

**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 383 (which corresponds to Litir 687). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk).

*There was once a blacksmith living in the Highlands. He was called John. He had a smiddy. He had a wife. She had a twist in her neck.*

*John was lazy. His wife was always scolding him. John was going to the smiddy for peace and quiet. One day, a young man came. He had green clothes on. He was carrying a young woman on his shoulders.*

*"Well, smith," said the young man, "can I use your anvil?"*

*"Yes," said John.*

*"Sit down," said the young man. He put his hand in his pocket. He took out five gold coins. "This will pay you," he said. "Now, the thing you'll see, don't do it yourself."*

*John sat down. The young man went to the anvil with the woman. John saw that her head was on back to front. The young man picked up a large sharp knife. He put the woman's head on the anvil. He cut it off. Her body fell onto the floor. There was no blood at all.*

*The young man picked up the woman's head. He put it in the fire. He worked the bellows. The fire got hot. The head turned to ash.*

*He picked up the ash and he*

Bha uaireigin gobha a' fuireach air a' Ghàidhealtachd. 'S e Iain an t-ainm a bha air. Bha ceàrdach aige. Bha bean aige. Bha snìomh aice na h-amhaich.

Bha Iain leisg. Bha a bhean an-còmhnaidh a' trod ris. Bha Iain a' falbh don cheàrdaich airson fois. Latha a bha seo, thàinig fear òg. Bha aodach uaine air. Bha e a' giùlain boireannach òg air a ghualinean.

"Uill, a ghobha," ars am fear òg, "am faod mi d' innean a chleachdadh?"

"Faodaidh," thuirt Iain.

"Dèan suidhe," thuirt am fear òg. Chuir e a làmh na phòcaid. Thug e a-mach còig buinn òir. "Pàighidh seo thu," thuirt e. "Nise, an rud a chì thu, na dèan thu fhèin e."

Shuidh Iain. Chaidh am fear òg don innean leis a' bhoireannach. Chunnaic Iain gun robh a ceann tromach air shearrach, no cùlaibh air beulaibh. Thog am fear òg sgian mhòr gheur. Chuir e ceann a' bhoireannaich air an innean. Gheàrr e dheth e. Thuit a corp don làr. Cha robh fuil sam bith ann.

Thog am fear òg ceann a' bhoireannaich. Chuir e don teine e. Dh'obraich e am balg-sèididh. Dh'fhàs an teine teth. Chaidh an ceann na luaithe.

Thog am fear òg an luaithe agus

*ground it further. There was nothing left but dust. He spat on it. He made a paste of it. He rubbed the paste on the woman's neck. And – amazingly – a green light appeared on the paste. A new head grew on the woman.*

*The young man looked at John. "Remember," he said, "the thing you saw, don't do it yourself." The lad and woman left.*

*Shortly after that, who came to the smiddy but the smith's wife. "Here's a cuppa for you, you lazy good-for-nothing," she said.*

*A thought came to John. He looked at the twist in his wife's neck. He looked at the knives. "Put the tea over there," he said, "and come here."*

*"What do you want, you lazy oaf?" she said.*

*John put his arms around his wife. He picked up a knife. And we'll see what happened after that – next week.*

phronn e tuilleadh i. Cha robh ann ach duslach. Rinn e smugaid air. Rinn e taois dheth. Shuath e an taois air amhaich a' bhoireannaich. Agus – abair iongantais – nochd solas uaine air an taois. Dh'fhàs ceann ùr air a' bhoireannach.

Choimhead am fear òg air Iain. "Cuimhnich," thuirt e, "an rud a chunnaic thu, na dèan thu fhèin e." Dh'fhalbh an gille agus am boireannach.

Goirid às dèidh sin, cò thàinig don cheàrdaich ach bean a' ghobha. "Seo srùpag dhut, a leisgeadair gun fheum," thuirt i.

Thàinig smuain gu Iain. Choimhead e air an t-snìomh ann an amhaich a mhnà. Choimhead e air na sgeinean. "Cuir an tì thall an sin," thuirt e, "agus trobhad an seo."

"Dè tha thu ag iarraidh, a bhumaileir leisg?" thuirt i.

Chuir Iain a ghàirdeanan timcheall a mhnà. Thog e sgian. Agus chì sinn dè thachair an uair sin an-ath-sheachdain.