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## **The houses, the pigs, and the fox** (A fable)

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, there were three pigs. Their names were Enrow, Worldcomb, and ImPlode. They were all sons of Ander. Now, before Ander followed the path of righteousness, he consulted with Leda (the mother of Pollux) who interceded on his behalf with Zeus to contrive that no girl children would come of his marriage to Walpins. And, Ander did not have piglet daughters. He felt, and rightly so, that women blabbed too much. There was much to be done and Ander did not have any use for blabbing.

Ander had discarded the woolly-headed Walpins, the daughter of eBlo, who had long since been revitalized by HRT, and who was last seen raking up dead leaves on The Mall. She was following the delightful path of the women who, over the decades, had been freed from the enslavement of dealing with allowances.

When the time had come for Ander to release his three piglets into the world to fend for themselves, he vowed that they would have secure futures. So he set about diluting the harsh effects of independence upon his litter by allowing them to have early access to their trust funds.

These funds had been diligently gathered and furtively nurtured over a few years of Ander's bloodletting toil in the futures of worthless employees. His litter, of noble birth and visage, would gather their harvests in the fullness of time. But, Ander thought, I must give them some of their shillings now before I join my cronies on the ski-slopes, golf courses, and machine shops.

The first offspring to leave was Enrow. He was always a fractious piglet. His favorite past-time was being invited to the web of political and social gatherings where cordon bleu swill was served on golden platters. He would occasionally attend breakfast meetings with Ander, at whose encouragement he would delve deeply into the pockets of others who carried little pouches of candy for curious youngsters.

Enrow decided to start spending his fortune by building his house on the dry planes of Texas. His house would be built of straw with strong beams made from the best girders energy could buy. Enrow loved nothing more than to lay out under the clear prairie night and wonder at the Milky Way. And, Ander saw that it was good.

The next piglet to leave was Worldcomb. This second offspring of Ander developed a latent interest in the many varieties of webs stitched together by the world's best spiders. The thin strands of hair woven by these insects would enthrall him for hours and hours. He liked nothing better than to rise early in the morning to find the finest of them before the sun got up. When the dew spread itself out along the highways and byways of his early morning dealings he would catch each droplet before the rising sun could vaporize them. Worldcomb was Ander's piglet in whom he was well pleased.

Worldcomb was also given his fortune. He decided to build his house by the beach in Florida. His house would be built from twigs - the finest treated mahogany, rosewood and walnut that could be imported through his friends in the talk-shops of the Keys. This would last his lifetime. And, Ander saw that it was good.

The third piglet to leave was ImPlode. Even though InPlode was not the brightest of sparks, he spent his youth dallying with a beautiful blond maiden of ability and sustenance. Together they were often seen tending to the sick, foraging in the woods, and cleaning the cupboards of inhabited households all across the land. They were never reproached.

Such was their industry that ImPlode decided his house would be built from solid brick. He intended to spend much time in his new abode with as many of his friends as possible. Here they would never be bothered by outside necessities. A kind of healthy long-term self-sufficiency, he often debated with his siblings. But, neither Enrow nor Worldcomb were interested in anything healthy or long-term. They were after all, self-sufficient. But ImPlode was determined that his house would stand the test of time.

ImPlode disliked bright sunshine and his large, tall, sturdy brick house had many small windows through which he could see the world without too much bright sunshine. And, he always believed that it was logical to leave some dirt in the cupboards so that the spiders could catch the flies on their rare forays through the air.

ImPlode built his large brick house in Chewco on the outskirts of New York within easy reach of his beloved hunting ground. And, Ander saw that it was good.

Then one cheerful spring morning as the birds were stirring themselves to breeze through the things that birds do on cheerful spring mornings, the sly hungry fox, called Copper, came a-courting Enrow, who was as snug as a bug in a rug wrapped up in his nice new straw house. Copper, always polite, asked to join Enrow at his table. But, frightened and argumentative, Enrow refused to allow such a lowly animal as Copper into his house. So, Copper swelled his chest with the hot, arid air of the Texas plains, threw his head back in a mighty effort to swallow even more air, and huffed and puffed until he blew poor Enrow's house down. Within seconds Copper had swallowed poor Enrow. And, Ander saw that it was not good.

It was a long trek to Florida for Copper. He found little in the way of food between the two destinations. By the time he reached the Sunshine State he was greedy for another bite. He came to Worldcomb's magnificent house of twigs and followed the same pattern of introduction as he had with Enrow. This diplomacy had the same effect. So, once again, in a terrible rage Copper huffed and he puffed and he blew Worldcomb's house down and gobbled up the little fat piglet. And, Ander saw that it was not good.

Traveling northwards to escape the swamps of Florida, Copper decided to pay a visit to New York where he remembered his great-uncle telling him about the favorable

pickings in that great city. Arriving on the outskirts of New York, Copper was once again ravenous. He spotted ImPlode's big house with its many small lighted windows. Here, he thought, I'll get my bellyful of feasting.

By this time, Copper had developed a large repertoire of entry techniques. He chose his most pleasant voice and his choicest words to solicit ImPlode to let him in and share his meat. Lo and behold, ImPlode, having great knowledge of culinary affairs and wishing to share his feast with his many savvy friends, invited Copper into his Spartan pad. And, God saw that this was good.