

# A Spark in the Sand

A Dunehopper Fire Safety 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](http://www.theobcc.org).





One breezy afternoon on the Outer Banks, the Dunehopper family scuttled out of their cozy burrow. Sandy stretched her claws.

“Let’s go see what treasures the tide brought in today!”

Scoot bobbed his eye stalks. “Race you to the shoreline!”

Papa and Mama smiled as little Shellby followed close behind. The dunes shimmered in the sunlight, and pelicans glided overhead. Everything felt calm—until Sandy suddenly sniffed the air.

“Do you smell that?” she asked.  
Papa lifted a claw. “Smoke.”



The family hurried up the dune ridge—always careful to step on the sandy paths, never the sea oats. As they reached the top, Scoot gasped.

A group of tourists had left a campfire smoldering in the dunes. Tiny wisps of smoke curled upward, and glowing embers sat buried in the sand.

“Oh no!” Mama said. “If this spreads, it could burn the dunes—*and all the homes inside them!*”

Sandy looked around. “All our ghost-crab neighbors live here. And the birds. And the tiny dune flowers!”

Papa nodded firmly. “Then we must act quickly and safely.”

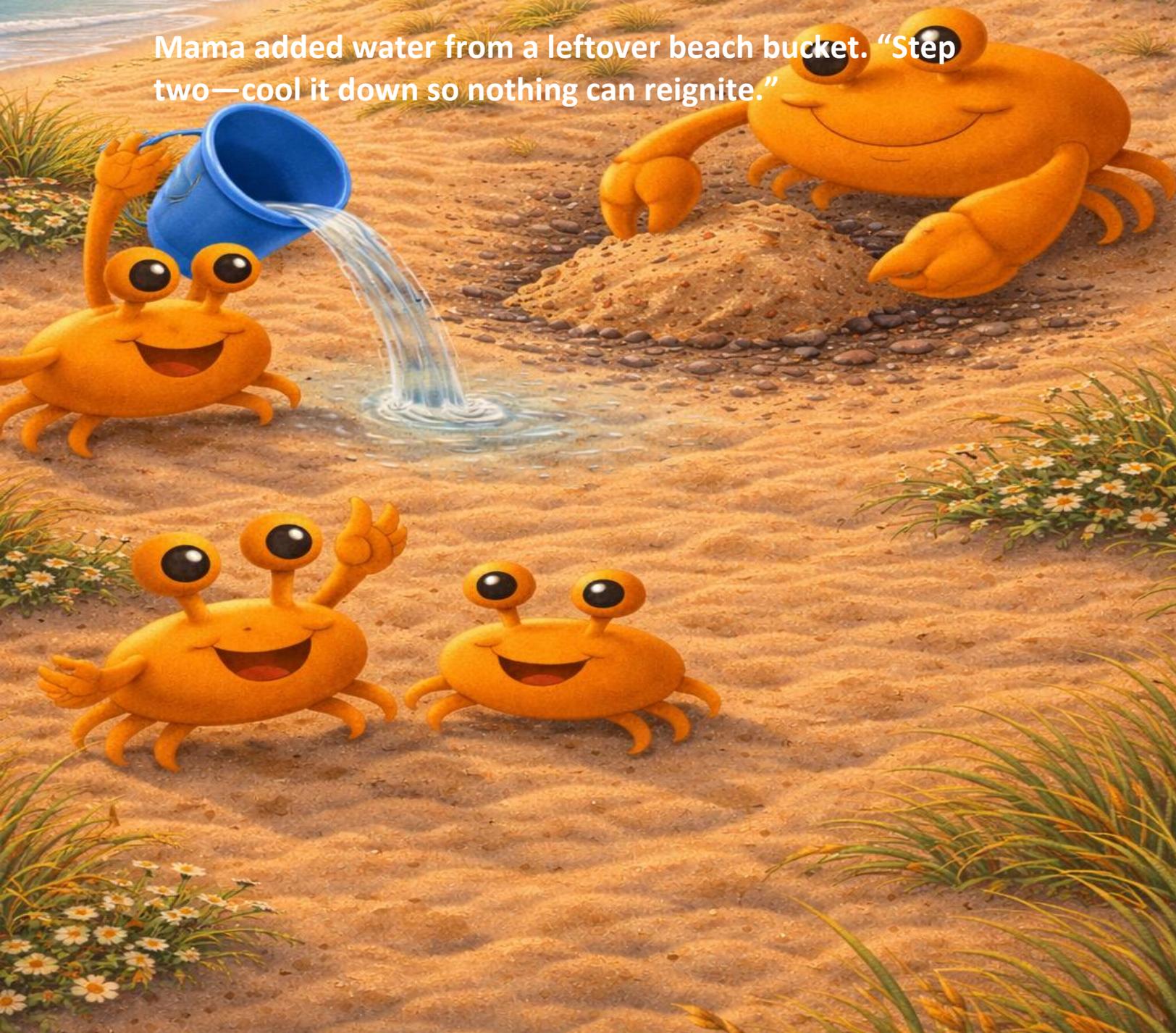
# Putting Out the Danger

Papa showed the children the right way to handle a leftover fire.

