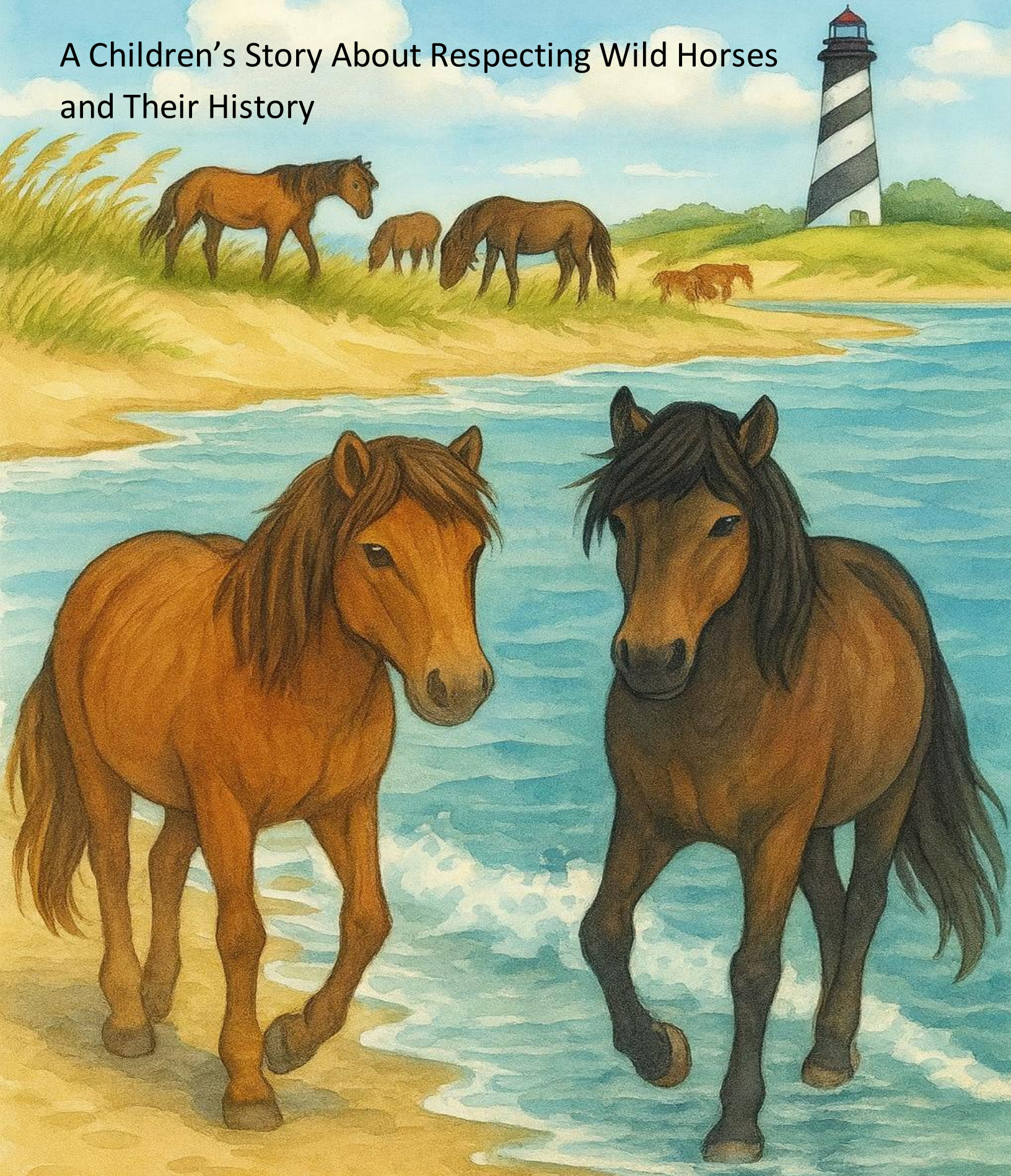


Wild and Free: A Day on the Beach with the Outer Banks Horses

A Children's Story About Respecting Wild Horses and Their History



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.

All materials in this book may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.



It was a bright summer morning on the Outer Banks. Jan and her younger brother Jake had just arrived with their family for vacation. As soon as they unpacked, they ran straight for the beach, their toes digging into the soft sand.



“Look!” Jake shouted. “Horses!”

A small group of wild horses stood peacefully in the dunes, their manes blowing in the salty breeze. They looked like something out of a dream.



“They're so close!” Jan whispered. “Let’s get a picture with them!”



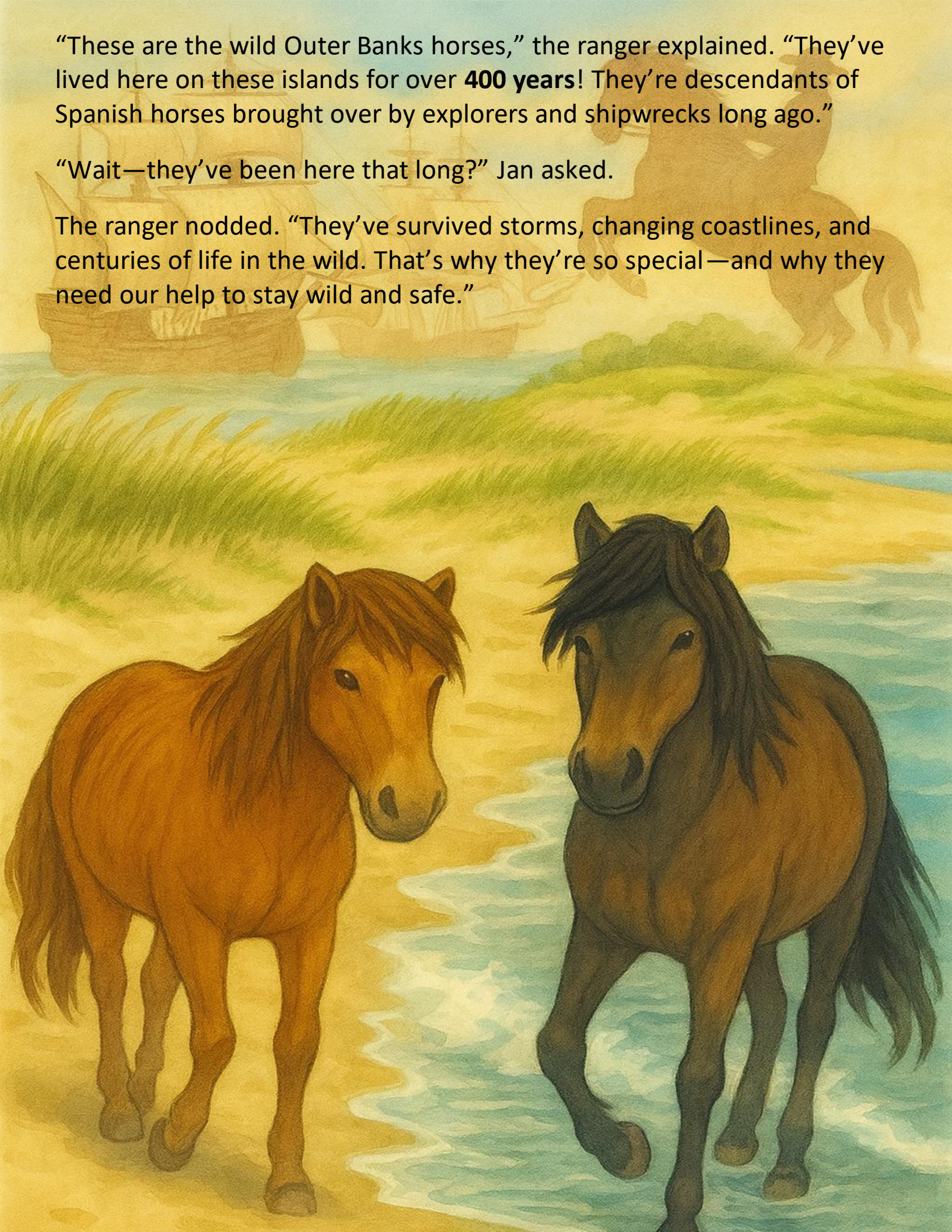
“Whoa there!” said a park ranger, walking over. “Let me teach you something important.”



“These are the wild Outer Banks horses,” the ranger explained. “They’ve lived here on these islands for over **400 years**! They’re descendants of Spanish horses brought over by explorers and shipwrecks long ago.”

“Wait—they’ve been here that long?” Jan asked.

The ranger nodded. “They’ve survived storms, changing coastlines, and centuries of life in the wild. That’s why they’re so special—and why they need our help to stay wild and safe.”



The ranger pointed to a nearby sign that read:

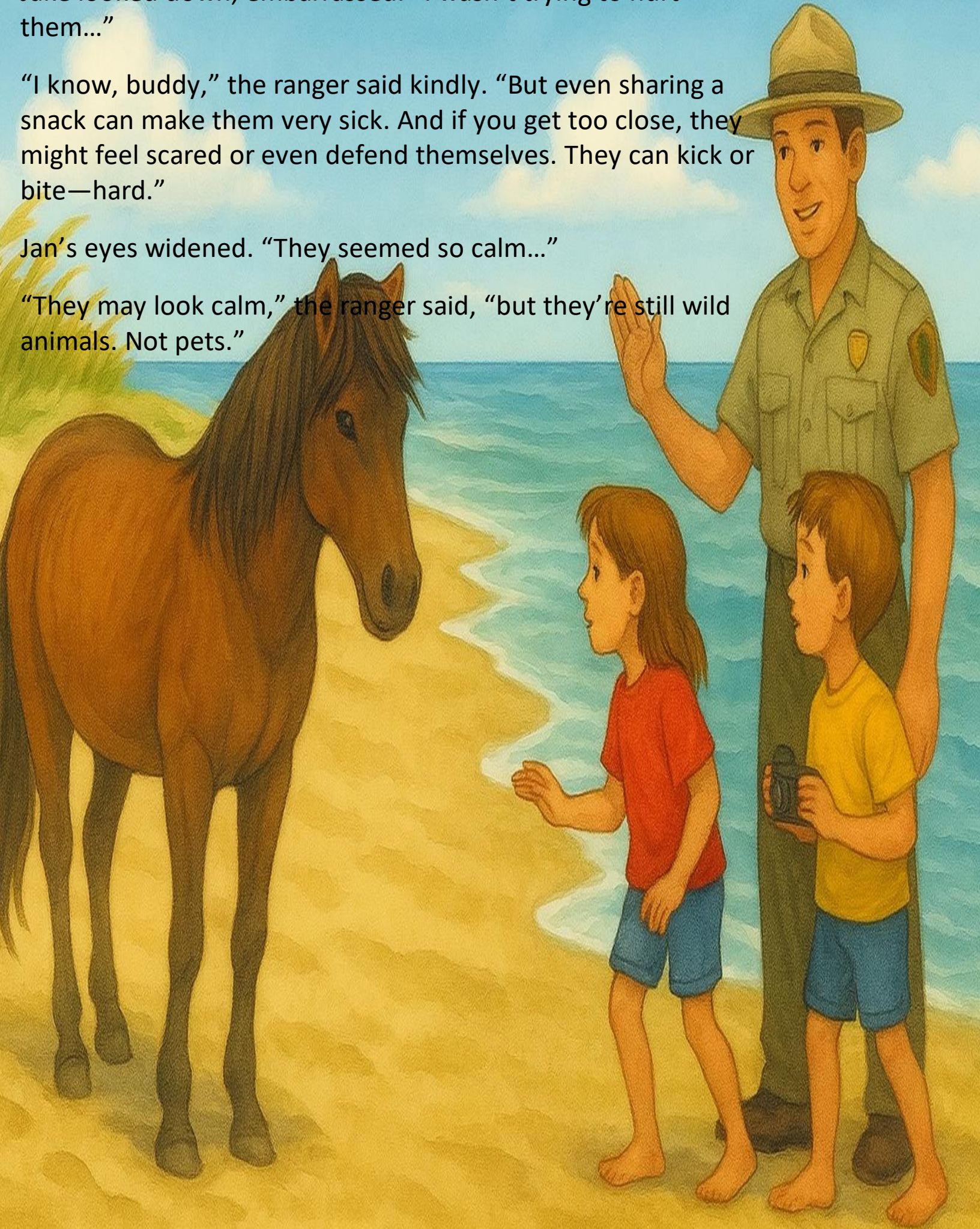


Jake looked down, embarrassed. "I wasn't trying to hurt them..."

"I know, buddy," the ranger said kindly. "But even sharing a snack can make them very sick. And if you get too close, they might feel scared or even defend themselves. They can kick or bite—hard."

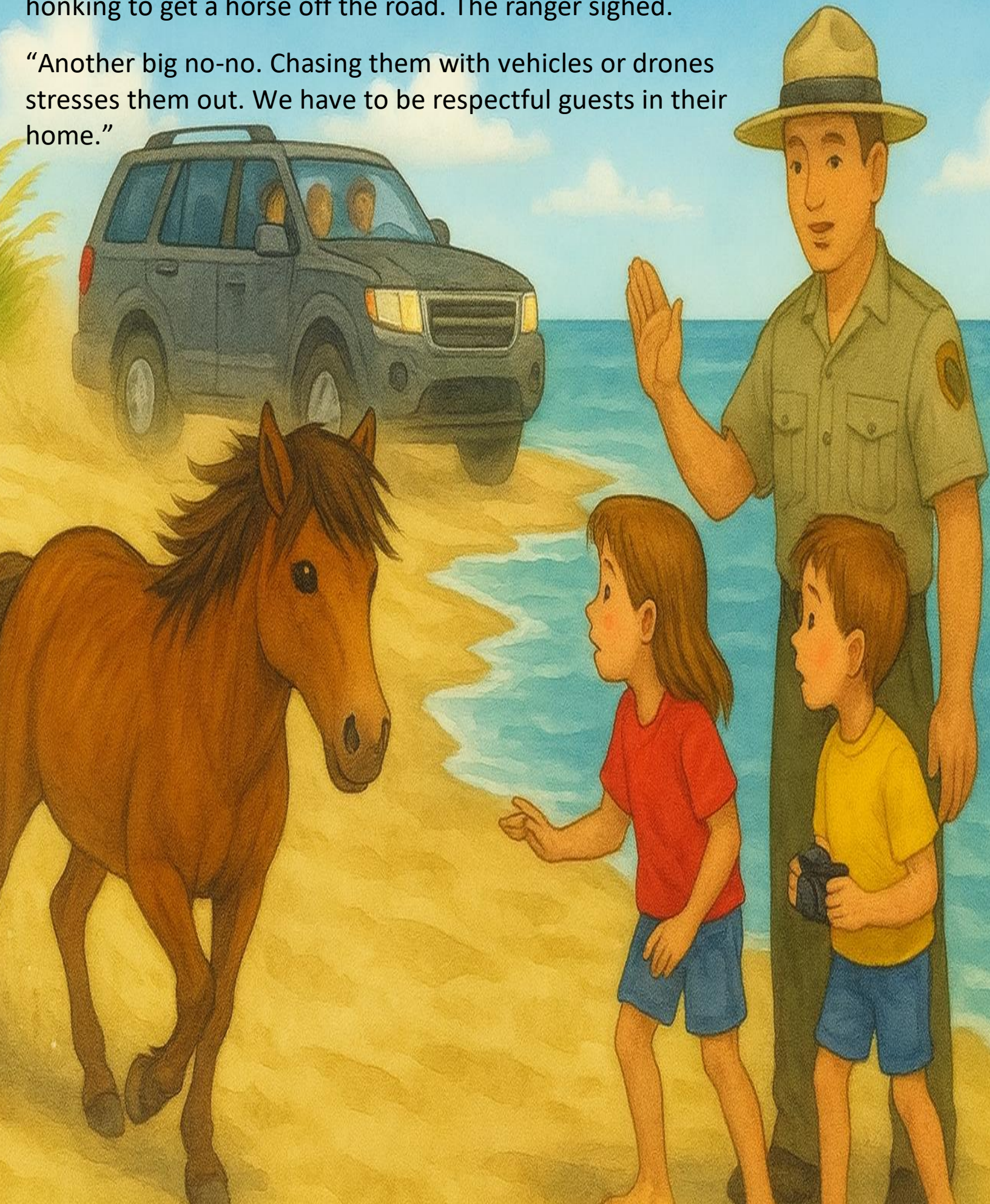
Jan's eyes widened. "They seemed so calm..."

"They may look calm," the ranger said, "but they're still wild animals. Not pets."



Just then, a family in a big SUV came rumbling down the beach, honking to get a horse off the road. The ranger sighed.

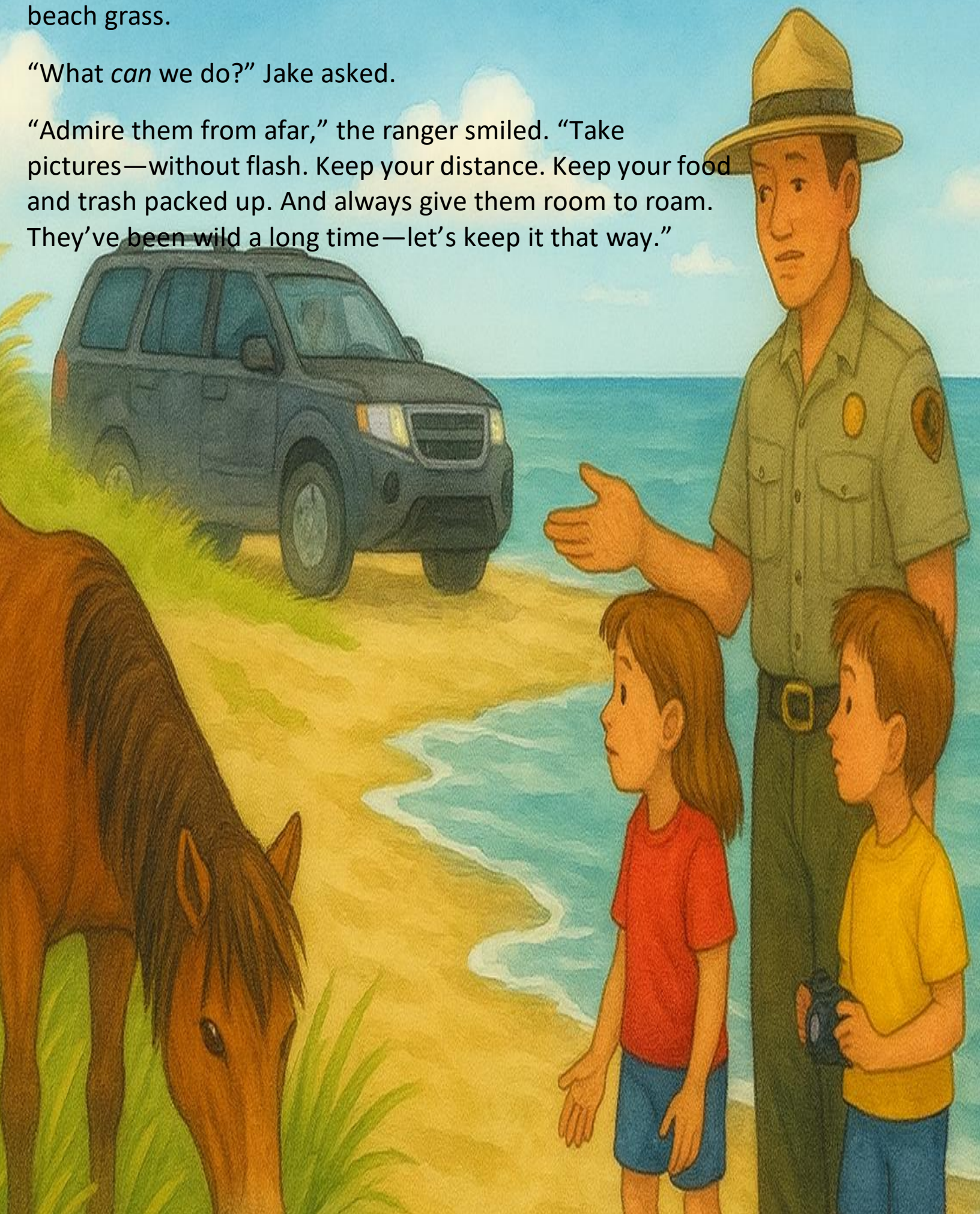
“Another big no-no. Chasing them with vehicles or drones stresses them out. We have to be respectful guests in their home.”



The horse stepped aside slowly, then returned to nibbling beach grass.

“What *can* we do?” Jake asked.

“Admire them from afar,” the ranger smiled. “Take pictures—without flash. Keep your distance. Keep your food and trash packed up. And always give them room to roam. They’ve been wild a long time—let’s keep it that way.”



Jake reached for his granola bar again—then paused.

“I think I’ll save this for later,” he said with a grin, putting it back in his backpack. “For *me*, not the horses.”



They sat down on their beach blanket and watched the horses wander through the dunes—free, wild, and just as they should be.



The wild horses of the Outer Banks have been here for centuries. Admire them from a distance, don't feed or touch them, and always treat their home with respect.



Don'ts for Wild Horses of the Outer Banks, North Carolina

1. Don't Feed the Horses

- Human food can make them very sick — even kill them.
- Wild horses get all the nutrition they need from their natural environment.

2. Don't Touch or Approach

- Stay at least **50 feet away** (the length of a school bus).
- These horses are wild animals — they can kick, bite, or charge if they feel threatened.

3. Don't Chase or Harass

- Never follow them with vehicles, drones, or on foot.
- Do not honk or rev engines to scare them off the road.

4. Don't Block Their Path

- If a horse is approaching, move away and give it plenty of room.
- Don't corner them near fences, dunes, or water.

5. Don't Litter

- Trash can harm the horses and pollute their fragile coastal habitat.

6. Don't Ride or Try to "Tame" Them

- It's illegal and dangerous.
- These are not domestic animals — they've lived wild for centuries.

7. Don't Use Flash Photography

- Bright lights and flashes can startle and stress them.

8. Don't Report Horse Sightings as Emergencies Unless They're in Danger

- Only call for help if a horse is injured, trapped, or behaving abnormally.

9. Don't Assume They're Safe Because They Look Calm

- Wild horses may appear tame but can react unpredictably.

10. Don't Violate Local Laws

There are strict regulations protecting the horses. Violators can face fines.