The Fox & The Armadillo

A South American Tale

Retold & Illustrated by Rick Tejada-Flores

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El Zorro y El Armadillo

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Once upon a time, on the vast rolling plains (or *pampas*) of Argentina, there lived a lazy fox. He was the owner of a rich farm, but instead of working in his fields, he preferred to spend his days lying under the trees, watching the clouds go by.

Not far away lived his neighbor, the armadillo. The armadillo was not as lucky as the fox. He had a small rocky farm with very bad land for growing crops. The armadillo was a hard worker, and every day he could be found working under the hot sun.

One day the fox wandered over to watch the armadillo work.

As he sipped his bitter tea, called *mate*, from a decorated gourd cup, with a silver straw called a *bombilla*, an idea began to form in his head.

"You know," said the fox, "I am always impressed by how hard you work. What a pity that your land is so bad that even with all your work you end up with so little."

“Its true,” said the armadillo, “this year I planted lots of potatoes and turnips, but only half of the plants came up.”

“You know,” said the fox, “ I have always thought of myself as your friend. And since friends should help each other, I have thought of a way to help you.”

“Instead of working so hard on your poor fields, why don’t you come to my farm and work my good fields?” said the fox.

“Well,” said the armadillo, “it would be wonderful to work on good land. I could really grow a big crop! But how would we divide what I grow?”

Now the fox wasn't really trying to help his neighbor, the armadillo. He thought that the armadillo was strong, but dumb, and could be made to work for free. The fox remembered that the armadillo had planted potatoes and turnips, which both grow at the bottom of the plant.

"Here's what we'll do," said the fox. "You can keep everything from the top of the plant, and I get everything from the bottom of the plant."

“Great,” said the armadillo, “its a deal!”

And they shook hands to seal the bargain.

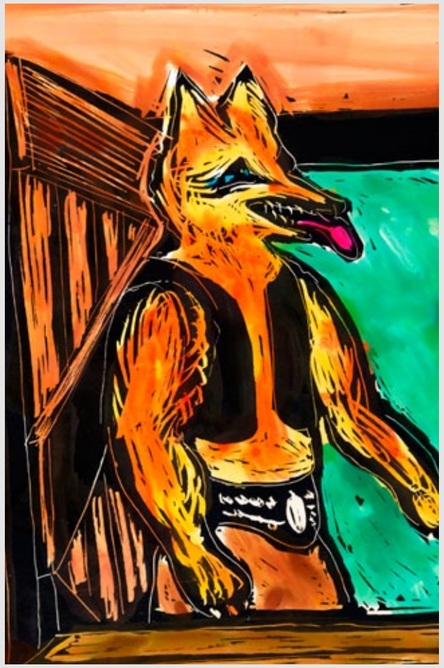
Early the next morning, while the fox was still asleep in his bed, the armadillo and his two children were hard at work in the fox's fields, hoeing and planting.

But the armadillo wasn't stupid. He knew what the fox was trying to do. So instead of planting beans, he planted wheat!

As the plants grew higher and higher, the armadillos admired their crop of wheat.

The fox, sure that he had tricked the armadillo, had gone off to visit some friends in a nearby city. You can imagine his surprise on returning when he found his fields full of bare wheat stalks – the armadillos had already harvested all of the wheat.

The fox was very upset. As he ran through his empty fields to the armadillo's house, he noticed that the dried stalks didn't look like potato or turnip plants.



The armadillos were just sitting down to a meal of fresh bread baked from their wheat when the fox burst throught the door.

"Where is my half of what you grew in my fields?" asked the fox.

"Your half is the roots of the wheat plants," said the armadillo. "The wheat grows on the top of the plant, so we get to keep it."

“All right, fair is fair,” said the fox, “but the next time you plant I want the part that grows on top, and you can keep the bottom part.”

The fox went away happy, thinking that everything was settled. For a long time he didn't pay any attention to his fields, or to what the armadillos were doing.

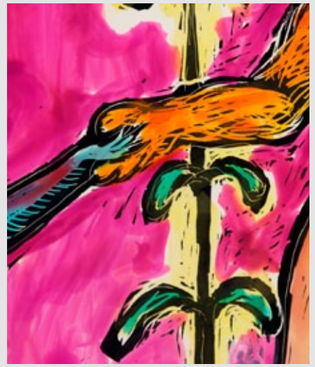
When he finally came to inspect his fields again, it was harvest time and the armadillos were busy carrying off large sacks.

"What did you plant this time?" asked the fox.

"Oh," said the armadillo, "these are potatoes. Since they grow at the bottom of the plant, we get to keep them all."

The fox had been tricked again!

“Lets make another deal,” said the fox. “I’m getting hungry. I want everything that grows at the top and at the bottom of the plant. You can have what grows in the middle.”



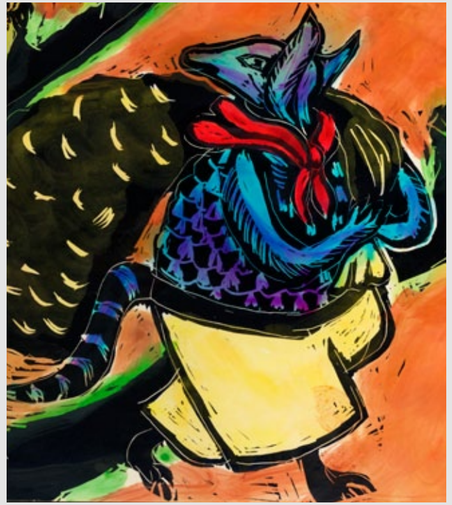
And so they shook hands again to seal the deal.

The fox hoped that this time he had made a deal with the armadillo that would give him all the crops. But he still hadn't changed his lazy ways, and paid no attention to what the armadillos were doing.

But once again the armadillos were smarter than the fox. When the fox finally arrived at his fields, he found that the armadillos had planted corn. And corn, as you know, doesn't grow at the bottom of the plant, or at the top — it grows in the middle!

"If you hadn't tried so hard to trick me I would have been glad to share what I grew with you," said the armadillo. "But two can play at being tricky."

“When you really want to work hard,” the armadillo continued, “then we can share. But right now I’m pretty tired, so I am going to go home, eat some corn, and have a nice rest....”



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THE FOX & THE ARMADILLO

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This story is adapted from an Argentine folk tale.

The illustrations, by artist & film maker, Rick Tejada-Flores, were originally created for an animated television movie of this story.

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Learn about Rick Tejada-Flores' documentary films by visiting his web site, www.paradigmproductions.com