

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Gormshuil na Maighe (1)

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh 's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 10.00 pm on a Sunday night, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'Beag air Bheag'. It is repeated at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 939. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which goes to air around 7.00 pm on Monday evenings (six days prior to Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh). Litir Bheag 635 corresponds to Litir 939. The Litir is available on the BBC website at bbc.co.uk/litir.

Tha sinn air a bhith ann an Loch Abar fad grunn sheachdainean. Mus fhalbh sinn, bu mhath leam stòiridh innse dhuibh a tha am measg na feadhainn as ainmeile às an sgìre sin. 'S e an tiotal oirre 'Gormshuil Mhòr na Maighe'. Bha an t-ainm Gormshuil – a' tighinn à *gorm* agus *sùil* – uaireigin cumanta aig boireannaich ann an Loch Abar, gu h-àraidh am measg nan Camshronach. Ach an dèidh linn Gormshuil Mhòr na Maighe – a bha na bana-bhuidseach – cha robh e cumanta tuilleadh.

Bha sinnsirean Gormshuil às an Eilean Sgitheanach agus Loch Abar. Bhuineadh iad do Chloinn 'ic Fhionghain agus na Camshronaich. Bha iad a' fuireach taobh Loch Airceig. Phòs Gormshuil Camshronach à Maigh, taobh an Lagain. Bha i làidir na ceann 's na bodhaig, agus bhathar ag ràdh gun robh comasan os-nàdarrach aice.

Nuair a bhiodh iasgair no sealgair a' tighinn seachad air an taigh aice, bhiodh iad ag iarraidh a beannachd. Latha a bha seo, chan e iasgair no sealgair a bha a' tighinn seachad ach Loch Iall, ceann-cinnidh nan Camshronach. Bha a phiobaire na chois. Bha Gormshuil aig a doras aghaidh. 'Cà'l sibh a' dol?' dh'fhaighnich i.

'Dè an diofar a th' ann dhutsa cà'l mi a' dol?' fhreagair Loch Iall.

Cha robh Gormshuil ro thoilichte. "'S minig **nach bu mhiste** iasgair no sealgair mo bheannachd,' thuir i, 'agus **cò dha an dùraichdinn e coltach ri mo cheann-feadhna?**'

Stad Loch Iall. Dh'inns e dhi gun robh e a' dol gu coinneamh le Iarla Athall, feuch tighinn gu rèite mun chrìch eadar Loch Abar agus Athall.

'Cò tha sibh a' toirt leibh?' dh'fhaighnich Gormshuil.

'Cha toir mi ach mo phiobaire an seo – mar a chaidh aontachadh,' ars an ceann-cinnidh.

'Mholainn gun till sibh dhachaigh,' thuir Gormshuil. 'Thoiribh feachd armaichte leibh. Cumaibh am falach iad. Ma chuireas sibh ur cleòc oirbh caoin air ascaoin, thig iad airson ur cuideachadh.' Thuig Loch Iall gun robh a beachd ciallach agus thug e feachd leis.

Aig a' choinneimh, bha Iarla Athall mì-reusanta mu na crìochan eadar an dà dhùthaich. Bha e a' creidsinn nach robh aig Loch Iall ach a phiobaire. Nuair a shèid e fideag airgid, dh'èirich feachd Athallach às an fhraoch agus à preasan.

'Cò iad?' dh'fhaighnich Loch Iall.

'Caoraich Athallach a tha a' dol a dh'ithe feur Abrach,' fhreagair an t-Iarla.

'Sèid suas,' dh'òrdaich an Camshronach don phiobaire aige, agus thionndaidh e taobh caoin a chleòca don taobh ascaoin. Nochd na gaisgich Abrach às na h-àiteachan falaich aca agus thòisich am phiobaire air port a chluich air a bheil 'Thigibh an seo, a chlannaibh nan con,

's gheibh sibh feòil' – port catha nan Camshronach. 'Seo na coin Abrach a chuireas ruaig air na caoraich Athallach,' thuir Loch Iall.

Air an rathad dhachaigh, chaidh Loch Iall a chèilidh air Gormshuil airson taing a thoirt dhi airson a comhairle. 'A dh'aindeoin ur faclan coibhneis,' thuir i, 'crochaidh sibh mo mhac latha air choreigin.'

'Ist,' thuir an ceann-cinnidh, 'chan eil agad ach tighinn thugam agus an latha seo a chuimhneachadh dhomh, agus – eadhon ged a bhiodh do mhac airidh air crochadh – nì mi cinnteach gum bi e air a shàbhaladh.' Ach saoil cò bha ceart agus cò bha ceàrr? Innsidh mi dhuibh an-ath-sheachdain nuair a bheir mi na sgeulachdan Abrach seo gu ceann.

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Faclan na Litreach: bana-bhuidseach: *witch*; Loch Airceig: *Loch Arkaig*; os-nàdarrach: *supernatural*; feachd armaichte: *an armed force*; mì-reusanta: *unreasonable*; àiteachan falaich: *hiding places*; port catha: *war tune*; faclan coibhneis: *words of kindness*.

Abairtean na Litreach: am measg na feadhainn as ainmeile: *among the best known*; bhuineadh iad do Chloinn 'ic Fhionghain: *they belonged to the Mackinnon clan*; taobh an Lagain: *over by Laggan*; ag iarraidh a beannachd: *wanting her blessing*; chan e iasgair no sealgair a bha a' tighinn seachad: *it wasn't a fisherman or hunter that was coming past*; Loch Iall, ceann-cinnidh nan Camshronach: *Lochiel, chief of the Camerons*; bha a phìobaire na chois: *his piper was with him*; aig a doras aghaidh: *at her front door*; dè an diofar a th' ann dhutsa cà'l mi a' dol?: *what difference does it make to you where I'm going?*; coinneamh le Iarla Athall: *a meeting with the Earl of Atholl*; feuch tighinn gu rèite mun chrìch eadar Loch Abar agus Athall: *to attempt to reach agreement about the boundary between Lochaber and Atholl*; mholainn gun till sibh dhachaigh: *I'd recommend you return home*; caoin air ascaoin: *inside out*; nuair a shèid e fideag airgid: *when he blew a silver whistle*; dh'èirich feachd Athallach às an fhraoch agus à preasan: *a force of Athollmen rose from the heather and out of thickets*; caoraich Athallach a tha a' dol a dh'ithe feur Abrach: *Atholl sheep that are going to eat Lochaber grass*; thionndaidh e taobh caoin a chleòca don taobh ascaoin: *he turned his cloak inside out*; thigibh an seo, a chlannaibh nan con, 's gheibh sibh feòil: *come hither, children of the dogs and you shall have flesh*; eadhon ged a bhiodh do mhac airidh air crochadh: *even should your son be deserving of hanging*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: 'S minig nach bu mhiste iasgair no sealgair mo bheannachd: *it's often a fisherman or hunter was none the worse for my blessing*. Dwelly gives *miste* as the second comparative form of *olc* 'bad, evil' but most scholars would consider it the second comparative of *dona* 'bad, evil' for which the first comparative is *miosa*. Whether either is actually correct in terms of the word's origin, it is still used regularly in idiom eg is *miste tu sin* 'you are the worse for that'; cha mhiste e a bhith stuama airson greis 'it won't harm him to be sober for a while'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: cò dha an dùraichdinn e coltach ri mo cheann-feadhna?: *to whom would I wish it so well as my clan chief?*

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