The Dunehoppers' Great Escape from the Sand Hole

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.
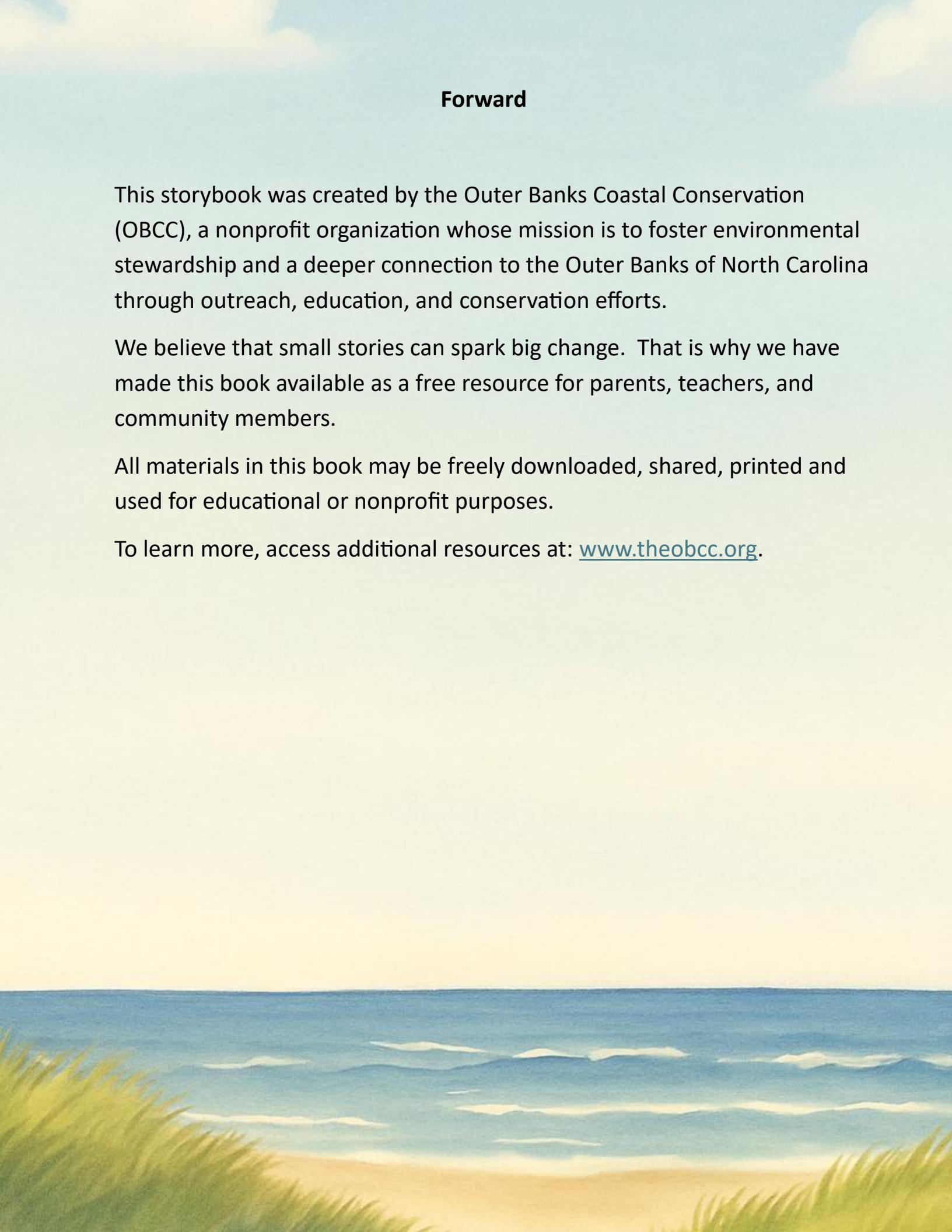
It was a beautiful August day on the Outer Banks, and the Jones family had arrived for a fun day at the beach.
Bob and Laura Jones spread out their towels while their two children, Clara and Mike, raced toward the sand.

"Let's build a sandcastle!" Clara cheered.
"And dig a big hole!" Mike added, grabbing his little shovel.

The children dug and dug, scooping sand higher and higher. Soon their dad, Bob, came over with a big shovel to help.
Before long, the hole was *very* deep—almost as tall as four-year-old Mike!

As the sun began to set, the sky turned pink and orange. The Jones family packed up and headed back to their cottage for dinner.

"We don't need to fill the hole," Bob said as they walked away. "The tide will take care of it."
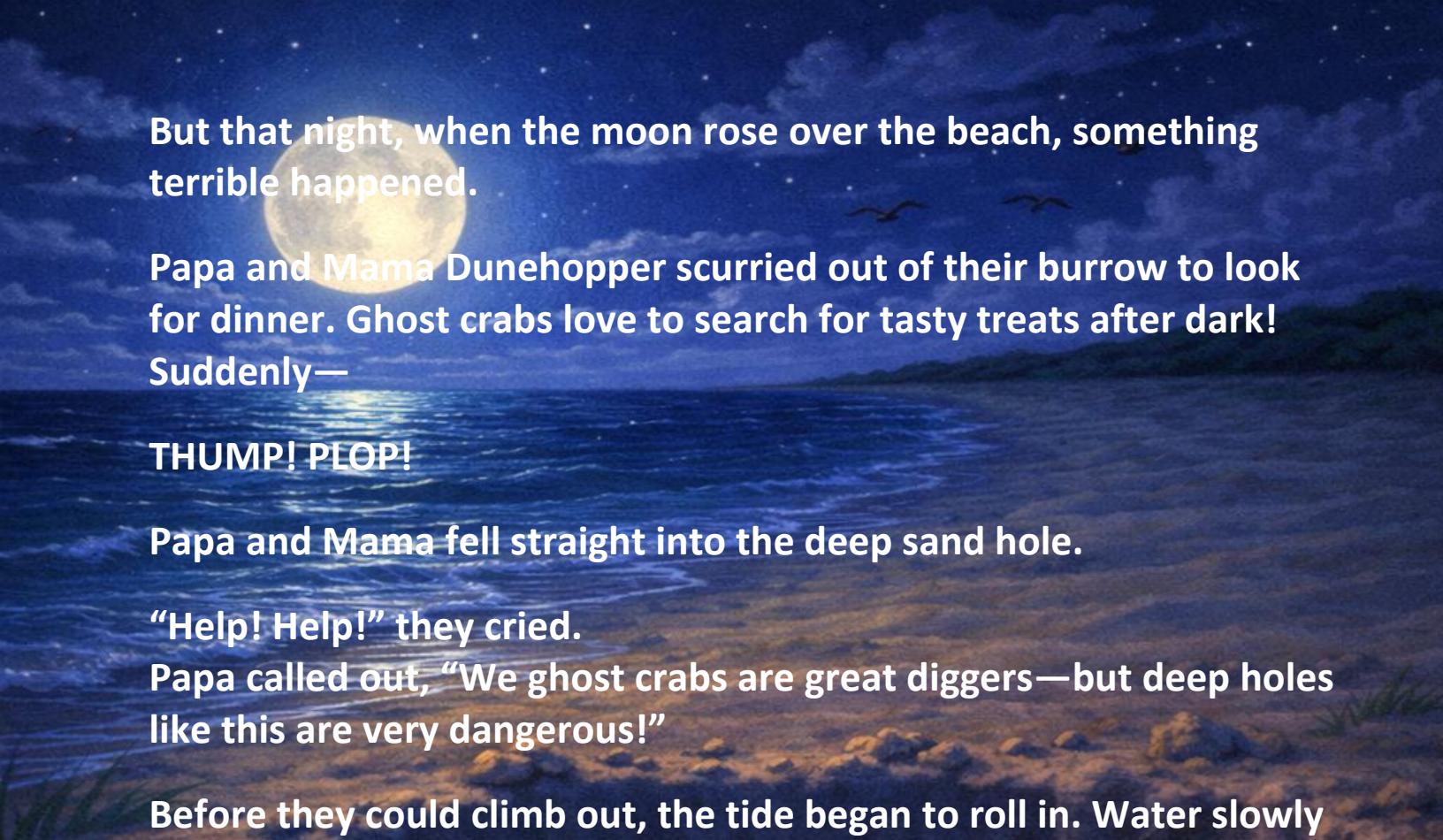
But that night, when the moon rose over the beach, something terrible happened.

Papa and Mama Dunehopper scurried out of their burrow to look for dinner. Ghost crabs love to search for tasty treats after dark! Suddenly—

THUMP! PLOP!

Papa and Mama fell straight into the deep sand hole.

"Help! Help!" they cried.
Papa called out, "We ghost crabs are great diggers—but deep holes like this are very dangerous!"

Before they could climb out, the tide began to roll in. Water slowly filled the hole around them.

Back at the burrow, Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby waited and waited.

"It's been hours," Sandy said worriedly.
"Papa and Mama should be back by now!"

"We have to find them!" Scoot shouted.

The three Dunehoppers hurried across the moonlit beach and met up with their friends—Sam the sea turtle, George the grasshopper, and Milo the mole crab. Together, they searched the shoreline.

The full moon shone brightly, lighting the sand like a silver path.

Suddenly, Sandy froze.
"Did you hear that?" she whispered.

From far away came a faint cry:
"Help! Help!"

They followed the sound and soon found a large, deep hole filling with seawater.

"Papa! Mama!, we will help you." Shellby cried.

Scoot spotted a piece of rope left behind on the beach.
"I have an idea!" he said.

"Grab on!" Scoot called, tossing the rope down into the hole.

With teamwork and strong claws, Papa and Mama were carefully
pulled out and safely onto the sand.

"Thank you!" Mama said, brushing off the wet sand.
"You saved us!"
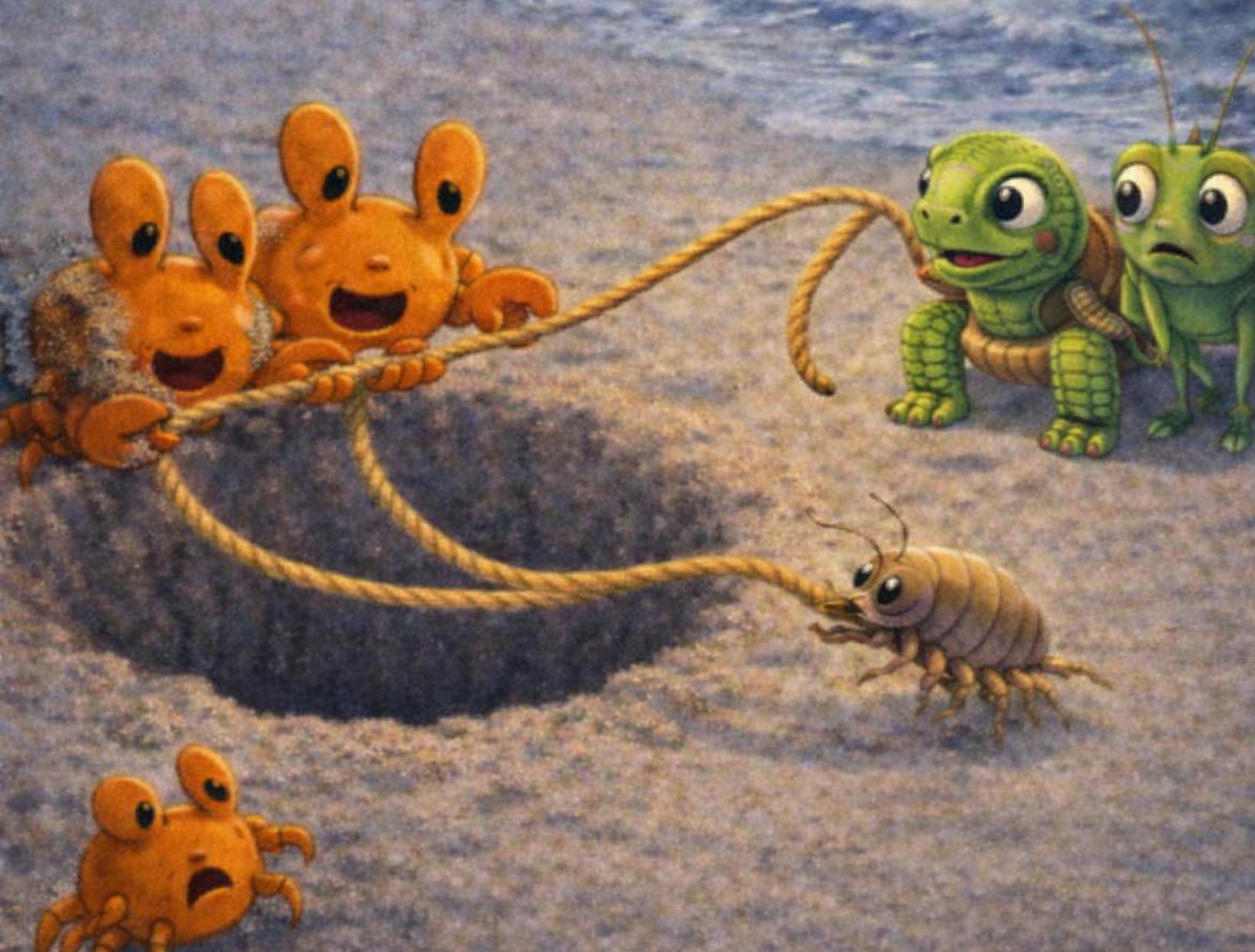
That evening, the Dunehoppers and their friends gathered driftwood and made signs. They placed them near the dunes where everyone could see.

