

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 701 (which corresponds to Litir 1,005). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Here is an old story called 'The Three Bog Cotton Shirts'. There was a king who had three sons and a daughter. His wife died. He married again. He was afraid his new wife would not like the children. Thus, he built them a house on the hunting-hill. His new wife didn't know about the house or the children.

The king was often visiting his children on the hunting-hill. Every bird he killed, he gave it to them.

One day, the king was out. A witch appeared in the palace. She spoke to the king's wife. 'You think there is nobody the king is keener on than you, but you're wrong,' she said.

'Who?'

'His three sons and daughter. They are in a sun-house on the hunting-hill.'

'Oh,' said the queen. 'I didn't know. How will I get them home?'

'When the king comes home,' said the witch, 'fill your mouth with red wine. When he comes through the door, spit the wine out. Tell him you are vomiting the blood of your heart. There is no treatment for it

Seo seann sgeulachd air a bheil 'Na Tri Lèintean Canaich'. Bha rìgh ann aig an robh trìùir mhac agus nighean. Chaochail a bhean. Phòs e a-rithist. Bha eagal air nach biodh a bhean ùr measail air a chloinn. Mar sin, thog e taigh dhaibh air a' bheinn-sheilg. Cha robh fios aig a bhean ùir mu dheidhinn an taighe no mu dheidhinn na cloinne.

Bha an rìgh gu tric a' tadhal air a chloinn air a' bheinn-sheilg. Gach eun a mharbh e, thug e dhaibh e.

Latha de na làithean, bha an rìgh a-muigh. Nochd bana-bhuidseach anns an lùchairt. Bhruidhinn i ri bean an rìgh. 'Tha thu dhen bheachd nach eil duine as docha leis an rìgh na thu, ach tha,' thuirt i.

'Cò?'

'A thriùir mhac agus nighean. Tha iad ann an grianan air a' bheinn-sheilg.'

'O,' thuirt a' bhanrigh. 'Cha robh fios a'm. Ciamar a gheibh mi dhachaigh iad?'

'Nuair a thig an rìgh dhachaigh,' ars a' bhana-bhuidseach, 'lìon do bheul le fion dearg. Nuair a thig e tron doras, spùt am fion a-mach. Can ris gu bheil thu a' cur a-mach fuil do chridhe. Cha bhi leigheas air a shon ach a thriùir mhac

except bringing home his three sons and daughter.'

The king came. His wife spat out the red wine.

'What's wrong with you?' asked the king.

'The blood of my heart is coming out of my mouth,' she replied. 'What will cure me will be your three sons and daughter coming home.'

The king sent a servant to the sun-house. The children returned home. The next day, the king went out. His wife sent for the witch. 'How will I get rid of the king's children?' she asked.

'If I receive payment,' said the witch, 'I'll get rid of them myself.'

'What payment?' asked the queen.

'Enough wool to fill my two ears and meal that fills a black jar.'

'What will that be?' asked the queen.

'Of wool – the produce of seven sheep-houses over seven years. Of meal – the produce of seven granaries over seven years.'

'You'll get that,' said the queen.

'Well, send the children to me one by one to fetch the fine comb,' said the witch.

And, next week, we'll see what happened.

agus nighean a thoirt dhachaigh.'

Thàinig an rìgh. Spùt a bhean am fion dearg a-mach.

'Dè tha a' cur ort?' dh'fhaighnich an rìgh.

'Tha fuil mo chridhe a' tighinn às mo bheul,' fhreagair i. ' 'S e do thrìuir mhac agus nighean tighinn dhachaigh a nì leigheas orm.'

Chuir an rìgh searbhant a-mach chun a' ghrianain. Thill a' chlann dhachaigh. An ath latha, chaidh an rìgh a-mach. Chuir a bhean fios don bhana-bhuidsich. 'Ciamar a gheibh mi cuidhteas clann an rìgh?' dh'fhaighnich i.

'Ma gheibh mise pàigheadh,' ars a' bhana-bhuidseach, 'cuiridh mi fhìn às dhaibh.'

'Dè am pàigheadh?' dh'fhaighnich a' bhanrigh.

'Uiread de chlàimh a lìonas mo dhà chluais agus min a lìonas crogan dubh.'

'Dè bhios an sin?' dh'fhaighnich a' bhanrigh.

'De chlàimh – toradh seachd taighean-chaorach fad seachd bliadhna. Dè mhin – toradh seachd grainnsichean fad seachd bliadhna.'

'Gheibh thu sin,' ars a' bhanrigh.

'Uill, cuir a' chlann a-nall thugam aon is aon a dh'iarraidh na cìre mine,' thuirt a' bhana-bhuidseach.

Agus, an-ath-sheachdain, chì sinn dè thachair.