Only Child

Shearwater

Your mother's milk
Your father's anger
The razor wire surrounding him
And far below
Their droning engines
You lay in bed
Blowing out stars

The masters of
Your lonely kingdom
Pulled you along
With red-rimmed eyes
Through endless hours
Of drill and harness
Until you fell, surrendering

But still they never
    laid the gun down,
    only child
They sit like
    lions in a sunbeam,
    only child
And never came down

Remember all
The roads descending
To who you were,
    for blurred-out miles?
You smolder now—
Coals and embers
Under the frost of indolence
I see you
    never lay the gun down,
    only child
You live your life
    behind a window,
    only child
And, dreaming,
    barrel down a bloodline,
    only child

Rise in the air over the mountains
Run like the days that cut them down
I see you now
As you relive them
Break like a wave, dissembling,
But when you're lying
    down among them,
    only child
There is no sound
    to fill the silence,
    only child. Forgive them
When you lay the gun down,
    only child, it's not surrendering—
It feels like running back through time
Only you know how

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