

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Tòmas Garnett agus an Clàrsair a Loisg a Thiompan

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.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 671. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 367 corresponds to Litir 671.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun t-seanfhalach Ghàidhlig a chruinnich Tòmas Garnett ann am Muile: *Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan ris*. Chuir esan a’ Bheurla air: *what a fool I was to burn my harp for him*. Tha an ìre mhath an aon seanfhalach aig Alasdair MacNeacail anns a’ chruinneachadh aigesan – *Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan dhut* – *pity him who would burn his harp for you*. Tha e stèidhichte air seann sgeulachd – agus seo mar a dh’aithris Tòmas Garnett i.

O chionn fhada bha clàrsair ainmeil a’ fuireach ann am Muile. Bha e pòsta aig boireannach brèagha agus bha gaol mòr aige oirre. Bha clàrsach air leth priseil aig a’ chlàrsair. Bha e moiteil aiste agus bheireadh e leis i do gach àite dhan rachadh e.

Chaidh an cupall seo a chèilidh air caraid a bha tinn, a bha a’ fuireach air taobh thall an eilein. Bha droch shìde ann. Bha aca ri strì an aghaidh gaillean. Mheilich a’ bhean leis an fhuachd. Dh’fhanntaich i. Bha i ann an cunnart a beatha.

Rinn an duine aice oidhirp a cumail beò. Chuir e teine thuige, a’ cleachdadh fraoch tioram. Ach cha robh mòran fraoich ann. Airson teas a chumail ri a bhean, bhris e a chlàrsach ann an sgealban. Chuir e a chlàrsach – pìos air phìos – don teine.

Chunnaic fear òg eile, a bha a’ sealg, an toit. ’S e duine-usal a bh’ ann. Chaidh e a-null far an robh an cupall. Bha biadh agus deoch aig an duine seo agus thug e an dà chuid don boireannach. Thàinig i thuige.

Thòisich an duine-usal air bruidhinn ri bean a’ chlàrsair. Bha an clàrsair cho toilichte gun robh feabhas a’ tighinn air a bhean ’s nach do mhothaich e gun robh an còmhradh car dlùth is pearsanta. Bha a bhean agus an duine-usal air a bhith eòlach air a chèile nuair a bha iad òg.

Bha am boireannach air a togail le a seanmhair a bha a’ fuireach air eilean eile – an aon eilean ri athair an fhir seo. Bha i fhèin agus an duine-usal air a bhith nan dlùth chompanaich nuair a bha iad òg. Bha am meas a bh’ aca do chèile air fhàs gu gaol.

Ach chaochail seanmhair na caileige agus b’ fheudar dhi tilleadh do dh’eilean a breith, gu taigh a h-athar. Bhon latha sin chun an latha seo fhèin, cha robh i fhèin ’s an duine-usal air coinneachadh ri chèile no dad a chluinntinn mu chach-a-chèile.

Chan e an teine a-mhàin a bh' air a chur thuige a-muigh sa mhonadh air an latha sin. Chaidh lasair a chur ris an t-seann ghaol cuideachd. Chuir an duine-uasal roimhe bean a' chlàrsair a thoirt air falbh leis gu eilean eile.

Choisich an triùir còmhla airson greis. Ann an cagair, dh'innis an duine-uasal do bhean a' chlàrsair dè bha fa-near dha. Bha ise fhathast ann an gaol leis, agus dh'aontaich i.

Nuair a ràinig iad gleann, chunnaic am boireannach allt aig bonn a' ghlinne. Thuir i ris an duine aice gun robh am pathadh oirre. Dh'fhalbh an clàrsair a dh'iarraidh uisge bhon allt. Nuair a bha e fada gu leòr air falbh, ruith a bhean agus an duine-uasal air falbh còmhla. Bha an clàrsair air a bhean agus a chlàrsach a chall, agus thuir e, "Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan dhut!"

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Faclan na Litreach: clàrsair: *harper*; Muile: *Mull*; mheilich: *became faint with the cold*; dh'fhanntaich: *fainted*; sgealban: *fragments, splinters*; toit: *smoke*; duine-uasal: *gentleman*; cagair: *whisper*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bha gaol mòr aige oirre: *he loved her greatly*; clàrsach air leth prìseil: *an extremely valuable harp*; moiteil aiste: *proud of it [fem]*; bheireadh e leis i do gach àite: *he would take it with him everywhere*; a chèilidh air caraid a bha tinn: *to visit a relative who was sick*; bha aca ri strì an aghaidh gailleann: *they had to struggle against a storm*; ann an cunnart a beatha: *in danger of her life*; oidhirp a cumail beò: *an effort to keep her alive*; chuir e teine thuige: *he lit a fire*; thàinig i thuige: *she came to*; gun robh feabhas a' tighinn air X: *that X was improving*; gun robh an còmhradh dlùth is pearsanta: *that the conversation was close and personal*; b' fheudar dhi tilleadh do dh'eilean a breith: *she had to return to the isle of her birth*; chaidh lasair a chur ris an t-seann ghaol: *the old love was given a new flame*; dè bha fa-near dha: *what his intention was*; a dh'iarraidh uisge: *to get water*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *Tiompan* is translated in the proverb in the Litir as "harp" but it has a wider meaning than that. It can refer to any musical instrument, particularly a drum, or stringed instrument with a sound box, but also a cymbal and perhaps even a lyre. Most authorities derive it from Latin tympanum "timbrel, drum" and, like the Latin word, tiompan in modern Gaelic also means an "eardrum". In the landscape it means a "rounded, one-sided knoll" (reminiscent of an instrument?) On the map it appears, for example, in Loch an Tiompain in Wester Ross, which is adjacent to a one-sided hill, and in Tiompan Head / Rubha an Tiompain in Lewis (the name reflects the shape of the headland). The story of the harper in Mull is located at Màm an Tiompain – and in this case oral tradition links the place to the instrument. Fascinatingly, Màm an Tiompain is adjacent to Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt, the site of the priest's death in last week's Litir. That part of Mull is full of great stories – I hope the Muilich are still telling them!

Seanfhacal na Litreach: *Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan dhut: pity him who would burn his harp for you.* Said of a person who has made a sacrifice for somebody only to find the beneficiary demonstrating that they did not value the sacrifice.

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