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## Greed

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# Stanton: Greed

## GREED

Maura Stanton

*after Callimachus*

*"Why are you chopping down my lovely trees?"*

*"To build a house to feast my dearest friends."*

*"Where will my stag feed? My unblinking hare?"*

*"Demeter, I own these fields, these forests, and these streams."*

So the Goddess punished him with savage hunger.  
None of the stuff he ate could satisfy  
His raging belly. Twenty sweating teenagers  
Served his Big Macs and twelve poured out his Cokes.  
He ordered sausage pizzas by the thousands,  
Buckets of chicken, barbequed ribs, and shrimp.  
His gastric juices sang for more and more  
And the more he ate, the more he desired to eat.  
His embarrassed family declined all invitations.  
"Sorry, he's gone hunting," said his son.  
"He can't come, he's slightly indisposed,"  
Said his wife. His daughter: "He's not home."  
Imagine a hole the size of Lake Superior  
Filled with herds of succulent red cattle,  
Flocks of bleating sheep, fresh eggs, and fish  
Leaping on the speckled backs of one another,  
All flowing uselessly into his mouth  
For he grew thinner with every fat swallow,  
Until his skin was cellophane over bones  
Stacked up like Legos ready to topple over.  
His wife opened the kitchen cabinet doors  
And wept. He'd eaten the sugar, the flour,  
The scented birthday candles, the toothpicks,  
And now she heard him shake the gerbil's cage.  
He ate the gerbil, he ate the dog, he ate

The cat, he ate the mouse caught in the trap,  
And when she saw him on his hands and knees  
At the baseboard, trying to catch a cricket,  
She sent the children to her mother's and prayed  
To Jesus words like these: "Oh dear Savior,  
Please cure this man who only wanted a deck,  
Jacuzzi, four-car garage, and 6,000 square feet  
On seven acres to raise his beloved family  
Free from drugs and inner-city youth."  
Now there was nothing left at home to eat.  
His teeth were aching; his belly craved  
Morsels of anything, and he wandered wide  
The streets of his town, rooting in the garbage,  
Savoring tossed-out banana peels, stale  
Cheerios in the bottoms of yellow boxes,  
Dregs of salad dressing, curdled milk, gristle.  
Sometimes he waited on the curb outside a feast  
Of the sort he used to give, all delightful song,  
And begged the guests for a scrap of this, a crumb of that.