

Johnnie o' Breadislee

Traditional

There are many different versions of this ballad, most of them were collected in Aberdeenshire but some sources say the oldest version came from Dumfriesshire. The main character of the song is Johnnie, an outlaw, who is thought to have held Morton Castle near Durisdeer at one time. One morning he decides to go hunting. Warned by his mother that he is in danger, he decides to go poaching and kills a deer. He feeds his dogs and sleeps in the woods. A man betrays him to some foresters, who attack him while he sleeps. He fights them but is outnumbered and dies of his wounds. Legend says that he is buried near to Durisdeer.

Dm C

John-nie rose up on a May Mor - ning Called for wa-ter to wash his_

4 Dm

hands Said "Gae loose to me the guid grey dugs That

7 Dm C B \flat C Dm C Dm

lie in i - ron bands, bands That_ lie in i - ron bands"

Lyrics

Johnnie rose up on a May Morning
Called for water to wash his hands
Said "Gae loose to me the guid grey
dugs
That lie in iron bands, bands
That lie in iron bands"

When Johnnie's mother she heard o'
this
Her hands wi dule she wrang
"Oh Johnnie for my venison
Tae the green woods dinnae gang,
gang
Tae the green woods dinnae gang"

But Johnnie's taken his guid bent bow
His arrows one by one
And he is gone to Durisdeer
Tae hunt the dun deer down, down
Tae hunt the dun deer down

Johnnie shot, the dun deer lap,
He's wounded her in the side,
And atween the water and the woods
The grey hounds laid her pride, pride

The grey hounds laid her pride

Johnnie ate o' the venison,
The dugs drank o' the blood,
And they lay down and fell asleep
Asleep as tho' they were deid, deid
Asleep as tho' they were deid

Then there cam a silly auld man
And a silly auld man was he,
For he's awa tae Monymusk
The Foresters for tae see, see
The Foresters for tae see

Up then spak the chief forester,
An angry man was he,
"If this be Johnnie o' Breadislee,
We will gar him dee, dee
We will gar him dee"

Johnnie sat against an oak
His feet against a stane
And he has slain the foresters,
He's slain them a' but ane, ane
He's slain them a' but ane

Noo Johnnie's guid bent bow is broke
His guid grey dugs are gone
Green grows his grave in Durisdeer
His hunting days are done, done
His hunting days are done

Words

gae - go • dinnae - don't
gang - go • guid - good
lap - leapt • atween - between
deid - dead • spak - spoke
gar - make • dee - die
stane - stone • ane - one

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