

Something Must Be Done

a Fairy Tale of

Arrochar and the Waste of the World



This story was written by George Robertson.
It can be read alongside Arrochar and the Waste of the World,
or on its own.

The Stràilleach Golamas was created by Anna Wilson for the
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‘Something must be done’, muttered the villagers.

The greyhairs and greybeards shook their heads sadly. Their grandparents, and their grandparents before them, had known Stràilleach Golamas. Stràilleach Golamas had been there since as long as the tide had come in and gone back out again. He was as much a part of the village as the Cobbler. They had thought him a friend. His hair could be put on their gardens to feed their potatoes and kale. His limbs could be used for firewood, or sometimes even to replace a rotting beam in a house or shed.

But times had changed, and Stràilleach Golamas had changed with them. Now his hair was more likely to strangle the plants in the garden. His limbs were hard to burn and gave off acrid smoke. Now his body parts littered the beach, and it was a foul mess.

Something must be done.



And so it was that at the next full moon, when the tide would be at its highest and lowest, the whole village gathered on the shore, and as the high tide receded they followed the water down, and with their spades or their bare hands, they cleared the beach of everything that was washed up, put it in sacks, and took it away to bury.

The tide came in, and the tide went back out again.

Stràilleach Golamas roamed across the foreshore, looking for things to build his body. There wasn't much there, but that probably didn't bother him. Size doesn't matter to Stràilleach Golamas. And with each passing tide there was more.



'Something must be done', the villagers said to the minister. The minister announced that he would exorcise Stràilleach Golamas. And so it was that at the next full moon, when the tide was at its highest and lowest, the minister followed the water down, exhorting and abjuring, commanding the demon: 'BEGONE!'

Up by the high tide line, in a small pile of kelp and rope and a discarded shoe, Stràilleach Golamas lay still, watching the two-legs from up on dry as he exhorted and abjured. Perhaps Stràilleach Golamas wondered what a 'demon' was.

The tide came in, and the tide went out again.

Stràilleach Golamas built a body.



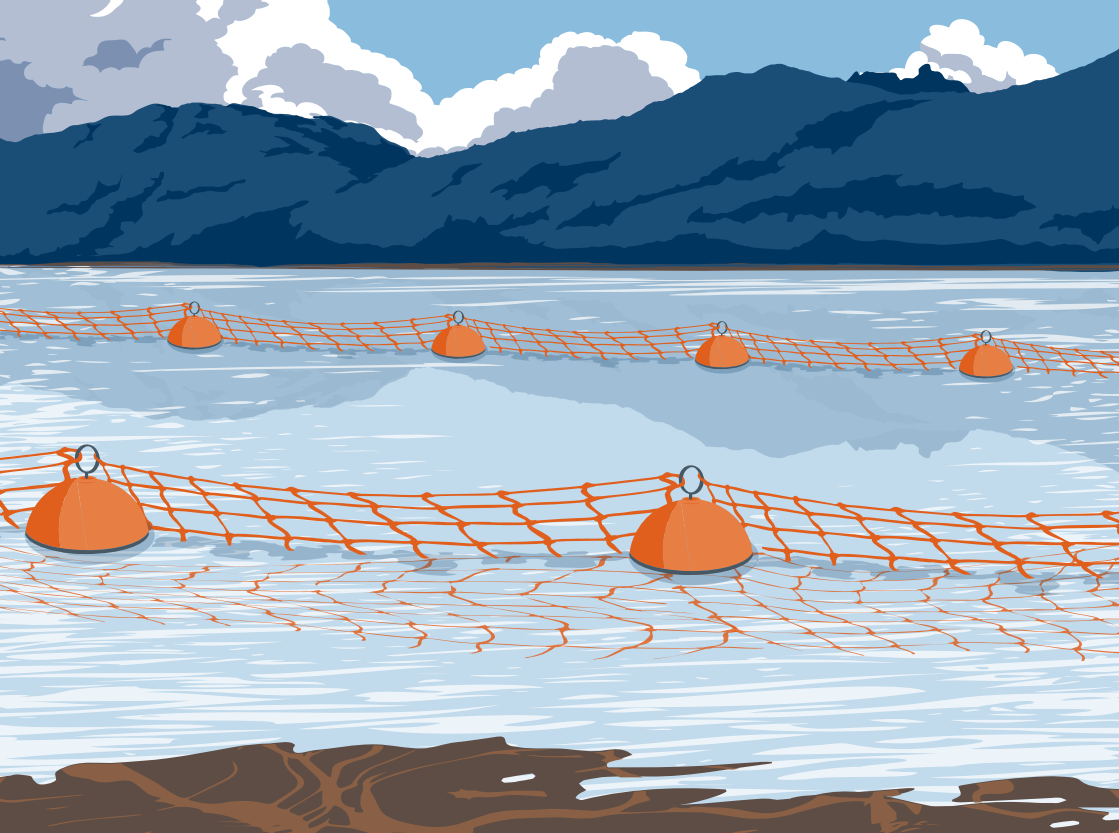
'Something must be done,' said the minister to the Baron.

