Cogan by Tim O Shea. Translation by Layla deCogan-Chin)

Ní mor a chuimhniu, gurbh fnade e traidisiuin na scealaithe in Eihnn fadó. Bhi sé laidir ach go hairithe. In ait ar nos Baile na Sceilige; ait ina raibh "an bhlas", 'sé sin, an ghaeilge, fos a labhairt mar theanga ghnach na ndaoine. Ag ama na sceala seo, bhi and ghaeilge duchais a bhi in usaid go foill, ach bhi tuiscint ag na daoine oga ar chuid mhairth bearla; ina mheasc sin, na focail "clana", gan ahmras

Bhi seanbhean ina conai ansin I mbaile ne Sceilge, agus seanachai a bhi inti, mar a bhi ina matheir, agus a seanmhathair roimpi. Bhi cuimhniu aici ar eachtra a tharla nuair a bhíodh sí óg, agus bhainfeadh buachailli óga na gceantrach leas as a dheanamh uirthi é a insint aris agus aris eile. Bhi fath le seo. Ní he go raibh speis acu i stair na sceala, ach ins an gcomhra a bhi ann. Ní raibh tuiscint ag an tseanachai ar na focail bhearla a bhi in usaid aici, ach mar a dheanfai go traidisiunta inseodh sí an eachtra san iomlan mar a bhi cuimhne aici air,

Mar is eol duit, gan amhras, bhíodh staisiuin na dteileagraif suite i mbaile na Sceilige, agus ba é an t-uasal Topping a bhíodh i gceanas air. Is ga a thuiscint go raibh na cablai a thioctadh isteach an thabhachtach ar fad. Fiu go raibh siad tiubh a dhothain, bhí sé riachtanach a bheith cinnte nach ndeanfai aon damaiste doibh, toisc go raibh luach na gceadta punt i dteachtaireachtaí orthu. Cuireadh bratacha san fharrage thar an ait ine raibh an cabla ag dui. Mar sin, ag togaint luach na gcablai in aireamh, is feidir a shamhlu an t-uafas a bhi ar an t-uasal Topping nuair a chonaic sé bad iascaireachta shasanach leistigh de chupla troith de na bratacha. Chuala an tseanbhean (a bhi ina chailín óg ag an ama sin ) an chomhra seo a leanas:

"What in the name of God are you doing there?"  
"What do you fucking think?"  
"You've no bloody right to fish near the cables"  
"I'll fish where I fucking want!"  
"I'll have you reported for this , you bastard!"  
"Ah, fuck off and leave me be!"  
"Those cables are worth a bloody fortune. If they are damaged..."  
"Listen, fuck off or I'll shove your cables up your arse!"

Dar ndoigh, nior thuig an tseanachai oiread is focail den chomhra, ach ní raibh a fhios aici cad ina thaobh go mbeadh na gasuir ag scairteadh gaire nuarr d'insíodh sí é!

It must be remembered that long ago in Ireland storytelling was a tradition which was especially strong in places like Ballinskelligs, where the "blas", the Irish language, was still the spoken language of the people. At the lime this story takes place, the Irish was stil in use, but the younger generation knew an amount of English, among which were certain swear words. They not only knew such words, but understood them too!

The storyteller in Ballinskelligs was an old women, to whom the family tradition of storytelling had been bequaed from her mother and before that, her grandmother. She recalled an incident that had taken place in her youth. The local boys greatly enjoyed asking her to repeat the tale over and over again. There was a reason for this, Their interest was not in the historical value of the story, but in the conversation. The old storyteller did not understand the English words, but as was the tradition, repeated the incident in its entirety as she remembered it

As you doubtlessly know, there was a telegraph stationon in Ballinskelligs, and a man called Mr. Topping was in charge of it. One must realise that although the cables were quite thick and it was important to ensure that they were never damaged, because of the great value of the messages sent along them. Flags were used as markers in the sea to show the cables' paths. Therefore, it is easy to imagine Mr. Topping's horror when he discovered that an english fishing boat was within several feet of the flags, The old woman (at that time, a young girl) heard the following conversation:

"in ainm De i neamh, cad ata a dheanamh agat ansin?"  
"Cad go h-ifreann a cheapann tu?"  
"Nil diabhal ceara ar bith agat a bheith ag iascaireacht chomh congaireach do na cabi siud!"  
"Eist liom, a bhumbeille ... deada: idh me mo dhiabhal iascaireachta pe ait is mian liom!"  
"Deanfaidh mé gearan fut, a dhiabhall" "Imigh leat agus fag l siochan mé!"  
"An bhfuil tu dur nach dtuigeann tu luach na gcablai sin, a h-amadan? ma deantar damaiste er bith..."  
"Go h-ifreann leat, no brufaidh me do dhiabhal cabali suas do thoin!"

Obviously, the old women understood none of the conversation, nor did she understand why the boys always laughed when she recounted it!