

The Big Beach Clean-Up



Outer Banks, North Carolina

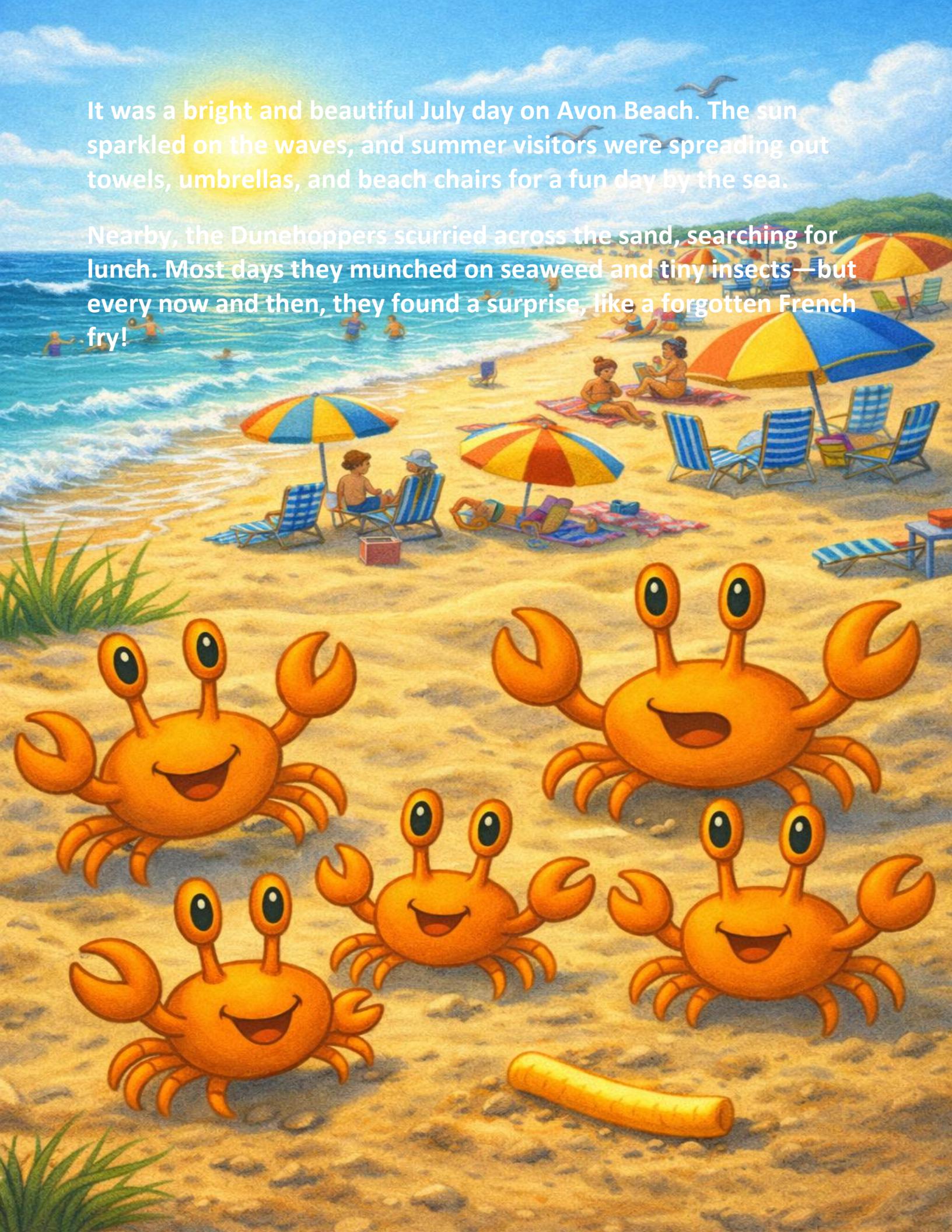
Forward

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 and beautiful July day on Avon Beach. The sun sparkled on the waves, and summer visitors were spreading out towels, umbrellas, and beach chairs for a fun day by the sea.

Nearby, the Dunehoppers scurried across the sand, searching for lunch. Most days they munched on seaweed and tiny insects—but every now and then, they found a surprise, like a forgotten French fry!

