

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 770 (which corresponds to Litir 1,074). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I'm continuing with the story The Raven's Stone which is based in Badenoch. Iain Bàn (Fair John) from Balnacraig and Helen Mackintosh from Dunachton were meeting each other often near the River Spey. John was crossing the river at a ford.

One day, John met a blacksmith – one 'Duncan of the Two Thumbs'. John knew that Duncan had just been in Dunachton. 'Did you hear anything of Helen?' he asked.

'Yes,' said Duncan. 'She is a prisoner in her own room.'

'That's bad,' said John. 'Will you give her a letter from me?'

'Be quiet,' said Duncan. 'That would be dangerous. Her ghillie lost his head yesterday for keeping the meetings between you and Helen a secret from the Lady.'

Despite the danger, however, the smith agreed to take the letter to Helen. He took it with him the next time he went to Dunachton. But Duncan didn't return home. Day after day, John was awaiting news from him.

John's father took his son to one side, and he said to him, 'There would

Tha mi a' leantainn leis an sgeulachd Clach an Fhithich, a tha stèidhichte ann am Bàideanach. Bha Iain Bàn à Baile na Creige agus Eilidh Nic an Tòisich à Dun Neachdain a' coinneachadh ri chèile gu tric faisg air Uisge Spè. Bha Iain a dhol tarsainn na h-aibhne aig àth.

Latha a bha seo, choinnich Iain ri gobha – fear 'Donnchadh na Dà Òrdaig'. Bha fios aig Iain gun robh Donnchadh dìreach air a bhith ann an Dùn Neachdain. 'An cuala tu dad air Eilidh?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Chuala,' arsa Donnchadh. 'Tha i na prìosanach na seòmar fhèin.'

'Tha sin duilich,' thuirt Iain. 'An toir thu litir dhi bhuam?'

'Ist,' arsa Donnchadh. 'Bhiodh sin cunnartach. Chaill an gille-frithealaidh aice a cheann an-dè airson na coinneamhan eadar thu fhèin is Eilidh a chumail dìomhair bhon Bhean-ualas.'

A dh'aindeoin a' chunnairt, ge-tà, dh'aontaich an gobha litir a thoirt do dh'Eilidh. Thug e leis i an ath thuras a chaidh e a Dhùn Neachdain. Ach cha do thill Donnchadh dhachaigh. Latha an dèidh latha, bha Iain a' feitheamh fios bhuaithe.

Thug athair Iain an gille aige gu aon taobh, agus thuirt e ris, 'Bhiodh fuasgladh ann nam biodh Clach an Fhithich agad.'

be a solution if you had the Raven's Stone.'

'What is the Raven's Stone?' asked John.

'Your grandfather told me about it. You take eggs from a raven's nest. You boil them and return them to the nest. The raven will know that the eggs are damaged. It will leave. But, on the third day, it will return with a small stone in its beak. He will rub the stone on the eggs. The eggs will become fertile and alive once more. If a man has been watching this, and if he should get hold of the stone, he will be able to make himself invisible.'

'How?' asked John.

'If he puts the stone in his mouth, he will be invisible,' said his father. 'To be visible once more, he will put the stone in his pocket.'

'That's amazing,' said John. 'I could go to Dunachton and be invisible.'

'Exactly,' said his father. 'Now, we must find a raven's nest.'

'Dè th' ann an Clach an Fhithich?' dh'fhaighnich Iain.

'Dh'inns do sheanair dhomh mu a deidhinn. Bidh thu a' toirt uighean à nead fithich. Bidh thu gan goil agus gan cur air ais san nead. Bidh fios aig an fhitheach gu bheil na h-uighean millte. Teichidh e. Ach, air an treas latha, tillidh e, le clach bheag na ghob. Bidh e a' suathadh na cloiche ris na h-uighean. Bidh na h-uighean a' tighinn torach is beò a-rithist. Ma tha duine air a bhith a' coimhead seo, agus ma gheibh e grèim air a' chloich, bidh comas aige a dhèanamh fhèin do-fhaicsinneach.'

'Ciamar?' dh'fhaighnich Iain.

'Ma chuireas e a' chlach na bheul, bidh e do-fhaicsinneach,' thuirt athair. 'Airson a bhith faicsinneach a-rithist, cuiridh e a' chlach na phòcaid.'

'Tha sin iongantach,' thuirt Iain. 'Dh'fhaodainn a dhol a Dhùn Neachdain, agus mi do-fhaicsinneach.'

'Dìreach,' thuirt athair. 'Nise, feumaidh sinn nead fithich a lorg.'