

The Crab's New Address



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On a bright morning, the hermit crab woke up and stretched his pale sandy-pink legs. His beige spiral shell felt tight around his soft curled abdomen. He wiggled, but the shell only squeezed harder. "Moving day!" he said, his glossy black stalk eyes shining. He clicked his big claw and his small claw. Today he would find a new home, a bigger seashell to call his own.



The ocean was warm and blue, and gentle waves rolled over the sand. The hermit crab's friend, the sea snail, glided up beside him. Her lavender-grey body left a soft trail, and her long tentacles with dark tips waved hello. "I heard you need a bigger shell," she said with a calm smile. "Let's look together. I know where the empty shells hide."



They started along the shore, where the tide had left a line of shells. The hermit crab's tight beige spiral creaked as he walked. "I want a home that's safe and cozy," he said. "And big enough for me to grow." The sea snail nodded, her pearly shell gleaming in the sun. "A good home meets real needs," she said. "We'll check each shell carefully."



The first shell was small, white, and curled like a tiny horn. The crab tried to squeeze inside, but his legs stuck out. "Too small!" he sighed. "I need more room." The sea snail tapped it gently. "Leave it here," she said. "A tiny fish might use it for shelter." The crab nodded and put it back exactly where he found it.



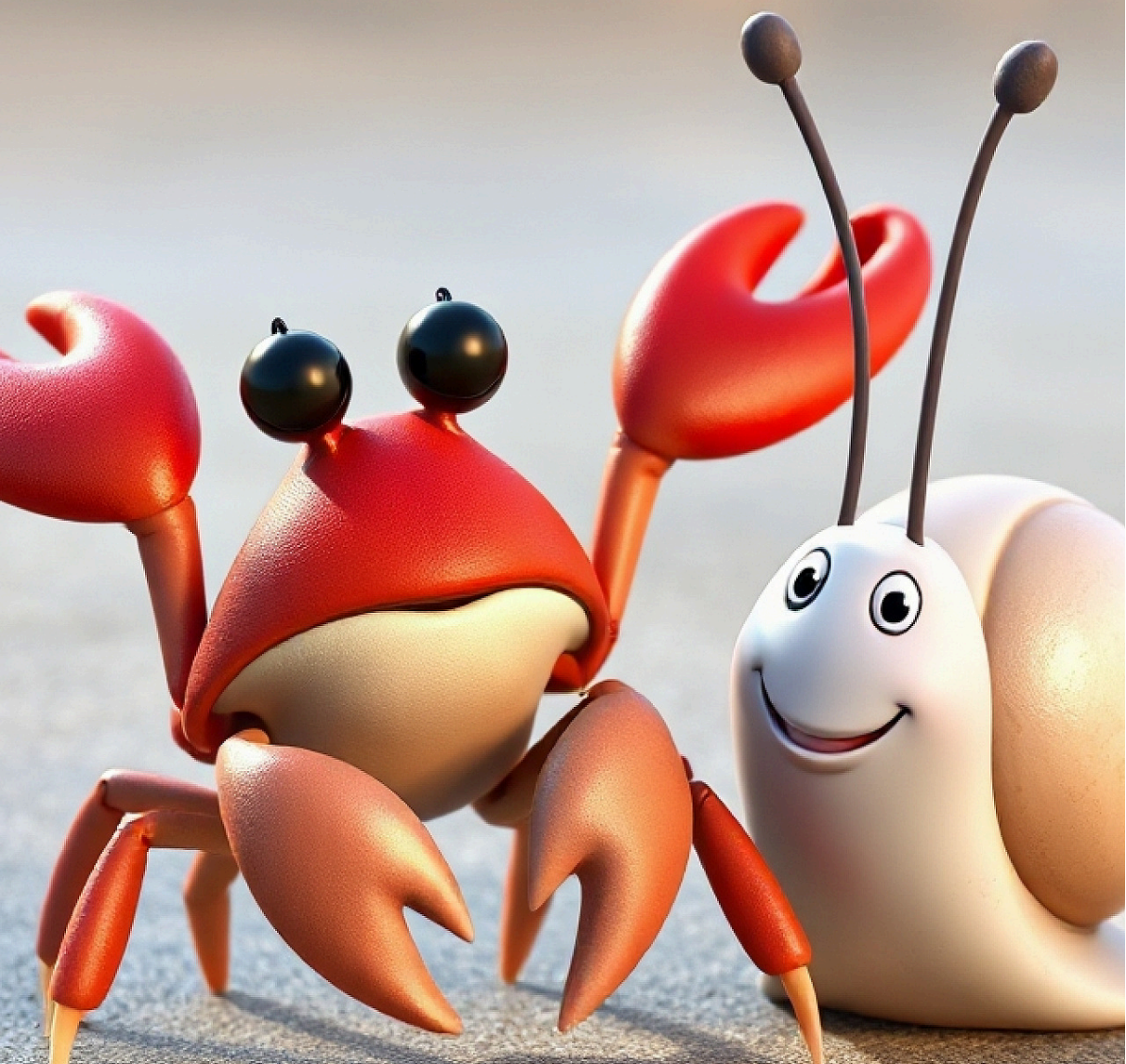
Next they found a heavy shell, thick and grey with a rough outside. The crab tried to lift it, but it was too heavy to carry. "I couldn't walk with this on my back," he said. The sea snail smiled kindly. "A home should be easy to carry," she said. "Let's keep looking." They left the heavy shell for a bigger creature to use.



Then the crab spotted a shell with a hole in its side. "This one has a hole," he said. "It wouldn't keep me safe." The sea snail peered inside. "A little shrimp is hiding in there," she whispered. "We must not disturb it. Let's move on quietly." They tiptoed away, leaving the shrimp to its nap.



The sun climbed higher, and the crab began to worry. "What if I never find the right shell?" he said. His stalk eyes drooped. The sea snail touched his claw with a tentacle. "Don't give up," she said. "We'll check every empty shell, but we must be careful not to bother any living creature." The crab nodded and kept going.



They looked at a shell that was too narrow, and another that was too wide. The crab tried each one, but none felt right. "My old shell was tight," he said, "but at least it fit." The sea snail smiled. "We'll find one that's just right for you," she said. "A home should fit like a glove."



Just then, a bright orange starfish waved from a rock. "Are you moving today?" it asked, its five arms wiggling. "I'm looking for a new shell," the crab said. "Good luck!" said the starfish. "I'll cheer for you!" The crab felt a little braver. He kept searching with his friend beside him.



The sea snail pointed with a tentacle. "Look there," she said. "That shell near the seaweed." It was a strong, spiral shell, pink and cream, with no holes and a smooth inside. The crab's eyes grew wide. "It looks perfect!" he said. He tried it on. It fit just right, roomy and cozy, not too heavy at all.



