

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 * This is Litir 279.*

An t-seachdain sa chaidh dh’innis mi dhuibh seann sgeulachd à Eilean Eige mu Chraobh-òir agus a màthair, Craobh-airgid. Bha Craobh-airgid ag iarraidh a nighean a mhurt oir bha a nighean na bu bhrèagha na i. Bha Craobh-airgid a’ smaoinichadh gu robh a nighean marbh, ach cha robh. Bha i pòsta aig prionnsa agus bha i a’ fuireach thall thairis. Nuair a dh’fhàg sinn an sgeulachd, bha Craobh-òir glaiste ann an seòmair agus bha a màthair air an taobh a-muigh dheth. Bha Craobh-òir air a meur a chur a-mach air toll-iuchrach an dorais mar a dh’iarr Craobh-airgid oirre. Nise, cuiridh mi crìoch air an sgeulachd....

Stob Craobh-airgid bior nimhe ann am meur a h-ìghne agus thuit Craobh-òir marbh. Nuair a thàinig an duine aice, am prionnsa, dhachaigh, lorg e marbh i. Bha e fo mhulad. Leis cho brèagha ’s a bha i, cha do thiodhlaic e idir i, ach ghlaic e a-staigh ann an seòmair i far nach fhaigheadh duine na còir.

An ceann ùine phòs e a-rithist agus bha an taigh gu lèir fo làimh na mnà seo ach aon seòmair agus ’s e am prionnsa a bha a’ glèidheadh iuchair an t-seòmair sin. Là de na làithean, dhìochuimhnich e an iuchair a thoirt leis agus fhuair an dàrna bean a-staigh don t-seòmair. Dè chunnaic i an sin ach an t-aon bhoireannach a bu bhrèagha ’s a chunnaic i riamh. Chunnaic i am bior nimhe ann am meur a’ bhoireannaich agus thug i aiste e. Agus dh’èirich Craobh-òir beò, cho brèagha ’s a bha i riamh.

Am beul na h-oidhche, thàinig am prionnsa dhachaigh. Nuair a chunnaic e gu robh Craobh-òir beò thòisich e air a pògadh ’s a pògadh ’s a pògadh. Thuirt an dàrna bean ris, “Bhon is ise a’ chiad tè a bha agad, is fheàrr dhut leantainn rithe, agus falbhaidh mise.”

“O, gu dearbh, chan fhalbh,” fhreagair am prionnsa. “Bidh an dithis agaibh agam.” Agus sin mar a bha.

An ceann dà bhliadhna, chaidh Craobh-airgid don ghleann far an robh an tobar anns an robh am breac. “A bhricein bhig bhòidhich,” ars’ ise, “nach mise a’ bhànrigh as brèagha san t-saoghal?”

“O, gu dearbh, cha tu,” fhreagair am breac.

“Cò eile?”

“Tha Craobh-òir, do nighean.”

Chaidh Craobh-airgid dhachaigh agus b’ fheudar don rìgh an long-fhada a chur air dòigh. Thuirt a’ bhànrigh gu robh i a’ dol a choimhead a h-eudail, Craobh-òir. Chaidh an long-fhada a chur air dòigh, agus dh’fhalbh iad. ’S i Craobh-airgid fhèin a bh’ air an stiùir. Cha robh iad fada sam bith air a’ chuan oir bha an long luath. Nuair a ràinig iad an taobh thall, bha am prionnsa air falbh. Chunnaic Craobh-òir long a h-athar a’ tighinn.

“O,” ars’ ise, “tha mo màthair a’ tighinn agus marbhaidh i mi.”

“Cha mharbh idir,” ars’ an dàrna bean.

Thàinig Craobh-airgid air tìr. “Thig a-nuas, a Chraoibh-òir, a ghaoil,” ars’ ise, “agus do mhàthair fhèin air tighinn gad ionnsaigh le deoch phrìseil.”

“Tha e na chleachdadh anns an dùthaich seo,” ars’ an dàrna bean, “gun toir an neach a bheir seachad deoch balgam e fhèin an toiseach.”

Chuir Craobh-airgid a beul ris, agus thug an dàrna bean dòrn dhi sìos a craos. Thuit Craobh-airgid marbh leis a’ phuinnsean san deoch. Cha robh aca ach a corp a thoirt dhachaigh is a thiodhlacadh.

Bha am prionnsa agus a dhithis bhan beò fada an dèidh seo, gu toilichte agus gu rianail. Dh’fhàg mise an sin iad.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Eilean Eige: *The Isle of Eigg*; Craobh-òir: *Gold Tree*; Craobh-airgid: *Silver Tree*; pòsta: *married*; marbh: *dead*; ghlais e: *he locked*; dhìochuimhnich e: *he forgot*; iuchair: *key*; tobar: *well*; eudail: *darling*; long-fhada: *longship*; cuan: *ocean*; a ghaoil: *beloved one (vocative)*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: agus a màthair: *and her mother*; air an taobh a-muigh dheth: *on the outside of it*; mar a dh’iarr X oirre: *as X requested of her*; cuiridh mi crìoch air X: *I will finish X*; stob X bior-nimhe ann am meur a h-ìghne: *X stuck a poisoned thorn in her daughter’s finger*; bha e fo mhulad: *he was distraught*; cha do thiodhlaic e idir i: *he did not bury her at all*; far nach fhaigheadh duine na còir: *where no man would get near her*; là de na làithean: *one day*; fo làimh na mnà seo: *under the control [hand] of this woman*; thug i aiste e: *she took it out of her*; am beul na h-oidhche: *at dusk*; bhon is ise a’ chiad tè a bha agad: *because she is the first one you had*; is fheàrr dhut leantainn rithe: *you had better continue with her*; an ceann dà bhliadhna: *at the end of two years*; gad ionnsaigh le deoch phrìseil: *to you with a precious drink*; tha e na chleachdadh: *it is a custom*; gun toir an neach a bheir seachad deoch balgam e fhèin an toiseach: *that the person who gives a drink takes a drop himself to start with*; thug X dòrn dhi sìos a craos: *X rammed her first down her open mouth*; cha robh aca ach a corp a thoirt dhachaigh: *there was nothing left to do but to take her body home*.

Puing-chànain na seachdaine: Bha am prionnsa agus a dhithis bhan beò fada an dèidh seo: *the prince and his two wives were alive for long after this*. Bhan is the lenited genitive plural form of bean, a wife, here lenited because there is no accompanying article. For “of the wives” we would say “nam ban”. We use the genitive plural following the numerical noun dithis; and dithis is itself lenited because it is commanded by the third person singular masculine possessive article “a” meaning “his”. For a good account of the declension of bean, see Dwelly p. 82 – but note that the dative plural has long gone from the language and that the distinct dative singular has almost disappeared as well, being met with only rarely. And here is a question to ponder until next week: in the phrase de chunnaic i ach an t-aon bhoireannach a bu bhrèagha a chunnaic i riamh (what did she see but the [one] most beautiful woman she had ever seen), why is there a t- in front of “aon”?

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Tha i pòsta aig prionnsa mòr thall thairis: *she is married to an important prince overseas*. Tha X pòsta aig Y: *X is married to Y*. Not the use of the preposition aig in this idiom.

* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig