

CLAUDE THE COGNITIVE CRUSTACEAN

Thump, thump, thump. My head was pounding. I rose from the floor wondering what I was doing laying there. I skittered over to the entrance of the cave, my claws clattering on the floor. I was blinded by the light that came through the opening. I walked outside, wary of my surroundings. It felt weird after having my claws on solid rock to have them sink into the sand. I wandered around the beach looking for food and my friends. I couldn't find them anywhere, even after a long search. I heard humans chattering near me.

I crawled as fast as I could into another cave before the humans could find me. Inside the cave was an opening to another small cave. The sun was setting and I hadn't found food yet, so I left the cave. I crawled over to a lump of seaweed near the tide pools, careful to not let the seagulls find me in fear of being eaten. I found some worms and ate some seaweed. I also even found some snails!

I decided to gather some materials to build a shelter and prepare to go on an expedition to find the other crabs. I went around and gathered some pieces of wood to build a hut inside the cave. Gathering the wood was difficult and took what felt like hours to drag large pieces of driftwood back to the cave. I managed to find some very shiny shells to use for decorations and other things.

After I was done searching for all the materials I needed, I was able to go on a search to find a sharp rock for a weapon to defend myself. Since it was nighttime, I decided to search further to the back of the cave, where I had not yet ventured. Upon further exploration of the cave I found a dark pool of water. There was an opening at the top of the cave above the water. Though it was a full moon, you couldn't see it, since it was blocked out by dark dreary clouds, but I could feel the cool air coming down and across my shell. There was a mysterious shimmering light glinting at the bottom

of the pool. As I edged closer to investigate the sparkling, the moonlight shined through the skylight abruptly. The ground started to shake violently, making me unsure of whether this had been a trap. Instead of the cave collapsing on me, a rock island emerged from the center of the pool with what looked like a clam on top. The shaking stopped, and as the moonlight shone upon the clam it opened. Like a pearl, a necklace with a blue gem lay inside the clam. The gem was bluer than the sea and more beautiful than the water as the sun sets.

I moved closer to get a better look, but I didn't see any ways to get to the necklace without a possibly dangerous trek underwater. However, as I approached the edge of the pool, a series of smaller rock islands floated up to the surface, like stepping stones in a garden pathway. The necklace seemed like it was calling to me, as if I were a piece of iron, and it a magnet, giving off waves of otherworldly importance.

I gingerly crawled across the stepping stones to reach the clam with the necklace, unsure of whether the stones were stable enough to hold me up. The entire experience felt mesmerizing with sprinkles of fear and uncertainty. I took the necklace carefully, so as to not let my claws snap it. I scurried back to the shelter I managed to build and went to sleep. After I woke up I looked towards the necklace and decided to put it on. I was hungry, so I decided to go out and scavenge for more food. Whilst scavenging for food I happened to overhear some humans and was stunned to discover I could understand them.

From the voices I heard there seemed to be two humans chirping amongst themselves. I, being curious, scampered over close enough to clearly hear the voices but far enough to be safe. The first one started talking:

"I still can't believe how good of a catch we had two days ago!"

"I can't believe it either. We got so lucky!" the other human being said.

They both appeared to be sitting on a driftwood log with fancy looking sticks with string attached to it, digesting some triangular looking things.

"How many do you reckon we got?" the first one asked in a questioning tone.

"I reckon we got all of them based off of yesterday"

"What do you mean?"

"There were no crabs out yesterday. Anyways I'm so glad we sold them, they were stinking up the warehouse. Too bad we have to wait until tomorrow to ship them" *They're the ones that took all of my friends?* I thought in anger and sadness as they left. *I wish I knew where the warehouse is.* I thought to myself as the humans were leaving. As they left I started feeling a headache come on. *Another one?* I thought. As I reached back home my headache was unbearable and I decided to go for a short dip in that pool I had found. After I got out of the pool I collapsed and passed out. I woke up on a floor that looked like a lake, each step I took rippling the water. I ended up coming across this white crab. It was slightly translucent looking like a spirit or ghost. It only spoke to me once answering none of the questions I had like "Where am I? And what am I doing here?" It said "Look for the signs." *Very vague Mr. Crab spirit thing.* I then felt as if the water had swallowed me and I was slowly falling. I woke up with a start on the floor. The necklace glowed making me think that the spirit was in there.

I finally knew what to do. I just chose a path going east from my cave. It just felt like the right thing to do. As I was walking along the path I think I might have been dehydrated since I started hearing plants talking to me. They started guiding me in what I assumed was the right path since I soon approached the warehouse. I went in through the back door and saw all of my friends and family in cages submerged in sea water. The adults were begging me to free them while the kids were fooling around. I didn't think I could break the lock but I said I would try. Somehow I managed to snap the lock to the cage and freed everyone!

I started escorting everyone out of the building and along the path I used to get here. I managed to make it back with all of my friends just in time to watch the sun rise. It was beautiful...