

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 569. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 265 corresponds to Litir 569.

Dubh, geal is dearg. Trì dathan a bhiodh gu math aithnichte do na seann Ghàidheil, agus iad ri innse stòiridhean. Dè tha mi a’ ciallachadh le sin? Uill, bidh sibh eòlach air uirsgeul Deirdre, tha mi cinnteach. Deirdre agus Clann Uisnich. ’S e an sgeulachd seo tè ainmeil ann an dualchas nan Gàidheil, an dà chuid ann an Alba is Èirinn. Tha i co-cheangailte gu làidir ri trì àiteachan ann an Alba – taobh Loch Nis, Gleann Nibheis agus Gleann Eite.

Anns an stòiridh tha Rìgh Uladh, Conachar, ag iarraidh Deirdre a phòsadh. Ach tha i a’ gabhail trom-ghaol air Naois agus tha i a’ falbh a dh’Alba cuide ris fhèin agus a **dhithis bhràithrean**, Ailleann agus Àrdan.

’S e am fear a tha ag aithris coltas Naois do Dheirdre an toiseach sealgair a tha a’ faighinn a-steach don bhothan aice am measg nam beann. Seo na chanas e ri Deirdre mu dheidhinn Naois agus a leithid... “lì an fhithich air an gruag, an cneas mar eala nan tonn, an leac mar fhuil an laoigh bhric dheirg, agus an lùth agus an leum mar bhradan a’ bhoinne-bhrais agus mar fhiadh a’ bhearraidh bhric...” Lì an fhithich – sin dubh. Cneas mar eala nan tonn – geal. Leac mar fhuil an laoigh bhric dheirg – ’s e sin dearg. Dubh, geal is dearg.

An latha eile, lorg mi dreach eile de dh’uirsgheul Deirdre à Alba. Anns an dreach seo, bha Conachar agus Deirdre a’ dol a phòsadh. Bha an geamhradh ann agus bha sneachd air an talamh. Mar thoradh air a’ phòsadh, mharbhadh laogh. ’S ann an uair sin a thòisich cùisean air a dhol ceàrr. Mharbhadh an laogh air an t-sneachd. Thàinig fuil às. Tharraing an fhuil fithich.

Bha Deirdre a’ coimhead a-mach air uinneag. Chunnaic i an sneachd air an talamh. Chunnaic i fithich. Bha am fithich ag òl na fala. Thuirt i ri Conachar, “Nach bu mhaiseach an duine aig am biodh cneas cho geal ris an t-sneachd, a ghruaidh cho dearg ris an fhuil agus fhalt cho dubh ris an fhitheach.” Fhreagair an Rìgh gun robh **clann peathar** aige agus gun robh fear dhiubh air an robh gach buadh a dh’ainmich i. Thuirt Deirdre nach rachadh i gu leabaidh gus am faiceadh i an duine sin.

Mar sin chuir Conachar fios air mac a pheathar, fear an robh Snaois mar ainm. Thàinig e fhèin agus a **dhà bhràthair**, Ailleann agus Àrdan. Nuair a chunnaic Deirdre Snaois, bha a cridhe air a lìonadh le gaol dha. Dh’fhàg i an Rìgh agus chaidh i cuide ri Snaois agus a bhràithrean. Fhuair iad long agus sheòl iad gu ruige a’ Bheinn Àrd.

Dubh, geal is dearg. Chì sibh mar a nochd na dathan sin anns an dreach seo de dh’uirsgheul Deirdre.

Ach bha cuid de luchd-aithris a' cur *dubh* don sgeul turas eile. Nuair a chaidh Deirdre agus Snaois – no Naois – air tìr air a' Bheinn Àird, bha an Gille Dubh a' feitheamh orra. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun robh sin air a' Gharbh Eileach, tuath air Diùra. Dh'fhalbh Naois agus a bhràithrean a Lochlann. Fhad 's a bha iad air falbh, laigh an Gille Dubh le Deirdre. An turas seo chan eil *dubh* math, agus chan eil sgeul air geal no dearg.

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Faclan na Litreach: Gleann Nibheis: *Glen Nevis*; Gleann Eite: *Glen Etive*; uirsgeul: *fable*; long: *ship*; sheòl: *sailed*; Lochlann: *Scandinavia*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Trì dathan a bhiodh aithnichte: *three colours which would be recognised*; agus iad ri innse stòiridhean: *when they were telling stories*; Deirdre agus Clann Uisnich: *Deirdre and the Sons of Uisne*; tha Rìgh Uladh, Conachar, ag iarraidh Deirdre a phòsadh: *the King of Ulster, Conachar, was wanting to marry Deirdre*; tha i a' gabhail trom-ghaol air Naois: *she falls madly in love with Naois*; am fear a tha ag aithris coltas Naois do Dheirdre: *the man who reports Naois's appearance to Deirdre*; don bhothan aice am measg nam beann: *to her bothy among the mountains*; lì an fhithich air an gruag: *the colour of the raven on their hair*; an cneas mar eala nan tonn: *their skin like the swan of the waves*; an leac mar fhuil an laoigh bhric dheirg: *their cheek[s] like the blood of the speckled red fawn*; an lùth agus an leum mar bhradan a' bhoinne-bhrais: *their vigour and friskiness like the salmon of the torrent*; mar fhiadh a' bhearraidh bhric: *like the deer of the speckled ridge*; bha an geamhradh ann agus bha sneachd air an talamh: *it was winter and there was snow on the ground*; mar thoradh air a' phòsadh, mharbhadh laogh: *to mark the marriage, a calf was killed*; thòisich cùisean air a dhol ceàrr: *things started to go wrong*; tharraing an fhuil fitheach: *the blood attracted a raven*; a-mach air uinneag: *out of the window*; ag òl na fala: *drinking the blood*; nach bu mhaiseach an duine aig am biodh cneas cho geal ris an t-sneachd: *wouldn't he be beautiful, the man who had skin as white as the snow*; nach rachadh i gu leabaidh gus am faiceadh i: *that she wouldn't go to bed until she saw*; bha a cridhe air a lìonadh le gaol: *her heart was filled with love*; a' feitheamh orra: *waiting for them*; air a' Gharbh Eileach, tuath air Diùra: *on the Garbh Eileach, north of Jura*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: a dhithis bhràithrean/a dhà bhràthair: *his two brothers. Are you aware of why we say bhràithrean with dithis but bhràthair with dà/dhà? Dithis is a noun, meaning "two people" so when it commands a noun like bràthair, the second noun goes in the genitive plural; we are saying "two people of brothers". Without an article, the genitive plural is lenited. However with dà or a dhà ("his two"), bràthair goes into the dual case which is like the singular dative (or nominative) and lenited. Both are acceptable for saying "two brothers".*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: gun robh clann peathar aige: *that he had nephews (lit. children of a sister).*

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