

# SESTINA FOR SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD ANIMALS

*"Hunger drives the animal mind to fill its needs by the nearest means."*

*-David Baker, "Hunger"*

I lurch from sticky sleep,  
through breakfast in one swallow;  
the slap of the shower  
tightens my grasp  
on reality once more.  
I'm out the door.

Then through iron school doors  
To my desk, shake off the sleep  
(I needed more!);  
in silence I swallow  
without the slightest grasp  
on any answer to this shower  
of questions, the icy shower  
of academic acid rain: the bells, the fear, the bullies and the bully pulpits; the doors  
are locked at 2:35 and the teachers are putting away their claws; they have no grasp  
on this cruelty—the creatures don't sleep;  
I swear they travel in packs all night, and swallow  
their cornered prey whole; and what's more,  
they're always hungry for more!

wild as the flight of a drunken swallow.  
I slip in through the Donatos back door.

Quick as my narcoleptic grandmother falls asleep,  
the hazy hours wriggle from my grasp.

Lunging, I grasp  
time card, steering wheel, cigarette; scream toward more  
homework, but too close to sleep  
to see through blinding rain-showers,  
I smell my way home. Slowly the car door  
opens and my room is a stomach toward which I am swallowed.

But there a different hunger floods me, and I begin to swallow  
everything within my grasp:  
my cell phone, notebooks, the clothes hanging on the door,  
the computer, alarm clock, I burp out "MORE!"  
Obliging my aching stomach, I shower  
down into my gullet my wallet and the bed on which I sleep.

*In primal lurches I swallow it all:  
First my room, then my house, then toward the school I bound;  
Dirt, root, brick, asphalt, lawn ornaments and lawnmowers,  
trees, care, library, cemetery, gas station.  
My mouth grown wide as prison walls,  
a vacuum with black-hole gravity,  
inhaling, swallowing everything.  
I grow bigger than it all, bigger than this town,  
and when I get to the school, it's a dimple in an apple:  
I bite down hard and chew until there's nothing left but bits of wire between my teeth.*

Sleep swallows me then, as I collapse onto scarred earth.  
I grasp at a shower of dreams in which I am hunting for breakfast with a pack of bears,  
far from school doors, more hungry than ever.

*—Anthony Iacobucci*

