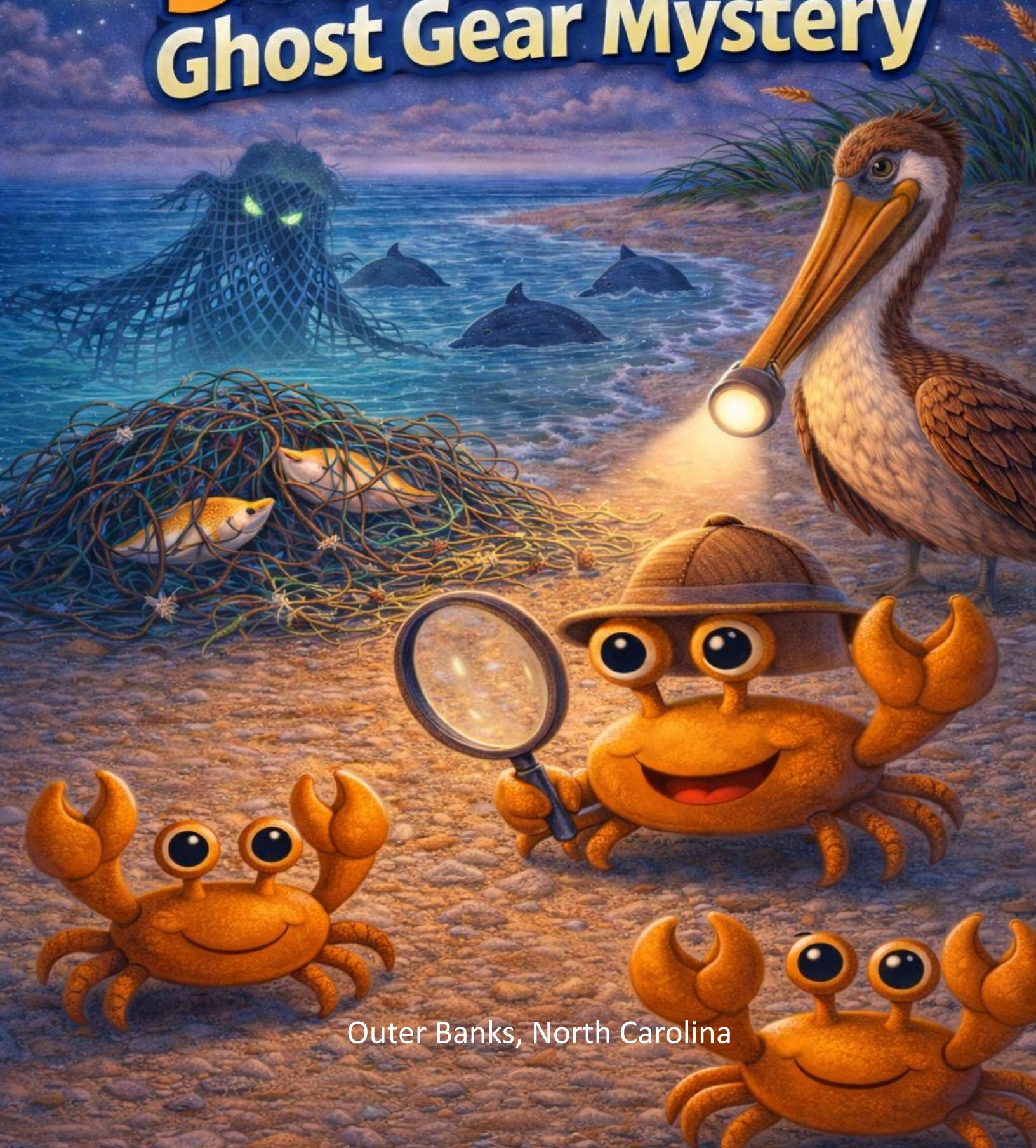


Scoot and the Ghost Gear Mystery



Outer Banks, North Carolina

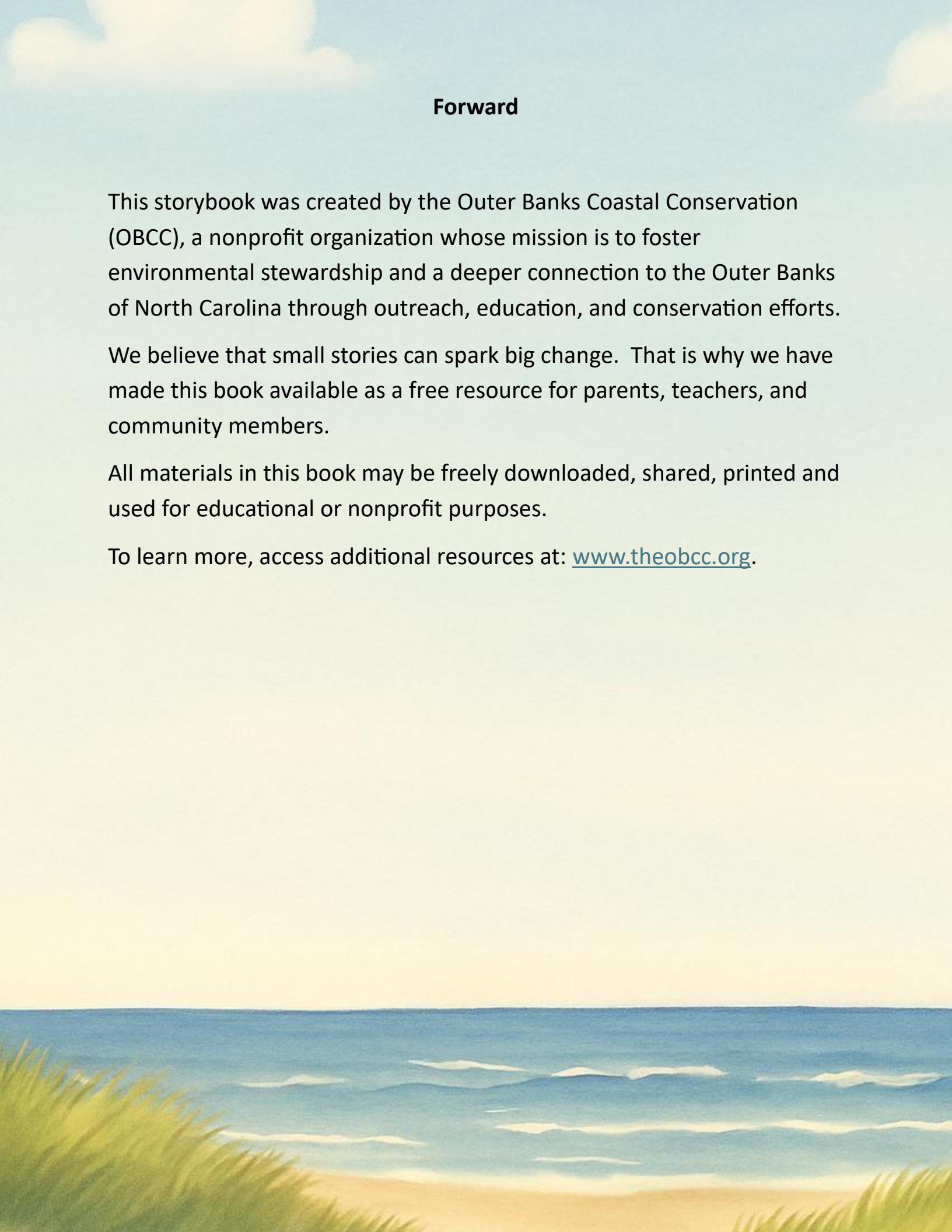
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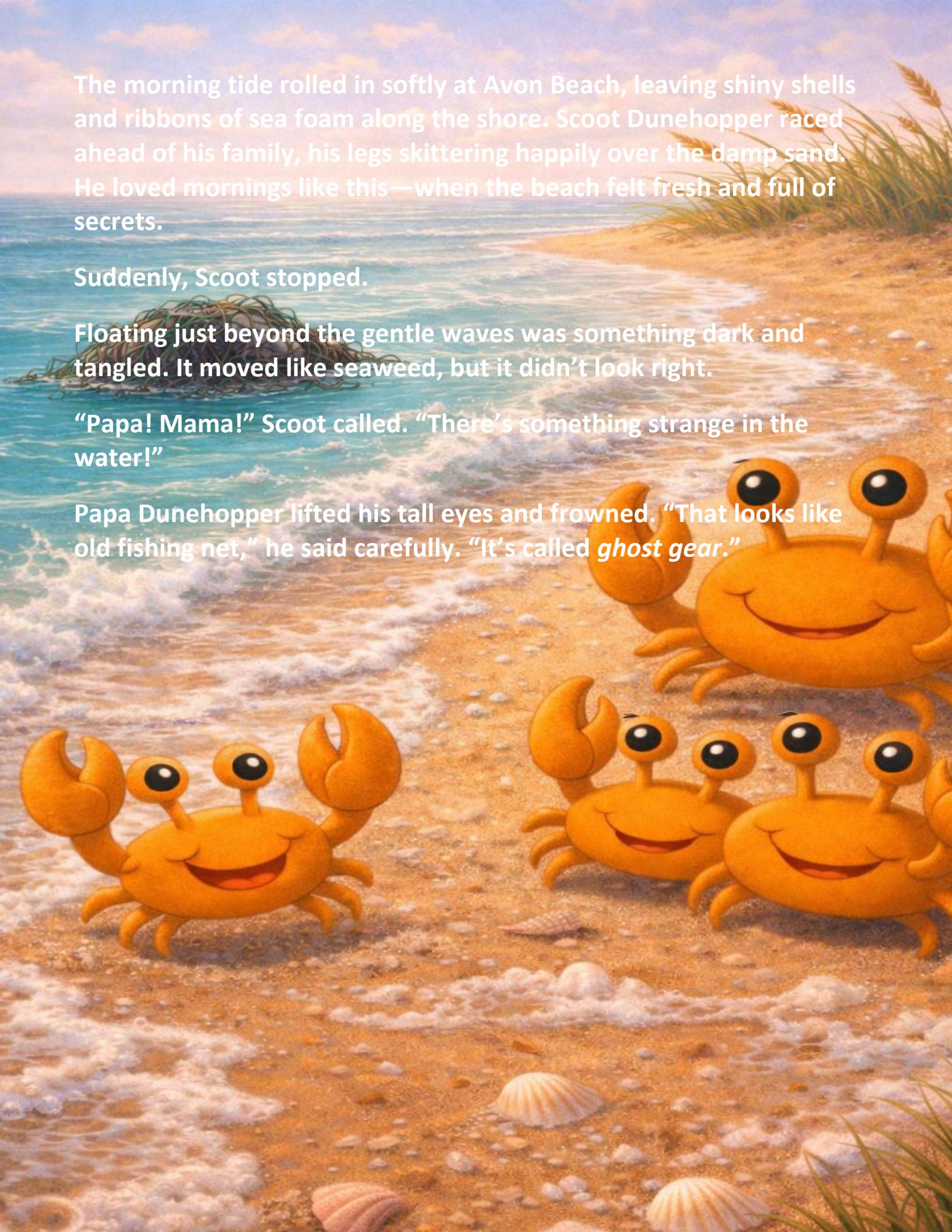
This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

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.





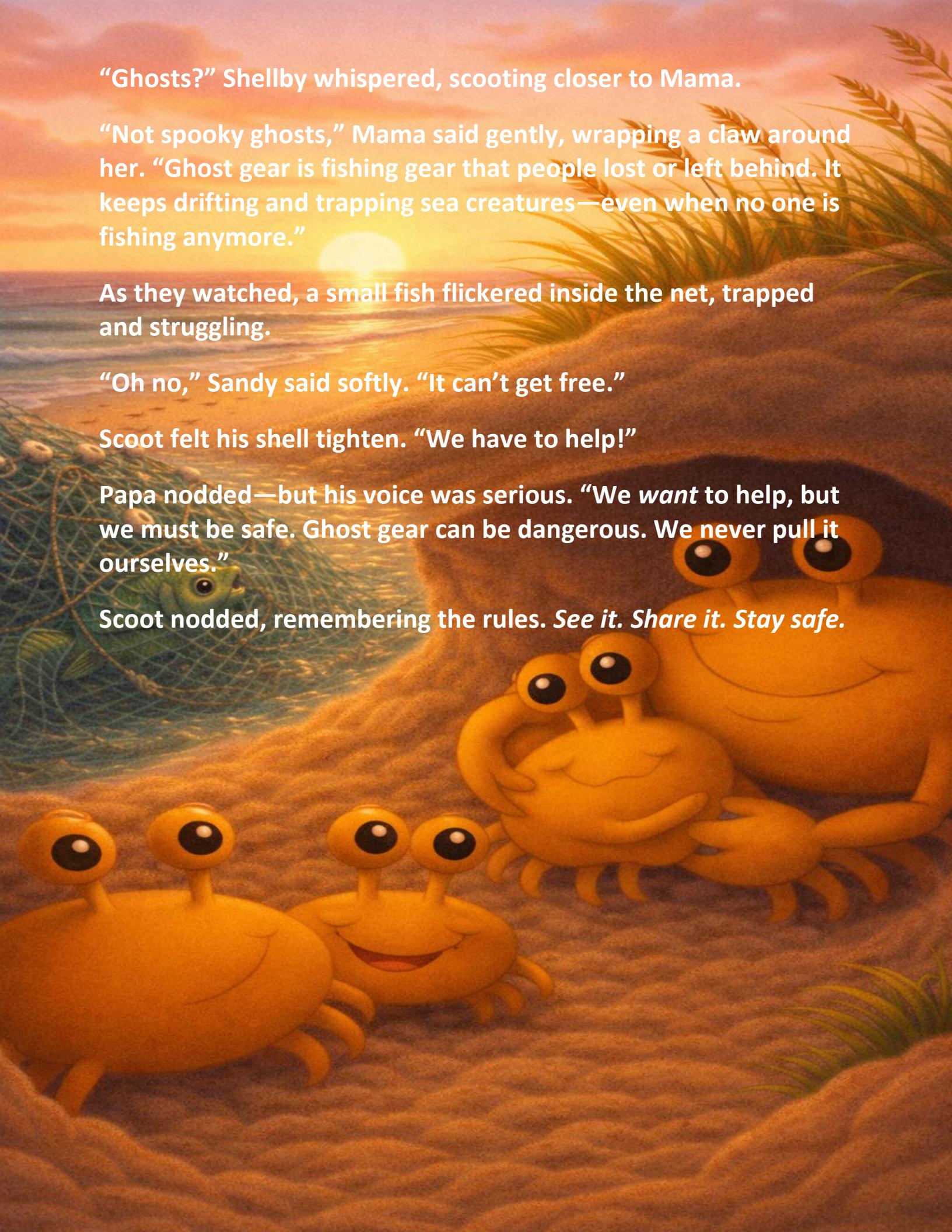
The morning tide rolled in softly at Avon Beach, leaving shiny shells and ribbons of sea foam along the shore. Scoot Dunehopper raced ahead of his family, his legs skittering happily over the damp sand. He loved mornings like this—when the beach felt fresh and full of secrets.

Suddenly, Scoot stopped.

Floating just beyond the gentle waves was something dark and tangled. It moved like seaweed, but it didn't look right.

“Papa! Mama!” Scoot called. “There’s something strange in the water!”

Papa Dunehopper lifted his tall eyes and frowned. “That looks like old fishing net,” he said carefully. “It’s called *ghost gear*.”

A warm sunset over the ocean. In the foreground, a green fishing net lies on the sand. A small, silver fish is caught in the net, its body flickering. The sand is textured and golden. In the background, the sun sets over the horizon, casting a golden glow. Some green plants are visible in the top right corner.

“Ghosts?” Shellby whispered, scooting closer to Mama.

“Not spooky ghosts,” Mama said gently, wrapping a claw around her. “Ghost gear is fishing gear that people lost or left behind. It keeps drifting and trapping sea creatures—even when no one is fishing anymore.”

As they watched, a small fish flickered inside the net, trapped and struggling.

“Oh no,” Sandy said softly. “It can’t get free.”

Scoot felt his shell tighten. “We have to help!”

Papa nodded—but his voice was serious. “We *want* to help, but we must be safe. Ghost gear can be dangerous. We never pull it ourselves.”

Scoot nodded, remembering the rules. *See it. Share it. Stay safe.*

A detailed illustration of a beach at sunset. In the foreground, two cartoonish yellow crabs with large claws and smiling faces are walking on the sand. In the middle ground, two dolphins are visible in the water, and a large brown pelican stands on the right. A fishing net is caught on some rocks in the water. The background shows a sandy beach leading to the ocean under a cloudy sky.

Just then, a shadow passed overhead. A brown pelican swooped down and landed nearby, folding her long wings.

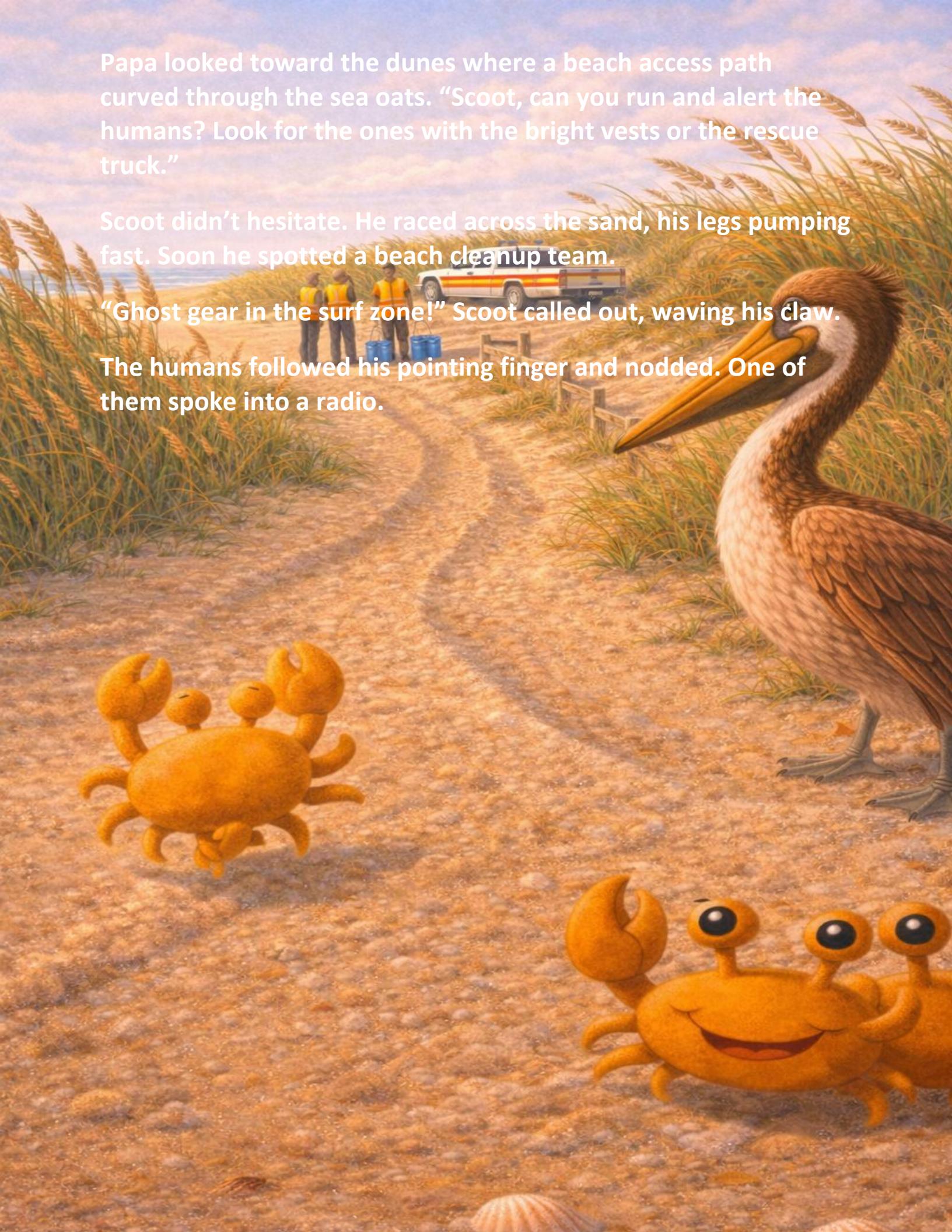
“That net has been drifting all morning,” the pelican croaked.
“It’s caught two fish already.”

“And dolphins are circling it,” she added. “They’re worried too.”

As if on cue, two dolphins surfaced offshore, clicking and splashing gently. They nudged the net away from the rocks, keeping it from tangling more creatures.

“They’re helping without touching it,” Sandy said in awe.

Mama smiled. “Everyone is doing their part.”



Papa looked toward the dunes where a beach access path curved through the sea oats. “Scoot, can you run and alert the humans? Look for the ones with the bright vests or the rescue truck.”

Scoot didn’t hesitate. He raced across the sand, his legs pumping fast. Soon he spotted a beach cleanup team.

“Ghost gear in the surf zone!” Scoot called out, waving his claw.

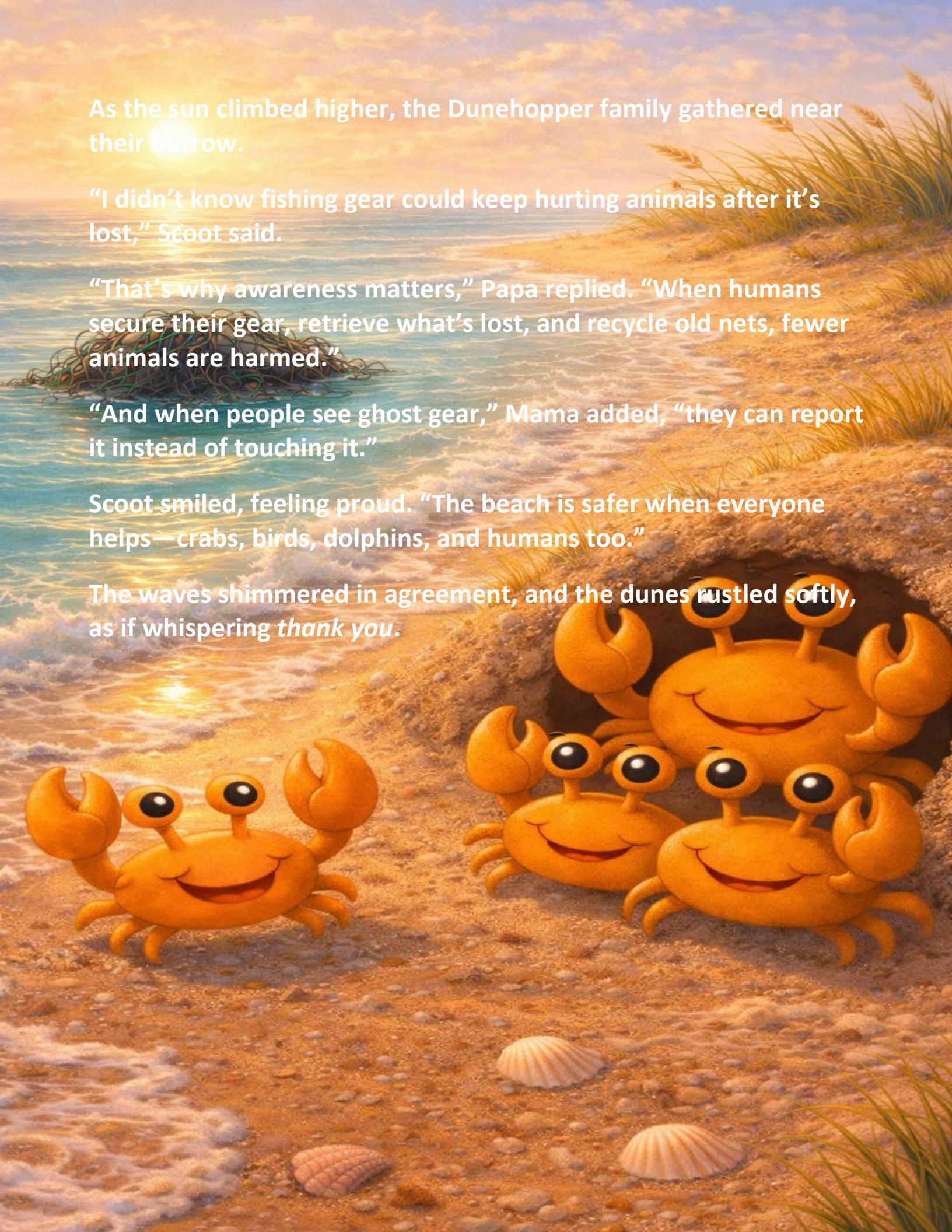
The humans followed his pointing finger and nodded. One of them spoke into a radio.

Before long, trained rescuers arrived with gloves, float lines, and long poles. They worked slowly and carefully, freeing the trapped fish and lifting the net safely out of the water.

The dolphins leapt once, as if cheering.

The pelican flapped her wings. "The sea thanks you," she said.





As the sun climbed higher, the Dunehopper family gathered near their burrow.

“I didn’t know fishing gear could keep hurting animals after it’s lost,” Scoot said.

“That’s why awareness matters,” Papa replied. “When humans secure their gear, retrieve what’s lost, and recycle old nets, fewer animals are harmed.”

“And when people see ghost gear,” Mama added, “they can report it instead of touching it.”

Scoot smiled, feeling proud. “The beach is safer when everyone helps—crabs, birds, dolphins, and humans too.”

The waves shimmered in agreement, and the dunes rustled softly, as if whispering *thank you*.

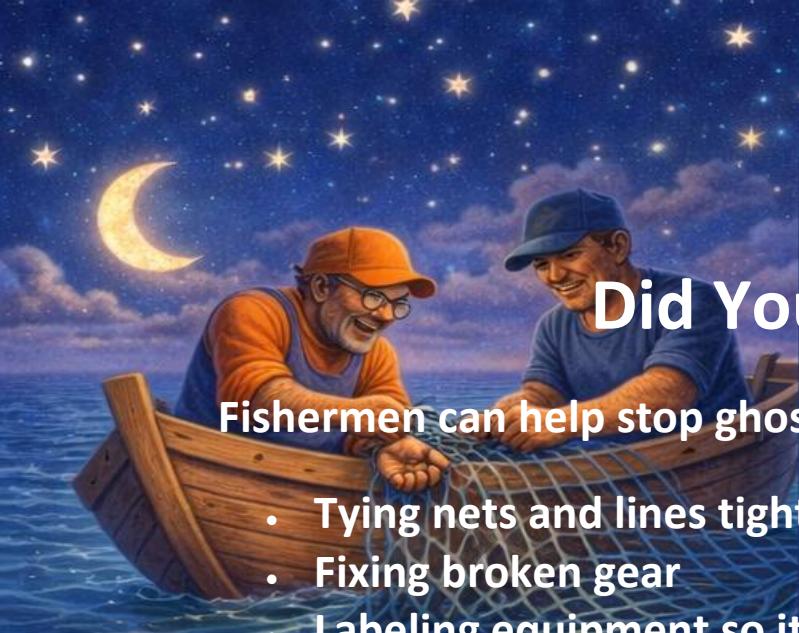


Shellby clapped her claws. "So the ocean doesn't have to keep holding onto them!"

"Exactly," Mama said. "Some fishermen even join cleanup days to help remove old gear already in the water."

The fisherman nearby seemed to smile, as if he'd heard them.

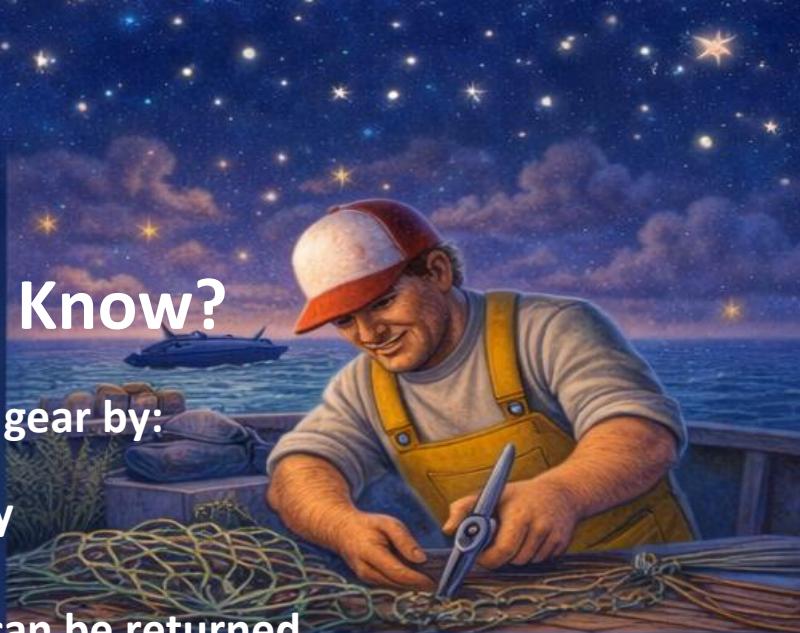




Did You Know?

Fishermen can help stop ghost gear by:

- Tying nets and lines tightly
- Fixing broken gear
- Labeling equipment so it can be returned
- Recycling old nets and fishing line
- Joining ocean and beach cleanups



When people fish responsibly, the ocean stays healthy and full of life !

