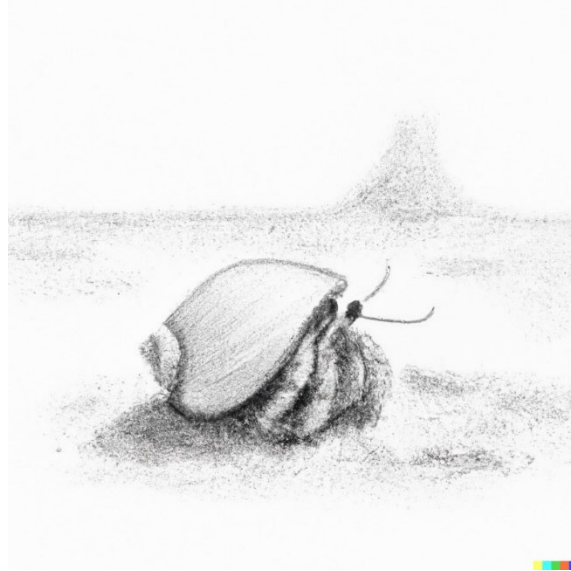


Thermi



It was time, and Thermi knew it. He'd spent so long in his current shell that he'd almost convinced himself that it was his terminal one, that he'd finished growing, and that he was finally rightsized. He felt strong and he had made the uncomfortable transition to bigger shells so many times before that he almost believed he'd done all the growing that he could. But this wasn't true, and he was slowly coming to realize it. Though his shell was very familiar and quite comfortable, it was not part of him and it was never meant to be permanent. Eventually, Thermi accepted that he was only staying in his current shell because he was too frightened to leave it. Sometime after that, he finally built up the courage to change. He was not exactly sure when he had made the decision, but by the time he saw the slightly larger shell lying vacant, he was ready.

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Thermi had spent a lot of time thinking about this change. He'd seen other hermit crabs who had become so scared of growing that they stayed in shells that were too small for them. Well, too small may not be quite right. The shells were large enough to house and protect their soft abdomen but not large enough so that they could grow bigger. These crabs were in a tight spot and, as many people know, those in shells that are undersized are often very difficult to deal with indeed. This is partly because their size relative to their shell makes them feel very big. But also, because they fully occupy their shells, they cannot retract completely into them for protection so they make more of an effort to appear formidable. Usually they do this by involving themselves in other's business, by being critical, opinionated, and quick to anger. But the main reason is that they know, or rather they feel, that they are not rightsized and this makes them sensitive both inside and out.

Such crabs are too big for their shells but too fearful to make the change that would enable them to grow. In an undersized shell, it can be easy to feel confident; it fits snugly and gives a sense of having everything under control. With the inside fully occupied, more attention can be given to what's going on with others on the outside. Of course, such feelings, almost as soon as they come to be felt, usually signal that it is time for a change, time to go out into the world and mature a little. Time to stop thinking about what others were doing and time to start thinking about one's own journey. But growth would involve change and crabs like this would rather remain undersized and feel safe than risk the opportunity to grow more fully into themselves. To the outside world, they may appear just fine, apparently strong and secure in a rightsized shell. Why risk the change? Far easier to focus on others than to look inward and address the pressing issue.

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Thermi made the dash from his undersized shell to his new one. It was terrifying to be out with his soft parts exposed, but he made it to his new shell and it fit admirably. Well, admirably may not be quite right. Immediately Thermi wondered if it was too big, for he suddenly felt very small, like his insides might rattle around his outsides and his thoughts might echo too loudly within this larger space. Still, Thermi knew that this was where he was supposed to be and tried to calm his mind and thoughts. Yes, he was smaller relative to his shell, but he now had lots of extra room to grow. Sure, it was a little echoey, but this was helpful too for when one can't hear one's own thoughts it often means that one had stopped thinking entirely and is merely reacting. In order to act, as opposed to react, one had to have time and space to think. Being larger, Thermi's new shell offered enough room that he could fully retract into it and be completely safe and secure while he figured things out over the next while. He could, at his own pace, grow into himself and practice being rightsized all the while.

The courage that Thermi had shown in making the transition would sustain him during this new phase. Gradually, he'd grow yet bigger and stronger, and eventually get that feeling again that there was further opportunity for growth. And so he'd continue on his journey of development, conscious of the relationship between his inside and his outside, attuned and receptive to signs of opportunities for growth, and courageous enough to take these.

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<https://kieranfor.de/2024/01/18/thermi/>