

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 676 (which corresponds to Litir 980). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Did you ever hear the story of 'MacVurich of Raasay'? MacVurich lived a long time ago on Raasay. He was famous as a hunter. One day, he was hunting near Dùn Cana, the highest hill on the island. He killed a deer and gralloched it. He put it on his shoulder. He was walking next to Loch na Mèilich when he heard a noise – bleating.

MacVurich knew it was not a sheep or goat that was making it. He put the deer from his shoulder. He found an unusual creature. It was shaggy with big paws and large eyes. It was afraid of the hunter. It was only young.

MacVurich put the creature inside his coat. He picked up the deer and he went home. He was taking his dinner when the room went dark. There was a big ugly head at the window.

MacVurich knew what it was – the Raasay monster. 'Give me back my baby,' said the monster.

'It comes under ransom,' replied MacVurich.

'What ransom?' asked the monster.

An cuala sibh riamh an sgeulachd 'MacMhuirich Ratharsair'? Bha MacMhuirich beò o chionn fhada ann an Ratharsair. Bha e ainmeil mar shealgair. Latha a bha seo, bha e a' sealg faisg air Dùn Cana, a' bheinn as àirde anns an eilean. Mharbh e fiadh agus ghreallaich e e. Chuir e air a' ghualainn e. Bha e a' coiseachd ri taobh Loch na Mèilich nuair a chuala e fuaim – mèilich.

Bha fios aig MacMhuirich nach e caora no gobhar a bha ga dhèanamh. Chuir e am fiadh far a ghualainn. Rannsaich e anns an fhraoch. Lorg e creutair annasach. Bha e molach le spògan mòra agus sùilean mòra. Bha eagal air ron t-sealgair. Cha robh e ach òg.

Chuir MacMhuirich an creutair am broinn a chòta. Thog e am fiadh agus chaidh e dhachaigh. Bha e a' gabhail a dhinneir nuair a dh'fhàs an seòmar dorch. Bha ceann mòr grànda aig an uinneig.

Bha fios aig MacMhuirich dè bha ann – Uilebheist Ratharsair. 'Thoir dhomh mo leanabh air ais,' thuirt an t-Uilebheist.

'Tha e a' tighinn air èirig,' fhreagair MacMhuirich.

'Dè an èirig?' dh'fhaighnich an t-Uilebheist.

'Feumaidh tu cabhsair math a

'You must build a good causeway across Loch Storab,' said MacVurich.

'That's difficult work,' said the monster. 'But if I build it, will I get my baby back without harm?'

'Yes,' said MacVurich.

The monster left. It returned about midnight. 'I've done the work,' it said. 'The causeway is made.'

'The baby is still under ransom,' said MacVurich.

'I paid the ransom!' shouted the monster. It was now getting angry.

'Not entirely,' said MacVurich. 'You must take all of my peats home from the peat-bank, and make a stack of them at the end of my house.'

The monster shouted that MacVurich was a villain without conscience. But it had no choice. It left to bring the peat home. When the work was done, it returned to MacVurich's house. 'The peat-stack is built,' it said. 'Now, give me my baby.' And I'll tell you what happened next week.

thogail tarsainn Loch Storab,' thuirt MacMhuirich.

'S e obair dhoirbh a tha sin,' thuirt an t-Uilebheist. 'Ach ma thogas mi e, am faigh mi an leanabh agam air ais slàn, sàbhailte?'

'Gheibh,' arsa MacMhuirich.

Dh'fhalbh an t-Uilebheist. Thill e mu mheadhan-oidhche. 'Rinn mi an obair,' thuirt e. 'Tha an cabhsair dèante.'

'Tha an leanabh air èirig fhathast,' arsa MacMhuirich.

'Phàigh mi an èirig!' dh'èigh an t-Uilebheist. Bha e a-nise a' fàs feargach.

'Cha do phàigh gu lèir,' thuirt MacMhuirich. 'Feumaidh tu gach fàd mònach agam aig a' pholl-mhònach a thoirt dhachaigh, agus cruach a dhèanamh dhiubh aig ceann an taigh agam.'

Dh'èigh an t-Uilebheist gur e bleigeard gun chogais a bha ann am MacMhuirich. Ach cha robh roghainn aige. Dh'fhalbh e airson a' mhòine a thoirt dhachaigh. Nuair a bha an obair dèante, thill e gu taigh MhicMhuirich. 'Tha a' chruach-mhònach togte,' thuirt e. 'Nise, thoir dhomh mo leanabh.' Agus innsidh mi dhuibh dè thachair an-ath-sheachdain.