

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 605. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 301 corresponds to Litir 605.

Tha mi ag innse na sgeulachd *Balgam Mòr*. Bha Mac na Bantraich ag iarraidh nighean an Rìgh a phòsadh. Cha robh an Rìgh deònach a nighean a thoirt dha. Thàinig na h-uaislean còmhla airson comhairle a thoirt don Rìgh. Bha iad a’ taobhadh le Mac na Bantraich ach thàinig an Earchlais-Ùrlair. Bha ise nàimhdeil do Mhac na Bantraich. Thuir i gun robh dòigh aice a’ chùis a dhèanamh air a’ ghille. Dh’fheumadh Mac na Bantraich neach a lorg a bheireadh botal uisge à tobar uaine an iomall tòrra an domhain na bu luaithe na Nighean Dubh na Luideig. Bha i cinnteach gun robh Nighean Dubh na Luideig na bu luaithe na duine sam bhith a lorgadh Mac na Bantraich.

“Tha mi a’ cluinntinn rudeigin,” thuir Claisneachd Mhath.

“Dè tha thu a’ cluinntinn?” thuir Mac na Bantraich.

“Gu feum thu botal uisge a thoirt à tobar uaine an iomall tòrra an domhain nas luaithe na Nighean Dubh na Luideig,” thuir Claisneachd Mhath.

“Rèisidh mise na h-aghaidh,” thuir Lurga Luath. Agus air falbh a ghabh an dithis. Bha Nighean Dubh na Luideig luath. Ach bha Lurga Luath na bu luaithe. Agus ràinig esan an tobar an toiseach.

An uair sin, dh’fheuch Nighean Dubh na Luideig ris a’ chùis a dhèanamh air Lurga Luath le a teanga. “Dèan suidhe is leig d’ anail is slìobaidh mi do cheann,” thuir i. Shuidh e sìos, shlìob i a cheann agus thuit e na throm chadal.

Rug i air claigeann each marbh a bha làimh rithe. Chuir i gu socrach fo a cheann e, agus **thug i na buinn aiste** leis a’ bhotal uisge.

“Tha mi a’ cluinntinn rudeigin,” thuir Claisneachd Mhath.

“Dè tha thu a’ cluinntinn?” thuir Mac na Bantraich.

“Tha mi a’ cluinntinn srann Lurga Luath. Tha Nighean Dubh na Luideig air am botal uisge a thoirt bhuaithe. Tha i a’ tighinn na deann.”

“Nì mise an gnothach ris a sin,” thuir Cuimse Dhìreach. Loisg e peilear air claigeann an eich a bha fo cheann Lurga Luath. Dhùisg Lurga Luath agus cha robh e fada ann a bhith a’ dèanamh a’ ghnòthaich air Nighean Dubh na Luideig. Spìon e am botal uisge bhuaipe agus dh’fhalbh e dhachaigh na dheann. Thug Mac na Bantraich am botal do nighean an Rìgh agus dh’iarr e oirre a phòsadh.

Ach cha robh an Earchlais-Ùrlair deiseil. Thuir i, nam biodh Mac na Bantraich ag iarraidh nighean an Rìgh, gu feumadh e torc nimhe, a bha anns a’

choille ubhal, a mharcahd beò, slàn gu doras Lùchairt an Rìgh. “Chan eil duine ann as urrainn sin a dhèanamh,” thuir i.

“Tha mi a’ cluinntinn rudeigin,” thuir Claisneachd Mhath.

“Dè tha thu a’ cluinntinn?” thuir Mac na Bantraich.

“Tha mi a’ cluinntinn – ma tha thu ag iarraidh nighean an Rìgh – gu feum thu torc nimhe a tha sa choille ubhal, a mharcahd beò, slàn gu doras na Lùchairt.”

Dh’fhalbh Lurga Luath agus Tòn Chruaidh còmhla gu ruige a’ choille ubhal. Bha an torc nimhe luath, ach bha Lurga Luath na bu luaithe. Fhuair e grèim air an torc. Bha an torc làidir, ach bha Tòn Chruaidh na bu làidire. Leum esan air an torc agus thug e an torc air ais beò, slàn gu doras na Lùchairt. Agus chì sinn dè thachair nuair a chuireas mi crìoch air an stòiridh an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Balgam Mòr: *Great Gulp*; uaislean: *nobles*; comhairle: *advice*; an Earchlais-Ùrlair: *the Floor-Mischief*; nàimhdeil: *hostile*; Claisneachd Mhath: *Good Hearing*; Lurga Luath: *Nimble Shanks*; srann: *snoring*; Cuimse Dhìreach: *Straight Aim*; Tòn Chruaidh: *Hard Haunches*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a’ taobhadh le Mac na Bantraich: *siding with the Widow’s Son*; dh’fheumadh X neach a lorg a bheireadh botal uisge: *X would have to find a person who would bring a bottle of water*; à tobar uaine an iomall tòrra an domhain: *from a green well that was situated at the outermost embankments of the world*; na bu luaithe na Nighean Dubh na Luideig: *more swiftly than the Black-haired Girl of the Ragged Cloth*; rèisidh mise na h-aghaidh: *I’ll race against her*; air falbh a ghabh an dithis: *the two [of them] took off*; ràinig esan an tobar an toiseach: *he reached the well first*; dh’fheuch X ris a’ chùis a dhèanamh air Y le a teanga: *X tried to defeat Y with her tongue*; dèan suidhe is leig d’ anail is sliobaidh mi do cheann: *sit down and take a breath and I’ll stroke your head*; thuit e na throm chadal: *he fell into a deep sleep*; rug i air claigeann each marbh a bha làimh rithe: *she took hold of the skull of a dead horse that was nearby her*; tha X air am botal uisge a thoirt bhuaithe: *X has taken the bottle of water from him*; a’ tighinn na deann: *coming at [her] top speed*; loisg e peilear: *he fired a bullet*; spìon e am botal uisge bhuaipe: *he wrenched the bottle of water from her*; dh’fhalbh e dhachaigh na dheann: *he left for home at [his] top speed*; gu feumadh e torc nimhe a mharcahd beò, slàn gu doras Lùchairt an Rìgh: *that he would have to ride a wild boar alive and uninjured to the door of the King’s Palace*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: a bha anns a’ choille ubhal: that was in the apple wood. *I have taken this from the published form of the original 19th Century manuscript of Iain Òg Ìle (John Francis Campbell). It represents an old grammatical form in which ubhal (the nominative singular form) is the same as the genitive plural form (“of apples”). We tend to use the genitive singular of ubhal today and consider it as a collective eg craobh-ubhail or the more old-fashioned crann-ubhail (apple tree), with ubhal slenderized. Are you worried what you might call an “apple orchard” in Gaelic and how to decline it? You needn’t be! It’s a special word – ubhalghort! The genitive singular is ubhalghoirt and the nominative plural is ubhalghoirtean.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: thug i na buinn aiste: *she took to her heels*.

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA