

The Crab's Costume Party



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Deep down in the sparkling blue sea, where the seaweed swayed and the bubbles floated up like tiny balloons, lived a cheerful crab named Clack. Clack had a bright coral-red shell with a bumpy texture, two large front claws, and four small walking legs. His stalked eyes twinkled with friendly dark pupils, and a wide smile showed tiny bubbles around his mouth. He loved bringing friends together more than anything.



One sunny morning, Clack put on his small blue bow tie and a purple party hat with yellow stars, sitting slightly crooked on his shell. He raised his claws and called out, 'Friends! I'm hosting a costume party tonight! Come dressed as anything you like!' The news bubbled through the reef, and everyone began to plan their outfits with excitement.



A small orange starfish with five chubby arms and tiny white dots heard the news and clapped all five arms. 'A party! A costume party!' she squealed, adjusting her red pirate scarf and shell necklace. A gentle lavender octopus with large teal eyes and eight wavy arms smiled and curled one arm near her face. 'I'll wear my yellow polka-dot hat,' she said. 'And my pearl shells.' Everyone was excited, except one little shrimp.



The shrimp was small and slender, much smaller than the crab, with a soft pink-orange body that was almost see-through. She had long thin antennae, a delicate fan-shaped tail, and big shy amber eyes with long lashes. Her rosy cheeks blushed easily. When she heard about the party, she hid behind a rock and whispered, 'But I have no costume to wear.'



The shrimp watched the other sea creatures swim by, each carrying something special. The starfish practiced a pirate dance, and the octopus tried on her hat. Even the little fish wore tiny shell necklaces. The shrimp looked at her own pale legs and her empty claws. 'I can't go,' she sighed. 'Everyone will laugh at me.' Her antennae drooped low.



Just then, a gentle current pushed a long ribbon of green seaweed past her rock. The shrimp watched it twist and curl like a dancer. She looked at the seaweed, then at her own small body. Slowly, a tiny idea began to grow. 'Maybe,' she whispered, 'I could make something.' She reached out and touched the soft, leafy green strands.



The shrimp gathered the seaweed and began to work. She wrapped the longest piece around her body like a leafy dress, tucking the ends neatly. She twisted a small strand into a crown and placed it on her head. Around each tiny wrist, she looped a bracelet of seaweed. She worked carefully, her amber eyes bright with focus.



When she finished, the shrimp looked at her reflection in a shiny shell. The green seaweed dress flowed around her like a little garden, and the crown sat lightly on her head. 'It's not fancy,' she said, 'but it's mine.' She felt a tiny flutter of pride. Then she took a deep breath and swam toward the party, her heart beating fast.



The party was in full swing under a big coral arch. Lanternfish glowed like tiny lanterns, and bubbles floated everywhere. The starfish wore her pirate scarf and twirled, and the octopus waved her eight arms in time with the music. Clack the crab stood at the entrance, greeting everyone with a big smile and a click of his claws.



When the shrimp arrived, she paused at the edge of the clearing. Her antennae trembled. 'What if they don't like it?' she thought. But the starfish spotted her first. 'Look!' she cried, pointing with one orange arm. 'Look at that beautiful seaweed dress!' All the sea creatures turned to see. The shrimp's cheeks blushed bright pink.



The starfish clapped all five arms, and the octopus let out a happy cheer. 'It's wonderful!' said the octopus. 'So clever and green!' The shrimp's eyes went wide. No one was laughing. Instead, everyone was smiling. The starfish swam over and said, 'You made that yourself? You're so creative!' The shrimp felt her heart grow warm and light.



Clack the crab raised his claws for quiet. 'Attention, everyone!' he said. 'Tonight we have many fine costumes, but I want to say something important. The best costume isn't about winning. It's about being creative.' He looked right at the shrimp and smiled. 'This little shrimp used seaweed from our own reef to make something special.'



The shrimp felt all the eyes on her, but this time she didn't want to hide. She stood up straight and let her seaweed dress flutter. 'Thank you,' she whispered. The starfish cheered loudly, and the octopus clapped her eight arms. Soon everyone was clapping and cheering. The shrimp felt proud and happy at last, her rosy cheeks glowing with joy.



The music started again, and everyone danced. The shrimp spun in her leafy dress, and her seaweed crown bobbed as she twirled. The starfish tried to copy her moves, and the octopus waved her arms like ribbons. Clack the crab watched them all, his friendly dark pupils twinkling. 'This,' he said, 'is what a party should feel like.'



Later, the shrimp sat beside the crab and the starfish, eating sea-grape snacks. 'I was so scared to come,' she admitted. 'But you all made me feel welcome.' The crab patted her tiny claw with his big one. 'That's what friends do,' he said. 'And you showed us that creativity comes from the heart, not from a shop.'



As the lanternfish dimmed and the party ended, the shrimp swam home with her seaweed crown still on her head. She looked up at the moon shining through the water. 'I didn't win anything,' she thought, 'but I made something beautiful.' And from that night on, she knew that being creative was the best prize of all.