

## 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 265 (which corresponds to Litir 569). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*Black, white and red. Three colours. The old Gaels knew them. They were in some of the stories.*

*Do you know the legend of Deirdre? Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneach. It is famous in the heritage of the Gaels. The story is connected to three places in Scotland – near Loch Ness, in Glen Nevis and in Glen Etive.*

*In the story, the King of Ulster wants to marry Deirdre. But she falls in love with Naois. She leaves for Scotland along with Naois.*

*It's a hunter who reports the appearance of Naois to Deirdre. The hunter gets into Deirdre's bothy in the mountains. He says this to Deirdre about Naois and the like... "The colour of the raven on their hair. Their skin like the swans of the waves. Their skin like the blood of the speckled red fawn. And their vigour and friskiness like the salmon of the torrent and the deer of the speckled ridge."*

*The colour of the raven – that's black. Skin like the swan of the waves – that's white. A cheek like the blood of the speckled red fawn – that's red. Black, white and red. The three colours I named at the start.*

Dubh, geal is dearg. Trì dathan. Bha na seann Ghàidheil eòlach orra. Bha iad ann an cuid de na stòiridhean.

A bheil sibh eòlach air uirsgeul Deirdre? Deirdre agus Clann Uisnich. Tha i ainmeil ann an dualchas nan Gàidheal. Tha an stòiridh co-cheangailte ri trì àiteachan ann an Alba – taobh Loch Nis, ann an Gleann Nibheis agus ann an Gleann Eite.

Anns an stòiridh tha Rìgh Uladh ag iarraidh Deirdre a phòsadh. Ach tha i a' gabhail gaol air Naois. Tha i a' falbh a dh'Alba cuide ri Naois.

'S e sealgair a tha ag aithris coltas Naois do Dheirdre. Tha an sealgair a' faighinn a-steach don bhothan aig Deirdre anns na beanntan. Tha e ag ràdh seo ri Deirdre mu dheidhinn Naois agus a leithid... "Lì an fhithich air an gruag. An cneas mar eala nan tonn. An leac mar fhuil an laoigh bhrìc dheirg. Agus an lùth agus an leum mar bhradan a' bhoinne-bhrais agus mar fhiadh a' bhearraidh bhrìc."

Lì an fhithich – 's e sin dubh. Cneas mar eala nan tonn – 's e sin geal. Leac mar fhuil an laoigh bhrìc dheirg – 's e sin dearg. Dubh, geal agus dearg. Na trì dathan a dh'ainmich mi aig an toiseach.

*The other day, I found another version of Deirdre's legend from Scotland. Deirdre says to the king, "Wouldn't the man be beautiful who had skin as white as the snow, a cheek as red as the blood and hair as black as the raven." The King says to Deirdre that his sister has children and that one of them is just like that. Deirdre says that she's not going to bed until she sees the man.*

*The King sends for the man. The young man comes. Deirdre falls in love with him. They leave together for Scotland. Black, white and red. Three important colours in the heritage of the Gaels.*

An latha eile, lorg mi dreach eile de dh'uirsgheul Deirdre à Alba. Tha Deirdre ag ràdh ris an rìgh, "Nach bu mhaiseach an duine aig am biodh cneas cho geal ris an t-sneachd, gruaidh cho dearg ris an fhuil agus falt cho dubh ris an fhithreach." Tha an Rìgh ag ràdh ri Deirdre gu bheil clann aig a phiuthar agus gu bheil fear dhiubh dìreach mar sin. Tha Deirdre ag ràdh nach eil i a' dol a leabaidh gus am faic i an duine.

Tha an Rìgh a' cur fios air an duine. Tha am fear òg a' tighinn. Tha Deirdre a' gabhail gaol air. Tha iad a' falbh còmhla a dh'Alba. Dubh, geal is dearg. Trì dathan cudromach ann an dualchas nan Gàidheal.