

## Pretend Not to Care

*Men in the jail's GP experience psychic disease and an alienation from self, generated by the demands of hypermasculine performance.<sup>4</sup>*

And days caught between the past and nothing.  
Pretend not to care. Each day postures up,  
Files out like xerox. Fight days. Pizza days.  
Groundhog Day starring Hitler with a shiv  
Packed up his colon in a toothbrush case.  
The day two deer pass the chow hall window.  
Pretend not to care. These days I don't eat,  
Sleep or shit. Days clog their guts with more days  
Then hawk ten stamps for a touch of sunlight.  
When the day won't shower, shaves in the sink,  
The night warns him once, then cracks his temple  
Off the toilet rim. Pretend not to care.  
The night shadowboxes, prays softly, chills.  
Flashlights float past cell doors like blank faces.

## Afterwards, Some Place Bets on If and When He Checks-In

If you put your guard down... They see this as weakness... You cannot show weakness... Be strong and hold your ground and put your head up. Whatever comes, come.<sup>22</sup>

— Inmate, Unnamed

Our stock. My hands, your means. We make it work.  
Old timers used to get Christmas boxes  
From the local church: ramen, toiletry,  
But that was scrapped. That was too much good shit.  
What is this, a country club? We make do.  
We brew pruno in the shower, pool stamps  
Of acid, skip breakfast to wait in line  
At the payphone. One man calls his daughter  
And sobs. *What did Santa bring you, honey?*  
When he lays the handset in its cradle  
His eyes shine with fear. Some laugh. Some look down.  
Most know he won't make the new year. *I cry*  
*Like a man*, he says and stands there, breathing  
In sweet wine, cheap soap, what feels like envy.