

**I**t was a glorious spring morning. It had rained in the night. Every leaf and blade of grass was illuminated with liquid diamonds. Armadillo grunted heavily and heaved himself out of bed. He pulled on his old cardigan. As usual he didn't notice that he'd put the buttons in the wrong buttonholes. He sat for a moment and considered his feet, briefly wiggling his toes.

“I'm still alive then,” he said out loud to himself, and he let off a single chuckling snort before pushing his feet into his battered red slippers.

*Armadillo and Hare*

Armadillo padded off to the kitchen and opened the fridge door.

“Fridge light isn’t working again,” he muttered. “And there’s no cheese.” He went to the bottom of the stairs and called up to Hare. “There’s no cheese in the fridge. Did you eat it?”

“I’m asleep,” came the reply.

“How can you shout back at me if you’re asleep?” Armadillo asked.

“Because my mouth is open,” Hare answered. “And sound is coming out, but my eyes are shut and no light is getting in, so I’m asleep.”

“Open your eyes then,” Armadillo suggested.

“Even if I do there’ll still be no cheese in

*Armadillo and Hare*

the fridge. You'll have to go to the store." Hare yawned. "Anyhow, you should lose weight. Cheese makes you fat, and your stomach is getting bigger. You should exercise, Armadillo, like me, and stop eating cheese."

Armadillo didn't reply. Instead, he went into the living room and heaved himself into the big armchair. He knew he was putting on



*Armadillo and Hare*

weight, but he didn't like to be told about it. He certainly didn't want to do any exercise, and there was no way that he was going to stop eating cheese. He wished that Hare was wrong, but he wasn't. That made things even more depressing. Hare was nearly always right.

Armadillo sighed.

Hare came downstairs. He was in his dark-blue pajamas. They had little stars on them.



Armadillo liked Hare's pajamas, but they didn't make them in anything near an armadillo shape or size.

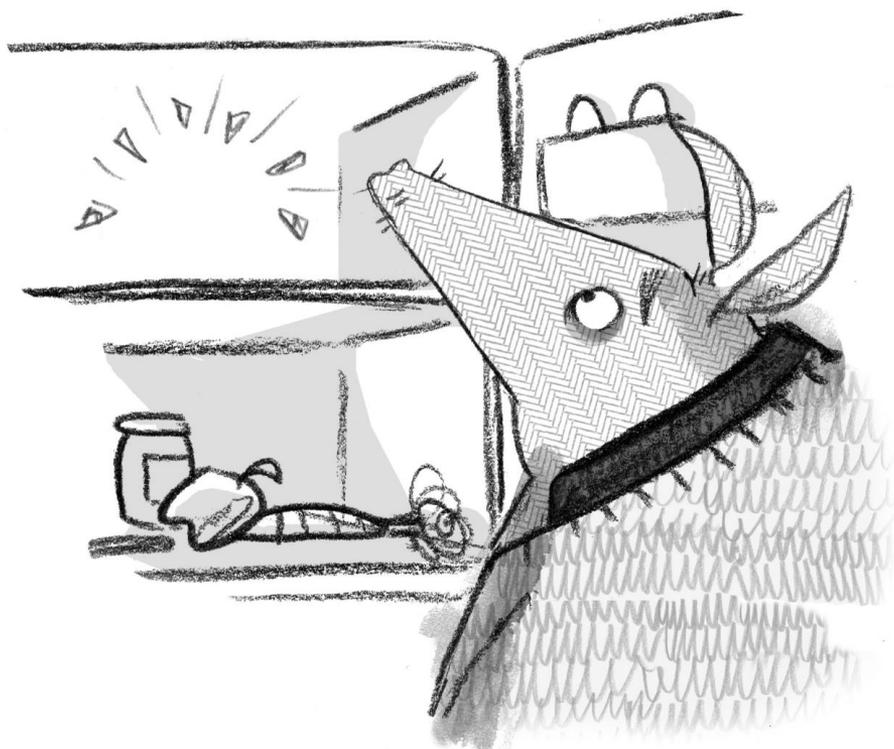
Hare paused for a moment in front of the mirror. He carefully straightened his phenomenal ears, adjusted his glasses, and draped a long colorful scarf casually around his neck.

"I thought I might buy a new scarf soon," said Hare. He turned toward the kitchen. "You left the fridge door open," he observed.

*He's right again,* thought Armadillo. "Yes, I did," he declared. "I thought some cheese might jump in if I left it open."

"It hasn't," Hare told him.

Armadillo shrugged. "I didn't think it would. It was just a chance. A tiny, tiny



possibility that some cheese might come wandering along and think: *Oh, that looks like a nice fridge. I could sit inside and keep cool. This warm sun is making me melt. How kind of someone to leave the door open for me. I'll just hop inside.*" Armadillo beamed at his friend.

Hare twitched one ear. "The fridge light's gone."

“I know,” Armadillo answered.

“I’ll make some breakfast then,” Hare said.

“Without cheese?” Armadillo questioned.

Hare stood in the kitchen doorway and looked back at Armadillo slumped in the armchair.

“You spend too much time sitting down,” he told his friend. “What you need is a hobby, something to do every day, something to keep you occupied. Maybe do some exercises.”

Armadillo gave a loud snort.

“I shall make us a healthy breakfast,” Hare went on. “Then you and I will do some exercises. I know some very good ones.”

“That will be nice,” Armadillo muttered.

“You’ve done your buttons up wrong again,” Hare told him.

*Armadillo and Hare*

Hare went to the kitchen and clattered around among the plates and bowls and cutlery. He soon reappeared with a tray full of fruit and juice—but no cheese.

While they ate, Hare explained why it was important to exercise. Armadillo thought he might buy some earplugs when he went out to get some cheese.

Hare pushed away his clean plate, got to his feet, and took off his scarf. “Right, breakfast finished, so now we will do our exercises. You stand there, Armadillo, and do what I do.”

