

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 367 (which corresponds to Litir 671). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about a Gaelic proverb in the book by Thomas Garnett: Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan ris. Pity the man who'd burn his harp for him. Alexander Nicolson has the same proverb in his collection – Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan dhut – pity him who would burn his harp for you.

The proverb is based on an old story. Here's how Thomas Garnett reported it: A long time ago, there was a harper in Mull. He was married to a beautiful woman. He was very much in love with her. The harper had a valuable harp. The harper was proud of the harp. He took the harp with him all the time.

The harper and his wife went to visit a relative who was sick. Their relative lived on the other side of the island. There was bad weather. They were on a high pass. The wife grew weak with the cold. She was in danger of dying.

The harper found dry heather. He made a fire. To keep his wife warm, he broke his harp into fragments. He put the fragments on the fire.

Another man saw the smoke. He was a gentleman. He had food

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu sheanfhalac Gàidhlig anns an leabhar aig Tòmas Garnett: *Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan ris. Pity the man who'd burn his harp for him.* Tha an aon seanfhalac aig Alasdair MacNeacail anns a' chruinneachadh aigesan – *Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan dhut – pity him who would burn his harp for you.*

Tha an seanfhalac stèidhichte air seann sgeulachd. Seo mar a dh'aithris Tòmas Garnett i: O chionn fhada, bha clàrsair ann am Muile. Bha e pòsta aig boireannach brèagha. Bha gaol mòr aige oirre. Bha clàrsach priseil aig a' chlàrsair. Bha an clàrsair moiteil às a' chlàrsaich. Bha e a' toirt na clàrsaich leis fad na h-ùine.

Chaidh an clàrsair 's a bhean a chèilidh air caraid a bha tinn. Bha an caraid a' fuireach air taobh thall an eilein. Bha droch shìde ann. Bha iad air bealach àrd. Dh'fhàs a' bhean lag leis an fhuachd. Bha i ann an cunnart bàsachadh.

Lorg an clàrsair fraoch tioram. Rinn e teine. Airson teas a chumail ri a bhean, bhris e a chlàrsach ann an sgealban. Chuir e na sgealban air an teine.

Chunnaic fear eile an toit. 'S e duine-usal a bha ann. Bha biadh agus

and drink. He gave food and drink to the woman. He made conversation with the woman. They knew each other when they were young, on another island. They were in love with each other then.

A flame was put to the harp. And a flame was put to the old love. The gentleman decided to take the harper's wife away with him to another island. The three of them walked together. In a whisper, the gentleman told the harper's wife his plan. She was still in love with him. She agreed with his plan.

They reached a glen. There was a burn in the glen. The woman said that she was thirsty. The harper left to get water from the burn. When he was at the burn, his wife and the gentleman ran away together. The harper lost his wife and his harp. And he said, "Pity the man who would burn his harp for you!"

deoch aige. Thug e biadh is deoch don bhoireannach. Rinn e còmhradh leis a' bhoireannach. Bha iad eòlach air a chèile nuair a bha iad òg, ann an eilean eile. Bha iad ann an gaol le chèile an uair sin.

Chaidh lasair a chur ris a' chlàrsaich. Agus chaidh lasair a chur ris an t-seann ghaol. Chuir an duine-uasal roimhe bean a' chlarsair a thoirt air falbh leis gu eilean eile. Choisich an triùir còmhla. Ann an cagair, dh'inns an duine-uasal a phlana do bhean a' chlarsair. Bha ise fhathast ann an gaol leis. Dh'aontaich i le a phlana.

Ràinig iad gleann. Bha allt anns a' ghleann. Thuir am boireannach gun robh am pathadh oirre. Dh'fhalbh an clarsair a dh'iarraidh uisge bhon allt. Nuair a bha e aig an allt, ruith a bhean agus an duine-uasal air falbh còmhla. Chaill an clarsair a bhean agus a chlarsach. Agus thuir e, "Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan dhut!"