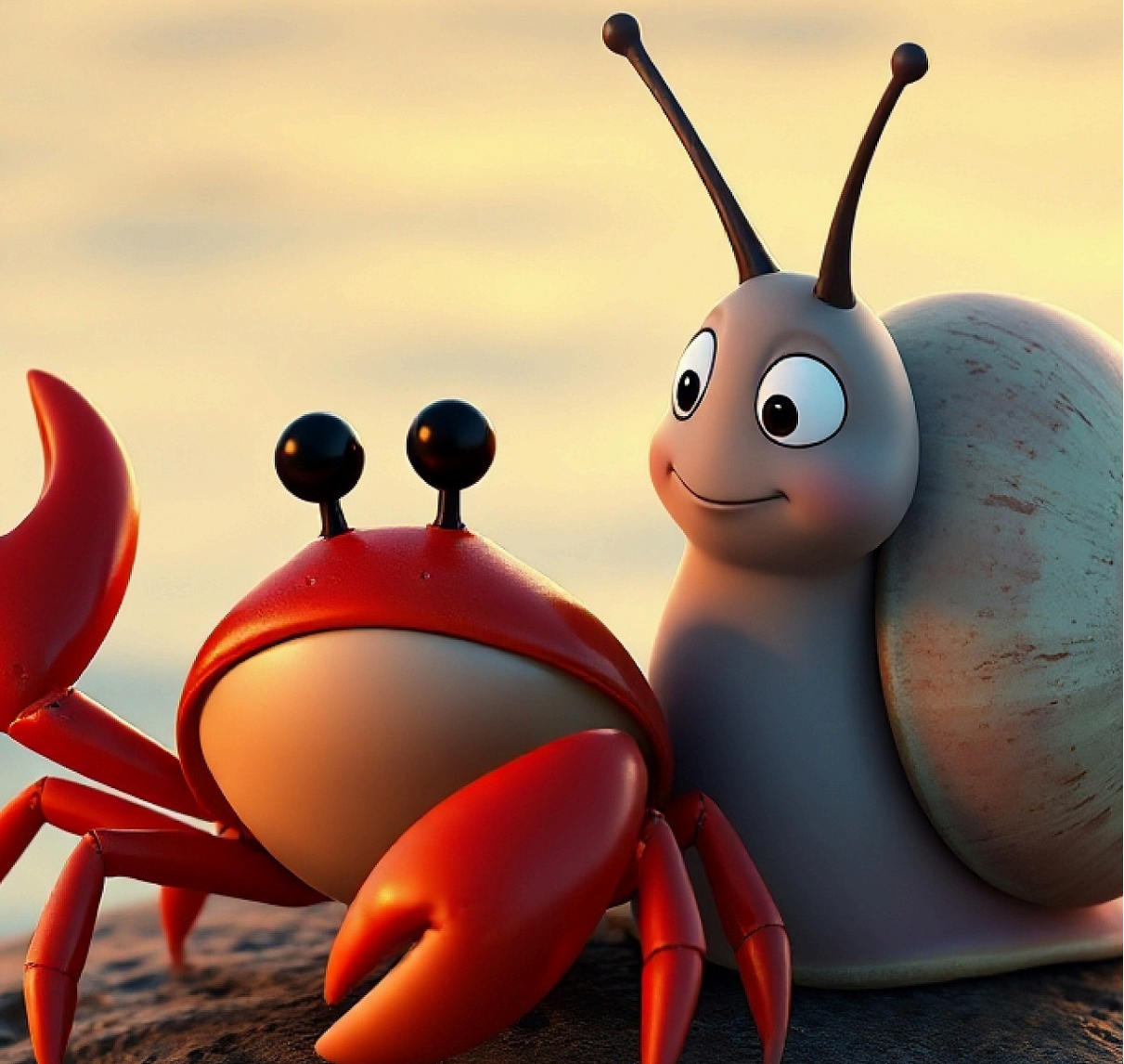
The crab wiggled his legs and felt the shell settle comfortably. "This is the one!" he cheered. "It's strong, and it fits, and I can carry it!" The sea snail clapped her tentacles. "A good home meets real needs," she said. "You found it." The crab did a happy little dance on the sand, his new shell shining in the sun.



The starfish hurried over, its bright orange arms waving. "Hooray!" it cried. "You found your new home!" Other ocean friends peeked out to see. A little fish blew bubbles, and a tiny shrimp waved from a rock. "Thank you, sea snail," said the crab. "You helped me find the perfect shell." The sea snail smiled warmly.



The hermit crab moved into his new shell. It was strong and safe, with plenty of room to grow. He felt cozy and happy inside. "I'm glad I waited for the right one," he said. "It was worth checking each shell carefully." His friends cheered as he settled in. The sun sparkled on the water, and the shore felt like home.



That evening, the crab sat on a rock and looked at the sea. His new shell glistened. "A good home isn't just big," he said. "It must fit, and be strong, and keep me safe." The sea snail nodded. "And it's even better when friends help you find it." The crab smiled, his glossy black eyes shining with joy.



The starfish came to visit. "Your new shell is beautiful!" it said. "It's perfect for you." The crab felt proud. He had searched carefully, and he had found exactly what he needed. His ocean friends had helped him, and he had not disturbed any living creature. That made his new home feel even more special.



As the moon rose, the hermit crab curled up inside his strong, cozy seashell. He felt safe and warm. His sea-snail friend rested nearby. "Goodnight, friend," she said. "Goodnight," said the crab. He closed his eyes, happy in his new home. A good home meets real needs, and his did—perfectly.