

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 384 (which corresponds to Litir 688). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you the story The Lad and the Blacksmith. John, the blacksmith, saw how a young man fixed a woman's head. Her head had been on backwards. John put his arms around his wife. She had a twist in her neck.

"Let me go," she cried. But John picked up a large knife. He put his wife's head on the anvil. He cut it off. He put his wife's head on the fire. He worked the bellows. The fire was hot.

When the head was burnt, John put it on the anvil. He ground it. There was nothing of it but dust. John spat on it. He made a paste of it. He put the paste on his wife's neck, just as the young man had done. But nothing happened. No new head grew on the neck.

John was afraid. He had murdered his wife. He extinguished the fire. He put his wife's body under the coal. And he fled.

Two years elapsed. John was in a country where nobody knew him. He saw a man sitting on a bench. He spoke to him. The man told him that things were difficult in the kingdom because of the King's daughter.

"What happened to her?" asked John.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an stòiridh *An Gille agus an Gobha*. Chunnaic Iain, an gobha, mar a chàirich fear òg ceann boireannaich. Bha a ceann air a bhith air a bhith tromach-air-shearrach. Chuir Iain a ghàirdeanan timcheall a mhnà. Bha snìomh aice na h-amhaich.

"Leig às mi," dh'èigh i. Ach thog Iain sgian mhòr. Chuir e ceann a mhnà air an innean. Gheàrr e dheth e. Chuir e ceann a mhnà don teine. Dh'obraich e am balg-sèididh. Bha an teine teth.

Nuair a bha an ceann loisgte, chuir Iain air an innean e. Phronn e e. Cha robh dad ann ach duslach. Rinn Iain smugaid air. Rinn e taois dheth. Chuir e an taois air amhaich a mhnà, dìreach mar a rinn am fear òg. Ach cha do thachair dad. Cha do dh'fhàs ceann às ùr air an amhaich.

Bha an t-eagal air Iain. Bha e air a bhean a mhurt. Smàl e an teine. Chuir e corp a mhnà fon ghual. Agus theich e.

Chaidh dà bhliadhna seachad. Bha Iain ann an dùthaich far nach robh duine eòlach air. Chunnaic e fear na shuidhe air being. Bhruidhinn e ris. Dh'innis am fear dha gun robh cùisean duilich san rìoghachd air sàillibh nighean an Rìgh.

"Dè thachair dhi?" dh'fhaighnich Iain.

“Her head is on backwards,” said the other man. “The King will give a large reward to any person who fixes her.”

John went to the palace to speak to the King.

“What is your profession?” asked the King.

“I’m a blacksmith,” replied John.

“That’s no use to me,” said the King. “I need a wizard.”

“I’ll fix your daughter,” promised John.

“If you don’t,” replied the King, “your head will come off your shoulders.”

John went to the smiddy. He worked the bellows. The fire was hot. Two guards came in with a beautiful girl. Her head was on backwards. The guards left. But they remained outside the door.

John asked the princess to put her head on the anvil. He picked up a large sharp knife. He cut the princess’s head off and ... the story will continue next week!

“Tha a ceann tromach air shearrach,” ars am fear eile. “Bheir an Rìgh duais mhòr do dhuine sam bith a chuireas ceart i.”

Dh’fhalbh Iain don lùchairt a bhruidhinn ris an Rìgh.

“Dè an dreuchd a th’ agad?” dh’fhaighnich an Rìgh.

“Tha mi nam ghobha,” fhreagair Iain.

“Chan eil sin gu feum sam bith dhomh,” thuirt an Rìgh. “S e buidseach a tha dhìth orm.”

“Cuiridh mise ur nighean ceart,” gheall Iain.

“Mura cuir,” fhreagair an Rìgh, “thig do cheann far do ghualnean.”

Chaidh Iain don cheàrdaich. Dh’obraich e am balg-sèididh. Bha an teine teth. Thàinig dithis fhreiceadan a-steach le caileag bhrèagha. Bha a ceann tromach-air-shearrach. Dh’fhalbh na freiceadain a-mach. Ach dh’fhuirich iad taobh a-muigh an dorais.

Dh’iarr Iain air a’ bhana-phrionnsa a ceann a chur air an innean. Thog e sgian mhòr gheur. Gheàrr e ceann na bana-phrionnsa dheth agus ... leanaidh an stòiridh an-ath-sheachdain!