

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 499 (which corresponds to Litir 803). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you an old story – ‘The Butler’s Son’. One night, the thieves went to a big house. There was a cellar in the house. The thieves let the butler’s son down to the cellar by rope.

He wasn’t there long when a light came on. There was somebody in the house. The thieves fled. They left the lad in the cellar.

The lad lit a match. In the corner, he saw a cow’s hide. The legs and horns were still on it.

He put the hide around him. He started to make a commotion. Somebody came. ‘Who’s that?’ said the voice.

‘Me,’ replied the lad.

‘Who are you?’

‘The Devil,’ said the lad. ‘If I don’t get the house key to get out, I’ll take you with me to Hell!’

The man above had a torch. He saw a terrible thing. The Devil, without doubt! He let down a rope, and the keys to the house.

The lad made for the thieves’ house. The hide was still on him. The thieves were arguing about the stuff they stole from the big house.

Bha mi ag aithris seann stòiridh dhuibh – ‘Mac a’ Bhuidealair’. Oidhche a bha seo, chaidh na mèirlich gu taigh mòr. Bha seilear anns an taigh. Leig na mèirlich mac a’ bhuidealair sìos don t-seilear air ròp.

Cha robh e ann fada nuair a thàinig solas air. Bha cuideigin anns an taigh. Theich na mèirlich. Dh’fhàg iad an gille anns an t-seilear.

Las an gille maids. Anns an oisean, chunnaic e bian mairt. Bha na casan agus adharcan fhathast air.

Chuir e am bian timcheall air. Thòisich e air ùpraid a dhèanamh. Thàinig cuideigin. ‘Cò tha ann an sin?’ thuirt an guth.

‘Mise,’ fhreagair an gille.

‘Cò thu?’

‘An Donas,’ thuirt an gille. ‘Mura faigh mi iuchair an taighe airson faighinn a-mach, bheir mi thu leam a dh’Ifrinn!’

Bha toirds aig an duine shuas. Dh’amais e an solas air a’ ghille. Chunnaic e rud uabhasach. An Donas, gun teagamh! Chuir e ròp sìos, agus iuchraichean an taighe.

Rinn an gille air àros nam mèirleach. Bha am bian fhathast air. Bha na mèirlich ag argamaid mun stuth a ghoid iad bhon taigh mhòr. Chuir an gille

The lad put his horned head inside. He shouted, 'Leave it to me. You were working on my behalf anyway!'

The thieves took fright. They fled and they left the money on the table. The lad filled a bag with it.

He went to his father's house. 'Why did you return?' said his father. 'I'll lose my job as a butler. We'll have to leave.'

The landlord heard that the lad was back. 'Your son left to gain a trade,' he said to the butler.

'I sent him away,' said the butler, 'but he returned.'

'He wasn't there long enough to learn a trade,' said the landlord.

'But he was,' replied the butler. 'He's very skilful.'

'And what trade is that?'

'Thieving,' said the butler.

'If he's as good as that,' said the landlord, 'go home and tell him this. He'll have to steal the bedsheet that will be under myself and my wife tonight. If he doesn't do that, I'll put a bullet in his head.' And we'll see what happened next week.

a cheann adharcach a-steach. Dh'èigh e, 'Fàgaibh agams' e. Bha sibh ag obair às mo leth co-dhiù!'

Ghabh na mèirlich eagal. Theich iad agus dh'fhàg iad an t-airgead air a' bhòrd. Lìon an gille poca.

Dh'fhalbh e a dh'ionnsaigh taigh athar. 'Carson a thill thu?' thuirt athair. 'Caillidh mi m' obair mar bhuidealair. Bidh againn ri falbh.'

Chuala an t-uachdaran gun robh an gille air ais. 'Chaidh an gille agad air falbh airson ceàird ionnsachadh,' thuirt e ris a' bhuidealair.

'Chuir mi air falbh e,' thuirt am buidealair, 'ach thill e.'

'Cha robh e ann fada gu leòr airson ceàird ionnsachadh,' ars an t-uachdaran.

'Bha, ge-tà,' fhreagair am buidealair. 'Tha e gu math sgileil.'

'Agus dè a' cheàird a tha sin?'

'Mèirle,' thuirt am buidealair.

'Ma tha e cho math sin,' ars an t-uachdaran, 'thalla dhachaigh agus inns dha seo. Bidh aige ris an siota-leapa a bhios fodham 's fo mo bhean a-nochd a ghoid. Mura dèan e sin, cuiridh mi peilear na cheann.' Agus chì sinn dè thachair an-ath-sheachdain.