

NICKEL



NAIL



**SONG
BOOK**



KELP



CURTAIN

The shore's far away, the story untold
The land still speaks, if only in the soul
Nickel nail curtain kelp: at least that's what we're sold
But you can always tell 'em you're not buying.

The nickel is the wage, and rent - the economic wind
And its blowing us away from where we'll never be again
Swept along with all the dust of family folk and friends and kin
Till it blows so hard we split and then we scatter.

it blowed upon our island in the outer Hebrides
With the kelp to feed our gardens from the richness of the sea
So we sow the fields with crops to grow the sustenance we need
On the plots of land we're leasing from the landlords

the plots we lease and live on overtime are getting smaller
And the rents are going up and out and off across the water
As the land's divided up and left to sons who married daughters
To have families of their own that now need feeding.

Too small a plot of land can hardly keep a family fed
And no amount of kelp can grow the wheat to make your bread
Let alone to pay the rent to furnish roofs above the heads
Now we've divvy'd up all that which can be divvy'd.

And we can't afford the rent whenever monthly it comes due
blown away to all the landlords in the lowland cities who
Sit atop a pile of gold and live a life afforded through
Pain and suffering of inconvenient crofters.

While they plot maneuvers to expand their mighty hoards
If it wasn't for the tenants on the land of which they lord
And their puny little plots producing no worthwhile reward
To make up for the declining rate of profits.

They amalgamated leaseholds into vast and rolling greens
valleys quiet and deserted, isolated and serene
Save for sheep -
the highlands filled with flocks of pure and simple needs
So much easier than managing the gael.

Blackened stacks of factories blowin' thick and acrid smoke
With Machines doin' the handiwork, the artisans are out
As the industry is churning and it's burning while its turning
All the wool into the profits they are seeking.

So the crown will levy tariffs by imperial decree
to combat the price of cotton from plantation slavery
For its hardly competition when the cotton's picked for free
By the brutal deadly weight of ceaseless toiling.

The hands that picked the cotton in the former colonies
Blown by winds from over Africa, not outer Hebrides
Not by willful choice or wage but lash and law of slavery
Guns and boats and whips and swords of bloody profits.

The cotton's sold to markets that are newly liberated
All Commodities for European trade emancipated
By the bourgeois revolution the aristocrats all hated
Since the tariffs of the empire suit them nicely.

So American investors sell their goods in competition
With the prices fetched by textiles made by mills in urban Britain
As we empty out the highlands to make room for sheep to live in
And the glens now ring with songs that are forgotten.

The highland world is ending yet we still must pay the rent
Even as the soil's depleted all its minerals are spent
It's more money that's the answer but we don't want to be sent
To work a wage in one of their infernal factories

So we look for a commodity to make a little cash
And we take the kelp from out the sea and burn it into ash
And we sell it to the British for producing soap and glass
For to win the war they're fighting against Napoleon

So we take the ocean's forest and we burn it into cash
And then sell it to the empire to turn into soap and glass
And two dozen tons of kelp can make a ton of soda ash
But the profits blow away onto the mainland.

For the empire's off to war and we are but a colony
And we must produce a product to sell as commodity
And exchange the oceans bounty which once fed the food we eat
For the prices all inflated by the fighting.

Now we're burning down the ocean just to pay the bloody rent
What the land cannot provide for us is just more money spent
And the kelp that fed our soil is burned to ash before it's sent
Blown away upon the winds on which its scattered.

Now there's not enough food, we need money to buy more
So we take from the sea and burn it on the shore
To sell it on the market to make soap and glass for war
For its markets that our labour must be serving.

Day came the ash we made, was ash we could not sell
For a process was developed using coal pulled up from hell
For it burns so hot that there's no need for kelp for ash as well
They can cheaply synthesize it in the factories.

Now the kelp's all gone because we burned it into ash
To be sold into the market and made into soap and glass
And we sold our island's future for some measly foreign cash
to support the war a-ragin' on the continent.

But then the war was ended and demand kept goin down
And the price of kelp collapsed as new efficiencies are found
With Industrial efficiency and coal from underground
it burns so hot that they don't need the ash we're selling.

We can't sell the kelp, but the kelp was gone
and the island was dead, and we couldn't hold on
So the wind blew us away as it was whispering a song
of a promised land where we could make a living.

The promise of a place where our language had been sown
where our ancestors had travelled, so the passage it was known
along the very line of temperate clime and rock and sea and foam
as the sad home island we are leaving.

Blown from home and land and renting tenements from lords
for the promises of passages to worlds we could afford
For the nickel is the rent and wage and wind that drives us forth
leaving all our homes and villages deserted.

The shore's far away, the story's in the soil
in the price of the commodities, and wages of the toil
Nickel nail curtain kelp: what is it to be loyal
To the people and the places that you come from?