The signs read:
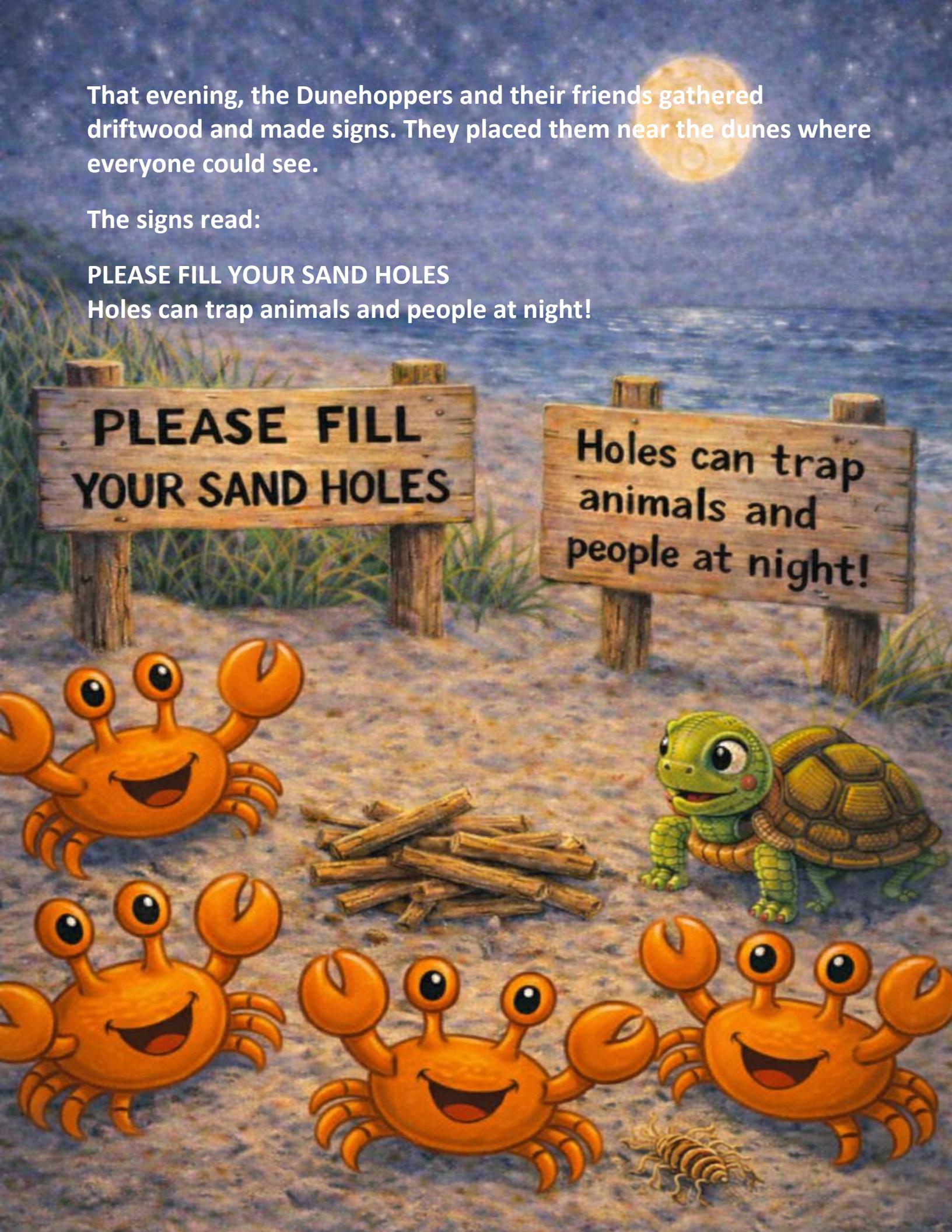
PLEASE FILL YOUR SAND HOLES
Holes can trap animals and people at night!

The next morning, the Jones family returned to the beach. Bob stopped when he saw the sign.

"Oh wow," he said quietly.
"I didn't realize our hole could hurt someone."

He turned to Clara and Mike.
"Let's fill in our holes from now on. We share this beach with lots of living creatures."

And from that day on, the beach was a safer place—because even small actions can make a big difference.

