

Shellby's Escape from the PLASTIC SODA RINGS



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.



On a sunny afternoon by the shore, Shellby Dunehopper scurried along the wet sand, searching for a tasty snack near the water's edge. Wave after wave rolled in, but each one left behind only shells and sea foam.

Then something strange washed ashore.

Shellby tilted her head and squinted.

"That doesn't look like food," she said. "It looks like plastic soda rings."



Curious, she crept closer. Just as she reached out to poke it with her claw, a surprise wave rushed in—*whoosh!* Before Shellby could jump back, her claw slipped right through the plastic loops.

“Oh no!” Shellby gasped.

She tugged and twisted, but the rings only tightened. There were no other crabs nearby to help. Try as she might, Shellby couldn't free herself.

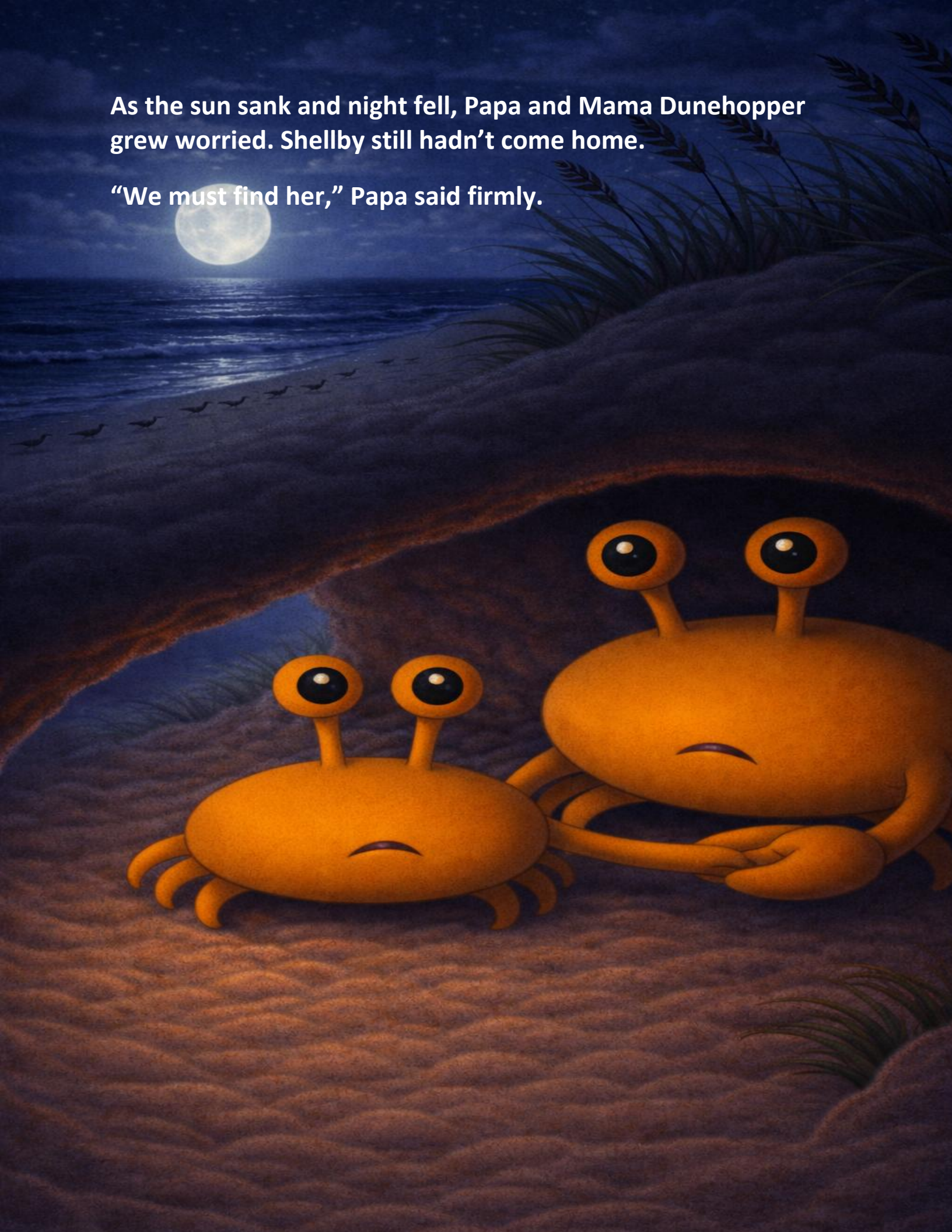


Slowly and sadly, Shellby limped toward the dunes, the plastic rings dragging behind her. With every step, the rings tangled tighter and tighter until she could barely move at all.



As the sun sank and night fell, Papa and Mama Dunehopper grew worried. Shellby still hadn't come home.

"We must find her," Papa said firmly.



He quickly called the local ghost crab police—Claw & Order—and sent word to the ghost crab community. Soon, police dune buggies rolled across the beach, their lights scanning the sand. But Shellby was nowhere in sight.



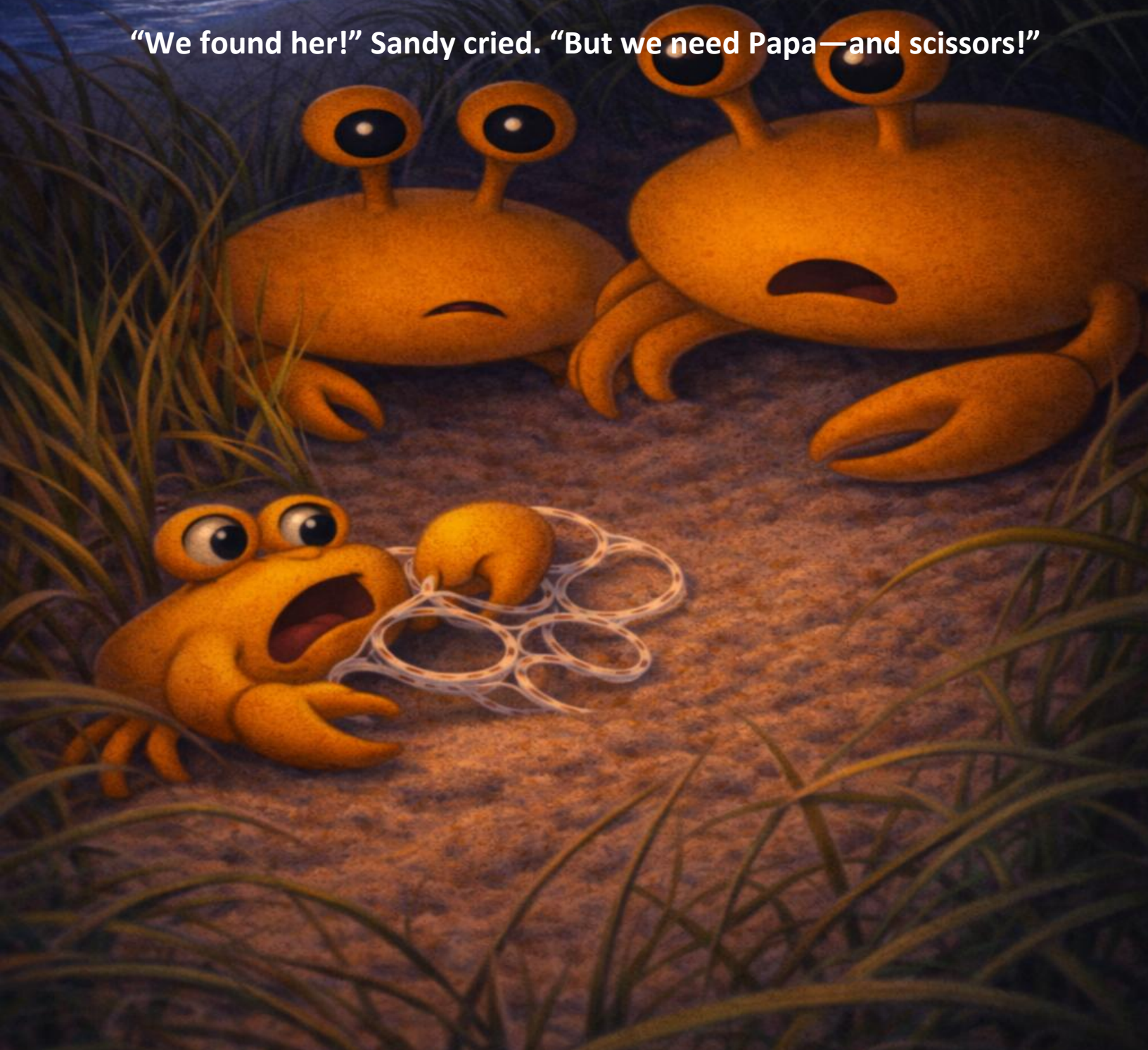
Mama and Sandy decided to search a quieter dune nearly half a mile from their burrow.

As they neared the tall grass, they heard a tiny voice.

“Help... help...”

They rushed forward and gasped. There was Shellby, stuck and exhausted, her claw tangled tightly in plastic soda rings.

“We found her!” Sandy cried. “But we need Papa—and scissors!”



Papa arrived as fast as he could. Carefully, he snipped each plastic loop until the rings fell away. Shellby was finally free.

“That was very close,” Mama said, giving Shellby a gentle hug.

Shellby smiled, relieved and thankful. She was so grateful to be safe—and to everyone who searched for her.



Later, Papa spoke softly but seriously.

“Plastic soda rings can be very dangerous for animals,” he said.
“If people don’t cut them before throwing them away, animals can get trapped and hurt.”

He held up the scissors.

“That’s why it’s so important for humans to snip every loop until the rings fall apart.”

Shellby nodded. She knew she’d never forget that day—or the lesson it taught.



Did You Know?

Plastic soda rings—the loops that hold cans together—can be very dangerous for wildlife.

Birds, crabs, sea turtles, and even fish can get their heads, beaks, or flippers stuck in the rings. Once trapped, they can't move or eat properly.

Scientists estimate that thousands of animals around the world are hurt or die each year because of plastic soda rings and other looped litter.

The good news?

Before you throw them away, cut every ring so no animal can get caught.

✂ *Snip, snip—and you've just saved a life!*



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