

Tha mi dìreach air a bhith a' coimhead air map de sgìre air a' Ghàidhealtachd far nach eil daoine a' fuireach an-diugh, a' coimhead airson cheàrnagan beaga a dh'innseadh dhomh gu bheil bothan ann. Tha e math a bhith a' campachadh sna beanntan ann an deagh shìde ach, ann an droch shìde, tha e nas cofhurtaile oidhche a chur seachad ann am bothan. Eadhon ged a bhiodh e grànda, salach.

'S iomadh trup a dh'fhaodainn aontachadh ris an t-seanfhaicil: *Ge h-olc am bothan bochd, 's e a tha olc a bhith gun olc 's gun mhath*. Is fheàrr rudeigin truagh a bhith agad na bhith as aonais, 's dòcha. *Ge h-olc am bothan bochd, 's e a tha olc a bhith gun olc 's gun mhath*.

Is iongantach an dualchas a tha co-cheangailte ri bothain na h-Alba oir anns an t-seann aimsir 's e dachannan a bh' annta. Bha mi ann am fear an-uiridh a bha còrr is ceud bliadhna a dh'aois, is a chaidh a thogail le teaghlach de Dhòmhnallaich. Bidh sliochd an teaghlach sin a' tilleadh à Sasainn as t-samhradh gach bliadhna airson fuireach anns an taigh anns an robh an sinnsirean a' fuireach. Chuir mi seachad an oidhche ann agus bha e uabhasach sàmhach sìtheil na bhroinn. Ged a bha mi a' leughadh stòiridhean mu thaibhsean mus deach mi innte, cha robh droch aisling sam bith agam.

Ach tha cuid de bhothain ann far a bheil daoine ag aithris gum bi rudan fìor annasach a' tachairt. B' e fear dhiubh sin bothan nach eil ann an-diugh – seann Loids na Beithneig ann an ceann shuas Ghleann Teilt ann an Athall. Sgrìobh ceannard aig còmhlan de *Scouts* à Pàislig mu dheidhinn na thachair dhaibh sa bhothan ann an naoi ceud deug caogad 's a h-ochd (1958).

Bha an togalach a' tuiteam às a chèile agus cha robh ach aon seòmar air fhàgail ann a bha dìonach. Ach bha an talamh a-muigh bog fliuch agus bha a' bhuidheann toilichte a bhith ann an àite tioram. Air aon bhalla bha sgeilp ann, air an robh botail is canaichean. Bha na balaich a' gabhail srùpag nuair a thuit – gu h-obann is gun rabhadh - botal falamh, anns an robh coinneal. Bha am botal briste ann an loidhne dhìreach ceithir òirlich os cionn a bhuinn. Bha na balaich dhen bheachd gu robh sin annasach dha-rìreabh.

An uair sin, thuit seann chana meargach don làr far na sgeilp. Choimhead na balaich air an sgeilp às an tàinig e, agus iad dhen bheachd gun deach a phutadh thairis le ainmhidh beag air choreigin. Ach anns an duslach air an sgeilp cha robh comharra sam bith ann gu robh dad beò air a bhith ann. Bha cearcall slàn anns an duslach far an robh an cana roimhe ach cha robh càil eile air an duslach a bhriseadh. Agus bha deich òirlich eadar an cearcall sin agus oir na sgeilp. Chan e sin a-mhàin ach bha cana eile air an sgeilp agus cha robh sin air gluasad idir.

An uair sin dh'fhosgail uinneag bheag leatha fhèin gun ghaoth ga putadh, agus rinn i brag air a' bhalla. B' e sin e do na *Scouts*. Bha an t-eagal orra. Theich iad às an togalach agus champaich iad a-muigh, pìos beag air falbh. Bha iad dhen bheachd gu robh taibhse no bòcan a' fuireach ann, dhen t-seòrsa ris an can sinn *bòcan ùpraidheach*. Cha chreid mi gum bi e ann an-diugh, ge-tà, oir chan eil sgeul air a bhothan tuilleadh. Tha e air tuiteam às a chèile buileach agus is iongantach mura h-eil am bòcan air a dhol à bith leis.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** ceàrnag: *square*; dachannan: *homes*; sinnsirean: *ancestors*; aisling: *dream*; Loids na Beithneig: *Bynack Lodge*; Pàislig: *Paisley*; dìonach: *weather-proof*; bog fliuch: *saturated*; coinneal: *candle*; duslach: *dust*; comharra: *mark, sign*; beò: *alive*; oir: *edge*; bòcan: *ghost, apparition, spectre*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** a dh'innseadh dhomh gu robh bothan ann: *which would tell me there is a bothy there*; ann an droch shìde, tha e nas cofhurtaile: *in bad weather it is more comfortable*; 's iomadh trup a dh'fhaodainn aontachadh ri X: *it is many a time I*

*could agree with X; is iongantach an dualchas a tha co-cheangailte ri bothain: the heritage associated with bothies is extraordinary; bidh sliochd an teaghlaich a' tilleadh à Sasainn gach bliadhna: the descendants of the family return from England every year; bha e sàmhach sìtheil na bhroinn: it was quiet and peaceful inside; mus deach mi innte: before I went to bed (idiom); ann an ceann shuas Ghleann Teilt ann an Athall: in upper Glen Tilt in Atholl; bha an togalach a' tuiteam às a chèile: the bothy was falling to pieces; bha sgeilp ann, air an robh botail is canaichean: there was a shelf there on which were bottles and cans; bha na balaich a' gabhail srùpag: the boys were taking a drink (srùpag can refer to alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks); ceithir òirlich os cionn a bhuinn: four inches above its base; thuit seann chana meargach don làr: an old rusted can fell to the floor; gun deach a phutadh thairis le ainmhidh beag air choreigin: that it was pushed over by some small animal or other; chan e sin a-mhàin ach bha cana eile air an sgeilp: not only that, but there was another can on the shelf; gun ghaoth ga putadh: without wind pushing it [fem]; champaich iad a-muigh: they camped outside; dhen t-seòrsa ris an can sinn bòcan ùpraidheach: of the sort we call a poltergeist; cha chreid mi gum bi e ann an-diugh: I don't reckon it's there today; chan eil sgeul air a bhothan tuilleadh: there is no longer any sign of the bothy.*

**Puing-chànain na seachdaine:** Eadhon ged a bhiodh e grànda, salach: *even if it were ugly and dirty. You won't often see ged as a translation of "if" in dictionaries, if ever – but it can be in a construction of this nature. Of course, the above might also be a translation of "even should it be ugly and dirty" – with the verb in the conditional. Gaelic learners tend to use "ged" constructions less often than native speakers and it is worth listening out for them on the radio and in conversation. Such finer points will take you from being a good "learner" to being considered a fully fluent and idiomatic speaker of the language. Here is another example where ged might stand for "if": Q: Am biodh tu deònach cluich anns an sgioba againn? (would you be willing to play in our team?) A: Ged a bhitheadh, chan urrainn dhomh – tha mo chas briste (even if I were, I cannot – my leg is broken).*

**Seanfhacal na seachdaine:** Ge h-olc am bothan bochd, 's e a tha olc a bhith gun olc 's gun mhath: *bad as the poor bothy is, what is truly bad is to be without bad or good.*

\* Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig