

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 376. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 72 corresponds to Litir 376.

Bidh sibh a’ cuimhneachadh gu bheil mi ag innse dhuibh na sgeulachd “Deirdre agus Clann Uisne”. Fhuair Colum Cruitire grèim air trìùir fhear agus thug e gu monadh mòr iad fad o làimh. Dh’iarr e orra cnoc cruinn gorm a dhèanamh còsach. Rinn iad sin. Bha e mar bhothan beag blàth is cofhurtail.

Chuir Colum a’ bhean-ghlùin air falbh leis an leanabh gu ruige am bothan. Bha dragh air gun tigeadh na thuir am fiosaiche mu a deidhinn gu bhith fìor – is gum biodh mòran fala air a dòirteadh air a sàilleabh. Bha Deirdre – oir b’ e sin ainm an leanaibh – a-nise ann an àite far nach fhaiceadh sùil i is far nach cluinneadh cluas i. Thug Colum biadh is aodach dhaibh a mhaireadh latha agus bliadhna. Is gheall e gun cuireadh e tuilleadh bìdh is aodaich gan ionnsaigh aig deireadh na bliadhna, agus aig deireadh gach bliadhna fhad ’s a bha e beò. Agus rinn e sin.

Bha Deirdre agus a muime a’ fuireach anns a’ bhothan am measg nam beann gus an do ràinig i aois ceithir bliadhna’ deug. Bha Deirdre dealbhach na pearsa is sgiamhach na maise. Bha a lì agus a lùth mar eala nan tonn agus eilid nam beann. B’ i a’ bhoinne fala a bu mhaisiche eadar ùir agus adhar ann an Èirinn.

Bha a muime a’ toirt seachad fios air a h-uile nì a b’ urrainn dhi. Cha robh feur a’ fàs o fhreumh, no eun a’ seinn à coille, no reul a’ soillseadh à nèamh air nach robh ainm aig Deirdre. Ach bha aon rud ann a bha am boireannach a’ diùltadh dhi. B’ e sin còmhradh le daoine eile.

Oidhche gheamhraidh a bha seo bha sealgair air seachran sa mhonadh. Chaill e a chùrsa agus a chompanaich. Thàinig sgìths air. Bha e fann leis an acras agus **air a lathadh leis an fhuachd. Laigh e sìos ri taobh an tolmain bhòidhich ghuirm** anns an robh Deirdre a’ fuireach. Agus chaidil e.

Thàinig brudair air. Anns a’ bhruadar bha an sealgair a’ smaoinichadh gun robh an tolman ri a thaobh na shìthean. Bha sìthichean a’ fuireach ann. Dh’èigh e air na sìthichean na aisling, agus dh’iarr e orra a leigeil a-steach. Chuala Deirdre e agus thuir i ri a muime, “A mhuime, gu dè tha siud?”

“Chan eil càil,” fhreagair a’ mhuime. “Dìreach eòin a’ sireadh a chèile.”

Dh’èigh an duine a-rithist. “A mhuime, gu dè tha siud?” arsa Deirdre.

“Chan eil càil. Dìreach eòin na coille air chall air a chèile.”

Dh’èigh an duine treas turas, ag iarraidh air na sìthichean a leigeil a-steach oir bha e fann leis an acras is air a lathadh leis an fhuachd.

“O, gu dè tha siud, a mhuime?” arsa Deirdre.

“Dìreach eòin air chall air a chèile. Thèid iad seachad gu doire nan geug,” thuirt am boireannach.

“O, a mhuime,” thuirt Deirdre, “dh’iarr an t-eun a-staigh. Leigidh mi fhìn a-staigh e.”

Leum Deirdre chun an dorais is dh’fhosgail i e. Cha robh eun ann. Bha sealgair ann. Bha e fann leis an acras is air a lathadh leis an fhuachd. Leig Deirdre a-steach e.

Ach nuair a laigh a shùil air Deirdre, chunnaic e a’ bhoinne fala a bu mhaisiche eadar ùr agus adhar. Bha a lì agus a lùth mar eala nan tonn agus eilid nam beann. Agus cha robh an t-acras air tuilleadh.

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Faclan na Litreach: bean-ghlùin: *midwife*; muime: *foster-mother*; bruadar: *dream*; sìthean: *faery hill*.

Abairtean na Litreach: fhuair X grèim air trìuir fhear: *X got hold of three men*; fad o làimh: *far away*; dh’iarr e orra cnoc cruinn gorm a dhèanamh còsach: *he asked them to hollow out a round green hill*; gu ruige am bothan: *to the bothy*; gum biodh mòran fala air a dòirteadh air a sàilleabh: *that much blood would be spilled because of her*; far nach fhaiceadh sùil i is far nach cluinneadh cluas i: *where no eye would see her and no ear would hear her*; a mhaireadh: *which would last*; gheall e gun cuireadh e X gan ionnsaigh: *he promised he would send them X*; fhad ’s a bha e beò: *as long as he lived*; bha X dealbhach na pearsa is sgiamhach na maise: *X was shapely of form and of exceptional beauty*; bha a lì agus a lùth mar eala nan tonn agus eilid nam beann: *her complexion and her vigour were like the swan of the waves and the hind of the mountains*; a’ bhoinne fala a bu mhaisiche: [*lit*] *the most beautiful blood-drop [ie woman]*; eadar ùir agus adhar: *between earth and sky*; a bha am boireannach a’ diùltadh dhi: *that the woman refused to her*; bha sealgair air seachran: *a hunter was wandering*; chaill e a chùrsa: *he lost his way*; fann leis an acras: *weak with hunger*; dh’èigh e air na sìthichean na aisling: *he shouted at the fairies in his dream*; dh’iarr e orra a leigeil a-steach: *he asked them to let him in*; eòin a’ sireadh a chèile: *birds looking for each other*; thèid iad seachad gu doire nan geug: *they’ll go past to the copse of the branches*; leigidh mi fhìn a-staigh e [*or a-steach – there are regional differences in the use of a-steach and a-staigh and they can be interchangeable*]: *I’ll let him in myself*; leum X chun an dorais is dh’fhosgail i e: *X leapt to the door and she opened it*; cha robh an t-acras air tuilleadh: *he was no longer hungry*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Laigh e sìos ri taobh an tolmain bhòidhich ghuirm:** *he lay down beside the beautiful green hillock (gorm refers to the colour of grass). You will see excellent grammar (of the traditional mode) in old Gaelic stories, recorded in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Here is an example. Tolman is a masculine noun which goes into the genitive (singular) case following the compound preposition ri taobh. It is therefore slenderised to tolmain but not lenited because of the n/t combination (cf doras an taighe). However the two adjectives are both slenderised (following the example of the noun) and lenited (as this is what would happen were the noun lenitable (cf doras a’ chidsin, where chidsin is lenited). So bòidheach becomes bhòidhich and gorm becomes ghuirm.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: **air a lathadh leis an fhuachd:** *numbed with the cold.*

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