

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 566. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 262 corresponds to Litir 566.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh, dh’innis mi dhuibh mu Chonlaoch, an seann treun-laoch Albannach a bha na mhac don ghaisgeach Ultach, Cù Chulainn. Dh’ainmich mi Conall, a bha na oide do Chù Chulainn. Uill, bha Conall cuideachd càirdeach do Chù Chulainn, a rèir beul-aithris. Mar a chanadh na seann daoine: *B’ e Conall agus Cù Chulainn clann an dithis pheathraichean.* Tha sin gan dèanamh nan co-oghaichean.

Dh’ionnsaich iad còmhla san aon oilthigh. Dh’fhàs iad dlùth ri chèile. Nuair a bha iad a’ dealachadh bho chèile, thug Conall mionnan. Thuirt e – a’ chiad duine a bheireadh naidheachd bàs Chù Chulainn dha, gum biodh e marbh sa mhionaid.

An latha a thuit Cù Chulainn air blàr a’ bhatail, thuirt e ri a chompanach Laoghaire, “Falbh a-nis agus inns do Chonall sgeul mo bhàis. Ach inns dha ann an dubh-fhacal no bidh thu fhèin ann an cunnart.”

Dh’fhalbh Laoghaire agus ràinig e Conall. Dh’fhàiltich Conall e. Thuirt Conall, “Ciamar a tha mo charaid, Cù Chulainn?”

“Tha gu math,” arsa Laoghaire, ged as e breug a bh’ ann. “Tha e a-nise air taigh ùr a dhèanamh.”

Cha robh Conall ro thoilichte mun naidheachd. Bha deagh chuimhne aige air seann taigh Chù Chulainn. Bu mhotha a chòrd an t-àite ris.

“Chan eil anns an taigh ùr,” thuirt Laoghaire, “ach taigh ìosal cumhang. **Nuair a shìneas e a chasan, ruigidh a cheann uachdar an taighe, ruigidh a chasan ìochdar an taighe, agus ruigidh a shròn mullach an taighe.**”

Thuig Conall an teachdaireachd. “**An e sin ri ràdh,**” thuirt e, “gu bheil mo dheagh charaid marbh?”

“Is tu fhèin a thug iomradh air a bhàs, seach mise,” fhreagair Laoghaire. Bha e a-nise sàbhailte.

“Lean thusa ormsa,” thuirt Conall, “agus a h-uile ceann nas motha na chèile a bha an aghaidh Chù Chulainn, bheir mi a-mach iad.”

Chaidh iad tron choille. Shnìomh Conall seachd gadan agus thug e do Laoghaire iad. Chomharraich Laoghaire a h-uile teaghlach a bha na nàmhaid do Chù Chulainn. Chaidh Conall a-steach do na dachaighean aca agus thug e a-mach an cinn. Chuir Laoghaire na cinn air na gadan aige. Bha eagal air a h-uile teaghlach anns an tìr romhpa. Lean an dithis orra len obair gus an robh na seachd gadan làn cheann.

Ràinig iad baile far an robh nighean òg uasal a’ fuireach. Bha eagal air na daoine. Ach cha robh air an nighinn. “Na bithibh fo eagal,” ars ise. “Chan eil annamsa ach boireannach;

cuiridh mi Conall gu sìth.” Thug i cuireadh do Chonall is Laoghaire thigheinn gu dinnear. Nuair a bha an dinnear seachad, chaidh a h-uile duine a-mach. Thug iad sùil air na gadan. Ach thug iad an creidsinn nach robh eagal orra.

“Thoir leat na cinn,” thuirt Conall ri Laoghaire. “Ma tha tuilleadh a dhìth ort, gheibh thu iad.” Dè bha Conall a’ ciallachadh? Lean e air. “A Laoghaire,” thuirt e, “tha do cheann-sa a dhìth air a’ ghad. Sin no mo cheann-sa fhèin.”

“Cha leig sinn a leas,” fhreagair Laoghaire. “Bu bheag leamsa tuiteam le do làimh ann an èirig Chù Chulainn.”

“Agus bu bheag leamsa tuiteam le do làimh-sa ann an èirig Chù Chulainn,” fhreagair Conall.

Agus tha an eachdraidh ag innse dhuinn nach do thuit fear seach fear dhiubh, eadhon nuair a bha na seachd gadan làn cheann.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: càirdeach: *related*; beul-aithris: *oral tradition*; cunnart: *danger*; dh’fhàiltich: *welcomed*; nàmhaid: *enemy*.

Abairtean na Litreach: an seann treun-laoch a bha na mhac don ghaisgeach Ultach: *the old champion who was a son of the Ulster hero*; san aon oilthigh: *in the same university*; a’ dealachadh bho chèile: *parting from each other*; thug Conall mionnan: *Conall took a vow*; a’ chiad duine a bheireadh naidheachd bàs X dha: *the first person to give him news of X’s death*; blàr a’ bhatail: *the battlefield*; sgeul mo bhàis: *the story of my death*; ged as e breug a bh’ ann: *although it was a lie*; bha deagh chuimhne aige air seann taigh X: *he well remembered X’s old house*; bu mhotha a chòrd an t-àite ris: *he really enjoyed the place*; taigh ìosal cumhang: *a low narrow house*; thuig X an teachdaireachd: *X understood the message*; is tu fhèin a thug iomradh air a bhàs, seach mise: *it’s yourself that reported his death, rather than me*; lean thusa ormsa: *follow me*; a h-uile ceann nas motha na chèile a bha an aghaidh Chù Chulainn, bheir mi a-mach iad: *every head bigger than the next that was against Cuchullin, I’ll bring them out*; shnìomh X seachd gadan: *X twisted seven withes*; bha eagal air a h-uile teaghlach romhpa: *every family was afraid of them*; gus an robh na seachd gadan làn cheann: *until the seven withes were full of heads*; na bithibh fo eagal: *don’t be afraid*; chan eil annamsa ach boireannach: *I’m only a woman*; thug iad an creidsinn: *they pretended*; ma tha tuilleadh a dhìth ort, gheibh thu iad: *if you need more you’ll get them*; cha leig sinn a leas: *we don’t need to*; bu bheag leamsa tuiteam le do làimh ann an èirig Chù Chulainn: *I wouldn’t like to fall to your hand in Cuchullin’s reparation*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Nuair a shìneas e a chasan, ruigidh a cheann uachdar an taighe, ruigidh a chasan ìochdar an taighe, agus ruigidh a shròn mullach an taighe: *this is a dubh-fhacal (a riddle) of which our ancestors were inordinately fond. It translates as “when he stretches out his legs, his head reaches the top end of the house, his feet reach the bottom end of the house and his nose reaches the roof of the house.” I hope you would understand from the description that he is in a coffin! Thus the news of Cuchullin’s death was given without actually mentioning death.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: An e sin ri ràdh gu bheil mo dheagh charaid marbh?: *is that to say my good friend is dead?*

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA