

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 679 (which corresponds to Litir 983). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I'm going to tell you a story about Oisean, the son of Fionn mac Cumhail. But my story begins before he was born. One day, Fionn was along with friends in Glenelg. A woman appeared. She wore a red cloak. She was the red-haired old woman of the fairies. She was grandmother to Gràinne, Fionn's wife.

'The Grey Magician came and took Gràinne away with him,' said the old woman. 'She is now in the Land of Darkness. You must save her.'

'OK,' said Fionn. 'I'll leave shortly.'

The old woman gave him three valuable things – a needle from pine tree, a shiny white pebble and a little rough black stone. 'There is magic in these three things,' she said.

Fionn left for the Land of Darkness. For days he walked, and he had only two grains of oats. He sat at the base of a tree to eat them. He heard a croaking above him. There was a large raven on a branch. 'Gròg, gròg,' said the raven. 'Will you give me a grain of oats, Fionn. I'm hungry.'

'We're both hungry, friend,' said

Tha mi a' dol a dh'innseadh dhuibh stòiridh mu Oisean, mac Fhinn mhic Cumhail. Ach tha mo sgeul a' tòiseachadh mus do rugadh e. Latha a bha seo, bha Fionn cuide ri caraidean ann an Gleann Eilg. Nochd boireannach. Bha cleòc dearg oirre. B' ise Cailleach Ruadh nan Sìthichean. Bha i na seanmhair do Ghràinne, bean Fhinn.

'Thàinig am Buidseach Glas agus thug e Gràinne air falbh leis,' thuir a' chailleach. 'Tha i a-nise ann an Tìr an Dorchadais. Feumaidh tu a sàbhaladh.'

'Ceart gu leòr,' arsa Fionn. 'Falbhaidh mi an ceartuair.'

Thug a' chailleach trì rudan priseil dha – bioran à craobh-ghiuthais, èiteag ghleansach agus clach bheag gharbh dhubh. 'Tha draoidheachd anns na trì rudan seo,' thuir i.

Dh'fhalbh Fionn gu Tìr an Dorchadais. Fad làithean a choisich e, agus bha dìreach dà ghràn de choirce aige. Shuidh e aig bonn craoibhe airson an ithe. Chuala e gràgail os a chionn. Bha fitheach mòr air geug. 'Gròg, gròg,' ars am fitheach. 'An toir thu gràn corca dhomh, Fhinn. Tha an t-acras mòr orm.'

'Tha an t-acras air an dithis againn, a charaid,' thuir Fionn. Agus thug e gràn

Fionn. And he gave the raven an oat grain.

'My blessing to you,' said the raven. 'When you need me, I'll be there for you.'

Fionn continued on his way and he reached a shore. He was still hungry. He saw a grey seal on the shore and he took out his sword. But the seal said to him, 'Don't kill me, Fionn. If you kill me, my children will also die.'

Fionn put his sword back in his sheath. The seal left. It returned within two minutes with a big salmon in its mouth. It gave Fionn the salmon.

Fionn came to a 'creachann' – a place full of stones in which no plant grows. He kicked a stone without knowing that it was home to a mouse. 'Why did you destroy my house?' said the mouse. 'I've never done you any harm.'

Before Fionn had an opportunity to speak, a large eagle came down. It picked up the mouse in its claws. And I'll tell you more next week.

corca don fhitheach.

'Mo bheannachd agad,' thuirt am fitheach. 'Nuair a bhios feum agad orm, bidh mi ann dhut.'

Lean Fionn air a shlighe agus ràinig e cladach. Bha an t-acras air fhathast. Chunnaic e ròn glas air a' chladach agus thug e a chlaidheamh a-mach. Ach thuirt an ròn ris, 'Na marbh mi, Fhinn. Ma mharbhas tu mi, gheibh mo chuid cloinne bàs cuideachd.'

Chuir Fionn a chlaidheamh air ais na thruaill. Dh'fhalbh an ròn. Thill e taobh a-staigh dà mhionaid le bradan mòr na bheul. Thug e am bradan do Fhionn.

Thàinig Fionn gu creachann – àite làn chlach anns nach robh lus sam bith a' fàs. Bhreab e clach gun fhiosta dha gun robh i na dachaigh do luchag. 'Carson a mhill thu an taigh agam?' thuirt an luchag. 'Cha do rinn mi cron sam bith ort.'

Mus d'fhuair Fionn cothrom bruidhinn, thàinig iolair mhòr a-nuas. Thog i an luchag na spuirean. Agus innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh an-ath-sheachdain.