



The Dunehoppers
Celebrate Christmas
With a Visit from
Santa Claws



Outer Banks, North Carolina

Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

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On a frosty December evening in the Outer Banks, the Dunehopper Ghost Crab Family peeked out of their burrow. The sand shimmered with tiny ice crystals—rare and magical on their warm island home.

Mama Crab brushed snowflakes off her shell and straightened her cozy seaweed scarf. Sandy and Scoot slid across the frosty sand in sideways loops.

“Tonight,” Mama whispered, “we celebrate Christmas... Dunehopper-style!”



A Sandy Christmas Tree

The family scurried sideways down the moonlit beach until they found a dune shaped almost like a tiny mountain.

“That one looks like a Christmas tree!” Sandy exclaimed.

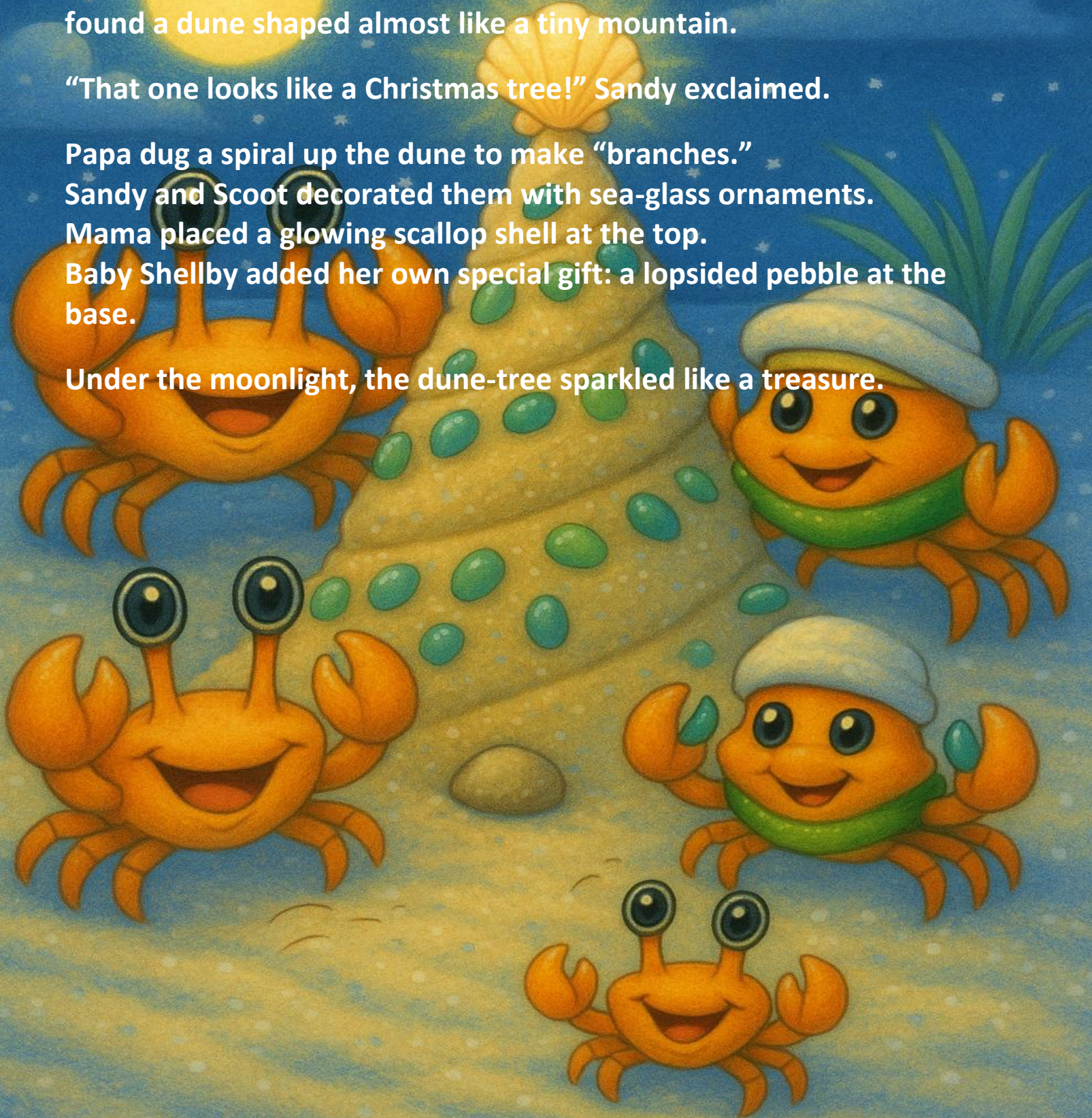
Papa dug a spiral up the dune to make “branches.”

Sandy and Scoot decorated them with sea-glass ornaments.

Mama placed a glowing scallop shell at the top.

Baby Shellby added her own special gift: a lopsided pebble at the base.

Under the moonlight, the dune-tree sparkled like a treasure.



The Bioluminescent Lights

“Time for lights!” Papa announced.

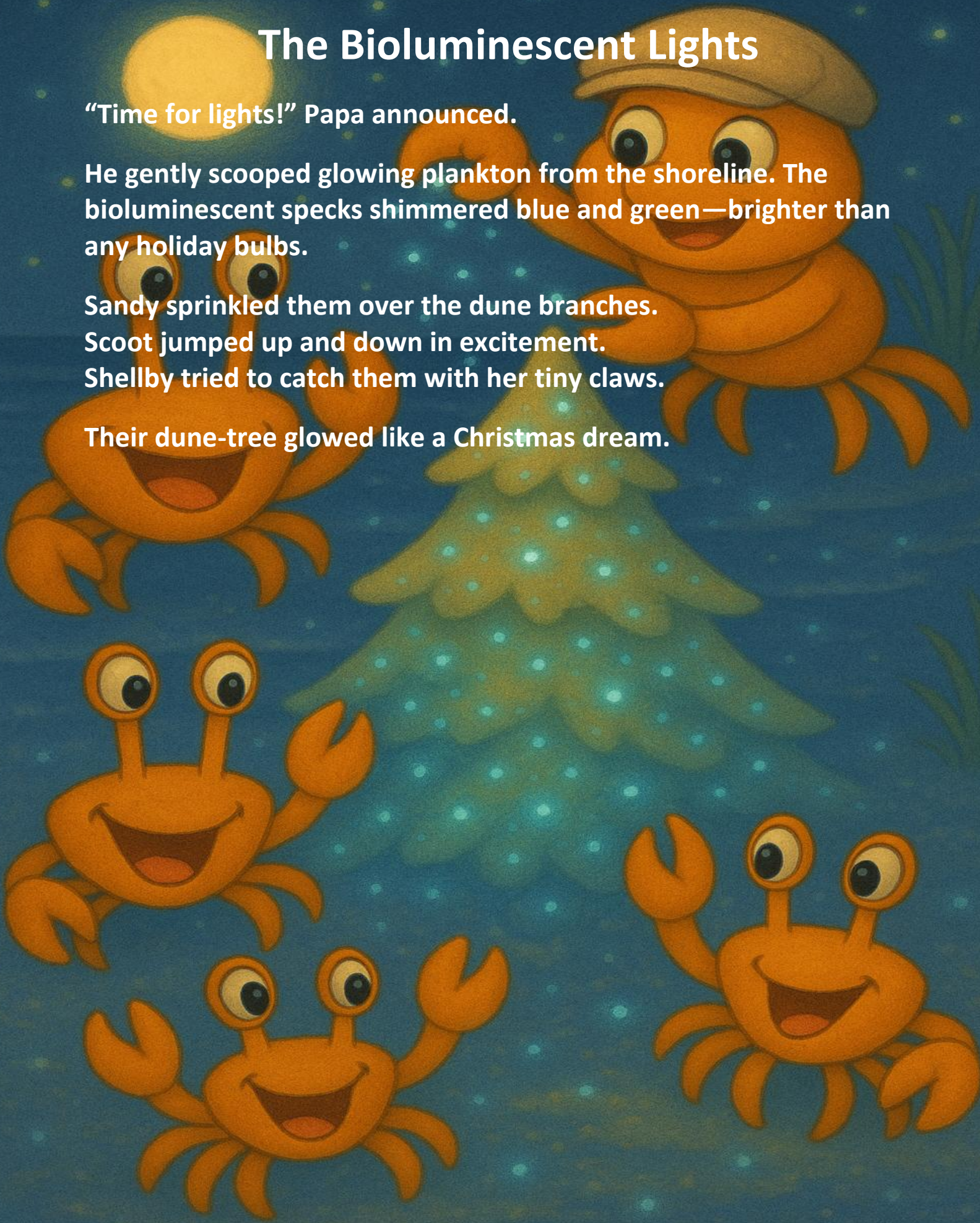
He gently scooped glowing plankton from the shoreline. The bioluminescent specks shimmered blue and green—brighter than any holiday bulbs.

Sandy sprinkled them over the dune branches.

Scoot jumped up and down in excitement.

Shellby tried to catch them with her tiny claws.

Their dune-tree glowed like a Christmas dream.



Gifts from the Sea

Mama gathered everyone around.

“In our family,” she said, “Christmas is about sharing gifts from the heart.”

Sandy gave Mama a heart-shaped shell.

Scoot found a smooth pebble just right for Papa’s burrow projects.

Papa presented Shellby with a driftwood rattle.

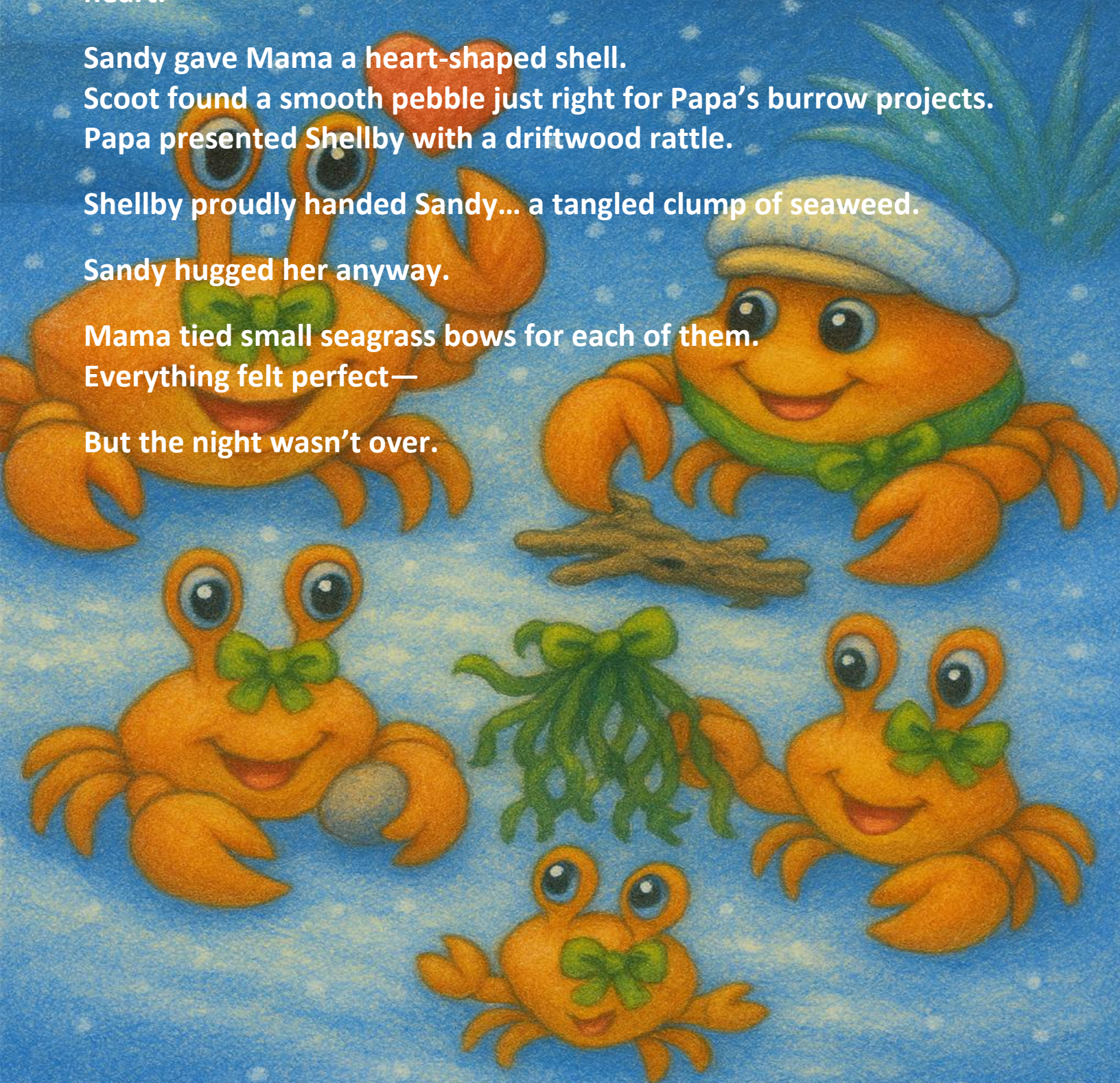
Shellby proudly handed Sandy... a tangled clump of seaweed.

