

The GREAT SEA OATS SCHOOL BEACH RUN 2024



Join the fun!

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

Every June, Sea Oats School sponsored its annual Beach Run, a sandy, sun-splashed race that raised money for local charities along the coast of the Outer Banks. Students trained for weeks, families lined the dunes with homemade signs, and the promise of glory—and ice cream—hung in the salty air.

Last year, Scoot Dunehopper had won the race in a blur of flying sand and sideways scuttles. But this year, Scoot had a different plan.

Instead of racing, he set up his famous popcorn stand near the pier. After many *very dramatic* past malfunctions, Scoot was proud to announce that the popcorn machine was finally working properly.

(He thought.)



The prize for the race was extra motivating: a shiny trophy *and* ten free sundaes from the Ice Cream Shack. That alone was enough to make every claw twitch with excitement.

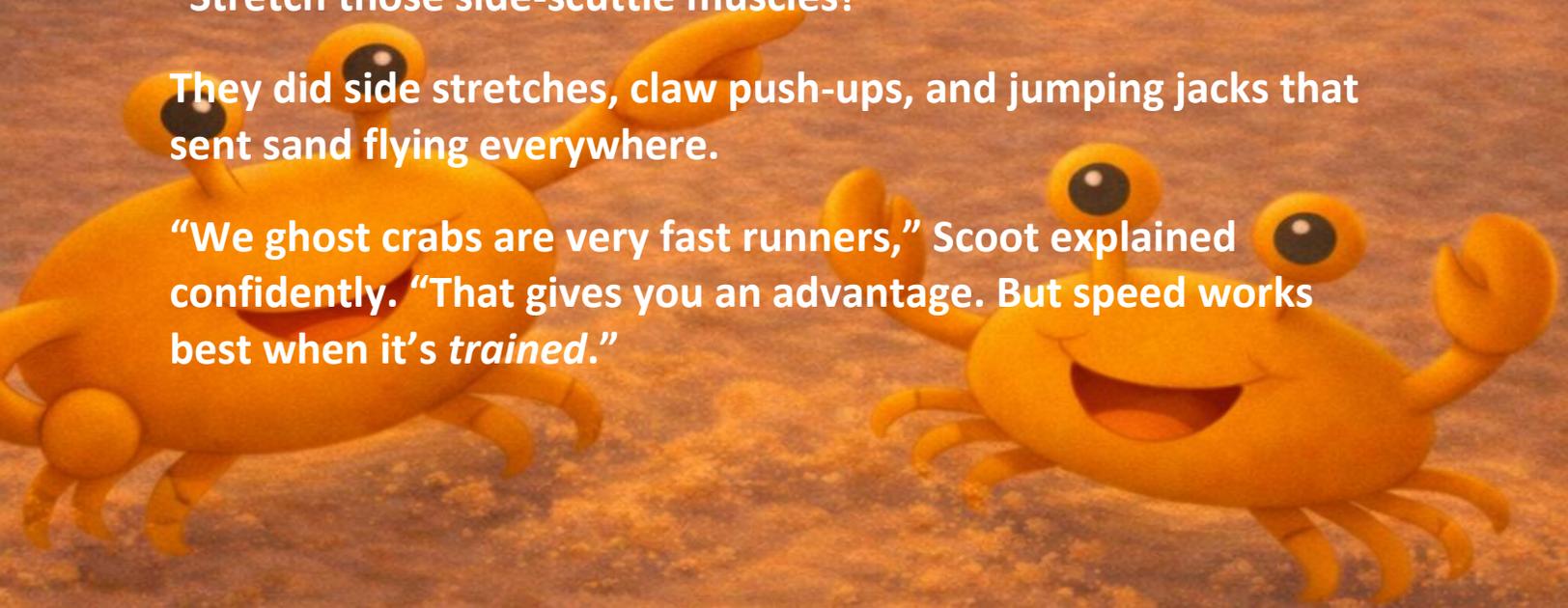
This year, ten students from Sea Oats School signed up to race—including Shellby Dunehopper.

Scout took his coaching job very seriously. All week long, he trained with Shellby on the beach.

“First things first,” Scout said, pacing like a professional coach. “Stretch those side-scuttle muscles!”

They did side stretches, claw push-ups, and jumping jacks that sent sand flying everywhere.

“We ghost crabs are very fast runners,” Scout explained confidently. “That gives you an advantage. But speed works best when it’s *trained*.”





Before the race, Scoot shared his top tips:

- Warm up with a light jog and leg swings
- Stay loose—no stiff claws
- Starting position matters

“Lean slightly forward,” Scoot demonstrated. “Front foot planted strong, back foot ready to explode. Eyes forward—not down. Claws relaxed.”

Then he leaned in and whispered dramatically, “At the start—*explode*. Don’t hop. Push hard. Drive your claws forward, not up. Focus on the finish line, not the other runners. And tell yourself: **FAST FAST FAST**. Don’t slow down early—run *through* the line.”

Shellby nodded seriously. She was ready.

Race Day

Race day arrived bright and breezy.

Shellby scurried down to the shore, her shell polished and her claws stretched. The entire Dunehopper family—Papa, Mama, and Sandy—gathered near the finish line to cheer her on.

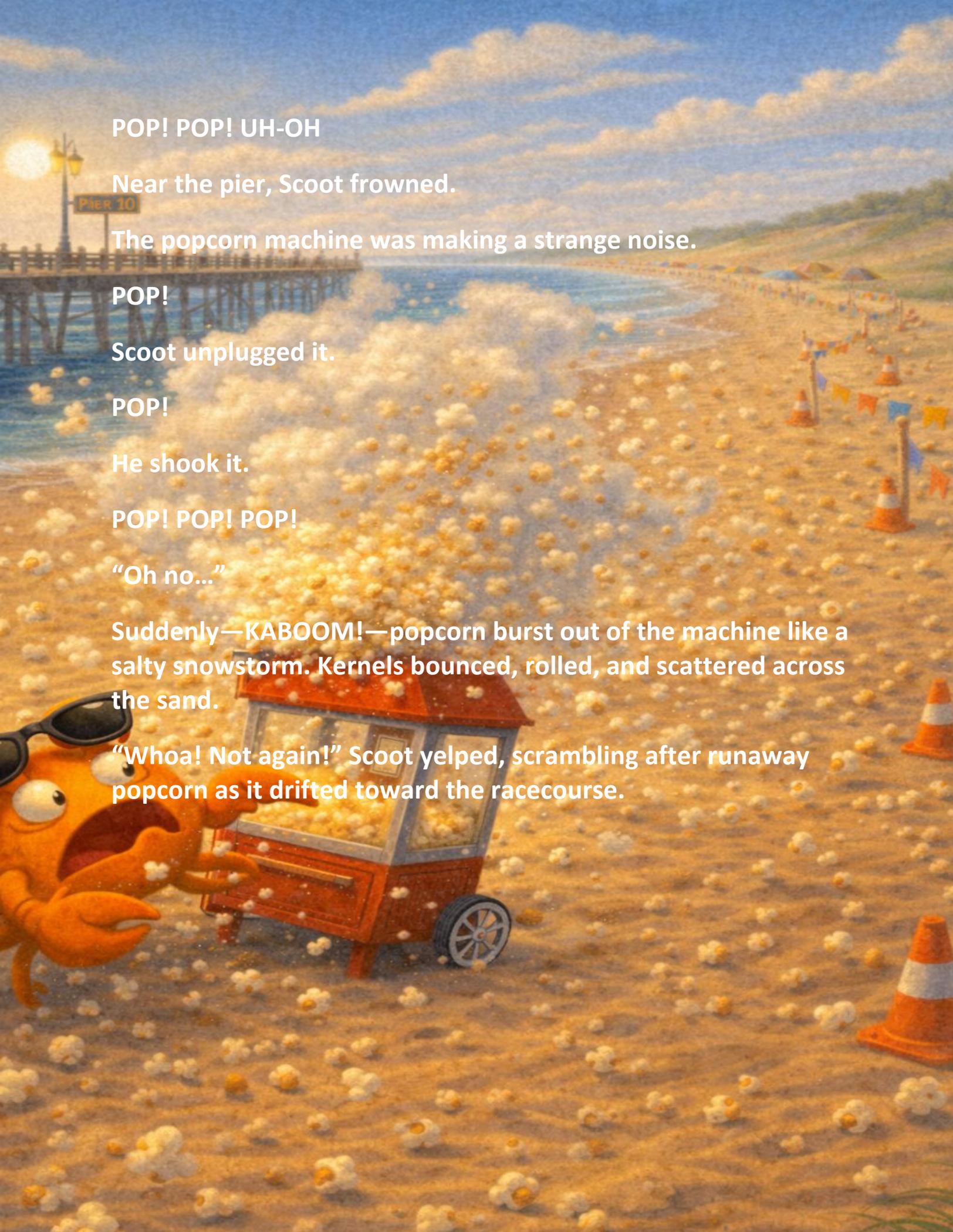
Scoot wasn't there: He was busy near the pier, popping popcorn and expecting a very busy day.

Papa hugged Shellby gently.

"I have confidence you're going to do great," he said. "Ghost crabs are the beach's tiny track stars."

"Thank you, Papa," Shellby smiled. "I'll try my best."



A vibrant beach scene at sunset. In the background, a wooden pier extends into the ocean, with a sign that reads "PIER 10". The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds. In the foreground, a red and white popcorn machine sits on a sandy beach. A large, fluffy cloud of popcorn is erupting from the machine, covering the sand. A cartoon crab wearing sunglasses is in the lower-left corner, looking surprised. To the right, a racecourse is marked with orange and white traffic cones and colorful flags.

POP! POP! UH-OH

Near the pier, Scoot frowned.

The popcorn machine was making a strange noise.

POP!

Scoot unplugged it.

POP!

He shook it.

POP! POP! POP!

“Oh no...”

Suddenly—KABOOM!—popcorn burst out of the machine like a salty snowstorm. Kernels bounced, rolled, and scattered across the sand.

“Whoa! Not again!” Scoot yelled, scrambling after runaway popcorn as it drifted toward the racecourse.

The finish line was so close—

BANG!

Shellby tripped.

She skidded to a stop, staring at the ground.

Popcorn.

“Where did *this* come from?!” she gasped.

Behind her, runners rushed past. And then—slow and steady—
Tom the Sea Turtle crossed the finish line.

The beach erupted in cheers.

“Tom! TOM!” everyone shouted.

Tom blinked in surprise. Turtles weren’t known for speed, and
Tom had just won the race of his life.



A Sweet Ending

Shellby stood up, brushing sand—and popcorn—from her shell. Her legs ached, but she smiled.

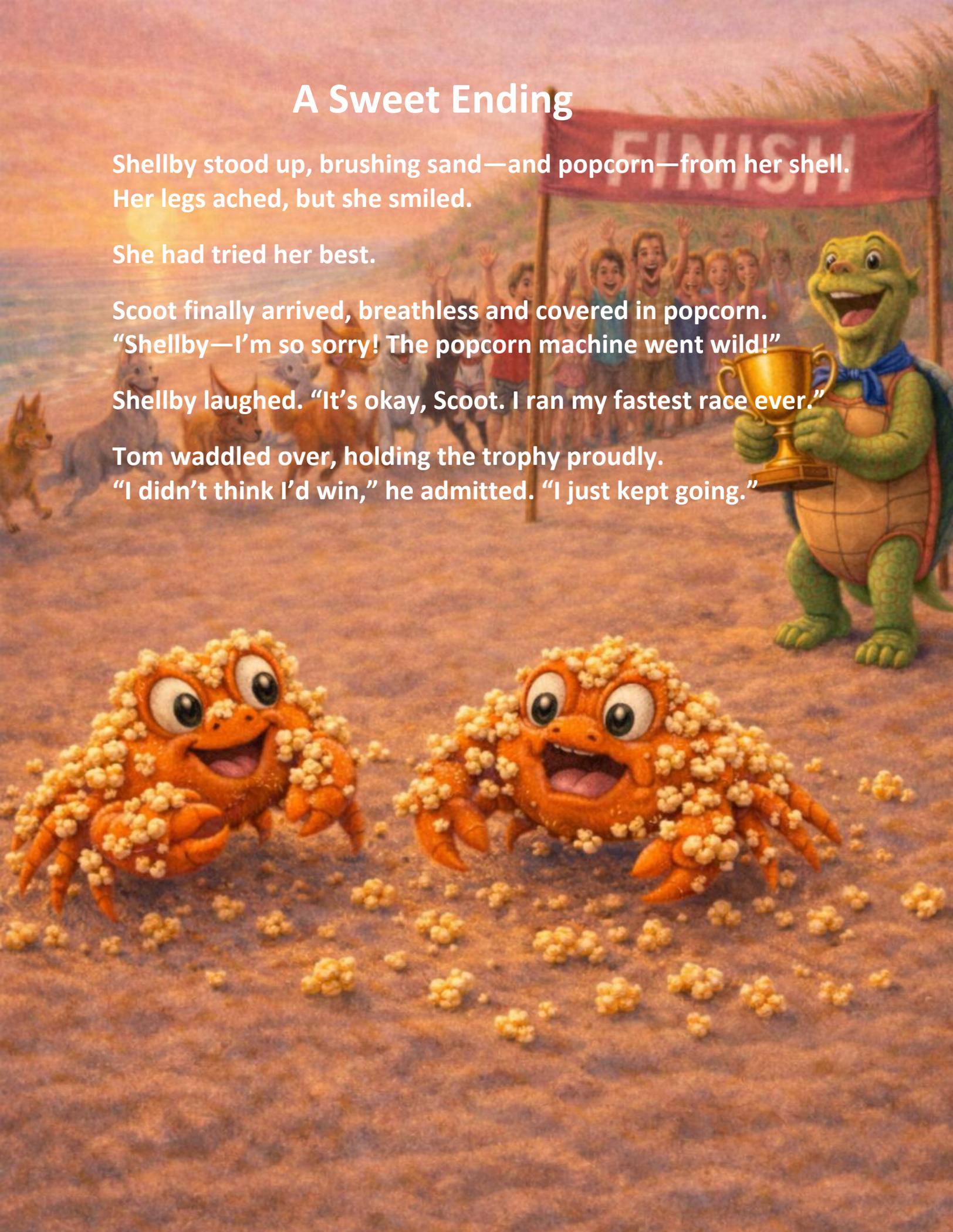
She had tried her best.

Scot finally arrived, breathless and covered in popcorn. “Shellby—I’m so sorry! The popcorn machine went wild!”

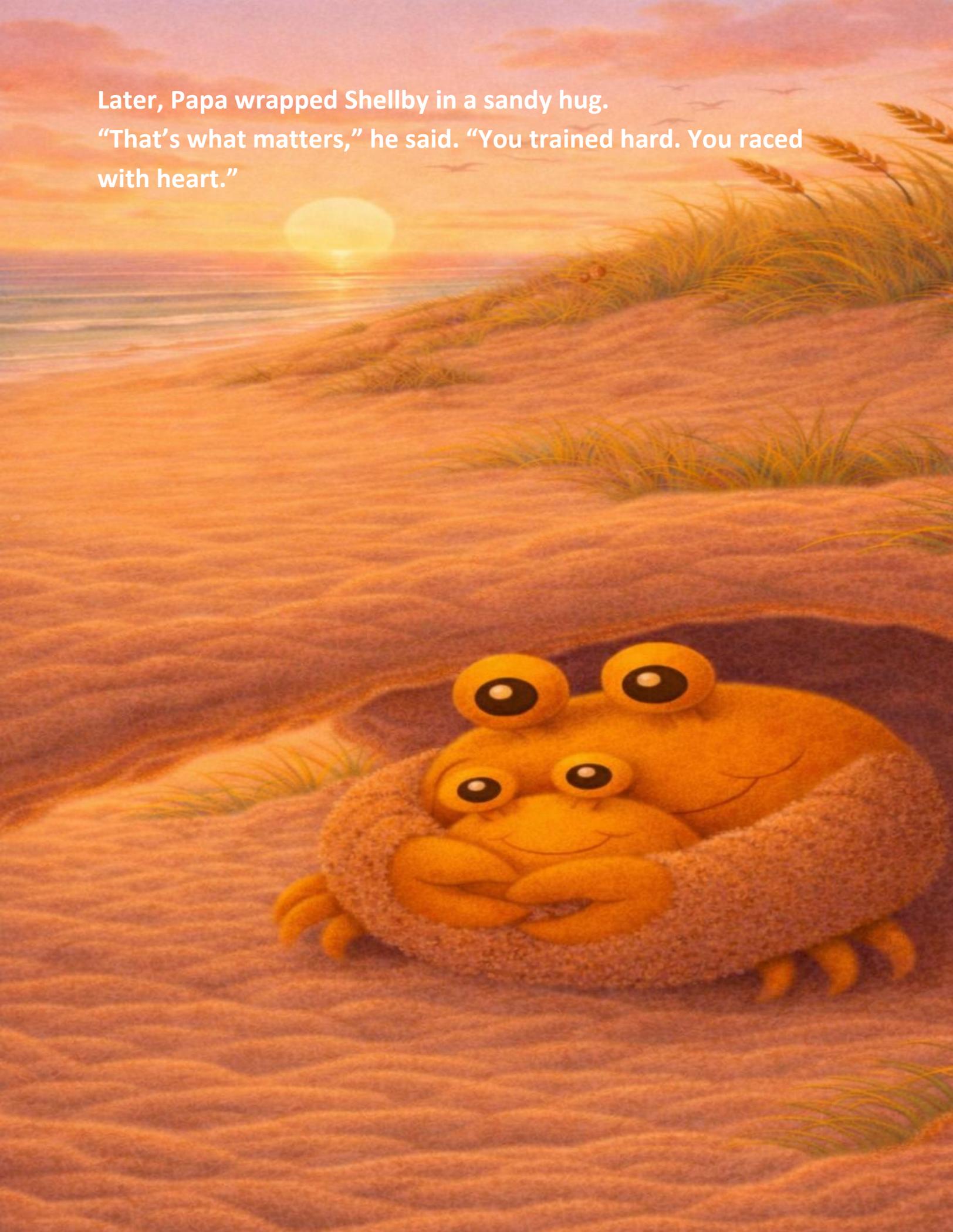
Shellby laughed. “It’s okay, Scot. I ran my fastest race ever.”

Tom waddled over, holding the trophy proudly.

“I didn’t think I’d win,” he admitted. “I just kept going.”



Later, Papa wrapped Shellby in a sandy hug.
“That’s what matters,” he said. “You trained hard. You raced
with heart.”



Later that afternoon, the Ice Cream Shack surprised everyone.
Tom shared his sundaes with all the racers—including Shellby.



As the sun dipped low and the beach buzzed with laughter, Scoot set up a POP-FREE ZONE sign on his popcorn stand.

“Next year,” he said confidently, “I’m racing again.”

Shellby grinned.

“And I’ll be right beside you.”

The beach run ended not with a win or a loss—but with teamwork, kindness, and a whole lot of popcorn.



Did You Know?

- Ghost crabs are some of the fastest runner on the beach!
- They can sprint sideways at speeds of up to 10 miles per hour, using their long legs and powerful muscles to zip across the sand.
- They're called "ghost" crabs because they're pale like sand and can disappear into their burrows in seconds-*blink and they gone!*
- Ghost crabs are mostly active at night, when beaches are cooler and safer from predators. During the day, they often hide underground to stay moist and protected.
- Just like Shellby, real ghost crabs don't just rely on speed- balance, awareness, and quick reactions help them survive (and win races!) on the shifting sands of the Outer Banks.

Fast, clever, and perfectly adapted to beach life-ghost crabs are true coastal athletes!

