

## The Seven Hulking Piglets

*by Nancy Martz*

Once upon a mud puddle next to a rock pile, a bosomy sow named Petaluma watched over seven hulking, pink piglets, each the size of a lead milk jug whose names were Ample, Bobble, Curdle, Diddle, Elbow, Fumble, and Gobble. Petaluma spent all of her time nursing and defending her farrow against the kettle of hawks soaring in daylight and the band of coyotes hunting at night.

During daylight, Petaluma taught her piglets to burrow deep under the rock pile and stay hidden while she blocked the entrance with her great girth and napped.

Unfortunately, the piglets didn't take the lessons seriously and rooted around for an exit on the other side of the rocks while Mom snoozed. Before long, Ample and Bobble poked their blowzy snouts out into the sunshine and were immediately plucked up by two hawks circling above. Petaluma woke to see them hanging by their curly tails from talons as the hawks labored arduously to rise above sea level with their corpulent catches. Self-reproaching and hysterical, Petaluma trundled to the far side of the rock pile to plug the hole that had tempted Ample and Bobble.

She spent the day nudging stones into the hole and sobbing copiously, but while she was gone, Curdle, Diddle, and Elbow poked their blowzy snouts out into the daylight and were ponderously towed off by three hawks who barely rose above ground with their bountiful booty.

Exhausted from filling the hole all day, Petaluma collapsed into the puddle formed by her tears. At dusk, a band of coyotes happened upon the unattended piglets Fumble and Gobble playing outside the lair and, with backbreaking exertion, lugged them off by their curly tails.

That night, Petaluma jerked awake, lunged from the puddle and hustled back to the lair, but found no piglets left. Heart-stricken, she let loose a bellow--part squeal, part oink, and part grunt that resounded through the tree tops and the dense forest.

Plunged in grief, Petaluma contemplated sowicide. Suddenly, she heard deep rumbling grunts and a tinkling of oinks. Alas, it was Zowie, the sire of her farrow! And in front of him, leading the way back to the lair were Ample, Bobble, Curdle, Diddle, Elbow, Fumble, and Gobble.

"Wowie Zowie!" squealed Petaluma and launched a series of motherly oinks at her farrow and flirty grunts at Zowie. Puffing up his barrel chest, Zowie elucidated: "Enroute to my mud bath I observed a drowning band of coyotes stuck up to their muzzles in the wallow. Forthwith, I gave them a friendly boost with my tusks and they yipped off draggie-tailed into the forest. They left two giggling piglets grooving in the wallow; then five more plopped euphorically into the mud from above, where I surveilled a rag tag flight of feckless hawks flopping flummoxed into their nests."

Rejoicing in their good fortune, the porcine family dug up and pigged out on a mess of roots, tubers, and truffles until they were all heavy as dump trucks, after which they sprawled rhapsodically up to their curly tails and blowzy snouts in hog wallows without any more disrespect from hawks and coyotes.