

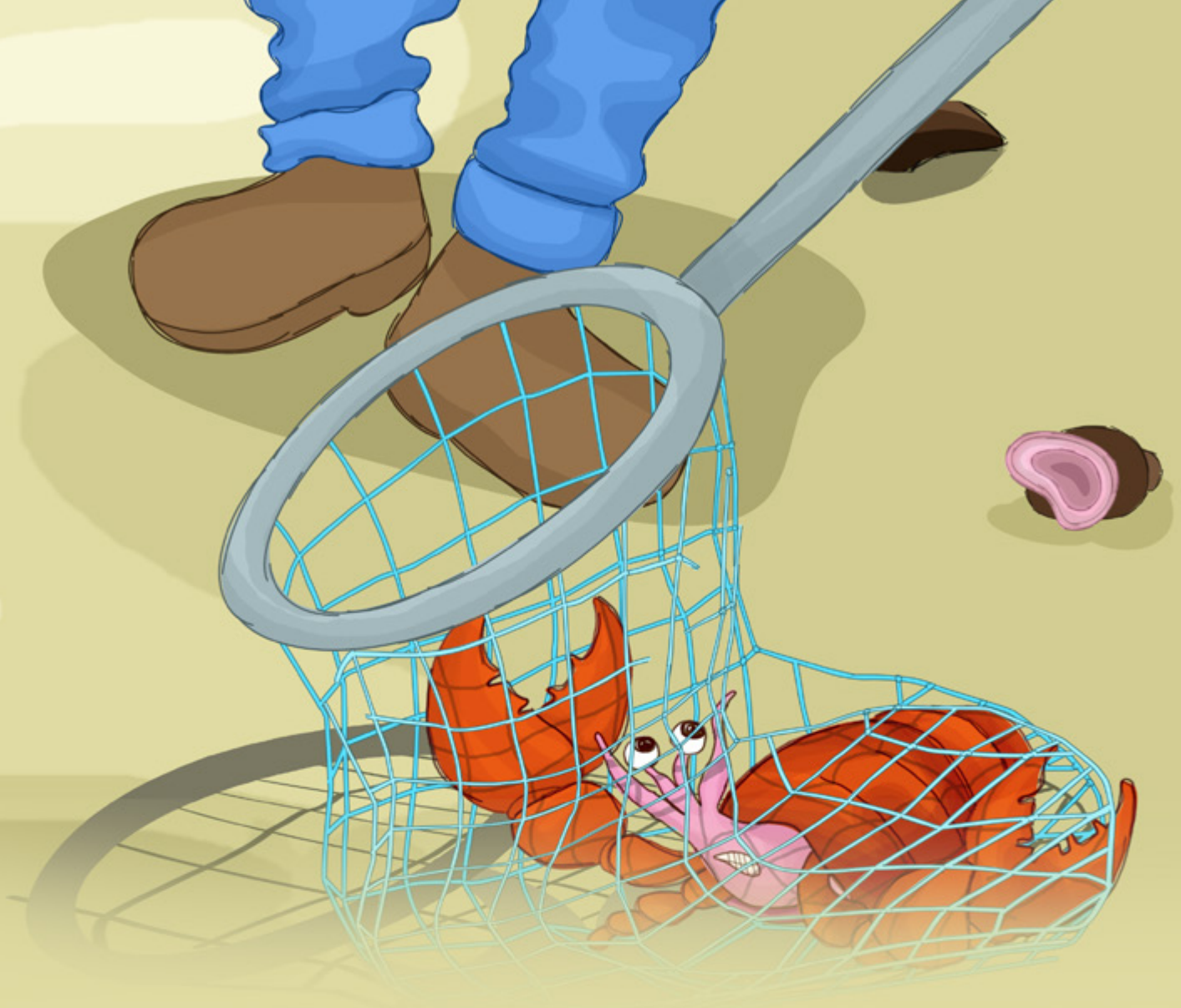
Hector The Hermit Crab



By T. Albert

Hector The Hermit Crab

Jimmy and Tammy love their pet Hermit, the crab. But Hermit is sad; he misses his home and family in the lagoon. The children wonder what to do. Should they set Hermit free? A touching story about love that has an important life lesson for the little readers.



As Hector the Hermit Crab crawled along the sandy shallows of the lagoon, he noticed a strange shadow form across the small hills and valleys of the sand. It got bigger, and bigger ... and bigger!

“What a great catch!” Larry yelled to the others in the boat. “We now have over 100 hermit crabs, 50 starfish, and who knows how many snails to sell to the pet shop. Let’s go and deliver our precious cargo.”



About one week later, Tammy and Jimmy were shopping with their mom at a new plaza that had just opened in their town.

It was a nice plaza and built just across the street from a small beach, a lagoon, and the big, blue, beautiful ocean.



They liked to shop with their mom,
but today was different.

All of the stores were new and their mom was shopping for
a special gift and had told them that they couldn't buy
anything. They weren't bored,
but they were definitely not happy.

Jimmy mumbled as they walked ...

“another shoe store, oh look – more dresses,
pots and pans, just what I need.”

“Jimmy,” Tammy said. “It's hard enough as it is without
listening to you complain. I don't like being here any more
than you, but you don't hear me grumbling.”

“What are you doing now?” Jimmy asked.



Their mom smiled and just kept on walking through the maze of stores. “We’re almost there,” she said.

“Almost where?” asked Tammy.

“Almost at another shoe store.” blurted Jimmy.

“Actually,” their mom said.

“I was thinking of the new pet shop.

It’s supposed to be the best in the area.

It has a giant aquarium with all kinds of fish, even a shark. There are birds, dogs, cats, lizards and more. It’s almost like a zoo. I thought you two could spend some time there while I got that special gift.”



Well, this changed everything. Tammy and Jimmy were now excited and couldn't wait to get to the pet shop. As they went around the next corner - there it was. A huge door with a giant sign ... "The Amazing Animal Emporium".



As they walked through the door, they couldn't believe their eyes. There, right in the middle of the store, was an aquarium that was bigger than any swimming pool they had ever seen. They walked around and peered into the water and saw all sorts of creatures. "Look at all the clown fish,"

Tammy said. "Well, they better swim fast."

Look at that shark!" Jimmy replied.

Oh, they were amazed!!! There seemed to be every type of fish and sea creature right in the middle of the store.

This truly was an amazing pet shop.



“Let’s see what else is here,”
yelled Jimmy as he walked off to explore.

They were amazed at the animals that were for sale and each type of animal had its own room. The door with the sign “Slithers” had all sorts of snakes. “The Pond” had frogs, toads, and giant dragonflies. “Arachnoland” had spiders and “Chirps” had hundreds of different birds. There were rooms for cats, dogs, hogs, and more.

“I wonder what’s in ‘Little Critters’.” Tammy said. “There’s only one way to find out.” Jimmy replied as they walked in together.



As they looked at all the small and sometimes unusual animals. They were amazed that people had these as pets.

There were mice, chipmunks, moles, starfish, snails, clams, beetles, and all things small.

“Look at this,” squealed Tammy.

“A hermit crab.” “Cool!” replied Jimmy.

Although the crab didn’t do much, they watched with fascination as it crawled over the sand and rocks. Once in a while, it would start to come out of its shell and then quickly pop back in and cover its face with its giant claw.

“He’s looking for a new and bigger shell for his home,” said their mom. “I’m glad I was able to find you two, this place is big.”



Tammy looked at the crab and said “Bye, Hector. We’ll miss you.” Jimmy waved to him and turned to walk away. As the three were leaving, they heard a tapping on the glass.

“I don’t believe this,” said their mom.

“That crab is saying good-bye to you two.

I guess we’ll just have to buy him and have a new pet.”

Now the fun began. They had the sales-person get Hector (since Tammy already named him) and put him into a box. Then they bought him a new cage, hermit crab bedding, several shells, a swimming pool, water dish, special food, some rocks, and everything Hector needed to be at home – in their home.



Tammy and Jimmy took excellent care of Hector and their mom was happy to see that they were so responsible with their little friend. But as time passed, Hector seemed to be less and less happy. After all, no matter how nice his human friends were, he didn't have any friends of his own kind. Hector missed his family and the open spaces of the lagoon that he was accustomed to.



One morning, Jimmy and Tammy decided that although Hector was a good pet, he deserved things they couldn't give him. "Mom," Tammy asked from across the room. "Can we let Hector go?" "Don't you like him any more?" she inquired. "Of course we do," said Jimmy. "But he isn't happy here and setting him free would be the best for him." "Hmm," their mom thought. "Tammy and Jimmy are very unselfish and very smart. I am so proud of them."



Later that day, their mom took Tammy, Jimmy, Hector, and all of Hector's things to the lagoon across from the plaza.

Tammy carefully took Hector from his cage and placed him in the sand next to the shallows. Jimmy put his swimming pool and rocks in the sand and their mom placed his food dish securely between two rocks.

As they left with the empty cage, they thought they heard a faint tapping on a rock. They turned to see Hector and several other hermit crabs slowly crawling into the shallows.



A true act of love is
ensuring that everyone is happy.

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