Sandy hugged her anyway.

Mama tied small seagrass bows for each of them.

Everything felt perfect—

But the night wasn’t over.



A Tiny Jingle in the Sky

Suddenly, Scoot froze.

“Do you hear that?” he whispered.

A soft jingling drifted from above—like tiny bells carried on the wind.

The Dunehoppers looked up.

Across the moonlit sky sailed a miniature sleigh made from a shiny shell. It was pulled by four speedy sand fleas, each no bigger than a pebble but fast as the wind.

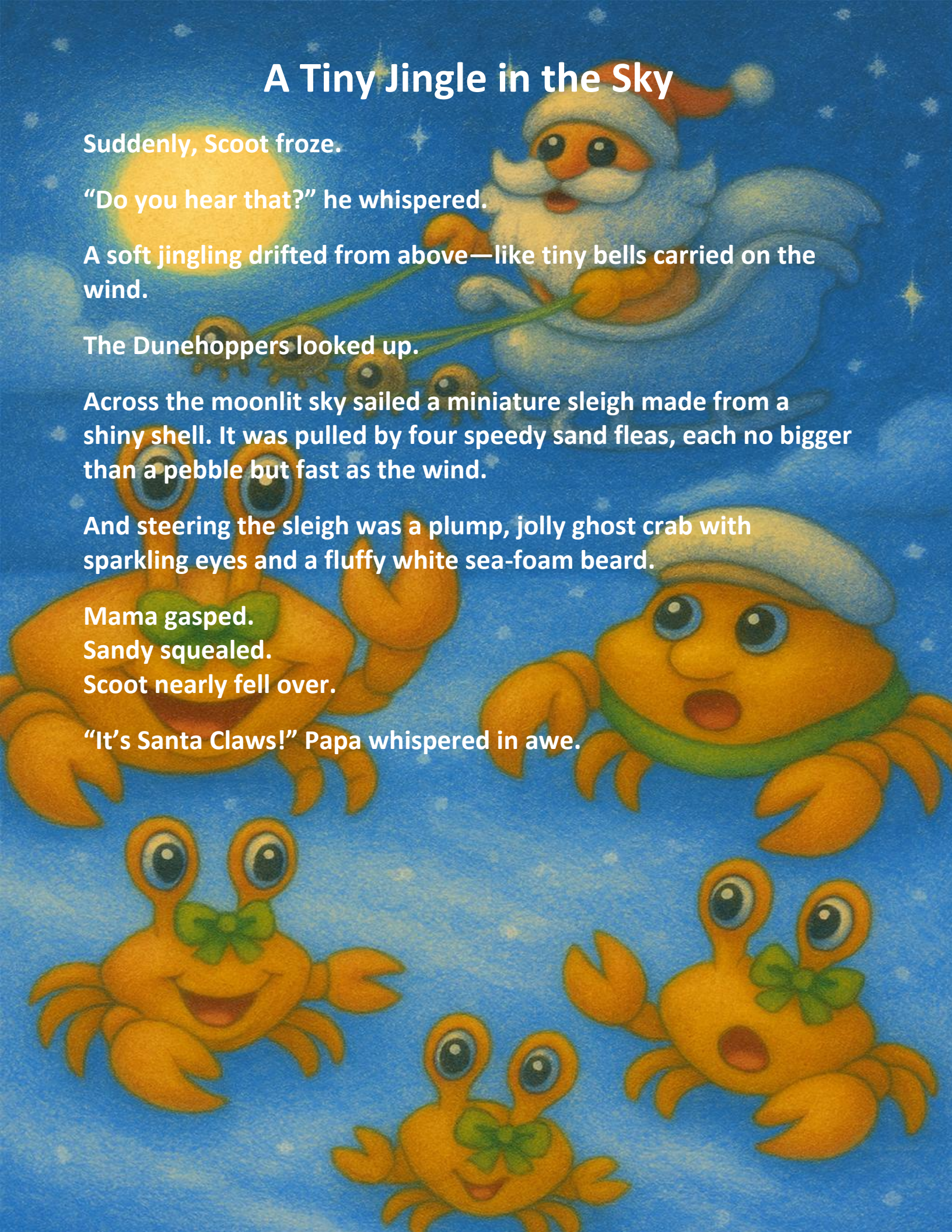
And steering the sleigh was a plump, jolly ghost crab with sparkling eyes and a fluffy white sea-foam beard.

Mama gasped.

Sandy squealed.

Scoot nearly fell over.

“It’s Santa Claws!” Papa whispered in awe.



Santa's Visit

Santa Claws landed softly beside their glowing dune-tree.

"Ho-ho-hoooo, my sandy friends!" he boomed in a cheerful crabby voice. "What a beautiful Christmas tree you've made!"

Shellby crawled straight into his claws without hesitation. Santa chuckled warmly.

"For Sandy," Santa said, placing a tiny starfish charm in her claw. "For Scoot," he presented a polished driftwood shovel perfect for digging burrows.

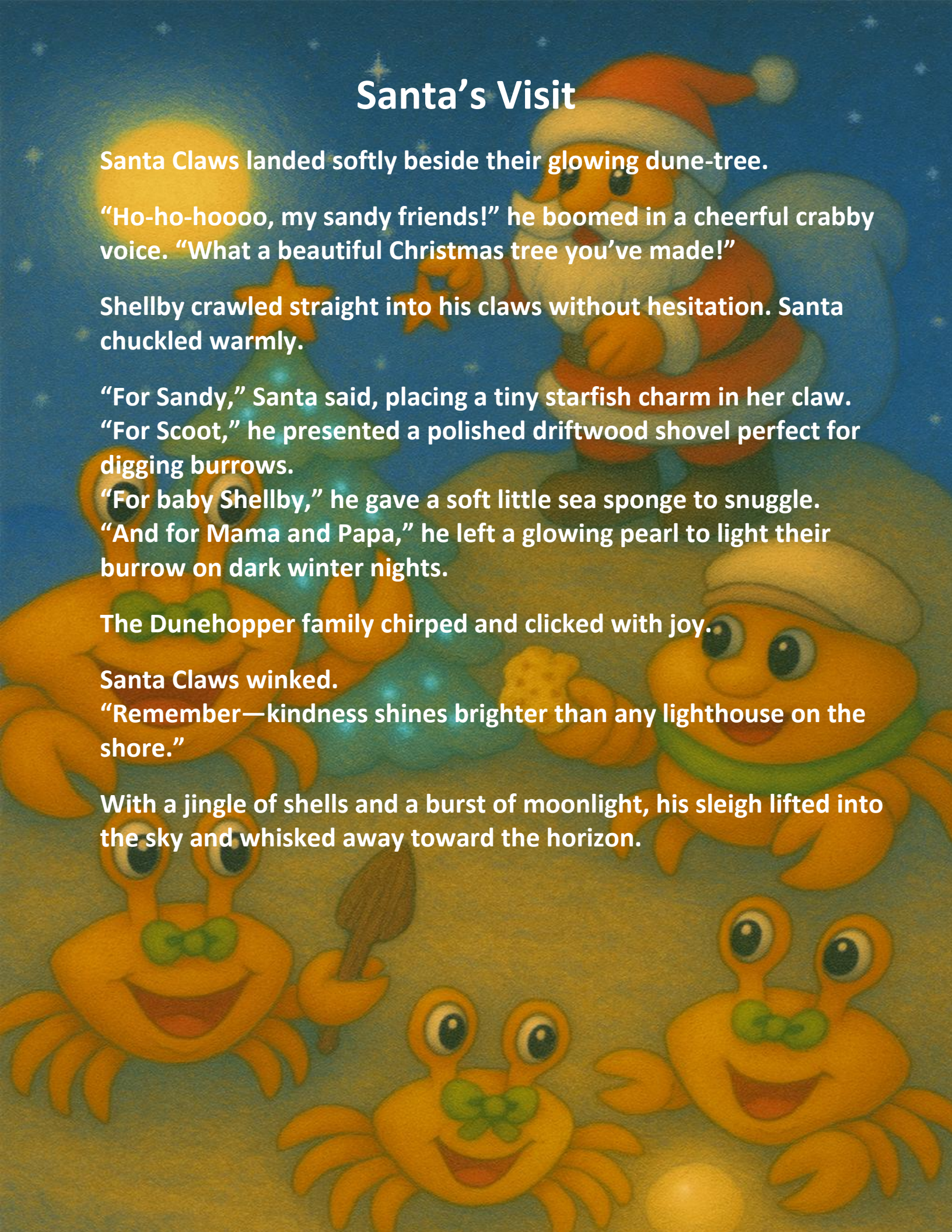
"For baby Shellby," he gave a soft little sea sponge to snuggle. "And for Mama and Papa," he left a glowing pearl to light their burrow on dark winter nights.

The Dunehopper family chirped and clicked with joy.

Santa Claws winked.

"Remember—kindness shines brighter than any lighthouse on the shore."

With a jingle of shells and a burst of moonlight, his sleigh lifted into the sky and whisked away toward the horizon.



The Christmas Moon Parade

Moments later, burrows all along the beach popped open. Ghost crabs of all sizes emerged, carrying shiny shells that chimed like tiny bells.

“It’s the Christmas Moon Parade!” Mama exclaimed.

The Dunehoppers joined their neighbors, hopping, zig-zagging, and laughing as they followed the glowing trail Santa Claws had left behind.



A Christmas Wish

At last, they snuggled together under their dune-tree, warm on their seaweed blanket.

The ocean hummed its lullaby.

The plankton lights flickered softly.

The glowing pearl nestled beside them.

Mama whispered, "This Christmas was magical."

Papa nodded. "Santa Claws knew just what we needed."

Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby drifted into sleepy dreams of jingling bells and moonlit sleigh rides.

Under the shimmering Christmas moon, the Dunehopper Ghost Crab Family felt the warmest gift of all—love, laughter, and being together.

