

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 580. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 276 corresponds to Litir 580.

Bidh daoine ag ràdh “cho carach ris an t-sionnach”, ach a bheil beathach ann a tha nas caraiche na sionnach? Seo agaibh stòiridh traidiseanta mun *nios*, no *neas*. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig air *weasel*. Tha e a' tighinn à taobh Loch Laomainn.

Anns a' choille bha sionnach a' fuireach. Bhiodh e a' falbh gach oidhche airson creach a thogail air cearcan na nàbaidheachd. Ach, a bharrachd air cearcan, bha e gu math measail air coineanaich no rabaidean. Chuir sin dragh mòr air nios anns an sgìre. Bha esan dhen bheachd gur ann leis-san a bha na rabaidean gu lèir.

Gu mì-fhortanach don nios, bha an sionnach mòran na bu làidire agus na bu chomasaiche air sealg. 'S ann tric a bhiodh an nios a' dol a chadal gun suipear fhad 's a bha an sionnach a' gabhail dìnnear mhòr de rabaidean.

Latha a bha seo, chunnaic an nios cothrom airson dìoghaltas a ghabhail air an t-sionnach. Bha e a-muigh a' sealg agus thàinig e air a' gheamair. Bha an geamair na shuain chadal aig bonn craoibhe. Ri a thaobh bha a ghunna, a bhogsa snaoisein agus còig paidhrichean de rabaidean sultmhor.

Thog an nios na rabaidean fear ma seach agus thug e gu oir na coille iad. Thog e am bogsa snaoisein cuideachd agus dh'fhalbh e leis. An uair sin chaidh e a-mach a lorg an t-sionnaich.

“Thig is faic an t-suipear mhòr agam,” thuirt e ris an t-sionnach.

“Agus dè ghlacadh nios beag a bhiodh inntinneach do **shàr-shealgair** mar a tha mise?” thuirt an sionnach. Bha e ruideigin **mòr às** fhèin.

“Tha deich rabaidean sultmhor agam,” thuirt an nios gu pròiseil. “Thig is coimhead.”

Dh'fhalbh an sionnach leis an nios agus, ceart gu leòr, bha deich rabaidean ann marbh air an talamh. “Is math a rinn thu, a charaid bhig,” thuirt an sionnach, “ach ciamar a ghlac thu deich rabaidean?”

“Bha e furasta,” fhreagair an nios. “Rinn mi snotadh air an fhùdair dhraoidheil aig a' gheamair. Thàinig neart mòr orm agus b' urrainn dhomh ruith na bu luaithe na rabaid sam bith.”

Choimhead an sionnach air a' bhogsa snaoisein. Bha ùidh aige ann. “Am feuch thu fhèin e?” thuirt an nios. Fhreagair an sionnach gum feuchadh.

“Ceart, ma-thà,” ars an nios. “Fosgail am bogsa. Dèan snotadh air an fhùdair a tha na bhroinn. Cuiridh mi geall nach bi do leithid ann airson neart no luaths.”

Dh'fhosgail an sionnach am bogsa. Chuir e shròn ann agus rinn e snotadh mòr. Rinn e nuall mòr agus sreathartaich gun sgur. Dh'fhalbh an nios agus bhìd e cluas a' gheamair. Dhùisg agus dh'èirich an geamair. Chuala e an othail anns a' choille agus thog e a ghunna. An ceann greis chuala an nios brag gunna.

Air an oidhche sin, chaidh an nios dhachaigh seachad air taigh a' gheamair. Bha earball an t-sionnach crochte air tarrag faisg air an doras. Bha fios aig an nios gum biodh na rabaidean aigesan a-nis, 's nach cuireadh sionnach dragh sam bith air. Agus sin mar a rinn an nios carach a' chùis air an t-sionnach nach robh buileach cho carach ris.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: nios, neas: *weasel*; Loch Laomainn: *Loch Lomond*; brag gunna: *a gunshot*; earball: *tail*.

Abairtean na Litreach: cho carach ris an t-sionnach: *as wily as the fox*; airson creach a thogail air cearcan na nàbaidheachd: *to plunder the neighbourhood's hens*; bha e gu math measail air coineanaich no rabaidean: *he really liked rabbits*; chuir sin dragh mòr air nios: *that really annoyed a weasel*; gur ann leis-san a bha na rabaidean gu lèir: *that all the rabbits belonged to him*; na bu chomasaiche air sealg: *better at hunting*; 's ann tric a bhiodh an nios a' dol a chadal gun suipear: *often the weasel would go to sleep without supper*; cothrom airson dìoghaltas a ghabhail air: *an opportunity to get revenge on*; thàinig e air a' gheamair: *he happened upon the gamekeeper*; na shuain chadal: *deeply asleep*; a ghunna, a bhogsa snaoisein agus còig paidhrichean de rabaidean sultmhor: *his gun, his snuff box and five pairs of fat rabbits*; fear ma seach: *one at a time*; thug e gu oir na coille iad: *he took them to the edge of the wood*; rinn mi snotadh air an fhùdair dhraoidheil aig a' gheamair: *I took a sniff of the gamekeeper's magic powder*; am feuch thu fhèin e?: *will you try it yourself?*; ceart, ma-thà: *okay, then*; a tha na bhroinn: *that's inside it*; cuiridh mi geall nach bi do leithid ann airson neart no luaths: *I bet you'll have no equal for strength or speed*; nuall mòr agus sreathartaich gun sgur: *great howling and incessant sneezing*; bhìd e cluas a' gheamair: *he bit the ear of the gamekeeper*; dhùisg agus dh'èirich an geamair: *the gamekeeper woke up and got up*; chuala e an othail anns a' choille agus thog e a ghunna: *he heard the uproar in the wood and he picked up his gun*; dhachaigh seachad air taigh a' gheamair: *home past the gamekeeper's house*; crochte air tarrag: *hung on a nail*; gum biodh na rabaidean aigesan a-nis: *that he would have the rabbits now*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: a bhiodh inntinneach do **shàr-shealgair** mar a tha mise: *that would be of interest to a supreme hunter as I am*. Sàr is a really useful augmentative prefix that can be used to emphasize the quality of the noun to which it is joined. It has the sense of the superlative about it and the "best player" award (eg in the shinty finals) is given to the "sàr-chluicheadair" (note that sàr lenites the noun). Other examples are sàr-dhuine (a great guy), sàr-mhàise (exceptional beauty), sàr-phroifeiseantach (a real professional). A famous 19th Century anthology of Gaelic poetry is called Sàr-obair nam Bàrd Gàidhealach, often referred to, when discussing poetry, as simply "Sàr-obair".

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha e ruideigin mòr às fhèin: *he was somewhat vain*.

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA