

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 617 (which corresponds to Litir 921). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Fionn MacCumhail was about to leave for Scandinavia along with the Big Lad. There was a fool there. He gave Fionn advice.

'Take Bran's golden chain with you,' he said. 'That won't break your contract because you won't have a dog, a friend or a weapon.'

Fionn put Bran's golden chain in his pocket. He reached the palace of the King of Scandinavia. But it wasn't a welcome he received. The King and his nobles were considering the best way to kill Fionn. 'We'll put him to death in the worst way,' said the King. 'We'll take him to the Big Glen. The Grey Dog will eat him.'

They took Fionn to the Big Glen. They heard the howling of the Grey Dog and left. Fionn was on his own. The dog was wild. There were flames coming from its nostrils.

Fionn shook Bran's chain. Suddenly, the wild dog stood in front of him like a domestic dog, wagging its tail. It licked Fionn. Fionn put the golden chain around its neck.

There was a house at the bottom of the glen. There was an old woman at the front door. She ran into the house. 'I've seen an amazing thing,' she said

Bha Fionn MacCumhail an impis falbh a Lochlann cuide ris a' Ghille Mhòr. Bha amadan ann. Thug e comhairle do Fhionn.

'Thoir leibh an t-slabhraidh òir aig Bran,' thuirt e. 'Cha bhris sin ur cùmhnant oir cha bhi cù no caraid no ball-airm agaibh.'

Chuir Fionn slabhraidh òir Bhrain na phòcaid. Ràinig e lùchairt Rìgh Lochlainn. Ach chan e fàilte a fhuair e. Bha an Rìgh agus uaislean a' beachdachadh air an dòigh as fheàrr airson Fionn a mharbhadh. 'Cuiridh sinn gu bàs e anns an dòigh as miosa,' thuirt an Rìgh. 'Bheir sinn dhan Gleann Mhòr e. Ithidh an Cù Glas e.'

Thug iad Fionn don Gleann Mhòr. Chuala iad donnal a' Choin Ghlais agus dh'fhalbh iad. Bha Fionn leis fhèin. Bha an cù fiadhaich. Bha lasairean a' tighinn às a chuinneanan.

Chrath Fionn slabhraidh Bhrain. Gu h-obann, sheas am madadh air a bheulaibh mar chù-taighe, a' crathadh earball. Dh'imlich e Fionn. Chuir Fionn an t-slabhraidh òir timcheall amhaich.

Bha taigh aig bonn a' ghlinne. Bha cailleach aig an doras mhòr. Ruith i a-steach don taigh. 'Tha mi air rud iongantach fhaicinn,' thuirt i ris a'

to the old man. 'A handsome man has the Grey Dog on a lead.'

'There's only one man who'd do that – Fionn MacCumhail with Bran's golden chain,' said the old man. He welcomed Fionn.

The couple invited Fionn to stay with them for a year and a day. At the end of that time, the old woman was outside. She saw a host on the great strand of Lochlann (Scandinavia). She ran to the house. 'There is a host on the strand,' she said, 'with a red-haired man at their head.'

'That's the Fingalians, with Osgar at their head,' said Fionn. He went to the strand. He had the Grey Dog with him. Everybody welcomed Fionn. And Bran and the Grey Dog welcomed each other warmly. The Grey Dog was Sgeolan, Bran's brother, who was thrown into the sea when Fionn was fleeing from the giant. They were puppies at the time. And that's my story. Cheerio.

bhodach. 'Tha an Cù Glas air taod aig fear eireachdail.'

'Chan eil ann ach aon duine a dhèanadh sin – Fionn MacCumhail, agus slabhraidh òir Bhrain aige,' ars am bodach. Chuir e fàilte air Fionn.

Thug an cupall cuireadh do dh'Fhionn fuireach aca airson latha is bliadhna. Aig deireadh na h-ùine sin, bha a' chailleach a-muigh. Chunnaic i sluagh air tràigh mhòr Lochlainn. Ruith i don taigh. 'Tha sluagh air an tràigh,' thuirt i, 'le fear ruadh aig an ceann.'

'S e sin an Fhèinn, agus Osgar aig an ceann,' arsa Fionn. Chaidh e don tràigh. Bha an Cù Glas na chois. Chuir a h-uile duine fàilte air Fionn. Agus chuir Bran agus an Cù Glas fàilte mhòr air a chèile. B' e an Cù Glas Sgeolan, bràthair Bhrain, a chaidh a thilgeil don mhuir nuair a bha Fionn a' teicheadh bhon fhamhair. Bha iad nan cuileanan aig an àm. Agus 's e sin mo sgeul. Mar sin leibh.