

# THE DUNEHOPPERS

Escape from the  
PLASTIC DOME



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](http://www.theobcc.org).

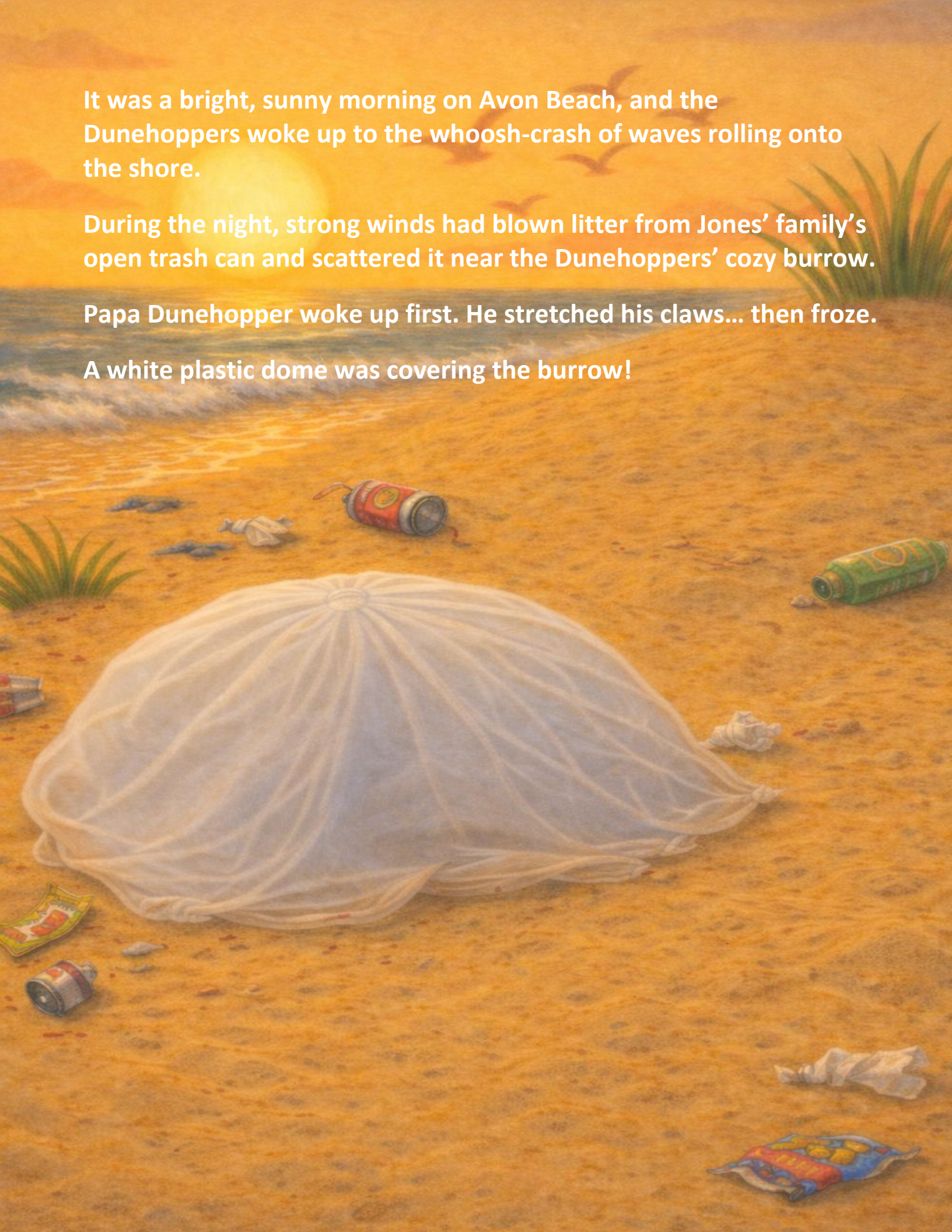


It was a bright, sunny morning on Avon Beach, and the Dunehoppers woke up to the whoosh-crash of waves rolling onto the shore.

During the night, strong winds had blown litter from Jones' family's open trash can and scattered it near the Dunehoppers' cozy burrow.

Papa Dunehopper woke up first. He stretched his claws... then froze.

A white plastic dome was covering the burrow!