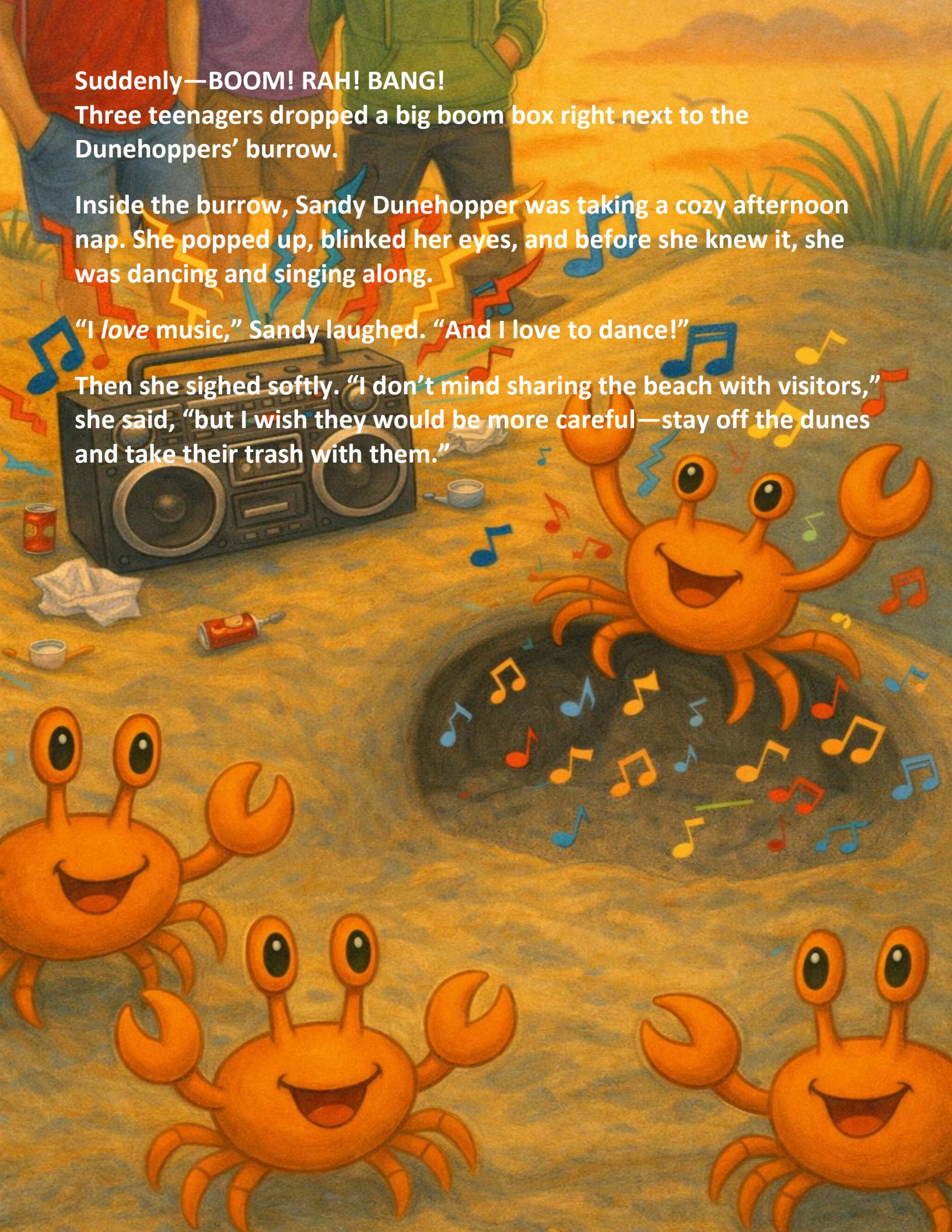
Suddenly—BOOM! RAH! BANG!

Three teenagers dropped a big boom box right next to the Dunehoppers' burrow.

Inside the burrow, Sandy Dunehopper was taking a cozy afternoon nap. She popped up, blinked her eyes, and before she knew it, she was dancing and singing along.

“I love music,” Sandy laughed. “And I love to dance!”

Then she sighed softly. “I don’t mind sharing the beach with visitors,” she said, “but I wish they would be more careful—stay off the dunes and take their trash with them.”



Just then, *clink!*

One of the teenagers tossed an empty soda can near the burrow.

Sandy pointed at it. “See? That’s what I mean. This is our home. I wish humans would respect it and clean up after themselves.”

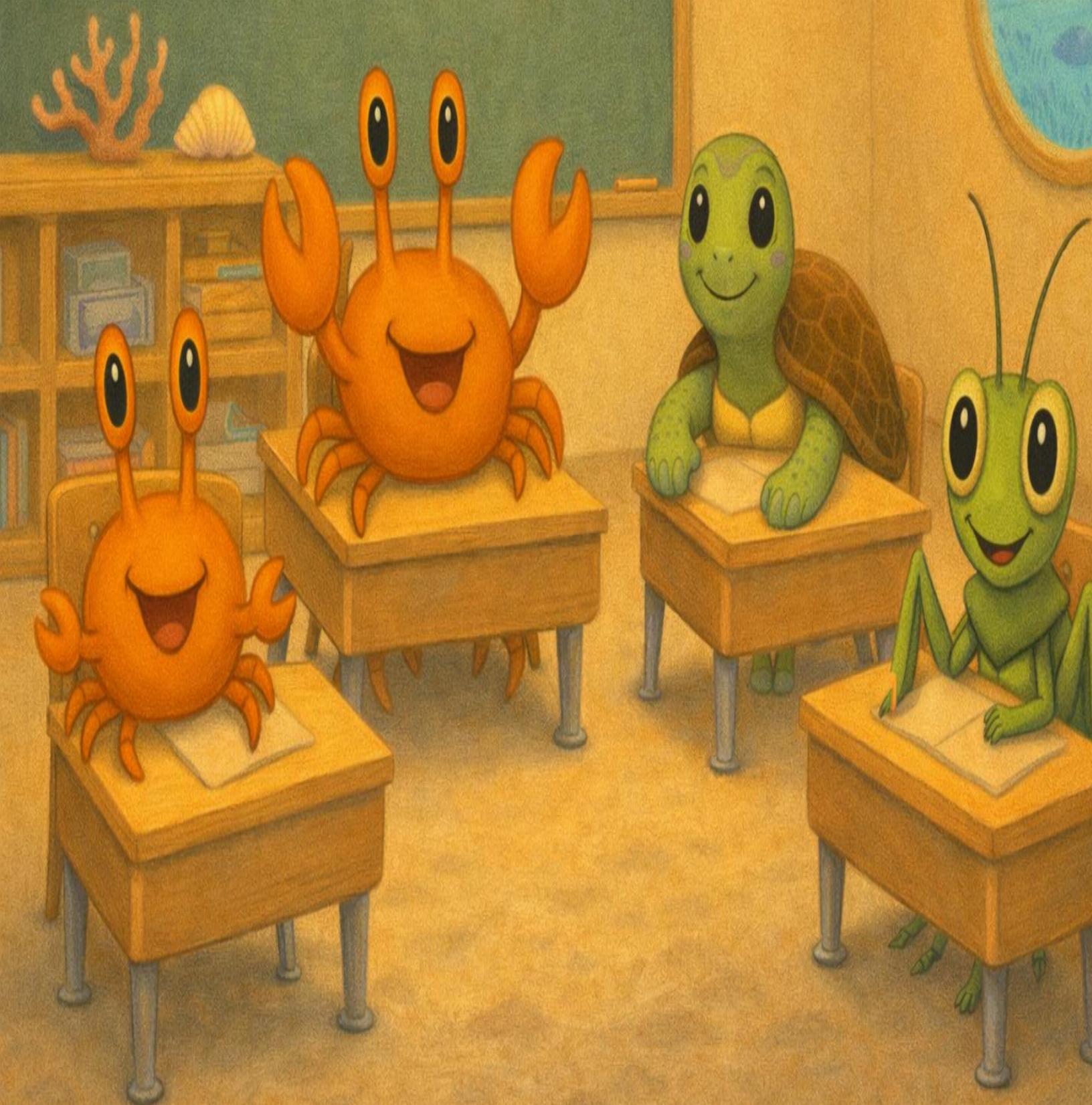
By the end of the day, bits of trash were scattered across the sand.

“Oh no!” cried Scoot Dunehopper. “Look at this mess! We have to do something. This is our home—and it needs to stay clean.”



The very next day at Sea Oats School, Scoot gathered his friends—Sam the Sea Turtle and George the Grasshopper.

“Let’s organize a beach clean-up!” Scoot said. “We all live here, and we all want a healthy beach.”



- Millions of tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year.
- Most beach trash is plastic—bottles, bags, wrappers, and caps.
- Many animals are hurt or killed when they eat trash or get tangled in it.
- Wind and waves can carry litter far across beaches and into the sea.
- Beach cleanups really help—and every little bit makes a difference!

As luck would have it, that same day in Science class, Professor Greenclaws taught an important lesson about litter. She wrote the lesson on the chalkboard:

That afternoon Scoot, Sandy, Shellby, Sam, and George grabbed their trash pickers and bags. Together, they worked up and down Avon Beach, picking up every piece of litter they could find.



When they finished, the sand was clean, the dunes were safe, and the ocean sparkled once more.

Sandy smiled and looked out at the waves. “When we take care of the beach,” she said, “the beach takes care of us.”

And from that day on, the Dunehoppers knew that even small claws—and helping hands—can make a big difference when it comes to protecting the place they call home.



Did You Know?

- **Trash can hurt beach animals.**
Ghost crabs, sea turtles, birds, and fish can get tangled in trash or mistake it for food.
- **Wind can move litter really fast!**
On windy beaches like the Outer Banks, trash can blow across the sand and into the ocean if it isn't secured.
- **Plastic lasts a long time.**
A plastic bottle or bag can stay in the ocean for hundreds of years!
- **Clean beaches help everyone.**
When beaches are clean, dunes stay strong, animals stay safe, and people can enjoy the shore, too.
- **Kids can make a big difference!**
Picking up just one piece of litter helps protect the beach—every little bit counts!

Remember: When we take care of the beach, the beach takes care of us.

