



He wasn't squished anymore. But he knew he would be again. And that would mean he was still growing.

A large, bright full moon is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image. The background is a deep navy blue, filled with numerous small, white stars of varying sizes. The bottom half of the image shows faint, wispy clouds.

## Part 2: The Grown-Ups Bit



A note from Clarke

This story started in my *debottlenecking* leaders and their teams.

The shell is a metaphor for the bottleneck - often the leader themselves, squished and holding everyone back without realising it.



I used it to explain bottleneck thinking to teams without sounding like a process wonk. It's a kids' story, after all.

Some people got it immediately.

Others would say "No... oh, wait..." and then go quiet.

*The metaphor does a huge amount of heavy lifting, precisely because it's so light.*

Over time, I noticed something unexpected and delightful.

People started sharing it beyond work. With their children. With friends. With partners who'd gotten squished.

Many told me the timing was perfect - they were squished but hadn't named it yet.



Back in the office: squished people lead to squished teams. Squished teams lead to squished organisations.

It's shells within shells.

Bottlenecks within bottlenecks.



And it works the other way too - when one person moves to a bigger shell, they make room for everyone behind them.

The whole system grows.

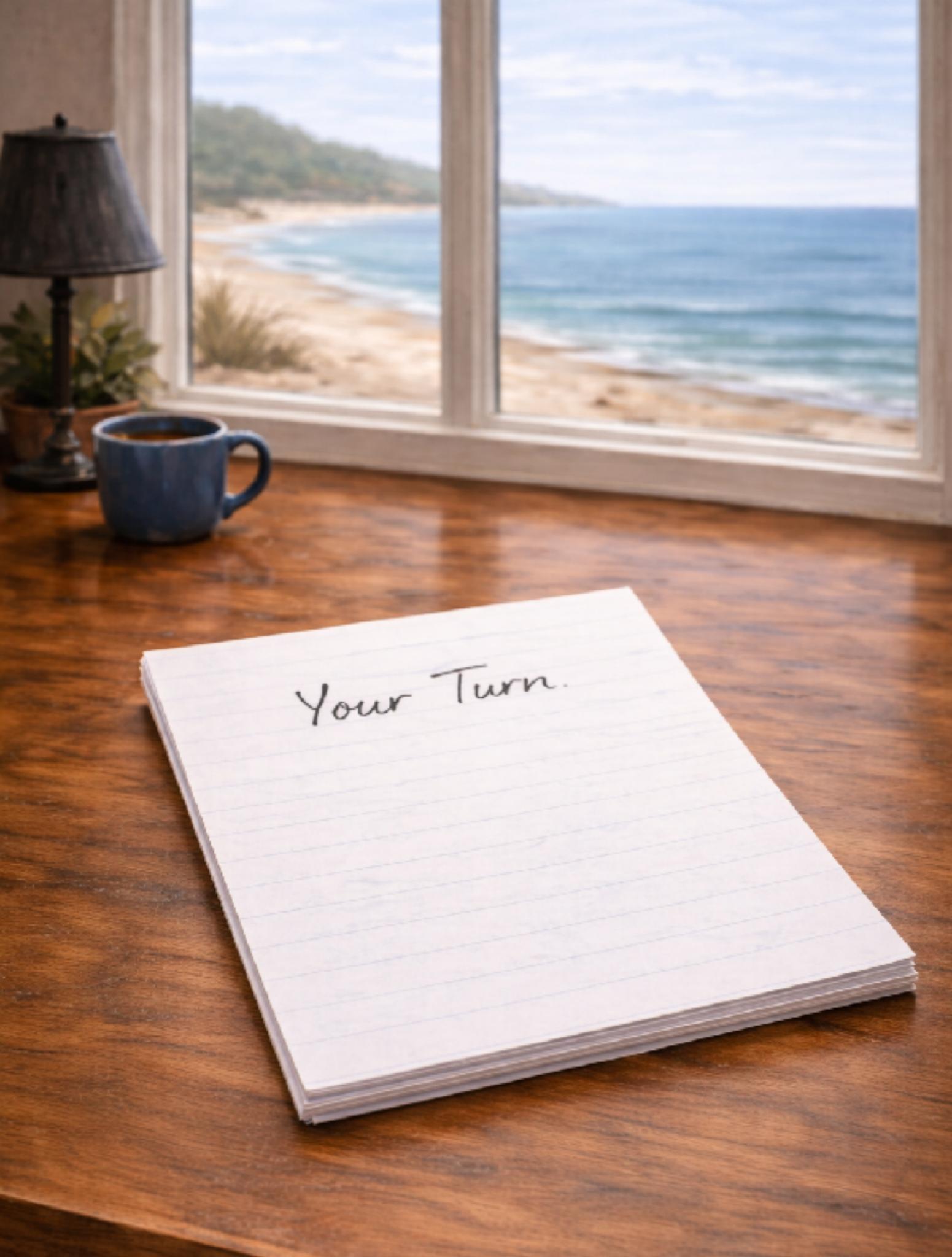
And sometimes the answer isn't a bigger shell.

It's clearing out the one you're in.

Or finding a same-sized shell with a better view.

There's comfort in realising that feeling  
squished is just part of growing.

And moving to the next shell? It's always  
easier than you imagined - once you've  
done it.



Now... go find your bigger shell.

- Clarke Ching

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Tell them it's free, it's a five minute  
read, and it *might be* useful.

And - please say hello -  
[clarke@clarkeching.com](mailto:clarke@clarkeching.com)

Thank You