**“We’re trapped!” Sandy exclaimed.**

**Carefully brushing the sand from his claws, Papa tugged and pulled at the plastic. Inside the burrow, Mama, Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby huddled close together, their eyes wide with worry.**

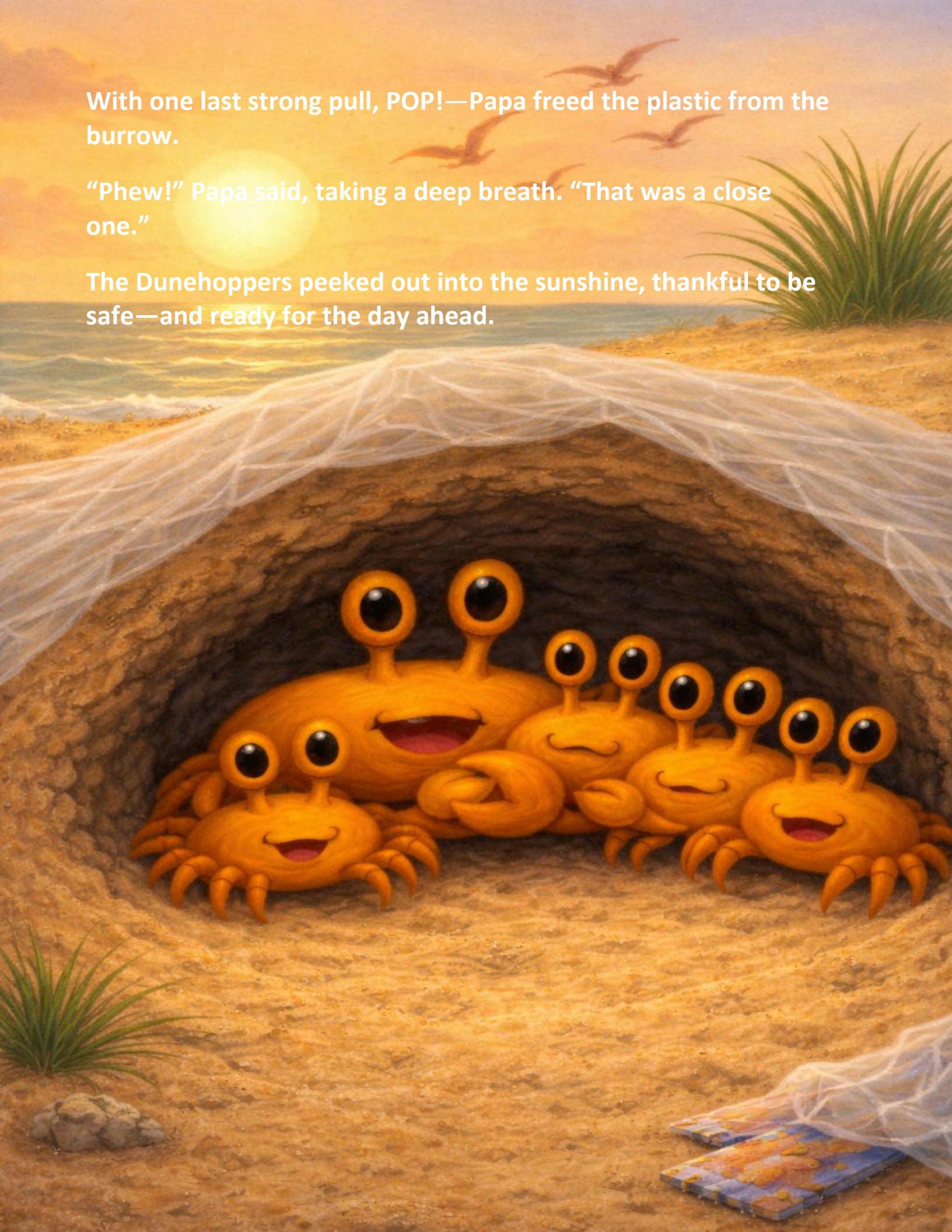
**“What if we can’t get out?” Sandy whispered.**



With one last strong pull, POP!—Papa freed the plastic from the burrow.

“Phew!” Papa said, taking a deep breath. “That was a close one.”

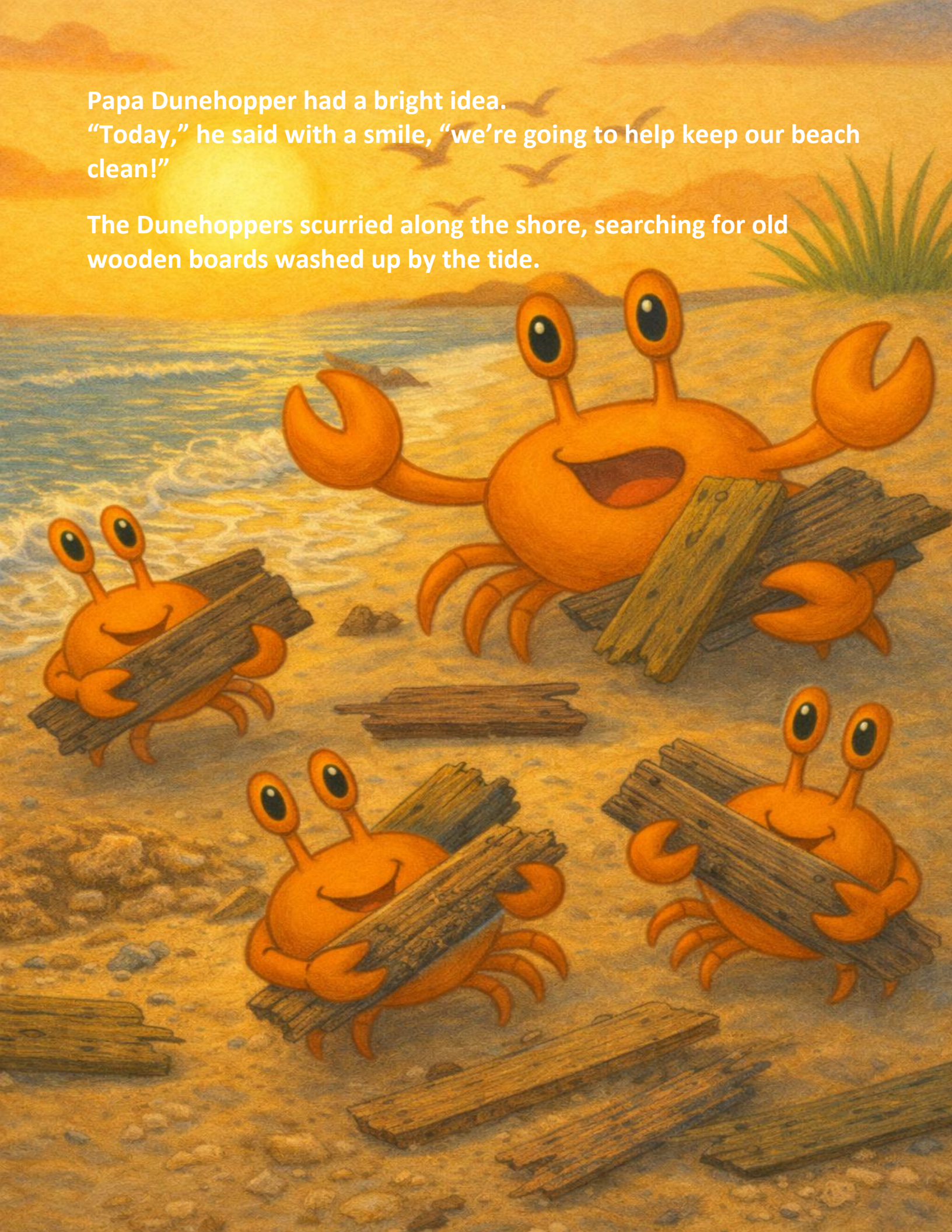
The Dunehoppers peeked out into the sunshine, thankful to be safe—and ready for the day ahead.



Papa Dunehopper had a bright idea.

"Today," he said with a smile, "we're going to help keep our beach clean!"

The Dunehoppers scurried along the shore, searching for old wooden boards washed up by the tide.



Soon, they gathered around their burrow and began making signs to share an important message.

Sandy worked carefully, scratching neat letters into her board. Her sign said:

- Secure your trash
- Don't let trash cans overflow
- Pick up litter
- Store cans in a sheltered spot



Scout made his sign extra big so everyone could see it. At the top he wrote, "Why It Matters!"

Underneath, he added:

Keeping trash secure:

- Helps reduce pollution
- Protects dunes and nesting areas
- Keeps animals from getting tangled or sick
- Keeps our beaches beautiful

Shellby smiled proudly as they placed the signs near their burrow.



Then Papa gathered the family close.

"You know," he said, "the winds on the Outer Banks are very special—and very strong."

He pointed toward the sea and the sound.

"These long, skinny islands sit between the ocean on one side and the calm sound waters on the other. Warm air and cool air meet here, and there are no mountains or tall forests to slow the wind down."

The Dunehoppers felt a breeze whoosh past their claws.

"That means the wind can race right across the beach," Papa explained. "It shapes the dunes, stirs the waves—and it can easily tip over trash cans or blow light trash far away if we're not careful."

Sandy nodded. "That's why securing trash is so important!"

Papa smiled. "Exactly. When we take care of our trash, we take care of our beach—and all the creatures who call it home."



Sandy suddenly remembered a true story about her friend Tortie the sea turtle.

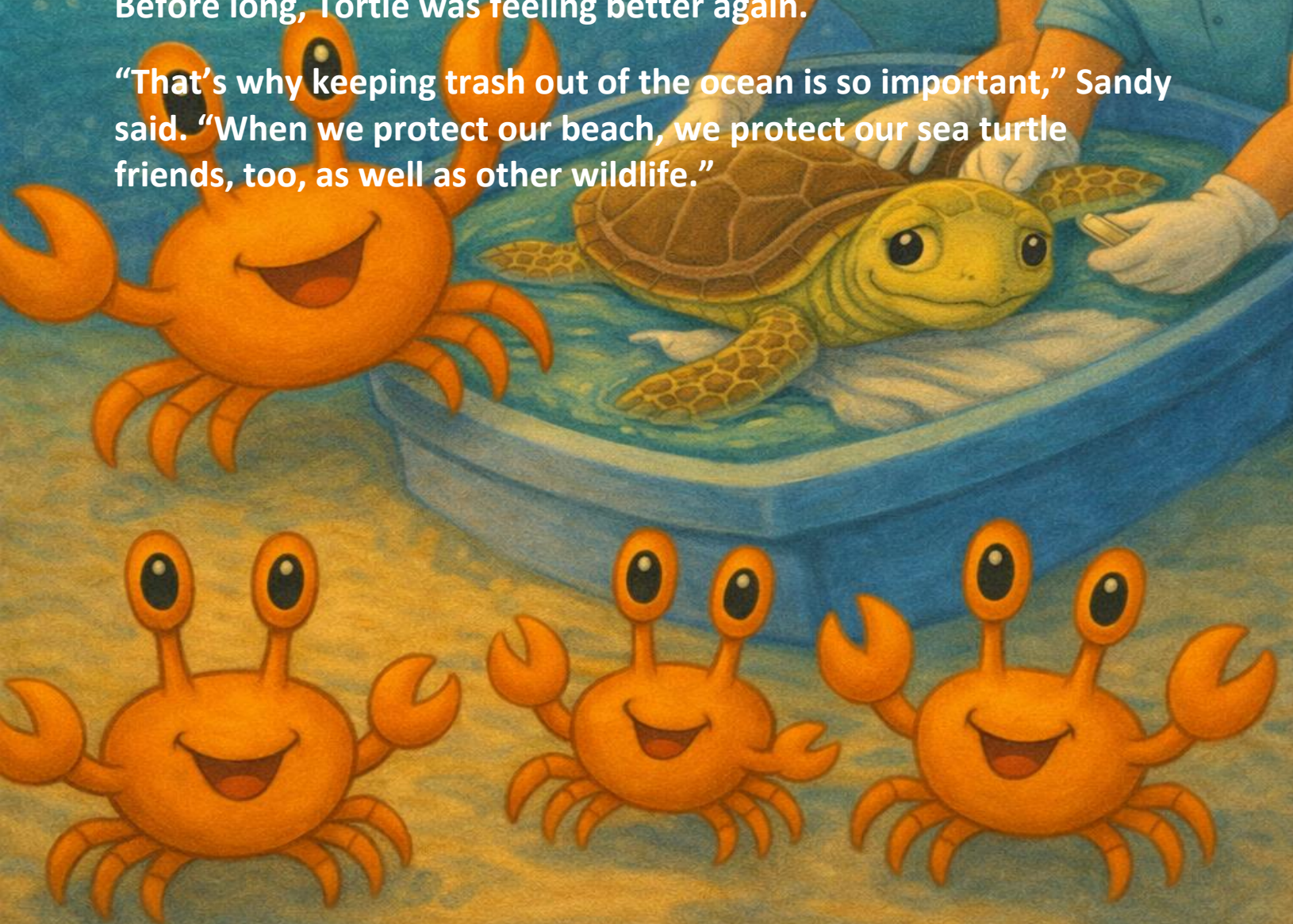
One day, Tortie saw a floating plastic bag in the water. It looked soft and wiggly—just like a jellyfish! Thinking it was food, Tortie tried to eat it.

“Oh no,” Sandy said softly. “Plastic can really hurt sea turtles.”

Thankfully, kind and caring humans noticed Tortie was in trouble. They carefully helped her and took her to a special animal hospital. There, Tortie was given medicine, rest, and lots of gentle care.

Before long, Tortie was feeling better again.

“That’s why keeping trash out of the ocean is so important,” Sandy said. “When we protect our beach, we protect our sea turtle friends, too, as well as other wildlife.”



# Did You Know?

## Plastic Trouble

A single plastic bag can float for miles in the ocean. To a sea turtle, it can look just like a squishy jellyfish. That's why plastic in the water can be very dangerous for turtles and other animals.

## Windy Beaches

The Outer Banks are famous for their strong winds! But those winds can easily blow loose trash across the beach. In fact, wind-blown litter is one of the most common things people find during Outer Banks beach cleanups.

## Secure-Can Rules

Many Outer Banks towns have special "secure-can" rules. These rules remind everyone to tie down or cover trash cans so storms and strong winds don't scatter trash everywhere.