“Step one,” he said, “we keep a safe distance. Fire can flare up fast.”

He scooped sand with his big claw and began to cover the embers completely.

Mama added water from a leftover beach bucket. “Step two—cool it down so nothing can reignite.”





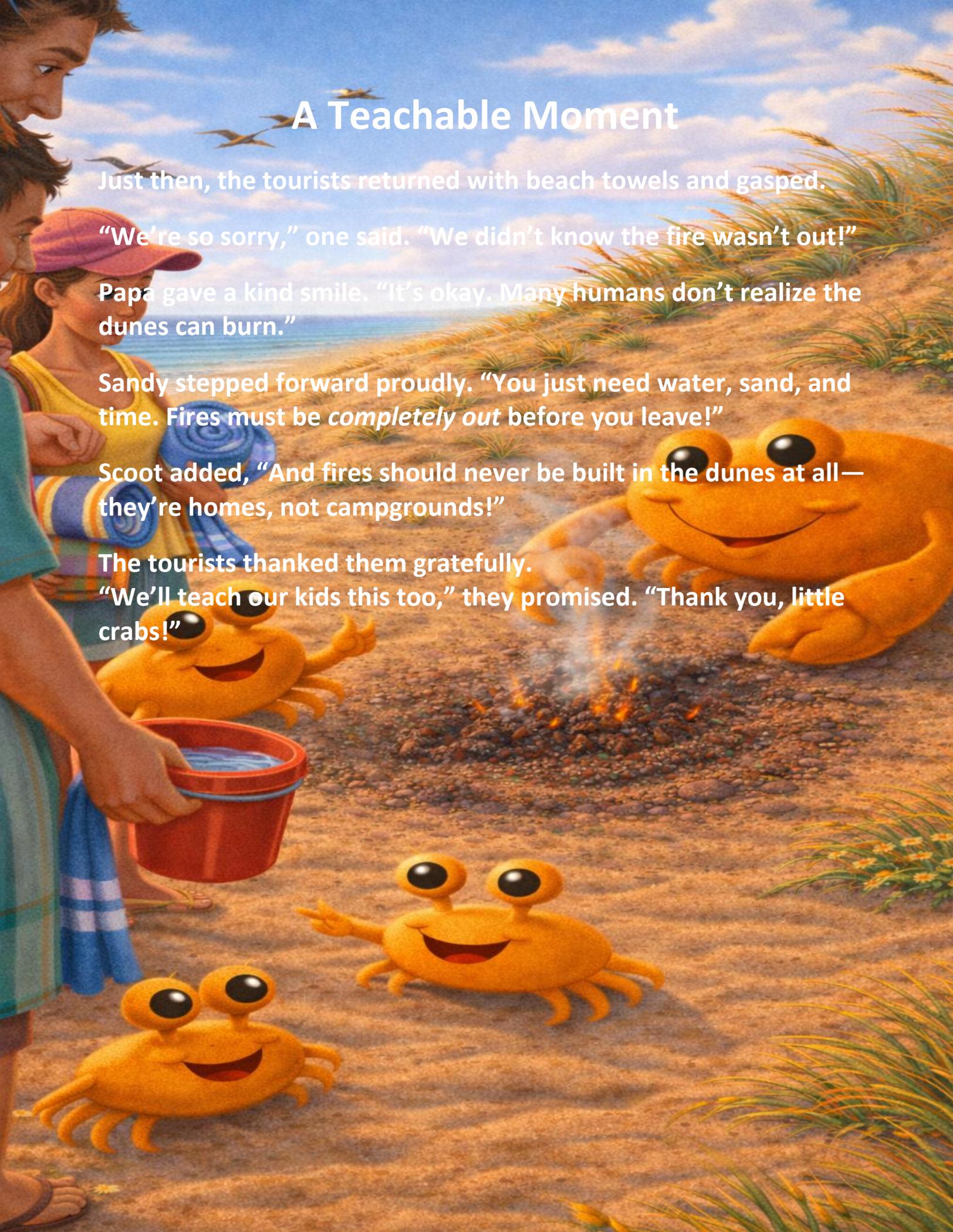
Sandy and Scoot listened closely.

“Why are fires so dangerous on dunes?” Scoot asked.

Mama explained, “Dunes are full of grass roots, dry sand, animal homes, and plants that burn easily. Even a tiny spark can travel and destroy everything.”

Papa touched the sand over the pit. “Step three—you check until it’s *cold*. If it’s warm, it’s not safe.”

Shellby tapped the sand. “Cold!” she chirped happily.



## A Teachable Moment

Just then, the tourists returned with beach towels and gasped.

“We’re so sorry,” one said. “We didn’t know the fire wasn’t out!”

Papa gave a kind smile. “It’s okay. Many humans don’t realize the dunes can burn.”

Sandy stepped forward proudly. “You just need water, sand, and time. Fires must be *completely out* before you leave!”

Scout added, “And fires should never be built in the dunes at all—they’re homes, not campgrounds!”

The tourists thanked them gratefully.

“We’ll teach our kids this too,” they promised. “Thank you, little crabs!”

# The Dunes Are Safe Again

The smoke faded. The sand cooled.

The Dunehopper family watched a ghost crab neighbor peek from her burrow with a relieved wiggle.

“We did it,” Mama said softly.

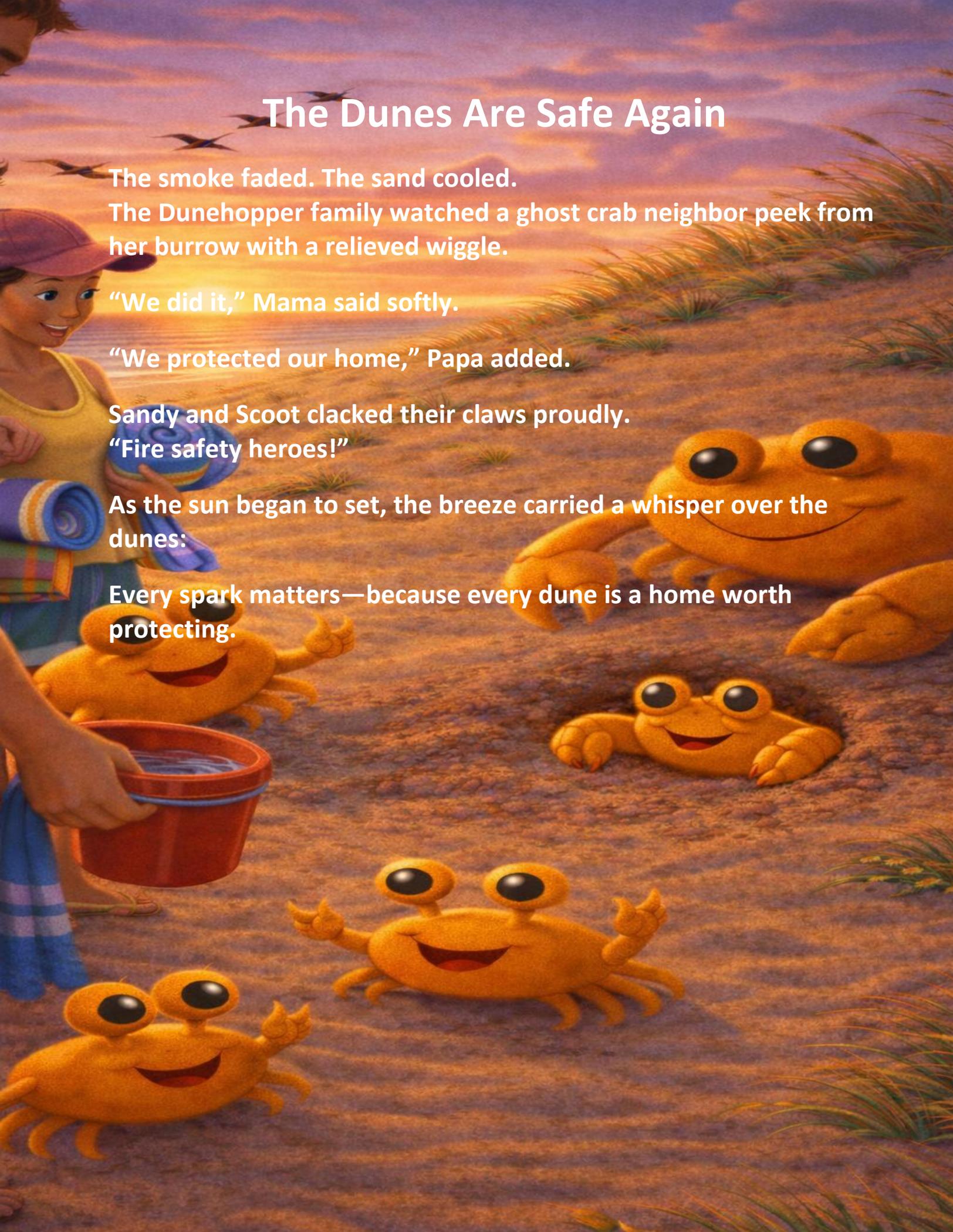
“We protected our home,” Papa added.

Sandy and Scoot clacked their claws proudly.

“Fire safety heroes!”

As the sun began to set, the breeze carried a whisper over the dunes:

Every spark matters—because every dune is a home worth protecting.



# Fire Smarts for the Beach

## Fire Safety Rules:

- Fires should never be built in sand dunes.
- Always pour water on a fire until the hissing stops.
- Stir with sand and pour more water.
- Check for heat—if it's still warm, it's still dangerous.
- Never leave a fire unattended.

## Nature Respect Rules:

- Dunes are home to animals—crabs, birds, insects, plants, and more.
- Human carelessness can hurt habitats.
- Kindness and responsibility keep wild places safe.