PLEASE
FILL YOUR
SAND HOLES

Holes can trap
animals and
people at night!
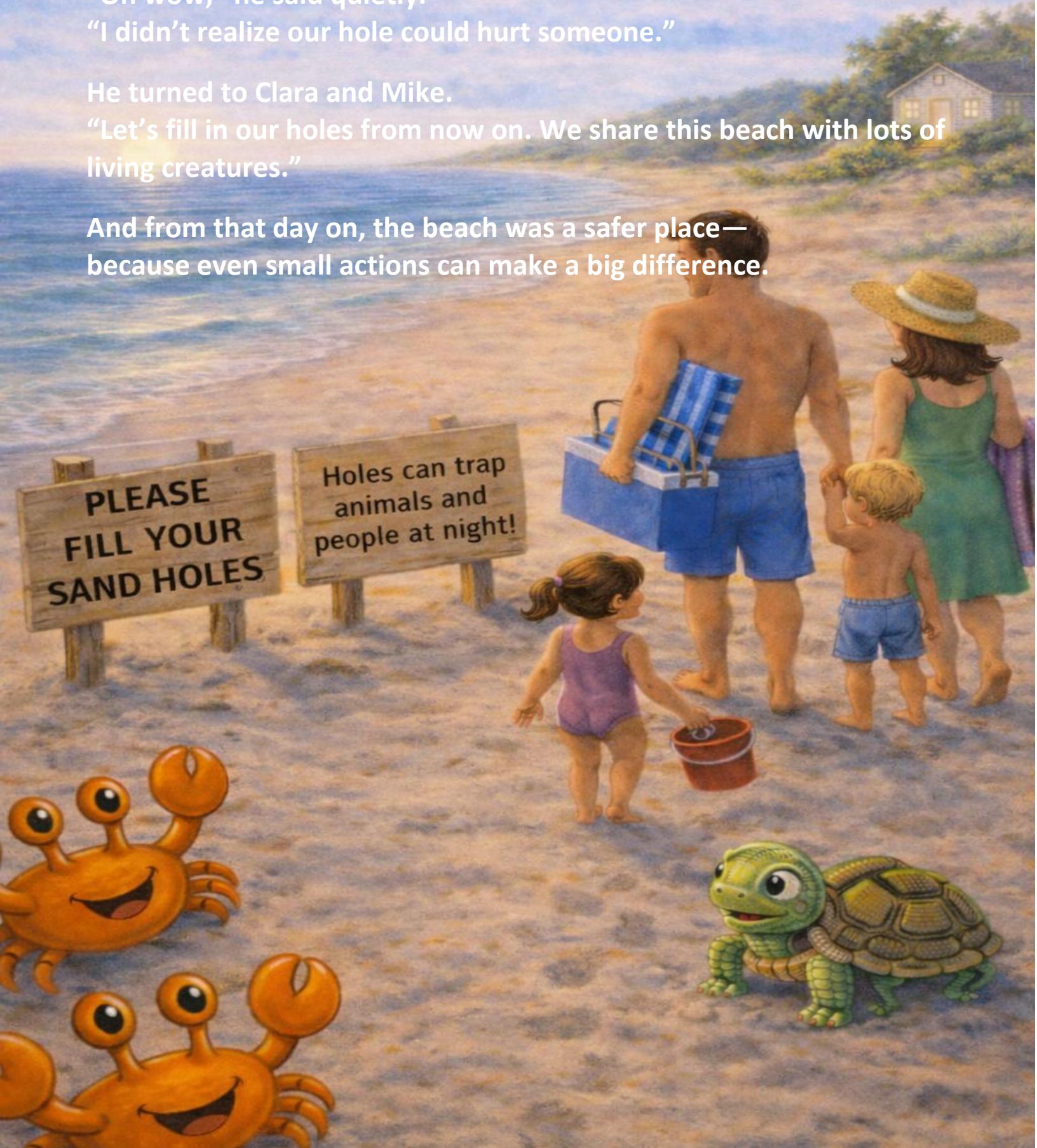
Did You Know?

- Holes in the sand can be dangerous. Animals like ghost crabs, turtles, and even birds can fall in and get stuck—especially at night.
- Many beach animals come out after dark. They can't always see deep holes left behind during the day.
- People can get hurt too! Someone walking on the beach at night might trip or fall into a hole.
- Filling in sand holes helps everyone. When you smooth the sand before you leave, you protect wildlife *and* other beach visitors.
- Small actions make a big difference. One filled-in hole can help keep the beach safe for all who share it.

Be a Beach Helper: Before you leave the beach, look around—fill in holes, knock down tall sand piles, and leave the shore just as nature likes it.