

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 256 (which corresponds to Litir 560). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Here is an old story – “The King and the Foal”. Searrach means “a young horse”.

There was once a man. He fell out with the king. His wife died. He and his daughter were living together. His daughter was very crafty.

The king sent for the man. The man went to the castle. “Come here tomorrow,” said the king, “and tell me what thing is most plentiful in the world.”

The man went home.

“Tell the king,” said his daughter, “that there’s nothing as plentiful as the sides.”

“Do you think that yourself?” he said.

“Yes, father,” she said. “Everything in the world has at least two sides. The inside and the outside. The top side and the bottom side. The faraway side and the near side.”

The man was satisfied. Next morning he went to the castle.

“Well,” said the king, “what is the most plentiful thing in the world?”

“There’s nothing in the world

Seo agaibh seann stòiridh – An Rìgh agus an Searrach. Tha searrach a’ ciallachadh “each òg”.

Bha duine ann uaireigin. Chaidh e a-mach air an rìgh. Chaochail a bhean. Bha e fhèin ’s a nighean a’ fuireach còmhla. Bha a nighean uabhasach seòlta.

Chuir an rìgh fios air an duine. Chaidh an duine don chaisteal. “Thig an seo a-màireach,” thuirt an rìgh, “agus inns dhomh dè an rud as pailte air an t-saoghal.”

Chaidh an duine dhachaigh.

“Can ris an rìgh,” thuirt a nighean, “nach eil sìon ann a tha cho pailt ris na taobhan.”

“A bheil thu fhèin a’ smaoineachadh sin?” ars esan.

“Tha, athair,” ars ise. “Airson gach rud air an t-saoghal tha co-dhiù dà thaobh aige. An taobh a-staigh ’s an taobh a-muigh. An taobh àrd ’s an taobh ìosal. An taobh thall ’s an taobh a-bhos.”

Bha an duine riarichte. An ath mhadainn chaidh e don chaisteal.

“Uill,” thuirt an rìgh, “dè an rud as pailte air an t-saoghal?”

so plentiful as the sides,” said the man. “However numerous anything is, its sides are more numerous.”

“I’m satisfied,” said the king. “But be here tomorrow, and tell me what thing is the richest in the world.”

The man left. He was upset.

“Tell the king,” said his daughter, “that there is nothing in the world as rich as the sea.”

“Do you think that yourself?” he said.

“Yes, father,” she said. “The sea is much larger than anything on the land. There is more in it of everything.”

The man was satisfied. The next morning he went to the castle.

“Well,” said the king, “what thing is the richest in the world?”

“There is nothing in the world as rich as the sea,” said the man. And he explained why. The king was satisfied. But he said, “Come here tomorrow. If you don’t tell what is the swiftest thing in the world, you’ll lose your head.”

And where is the foal in the story? Ah, well, he appears next week.

“Chan eil sìon air an t-saoghal cho pailt ris na taobhan,” ars an duine. “Cho pailt ’s a tha rud sam bith, tha a thaobhan nas pailte.”

“Tha mi riarachtaichte,” ars an rìgh. “Ach bi an seo a-màireach, agus inns dhomh dè an rud as beartaiche air an t-saoghal.”

Dh’fhalbh an duine. Bha dragh air.

“Can ris an rìgh,” ars a nighean, “nach eil sìon air an t-saoghal cho beartach ris a’ mhuir.”

“A bheil thu fhèin a’ smaoinichadh sin?” ars esan.

“Tha, athair,” ars ise. “Tha a’ mhuir fada nas motha na rud sam bith air an talamh. Tha barrachd innte dhen a h-uile rud.”

Bha an duine riarachtaichte. An ath mhadainn chaidh e don chaisteal.

“Uill,” thuirt an rìgh, “dè an rud as beartaiche air an t-saoghal?”

“Chan eil sìon air an t-saoghal cho beartach ris a’ mhuir,” ars an duine. Agus mhìnich e carson. Bha an rìgh riarachtaichte. Ach thuirt e, “Thig an seo a-màireach. Mura h-inns thu dhomh gu dè as luaithe a tha air an t-saoghal caillidh thu do cheann.”

Agus càite a bheil an searrach anns an stòiridh? A, uill, nochdaidh e an ath-sheachdain.