And so it was that at the next full moon, when the tide was at its highest and lowest, all the Baron's men gathered on the beach. As the high tide receded, they followed the water down, and with shovels and forks, they cleared the beach of everything that was washed up and put it all into hundreds of enormous sacks. The sacks were loaded onto carts, which took them miles away, where they were burned.

Stràilleach Golamas lay still and watched. The two-legs from up on dry were certainly very busy today.

The tide came in, and the tide went out again.

Stràilleach Golamas built a (small) body.



‘Something must be done,’ said the Baron to the King’s counsellors. These wise people understood that you couldn’t carry away the Stràilleach Golamas and bury it. Even if the whole kingdom was one big hole, it wouldn’t be enough. So, they devised a different plan – they would starve Stràilleach Golamas!

The King’s counsellors ordered a huge net to be made of magic rope, the orange kind. The bottom was weighted with lead and the top was held up by big, round floats. It was strung across the entire width of the loch. Now, the villagers could be sure that nothing – well, not much – would wash up onto the beach.

The tide came in, and the tide went out again.

Stràilleach Golamas roamed across the foreshore, looking for things to build his body. There wasn’t much there, but that probably didn’t bother him. Size doesn’t matter to Stràilleach Golamas.

For a time, all was well. There were a few small bits and bobs along the shore, but not much. The fishers had to go further down the loch, past the magic net that was holding back all the flotsam and jetsam, protecting the village from Stràilleach Golamas, but that wasn’t a great hardship.



Then one winter's day the winds picked up. Grey clouds blew in from the west and it started to rain. As the day wore on the clouds grew darker, the rain grew heavier, the wind grew stronger. The villagers called their children into the houses. They brought in their dogs and cats. They brought the chickens and sheep and cattle into the barns. The wisest amongst them brought in the trampolines.

The clouds became a deep, dark black. The rain lashed the village, running down the streets like rivers. The wind howled, tearing slates from roofs and uprooting trees. Lightning lit the sky and thunder roared. The storm raged all night and was the fiercest anyone could remember.

The next day, after the storm had abated, the tide went out.

Stráilleach Golamas hardly knew where to start. The net made from magic rope (the orange kind), the floats, and everything the net had caught covered the beach. Some of the two-legs from up on dry came down and waded up to their knees through the debris. They had brought sacks and forks and tried to take some of the foul mess away, but it was a futile task. They walked away in despair.



‘Something must be done’, said the King’s counsellors to the King. The King knew he had to find a solution. After all, it was he, the King, who owned all the land between where the tide came in and where the tide went out (as everybody knows). He advertised for a hero, normal terms and conditions: the Princess’s hand in marriage and half the Kingdom to the Hero who could defeat Stràilleach Golamas. Heroes came from far and wide: mighty heroes, renowned heroes. The King chose the mightiest of the Mighty and the renowndest of the Renowned: this Hero had defeated fearsome giants, slain terrible dragons and overcome evil sorcerers. His horse was as swift as the wind, and he carried a magic lance and wielded a magic sword.

At the next full moon, when the tide was at its very highest, the Hero built a screen from driftwood, seaweed, rope, fish boxes and tyres just above the tideline, to conceal him and his horse from the view of Stràilleach Golamas. To cover his strange, unsalty smell he draped himself and his horse with rotten seaweed. The villagers were warned to stay inside, away from the beach.

The tide went out.



Stràilleach Golamas began to build a body. There was seaweed. There was driftwood. There were fishbones and feathers. There was magic rope - the orange kind, the blue kind, the green kind. There were floats. There were boots and shoes, gloves and hard hats, fish boxes and tyres. There were sweetie wrappers, plastic cups and spoons, shotgun cartridges and footballs. There were socks, high visibility vests and the covers of lobster creels. There was a barbecue cover and a toy soldier. There were balloons. Stràilleach Golamas was bigger than ever.

Behind his screen the Hero waited and watched.

When the tide reached its very lowest ebb, and Stràilleach Golamas was the biggest he had ever been, the Hero spurred forward his horse. As swift as the wind, they charged down Stràilleach Golamas, piercing him with the magic lance. The Hero leapt from his horse, unsheathed his magic sword and cut off what he guessed to be the head.

Stràilleach Golamas was slain!



The Hero called his squire, who brought the largest wagon the kingdom had ever seen. They loaded Stráilleach Golamas's remains onto it and paraded triumphantly through the streets of the village (both of them!). Then they turned the wagon towards the King's castle to go to claim their reward.

The tide came in, and the tide went out again.

The Hero rode away, unwed.



Something must be done.