

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 **

Is fhada o nach robh stòiridh beag laghach againn ann an Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh. Chan eil fhios a'm dè cho laghach 's a tha am fear a thagh mi an-diugh, ach tha e goirid gu leòr airson a bhith seachad taobh a-staigh còig mionaidean! Agus bidh fios agaibh gu bheil tòrr sgeulachdan Gàidhlig a mhaireas mòran nas fhaide na sin!

Co-dhiù, tha an stòiridh seo a' tighinn bhon stòras aig tè a bha ainmeil airson sgeulachdan is òrain – Nan NicFhionghain, Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh nach maireann, à Bhatarsaigh, a chaochail o chionn fichead bliadhna am-bliadhna. Tha mi air a dhèanamh beagan nas sìmplidhe agus nas giorra. 'S e an t-ainm a th' air “Na sìthichean a ghoid pàiste.” Mar phàirt dhen stòiridh chì sibh mar a bhiodh na seann daoine a' creidsinn nach b' urrainn do shìthichean dhol ann an sàl – sin uisge na mara. Co-dhiù seo e:

Bhiodh na sìthichean aig an àm ud, bhiodh iad a' goid nam pàistean is na cloinne bige. Bha boireannach a bha seo, nuair a thill i dhachaigh là a bha seo don phàiste aice, mhothaich i nach e an leanabh aice fhèin a bh' ann. Nuair a bhiodh am pàist' aice fhèin a' gabhail brochan, nuair a bheireadh i uiread a bha seo dha, bhiodh gu leòr aige. Chan iarradh e tuilleadh. Ach ge brith gu dè na gheibheadh am pàiste ùr a bha seo, cha bhitheadh gu leòr aige. “Cha chreid mi,” ars' a mhàthair ri nàbaidh, “nach e goid a rinneadh air.”

“Dad thus!” arsa bodach anns a' bhaile nuair a chuala e mu dheidhinn. “Innsidh mise dhut ciamar a gheibh thu cinnt. A-màireach, leig ort gu bheil thu a' falbh on taigh agus fàg an leanabh sa chreathail. Nuair a tha e a' smaointinn gu bheil thu air falbh, coimhead air an uinneig gun fhiosta dha agus chì thu cò th' agad – seann bhodach sìth an àite do leanabh fhèin.”

'S e sin a rinn i. Dh'fhalbh i a-mach agus gun fhiosta don phàiste, choimhead i air an uinneig. Chunnaic i bodach beag sìth air uilinn sa chreathail, agus e a' cluich feadan. Thill am boireannach don t-seann duine anns a' bhaile agus thuirt i ris gur e an fhìrinn a bh' aige. “Ach dè a-nist,” ars' ise, “mar a gheibh mi air falbh e?”

“Innsidh mise dhut,” ars' esan. “An ath-là a bhios tu a' dol dhan tràigh, thoir leat e, agus cuir air mullach sgeire e. Tòisich air a bhith a' gearradh an todhair timcheall na sgeire agus leig leis an làn èirigh gus am bi an sgeir air a cuairteachadh agus am bodach sìth fhathast oirre. Ach feuch nach beir an làn ort fhèin.”

'S e sin a rinn am boireannach. Gheàrr i an todhar – 's e sin an fheamainn a bhiodh daoine a' cleachdadh mar thodhar – agus leig i leis an làn èirigh gus an robh an sgeir air a cuairteachadh. Dh'èirich an leanabh gu chasan, chaidh e ann an riochd bodaich sìth, agus

thòisich e air maoidheadh oirre is air maoidheadh oirre. Ach rinn i fhèin deiseil airson falbh dhachaigh às aonais.

Thàinig na sìthichean eile agus, mun do dh'fhalbh am boireannach, dh'èigh i air a' bhodach bheag, "Bidh thu ann a sin gus am faigh mi mo leanabh fhèin air ais!" Nuair a chunnaic na sìthichean nach fhaigheadh am bodach far na sgeire, chaidh iad don bhoireannach leis an leanabh aice fhèin agus thug iad dhi e. As dèidh sin fhuair daoine às a' bhaile am bodach sìth far na sgeire le bàta. Agus thill esan do na sìthichean.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh: *Nan, daughter of Hector, who was son of Finlay*; Bhatarsaigh: *Vatersay*; nas giorra: *shorter*; brochan: *porridge*; nàbaidh: *neighbour*; creathail: *cradle*; air uilinn: *on his elbow*; feadan: *chanter*; todhar: *fertilizer (here referring to seaweed cut as fertilizer)*; an fheamainn: *the seaweed*; às aonais: *without him*; sìthichean: *fairies*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: a mhaireas mòran nas fhaide na sin: *which last much longer than that*; na sìthichean a ghoid pàiste: *the fairies who stole a child*; nach b' urrainn do shìthichean dhol ann an sàl: *that fairies could not go in salt water*; bhiodh iad a' goid na cloinne bige: *they would steal (the) little children*; nuair a bheireadh i uiread a bha seo dha: *when she would give him this particular amount*; chan iarradh e tuilleadh: *he wouldn't want any more*; ge brith gu gè na gheibheadh am pàiste ùr: *whatever the new child would get*; cha chreid mi nach e goid a rinneadh air: *I reckon he was stolen (that it was stealing that was done on him)*; dad thus(a)!: *never mind (also dad ort)*; ciamar a gheibh thu cinnt: *how you can be certain*; leig ort gu bheil thu a' falbh: *pretend you are leaving*; coimhead air an uinneig gun fhiosta dha: *look through the window without him knowing*; dè a-nist mar a gheibh mi air falbh e?: *how will I now get rid of him? (dè mar is an alternative to ciamar)*; cuir air mullach sgeire e: *put him on top of a sea-rock*; leig leis an làn èirigh: *let the tide come in*; feuch nach beir an làn ort: *make sure the tide doesn't catch you*; gus an robh an sgeir air a cuairteachadh: *until the sea-rock was surrounded (by water)*; chaidh e ann an riochd bodaich sìth: *he adopted the form of an old fairy man*; far na sgeire: *off the rock*.

Puing-ghràmaid na seachdaine: a chaochail o chionn fichead bliadhna am-bliadhna: *who died twenty years ago this year. Don't get confused about am-bliadhna – it is an adverb and can only mean "this year". Bliadhna is a feminine noun and, thus, "the year" (nominative case) would be a' bhliadhna, not am bliadhna. Also, avoid the increasingly frequent mistake of saying am-bliadhna-sa, to emphasize "this year". The –sa suffix is redundant because am-bliadhna already means "this year". You could in theory say a' bhliadhna-sa for "this year" but this is rarely heard: am-bliadhna is the one to go for. Practise it today! There are also special adverbs for "last year" (an-uiridh, rather than a' bhliadhna sa chaidh) and an ath-bhliadhna, rather than a' bhliadhna sa tighinn.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Is fhada o nach robh stòiridh beag laghach againn: *it's a long time since we had a nice wee story. Do you notice that it is the negative interrogative verbal form nach robh that is used in this very common Gaelic idiom, even though it has an affirmative meaning? This type of verbal situation is quite common, although it might sound a little strange at first to the foreign ear. Is fhada o nach fhaca mi thu: it's a long time since I saw you. You might reply by saying, "Is fhada, gu dearbh."*

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