

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, thug mi an tòimhseachan seo dhuibh.

*Triùir air muin trì
'S trì nan dèidh.
B' iad sin triùir bhràithrean,
Dol a dh'iarraidh bean dom màthair fhèin.*

Seo a-nise am fuasgladh. Bha na bràithrean air muin eich, agus bha na coin aca gan leantainn – sin agaibh an “trì nan dèidh”. Bha na gillean ann an cabhaig cobhair fhaighinn dom màthair, a bha an impis leanabh a bhreith. Bha iad a' dol a dh'iarraidh bean-ghlùin air a son. Is sin agaibh e.

Airson a' chòrr dhen Litir an t-seachdain-sa, bu mhath leam stòiridh innse dhuibh. Faodaidh sibh suidhe sìos is gabhail air ur socair! Bha gille a bha seo a' fuireach ann an Siorrachd Pheairt o chionn fhada. Thàinig an latha nuair a bha aige ri falbh a dh'iarraidh obair agus dh'fhàg e dhachaigh, is chaidh e don cheann a tuath. Mu dheireadh, fhuair e obair mar sgalaig aig tuathanach.

Bha an obair cruaidh ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, 's e glè bheag a fhuair an gille ri ithe. 'S e spìocair a bha anns an tuathanach. Bhiodh an gille ag obair bho shia uairean sa mhadainn gu meadhan-latha gun càil idir fhaighinn agus, an uairsin, gheibheadh e bobhla lùite. As dèidh sin, chumadh e ris an obair aige gu seachd uairean feasgar gun rud sam bith eile ri ithe. An uairsin gheibheadh e bobhla bhuntàta le ìm. Ach feòil? Chan fhaigheadh e eadhon fàileadh dhith.

Mhair e mar sin airson mìos. Ach an uairsin, dh'atharraich cùisean. Bhàsaich seann mhuc aig an tuathanach – tè mhòr shalach ghrànda – ach cha robh fios aig an sgalaig co-dhiubh 's e tinneas neo seann aois a chuir às dhi. Thachair seo anns a' mhadainn, agus air an dearbh oidhche sin fhèin, bha feòil gu leòr air an truinnsear. Muic-fheòil!

Mhair a' mhuc-fheòil fad seachdain agus, mu dheireadh, shaoil an gille gu robh blas àraidh oirre. An uairsin, cha robh sgeul oirre agus bha an gille air ais gu diathad shìmplidh gach oidhche – buntàta is ìm. Bha e mar sin airson greis gus an cuala an gille gu robh seann reithe an tuathanaich air bàs fhaighinn. Bhàsaich e anns a' mhadainn, agus dè bha air a thruinnsear air an oidhche sin fhèin ach muilt-fheòil.

Mhair an fheòil sin fad còig latha agus, air a' chòigeamh latha, bha blas car neònach oirre. An uairsin bha cùisean air ais mar a bha iad roimhe - lùite aig meadhan-latha is buntàta air an

oidhche. As dèidh greis, ge-tà, bhàsaich seann bhò. Agus bha mairt-fheòil aig a' ghille airson deich latha.

Chum gnothaichean a dol mar sin. Bhiodh ùine aig a' ghille gun rud sam bith ri ithe ach lùte is buntàta, an uairsin gheibheadh seann bheathach eile bàs agus bhiodh feòil aige. Ach madainn a bha seo chuala e naidheachd a chuir an t-uabhas air, agus dh'fhàlbh e sa spot. Rinn e air an rathad gu deas agus, mu dheireadh, thàinig e don taigh aige fhèin. Bha athair aig an doras.

“Carson a thill thu?” dh'fhaighnich e.

“B' fheudar dhomh tilleadh,” thuirt an gille. “Chuala mi fìor dhroch naidheachd agus cha b' urrainn dhomh fuireach na b' fhaide.”

“Dè bh' ann?” dh'fhaighnich athair. “Dè bh' ann a thug ort falbh gu grad?”

“Chuala mi,” thuirt an gille, “gun do chaochail màthair-chèile an tuathanaich!”

* * *

Faclan na seachdaine: tòimhseachan: *riddle*; fuasgladh: *solution*; Siorrachd Pheairt: *Perthshire*; sgalag: *male farm worker* (note that the word is feminine); lùte: *porridge*; truinnsear: *dinner plate*; muic-fheòil: *pork*; blas: *flavour*; diathad: *meal*; muilt-fheòil: *mutton*; mairt-fheòil: *beef*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: bha na bràithrean air muin-eich agus bha na coin aca gan leantainn: *the brothers were on horseback and their dogs were following them*; bha na gillean ann an cabhaig cobhair fhaighinn dom màthair: *the lads were in a hurry to get help for their mother*; a bha an impis leanabh a bhreith: *who was about to give birth*; chaidh e don cheann a tuath: *he went to the north (part of the country)*; 's e glè bheag a fhuair an gille ri ithe: *the lad got very little to eat*; chan fhaigheadh e eadhon fàileadh dhith: *he wouldn't even get a smell of it (fem.)*; mhair e mar sin airson mìos: *it remained like that for a month*; cha robh fios aig X co-dhiubh 's e tinneas neo seann aois a chuir às dhi: *X didn't know if it was illness or old age that did for her*; gus an cuala X gu robh seann reithe an tuathanaich air bàs fhaighinn: *until X heard the farmer's old ram had died*; gheibheadh seann bheathach eile bàs agus bhiodh feòil aige: *another old animal would die and he would get meat*; chuala e naidheachd a chuir an t-uabhas air: *he heard news that horrified him*; dh'fhalbh e sa spot: *he left immediately*; b' fheudar dhomh tilleadh: *I had to return*; cha b' urrainn dhomh fuireach na b' fhaide: *I couldn't stay (any) longer*; dè bh' ann a thug ort falbh gu grad?: *what was it that made you leave suddenly?*

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Chuala mi gun do chaochail màthair-chèile an tuathanaich: *I heard that the farmer's mother-in-law died*. Cèile means “a spouse” and, although it is not used widely in normal conversation, it is met with frequently in phrases regarding “in-laws”. Father-in-law is athair-chèile; brother-in-law is bràthair-chèile and sister-in-law is piuthar-chèile. It may be seen on Gaelic gravestones (an all too rare occurrence in Scotland, although common in the Irish Gaeltacht) in additions to an original inscription, such as Mar chuimhneachan air Dòmhnall Alasdair MacLeòid... agus a chèile Mairead Ealasaid Nic a' Ghobhainn. *If the woman had been buried first, her spouse would have been added as “a cèile” (ie her spouse, non lenited)*. You will also be familiar with cèile in many idiomatic guises eg thugadh às a chèile iad (*they were rent asunder*); cum o chèile iad! (*keep them apart!*); bha Màiri agus Iain a' pògadh a chèile (*Mary and John were kissing each other*). Note that, in the last example, the use of “cèile” does not imply that Mary and John were actually married, although they may have been!

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: bha iad a' dol a dh'iarraidh bean-ghlùin: *they were going to fetch a midwife. You will be familiar with iarraidh meaning "wanting" but it can also mean "fetching" or "looking for".* Bha aige ri falbh a dh'iarraidh obair: *he had to leave to seek work.*

* *"Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh" is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig*