



**MICHELLE LAVERICK**  
*Selkie Child*

**SELKIE CHILD EP SONG BOOK**





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### SELKIE CHILD EP SONG BOOK

This songbook contains all the lyrics to the EP as well as some simple notation for the guitar parts. I do notate my own music, so if I don't play it for a while, I can go back and refresh my memory for a long time. That's numbered finger positions and to where the changes are made. I'm usually making very small single-note changes in a verse, which by their nature are hard to document - especially for someone like myself with no formal musical training. So I've opted just to note the changes but not where they happen in the song. You'll be able to put your fingers in the right place, but just necessarily at the right time. But if you listen - the music is actually quite simple.

To make this a bit nicer to look at, I've populated it with images from Craster, Northumberland, with many thanks to @SeaSkyCraster

Some of the songs started their lives when I was on holiday in Seahouses in 2023. Craster is a small village further south along the Northumberland coast. It is famous for having one of the last herring smokehouses in the area called L. Robson & Sons. If you are ever in the area, I recommend a visit.



# SELKIE CHILD

So, hopefully, you are familiar with the ancient Scots/Irish myth of the selkie - I was first introduced to the story by the Unthanks version of the Great Silkie of Sule Skerry and then later on Lucy Farrell's But For You. I was drawn to the story due to the transformation the selkie makes from seal to human, but it occurred to me that the children of the selkie and human - contain that duality as well. I've been on a journey for the last ten years, which culminated in me becoming more interested in folk music, especially as interpreted by modern musicians. I've joked that I'm on the 100-step program to being a folk musician - and when the program is finished - I'll be handed a certificate that proves I'm a gen-u-ine folk musician. Step 4 in the program requires you to write a song about a selkie. I'm trying my best to weave local references into my songs (cos that's what Step 5 tells you to do) - so you will hear 3 different references to the area called Teesside, where I was born and raised.

Seal Sands is a nature reserve on the River Tees that was built in the late 60s as an attempt to re-establish the seal population previously decimated by industrial development that stretched from Stockton-on-Tees to the sea in Redcar. Seal Sands has to be one of the most unusual nature reserves - where wild marshy areas and sandbanks give way to cooling towers and the remnants of the chemical work where nature and man-made industry meet. The whooshing sounds at the beginning of the track are cars passing along Seal Sands. Ironically, I've not been to Seal Sands yet, so at the moment, the place only exists within the bounds of my imagination. But the next time I'm home to see my Mum, it's on my bucket list. It's part of my plan to become an ex-exiled smoggy and get back in touch with my roots.

I also sing about the "Bridge of Infinity", which sounds like a metaphor for time: it could well be a metaphor - but it is also an actual bridge built on the banks of the Tees - where the infinity symbol ( $\infty$ ) is formed by the bridge and its reflection. Finally, "icy eye" is a bit of a pun - of course, about how cold getting in your eye, which can often make you cry - but it's a bit of a nod to the old ICI Billingham/Wilton chemical plants that once employed many thousands. I did six weeks of work experience as a teenager at school in the 80s, at ICI Billingham, which seems like another lifetime ago.



# SELKIE CHILD [D-A-D-F#-A-D]

My mother was a selkie beached on Seal Sands  
She could never leave her place on the land  
And I was her selkie child that could not be  
So far away from the salt, the sand and the sea

Though human words I spoke  
Neither fish, Neither foul, Neither flesh  
Neither bird or bloke

How strangely strange this strangeling I am  
How strangely changeable this changeling I am  
I pulled myself up by the boots  
I pulled myself up by my roots

Crossing the River Tees, the poor girl's Rubicon  
One look over my shoulder, the next, I was gone

Now, here I stand On the Bridge of Infinity,  
With my future behind and the past in front of me  
Learning secrets, a secret heart could not tell  
Feeling the pull of the estuary's swell  
For the thorn is the cradle of the oak  
And the best lies live close to the truth

This is not a tear - I do not cry  
This is just the wind in my eye  
These are not tears; I shall not cry  
It's just the wind in my icy eye

I was my mother's selkie child  
I was just my mother's selkie child  
I was my mother's selkie child  
I was just my mother's child

## THE VERSES:

0-0-0-7-7-0  
0-0-0-7-6-0  
0-0-0-6-5-0  
0-0-0-7-5-0  
0-0-0-3-3-0  
0-0-0-3-2-0  
0-0-0-3-1-0  
0-0-0-0-0-0

0-0-7-6-7-0  
0-0-5-6-7-0  
0-5-4-6-7-0  
0-5-0-6-7-0

## CHORUS (ITALICS):

0-0-0-0-6-5-0  
0-0-0-0-5-5-0  
0-0-0-0-4-6-0  
0-0-0-0-3-5-0



# THE BUTCHER'S DAUGHTER

With kind thanks to Lou Reed for his "ostrich tuning". This is a traditional song that has undergone major surgery. I first heard the song by Kris Drever/Lau and later Frankie Archer (and although I didn't realise it at the time, so had the Unthanks - a quick Google will show you that loads of people have done their own version of this song - so it must be good!). Its original title is "The Butcher's Boy" (Laws P24, Roud 409), and the opening lines vary (as folk songs do) to a different street in almost every version - verses and their order vary massively. So, I decided to add my own road where I was born (Fairwell Road) and change the gender from male to female. You could say I butchered the song.

Two aspects of the song caught me - as I heard "maid again" as "made again" and also the lines "when cherries grow on apple tree" (various versions use different fruit!) to my eyes/mind spoke to the impossibility and inflexibility of nature to allow change. The tension between nature and nurture interests me greatly - as does our capacity to create change and the forces aligned that try to prevent it. One day, cherries will grow on an apple tree.

So, the major surgery is a substantial lyric change and my own tune. I'm useless at picking up other people's tunes, so it's easier for me to invent a new one and go with that. Step 6 of the folk musician program is a radical re-invention of a traditional folk song!

Achievement Unlocked!



# THE BUTCHER'S DAUGHTER [D-D-D-D-D-D]

In Fairwell Road where I did dwell  
I was born a butcher's boy that was loved right well  
But I spirited his life away  
For with me, he could not stay

I wish, I wish, I wish in vain  
I wish I was made again  
But made again I'll never be  
Can cherries grow on an apple tree?

I when I was just a baby born  
I'd smile on my daddy's knee  
Not to be his poor boy, dead and gone  
With the long green grass growing over me

I wished, I wished, I wished in vain  
I wished I was made again  
But made again I'll never be  
Do cherries grow on an apple tree?

I went upstairs to go to bed,  
And calling to my mother I said,  
"Give me a chair till I sit down  
And a pad and pen, till I write down."

My Daddy went upstairs and the door he broke  
He caught me hanging by a rope  
He took his knife and cut me down  
In my pocket these words they found

I wished, I wished, I wished ALL in vain  
I wished I was re-made again  
But re-made again I'll never be  
Til cherries will grow from the apple tree

I wished, I wished, I wished ALL in vain  
I wished I was re-made again  
But re-made again I'll never be  
One day cherries will grow from the apple tree

## PART 1

14-14-0-0-0-0  
9-9-0-0-0-0  
7-7-0-0-0-0  
5-5-0-0-0-0

## PART 2

Is the same pattern  
going down the fret  
board

Using 2nd string start  
on the 6th fret and do  
this run

6 → 5 → 4 → 2 → 0

## PART 3

2-2-0-0-0-0  
5-5-0-0-0-0

## THE SLOW PARTS

0-0-0-8-5-0  
0-0-0-7-4-0  
0-0-5-4-0-0  
0-0-0-0-0-0







# SWEET TEES

When I play this song live, I have to explain that the title is not “Sweet Tease” but “Sweet Tees” and, once again, it refers to the River Tees. At college in Stockton, I was very fortunate to have a rather excellent English Literature teacher called Mrs Biddescombe. She tolerated my eccentric ways and did not flinch when I asked if we could study T.S Eliot’s “The Wasteland”. I’d heard it was a challenging poem and perhaps one of the most influential of its time - and I thought if I could understand it - no poetry could strike in me fear - how wrong I was. It’s a great poem, and I was drawn to Eliot’s paraphrasing of Spencer’s Prothalamion.

“Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,  
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long”

At the time, I thought, wouldn’t it be great to write a poem or song that changed this to “Sweet Tees, run softly till I end my song?” - some 34 years later, I made good on my promise.

What can I say?  
I’m a slow burner.

When I sing this live, I try to get the crowd to sing along - so I can do my party piece of a very long phrase of “My sweet Tees”, where I try to hold the note as long as possible. We have tried to reproduce this in the studio. I did think of getting a local choir to sing the refrain, but the logistics were too complex. If you see me play this live - please sing along “Sweet Tees, Sweet Tees, Run Softly”

# SWEET TEES

[D-A-D-F#-A-D]

Sweet Tees, Sweet Tees  
Sweet Tees, Run softly  
Sweet Tees, run softly till I end my song,  
Sweet Tees, run softly, for I speak not loud nor long

They kicked us when we were down  
You were more likely to be poisoned  
than drown  
It’s not the fall that kills you  
It’s the contact with concrete

Sweet Tees, Sweet Tees  
Sweet Tees, Run softly  
Well, I felt like an orphan  
Who’s parents were still alive  
They drove me down to the institute  
And left me behind  
As Doctor Death  
Greeted me with a vivisectionist smile  
I knew success would be  
Just getting out of there alive

As rain dripped like tears from barbed wire  
From the closed foundry gates  
I had to run away from here  
To try and find another place

Sweet Tees, Sweet Tees  
Sweet Tees, Run softly  
There was blood, there was blood  
there was everywhere  
There was blood, there was blood  
Blood that shouldn’t be there...  
There was blood, there was blood  
blood in my underwear  
There was blood, there was blood  
Don’t ask me how it got there

I’m not trying fool anyone now  
Least of all myself  
I know don’t pass  
I’m Little miss kiss my ass

Sweet Tees, Sweet Tees  
Sweet Tees, Run softly  
This is a song  
I cannot sing  
Without everyone joining in  
This is a song  
I cannot sing  
Without sound of your voices  
Blending in

Sweet Tees, Sweet Tees  
Sweet Tees, Run softly

So, Sweet Tees  
run softly  
till I end my song,

Sweet Tees  
run softly  
for I speak not proud or strong

## MAIN VERSE

0-5-4-3-0-0  
x-0-2-1-0-0

## CHORUS

2-2-0-1-0-0  
4-4-0-3-0-0  
5-5-0-3-0-0



# THE MERCY

I don't have much to say about this song - except to explain/acknowledge where I stole the "oh the mercy" part from. It came from me watching the 2017 film "The Mercy" which tells the mysterious story of Donald Crowhurst who took part in the 1968 Sunday Times Golden Globe Race. Setting sail on a highly experimental, untested trimaran - Donald's trip went wrong. He began faking his journey, realising that if he rounded Cape Horn, he would die in the Southern Ocean. So rather than taking a left at the Horn of Africa, he made a right over to South America.

There, he languished for some time, hoping to limp back to the UK at the back of the pack with his logs not being too closely examined for discrepancies. Failure to end the race would mean financial ruin, and being exposed would have been reputationally damaging. Sadly, things didn't work out.

Donald wasn't ever seen again. In the film, his broken radio starts to talk back to him in what appears to be a case of cabin fever, delirium - perhaps even psychosis. One of the last entries in his logs read, "It is finished. It is finished. It is the mercy". The song isn't really about Donald - I was more drawn to this uncanny idea of the mercy - as some kind later day siren tempting Donald - the Devil comes to tempt us with many attractive guises and easy solutions to our problems - our job is to resist "the mercy".

# THE MERCY [D-A-D-F#-A-D]

Bury me not in  
a hollow tree  
Let me close my eyes now so  
That so I can see  
There I am part of  
His darkness  
He created between  
him and me

It's just like me to return  
to the scene of the crime  
I'm playing detective, but I know  
the murder is mine  
We've all got that  
redemption thing going on  
Even though didn't do  
anything wrong

Am I the creature he made of me?  
Am I his rhesus monkey?  
The minor bird that will always be  
found singing in the minor key?

But, Oh the Mercy, Oh the Mercy  
She calls out from the sea  
And she promises the seals  
will always take care of me  
the mercy, she promises  
she will always take care of me...

No matter how much they lay  
their concrete down  
The wise they always know  
That something green always  
finds a way thru cracks  
and finds a place  
For it to grow

And we always dreamed  
Of cottage up high on the hill  
Far away from people  
Where we could just be...

And I always dreamed  
Of cottage up high on the hill  
Far away from people  
Where I could just be...

Are you ready to  
live without love?  
Are you ready for love?

## OPENING INSTRUMENTAL

14-12-0  
13-12-0  
12-12-0  
12-10-0  
12-9-0  
10-9-0  
7-0-0

## MAIN VERSE

x-0-8-7-0-0 (this would be like A chord)  
0-8-0-7-0-0 (this would be E7 in concert pitch)  
8-8-0-7-0-0  
6-0-0-0-0-0

This ends with hammer ons and pull offs  
on strings 21

## THE OH THE MERCY PART

0-12-0-12-0-0  
0-10-0-10-0-0  
0-8-0-8-0-0  
7-0-0-0-0-0  
0-8-0-8-0-0



# THE HEART'S FOREST

The "Hearts Forest" is a quotation from Sir Thomas Wyatt's poem - I've tried to re-find it but have drawn a blank. The dark wood/forest is a strong metaphor that runs throughout European literature. Its most notable reference is probably from Dante's Divina Comedia.

Midway upon the journey of our life  
I found myself within a forest dark,  
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Aside from that, I don't really draw upon Wyatt's poem. I just loved the phrase "the hearts forest".

I feel the need to acknowledge a piece of poetry that I reworked. In the song, I sing, "I'd shore up my ruins, I'd be out of reach". That reference to ruins I believe I've stolen from Eliot's The Wasteland again, specifically

These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih

At this point in the poem, Eliot is on the verge of a spiritual or mental breakdown, and the poetry feels like it is crumbling under the weight of its own intertextuality. The part "Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe." comes from Thomas Kyd's late-sixteenth-century revenge play, The Spanish Tragedy. Whereas "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. Shantih shantih shantih" is repeated almost like a desperate mantra stemming from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Chapter 5, second Brahmana. It is as if by repeating these words - Eliot is able to keep him safe from collapse - so these fragments of text are shoring up his personal ruins. I think there are two things going on here - a very personal existentialist crisis but also a crisis in culture that came in the interwar period when many countries were recovering from the horrors of the Great War - completely unaware of even greater horrors to come. It's interesting that Eliot draws from the Hindu text. The modernists like TS Eliot and Herman Heese were increasingly looking outside of European culture for spiritual meaning elsewhere - perhaps Europe, after the Great War, had demonstrated an overwhelming sense of spiritual bankruptcy.

It's probably at this point you might think, I think too much - or that I'm fantastically pretentious and up my own arse. You're not that wide of the mark. :-D

Finally, there's another funny reference. I was once fortunate enough to see Martin Carthy perform at Cafe9 in Sheffield (it's a lovely, intimate venue - and I've seen many great performers there over the years, including Iona Lane and Charlie Dore). Anyway, miss hearing a lyric I spoke to the great man after the gig. The following conversation went like this:

Michelle: "Hi, you know in the last song - did I hear you sing "Cruel Britannia"  
Martin: "No, no, no, it's something else - besides which Cruel Britannia is far too obvious!  
Michelle (thinks to herself): Not for me, it isn't. I do, obvious.

# THE HEART'S FOREST [C-G-C-F-C-E]

Lost in the Heart's Forest  
Scrabbling around in the dark  
I've I lived in land too long  
To ever find my way to the sea

And my bag they are broken  
They don't lock anymore  
And they spill their contents  
With stuff you can't ignore

You don't know how little you have  
Until you lose it all

And I like to meet the man who  
who put this darkness in my heart  
And I'd follow him down an empty road  
where all journeys must start

## MAIN VERSE

0-0-0-7-0-8  
0-2-0-0-0-1 /3,1,0  
0-5-4-0-0-1 /0  
x-0-2-0-0-1 /3,1,0

## OPENING REFRAIN, AND 'CHORUS'

0-0-0-7-0-8  
0-0-0-7-0-7  
0-0-0-7-7-0  
0-0-0-7-5-0  
0-0-0-7-4-0  
0-0-0-7-4-0  
0-0-0-3-0-0 /3,1,0

When I get too old for this little life  
And blue skies are unbelievably blue  
He would know the lull between two storms  
Is the dead calm between me and you

You don't know much you have  
Until you lose it all

So there I'll build a driftwood house  
Right here on the beach  
And I'd shore up my ruins  
To be out of reach

And this how I will live out  
what's left of my days  
So goodbye Cruel Britannia  
From all those you betrayed

We didn't know what we had  
Until they took it away



- 1 SELKIE CHILD** (5:26)
- 2 THE BUTCHER'S DAUGHTER** (TRAD 4:46)
- 3 SWEET TEES** (5:12)
- 4 THE MERCY** (6:50)
- 5 THE HEART'S FOREST** (6:19)

### **CREDITS:**

Michelle Laverick - lyrics, vocals, guitar, harmonium, shruti box

Ben Haynes - bass, electric guitar

Jas Scott - string arranger and cello

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