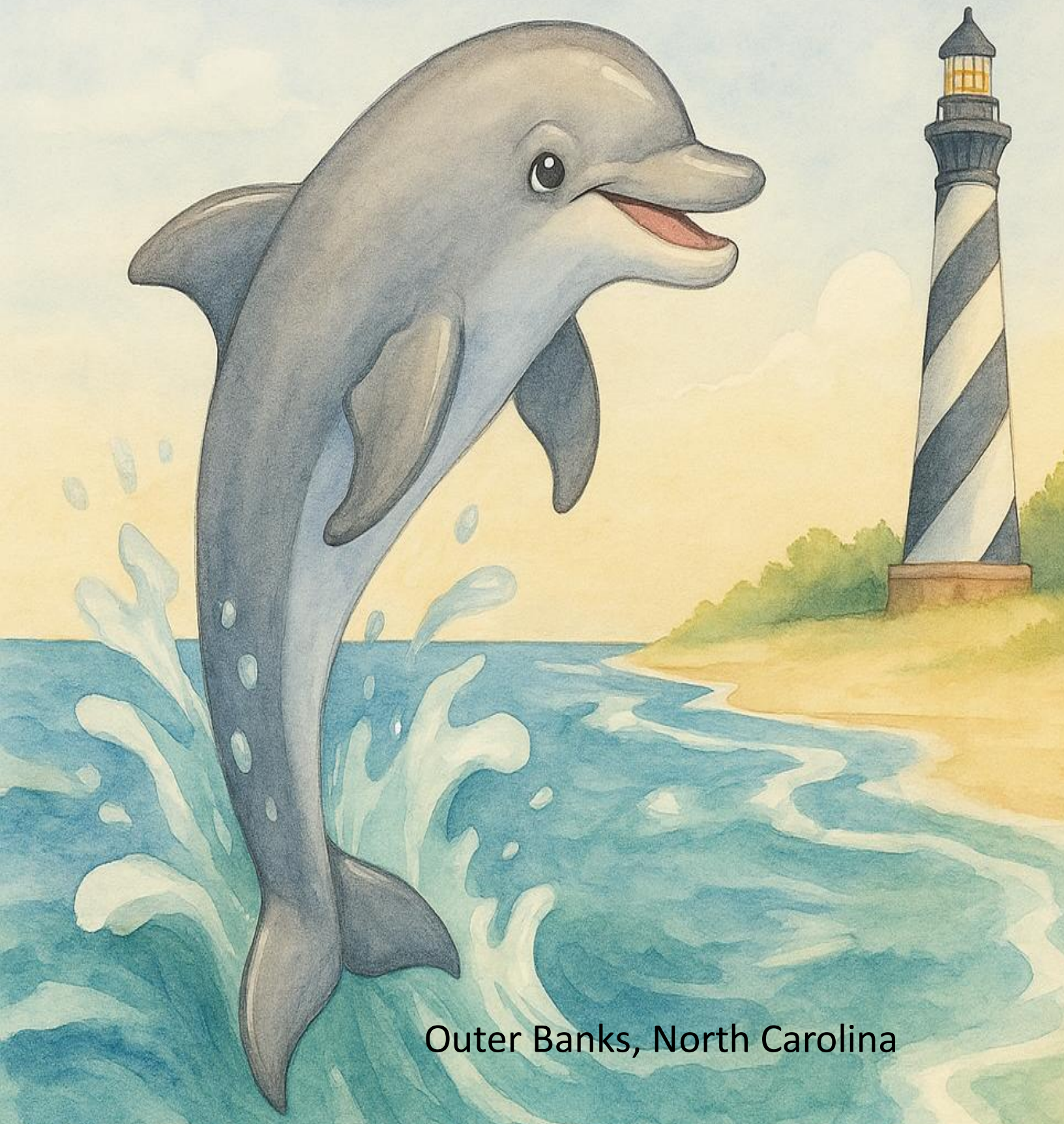


A “Leave No Trace” Tale

A Coastal Critters Story



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.

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 morning on the Outer Banks. The sky was painted with soft pink clouds, and the waves whispered gently on the shore.

Sandy the ghost crab peeked out from his burrow in the dunes. "Ahh," she sighed, stretching his tiny claws. "A perfect day for digging and dashing!"



Sandy scuttled across the warm sand, excited to visit his friends.

First, he saw Piper the piping plover, dancing at the edge of the waves.

But Piper wasn't dancing. She was hopping in circles, chirping in distress.

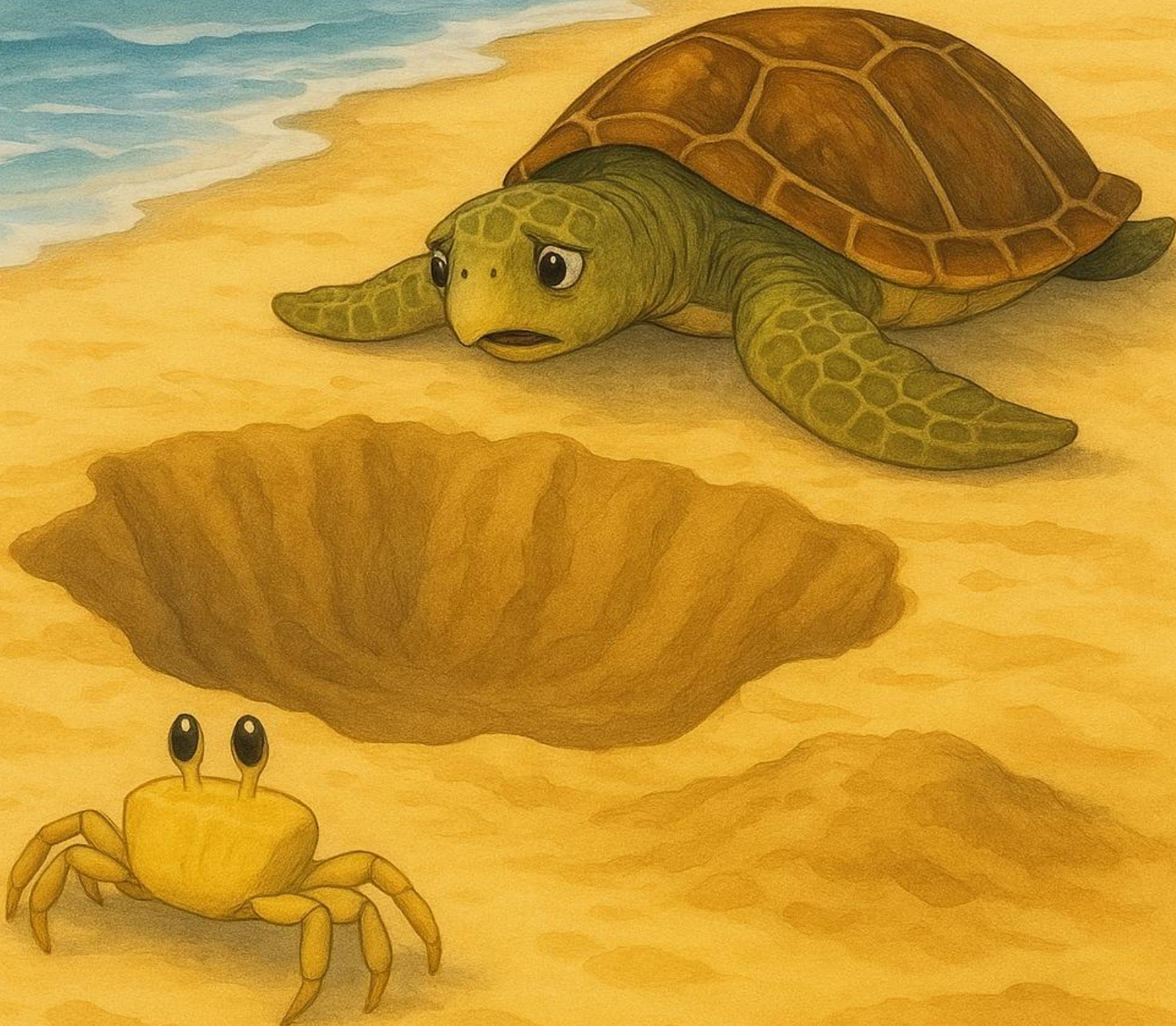
"Look at all this trash!" she cried. "Plastic straws and chip bags are everywhere. I almost tripped on a soda can!"



Next, they spotted Tilda the sea turtle, slowly making her way up the beach.

Her flippers dragged through the sand, and she looked worried.

"I tried to reach my nest," Tilda said, "but someone dug a huge hole right in my path! I almost got stuck!"

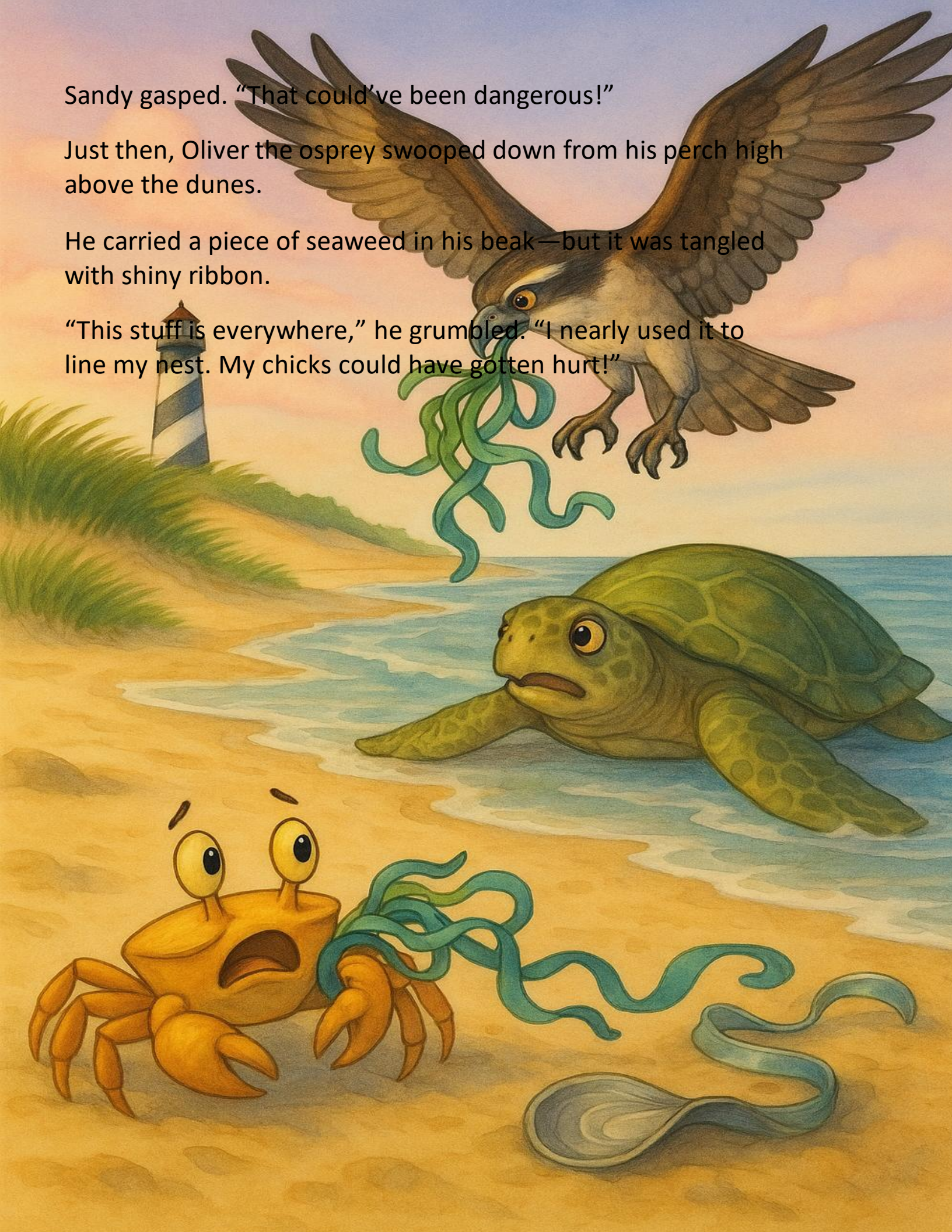


Sandy gasped. "That could've been dangerous!"

Just then, Oliver the osprey swooped down from his perch high above the dunes.

He carried a piece of seaweed in his beak—but it was tangled with shiny ribbon.

"This stuff is everywhere," he grumbled. "I nearly used it to line my nest. My chicks could have gotten hurt!"



Out in the ocean, Dolly the dolphin splashed up to the surface.

“There's so much floating plastic today,” she said, bobbing with concern. “One looked like a jellyfish—I almost ate it!”



The critters gathered in a quiet circle. The beach was their home, but today, it didn't feel safe.

Sandy shook his shell. "Something's got to change."



Just then, a group of children arrived. They laughed and played, skipping and running along the sand. One child dug a deep hole. Another left a trail of snack wrappers behind.

“Wait!” Sandy squeaked. “Watch out!”



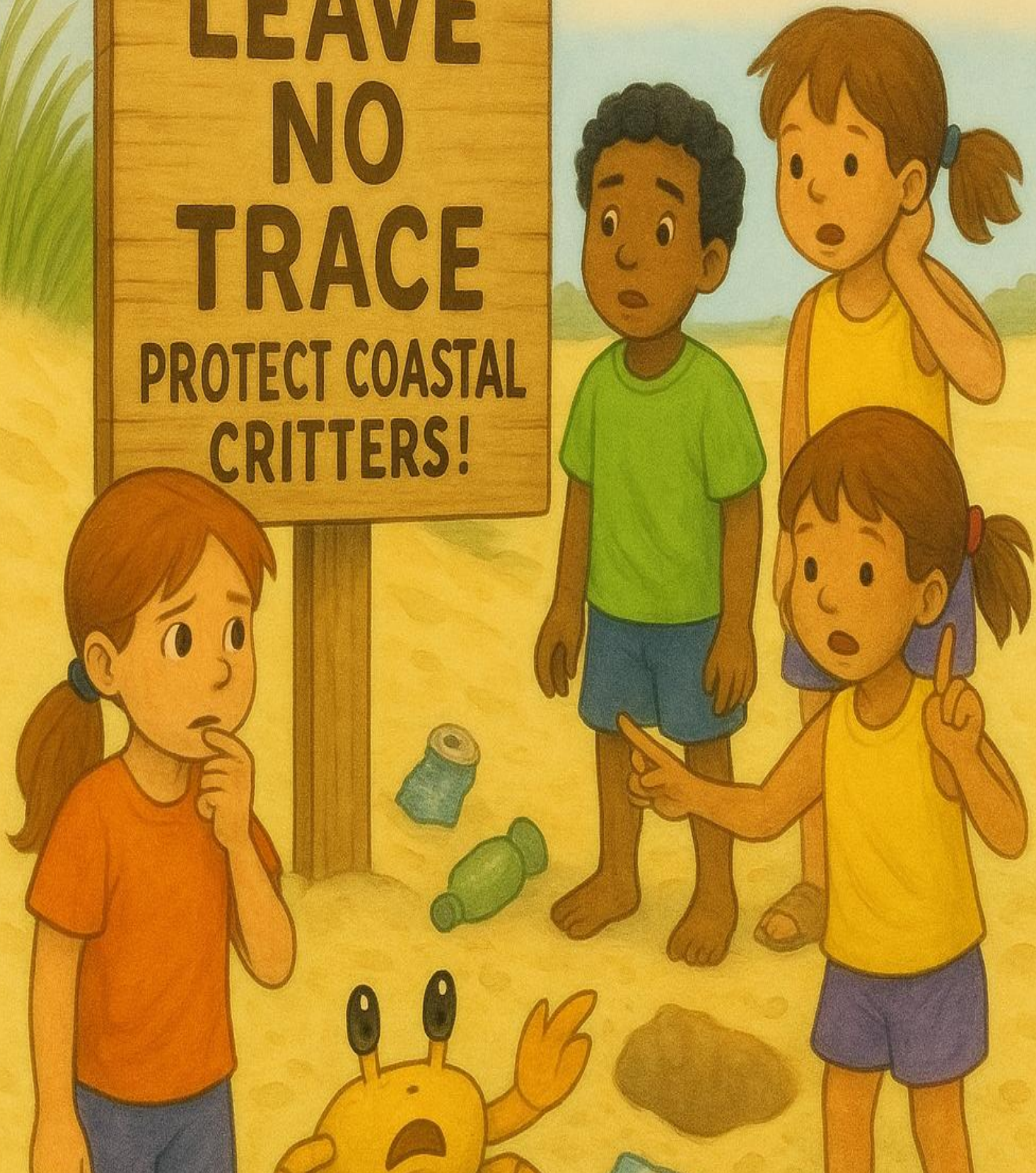
Piper flapped her wings and chirped loudly.
Tilda pointed with her flipper toward a wooden sign nearby.
Oliver flew high overhead, circling the sign until the children
looked up.

Leave No Trace—Protect Coastal Critters!



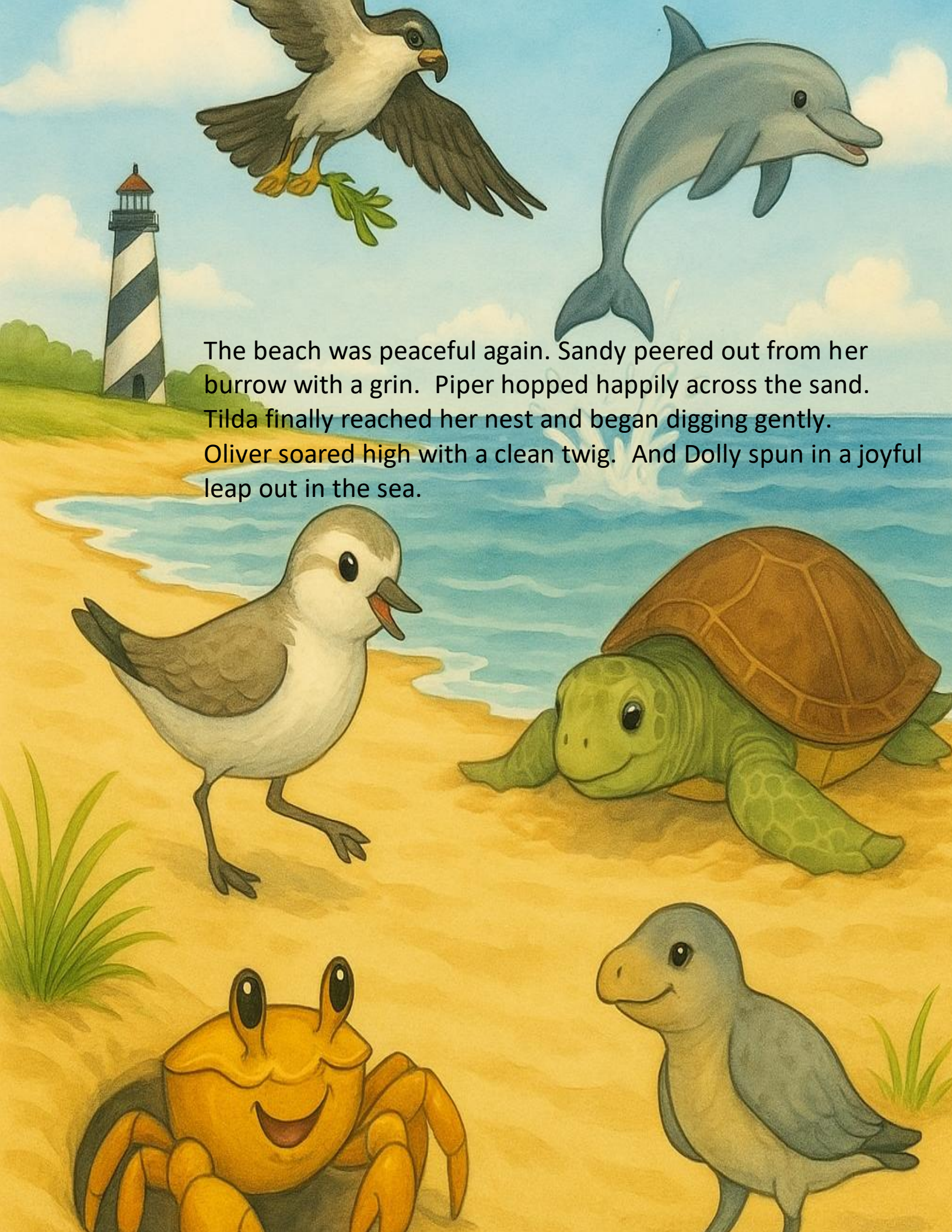
One of the children read it aloud. "What does *leave no trace* mean?" "It means clean up everything when you go," said another. "Like... don't leave trash or big holes." "And stay off the dunes," a third added. "That's where animals live!" The children looked around. "Oh no. We didn't know!"

**LEAVE
NO
TRACE**
**PROTECT COASTAL
CRITTERS!**



Right away, they got to work. They picked up every bit of trash, filled in the deep holes, moved carefully away from the dunes, and watched the animals from a safe distance.





The beach was peaceful again. Sandy peered out from her burrow with a grin. Piper hopped happily across the sand. Tilda finally reached her nest and began digging gently. Oliver soared high with a clean twig. And Dolly spun in a joyful leap out in the sea.

That evening, the children packed up their things—and all their trash too. One of them smiled and said, “We’re Beach Heroes now!”

From that day on, they remembered:

Take only memories. Leave only footprints.

Because when you **leave no trace behind**,
you protect the wild, the waves, and the wonderful creatures
that call the coast home.

