

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 890 (which corresponds to Litir 1,194). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I am going to tell you the story 'The Ship That Went to America'. This ship sailed to America. It foundered on rocks near the shore. Only one man and his wife survived. They got to land. They built a hut there.

They wanted to find other people. The man left and went through a great forest. He saw nobody. He reached the top of a mountain. He saw a hut down below. He went to the hut. He entered.

There was a table there with a large white tablecloth on it. There was a bottle of wine on it, and a loaf of bread. The man was hungry. He took a gulp or two of the wine, and a bite from the loaf.

An old grey-haired man entered. 'What's your news, stranger?' he said.

The other man told him what had happened. He apologised for taking wine and food. 'It's OK,' said the old man. 'Take your fill of it. Are you married?'

'Yes,' said the other man.

'Do you have a family?' asked the old man.

'No.'

Tha mi a' dol a dh'aithris sgeulachd dhuibh – 'An Long a Chaidh a dh'Ameireagaidh'. Sheòl an long seo a dh'Ameireagaidh. Bhuail i ann an sgeirean faisg air a' chladach. Cha do mhair beò ach aon fhear agus a bhean. Fhuair iadsan gu tìr. Thog iad bothan ann.

Bha iad airson daoine eile a lorg. Dh'fhalbh am fear agus chaidh e tro choille mhòr. Chan fhac' e duine. Ràinig e mullach beinne. Chunnaic e bothan shìos fodha. Chaidh e chun a' bhothain. Chaidh e a-steach.

Bha bòrd ann le tubhailt mhòr gheal air. Bha botal fiona air, agus lof arain. Bha an t-acras air an duine. Ghabh e balgam no dhà dhen fhìon, agus crioman às an lof.

Thàinig bodach liath a-steach. 'Dè do naidheachd, a choigrich?' thuir e.

Dh'inns am fear eile mar a thachair. Thug e a leisgeul airson fion agus biadh a ghabhail. 'Ceart gu leòr,' ars am bodach. 'Gabh do leòir dheth. A bheil thu pòsta?'

'Tha,' ars am fear eile.

'A bheil teaghlach agad?' dh'fhaighnich an seann duine.

'Chan eil.'

The old man gave him a bed for the night. Next morning, the old man made them breakfast. When the other man was leaving, the old man came to him with a tablecloth. 'What will you give me if I give you this tablecloth?' he said. 'When you spread it on a table, a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread will appear, and additional food.'

'But,' said the other man, I don't have anything to give you.'

'Aye,' replied the old man. 'Give me, then, the first person or animal that is born to you.'

The other man did not expect to ever have children. He had no animals. He accepted the contract.

'So,' said the old man, 'whatever it is that is born to you, come here with it seven years from today.'

The other man agreed to the contract. He returned home. His wife was pleased to see him. The man spread the tablecloth. A bottle of wine, a loaf of bread and other food appeared. Wasn't it marvellous! But his wife didn't know about the contract he [had] made with the old man.

Thug am bodach leabaidh dha airson na h-oidhche. An ath mhadainn, rinn am bodach bracaist dhaibh. Nuair a bha am fear eile a' falbh, thàinig am bodach thuige le tubhailt. 'Dè bheir thu dhomh ma bheir mise dhut an tubhailt seo?' thuirt e. 'Nuair a sgaoileas tu air bòrd i, nochdaidh botal fiona agus lof arain agus biadh a bharrachd.'

'Ge-tà,' thuirt am fear eile, 'chan eil dad agam a bheir mi dhut.'

'Seadh,' fhreagair am bodach. 'Thoir dhomh, ma-thà, a' chiad duine no beathach a bheirear dhut.'

Cha robh am fear eile an dùil clann a bhith aige a-chaoidh. Cha robh beathaichean aige. Ghabh e ris a' chùmhnant.

'Ma-thà,' ars am bodach, 'ge brith de bhios ann a bheirear dhut, thig an seo leis seachd bliadhna on diugh.'

Dh'aontaich am fear eile ris a' chùmhnant. Thill e dhachaigh. Bha a bhean toilichte fhaicinn. Chuir an duine an tubhailt a-mach. Nochd botal fiona, lof arain agus biadh eile. Nach bu mhìorbhaileach e! Ach cha robh fios aig a bhean mun chùmhnant a rinn e leis a' bhodach.