

THE DUNEHOPPERS AND THE MAGIC OF Kind Words



Outer Banks, North Carolina

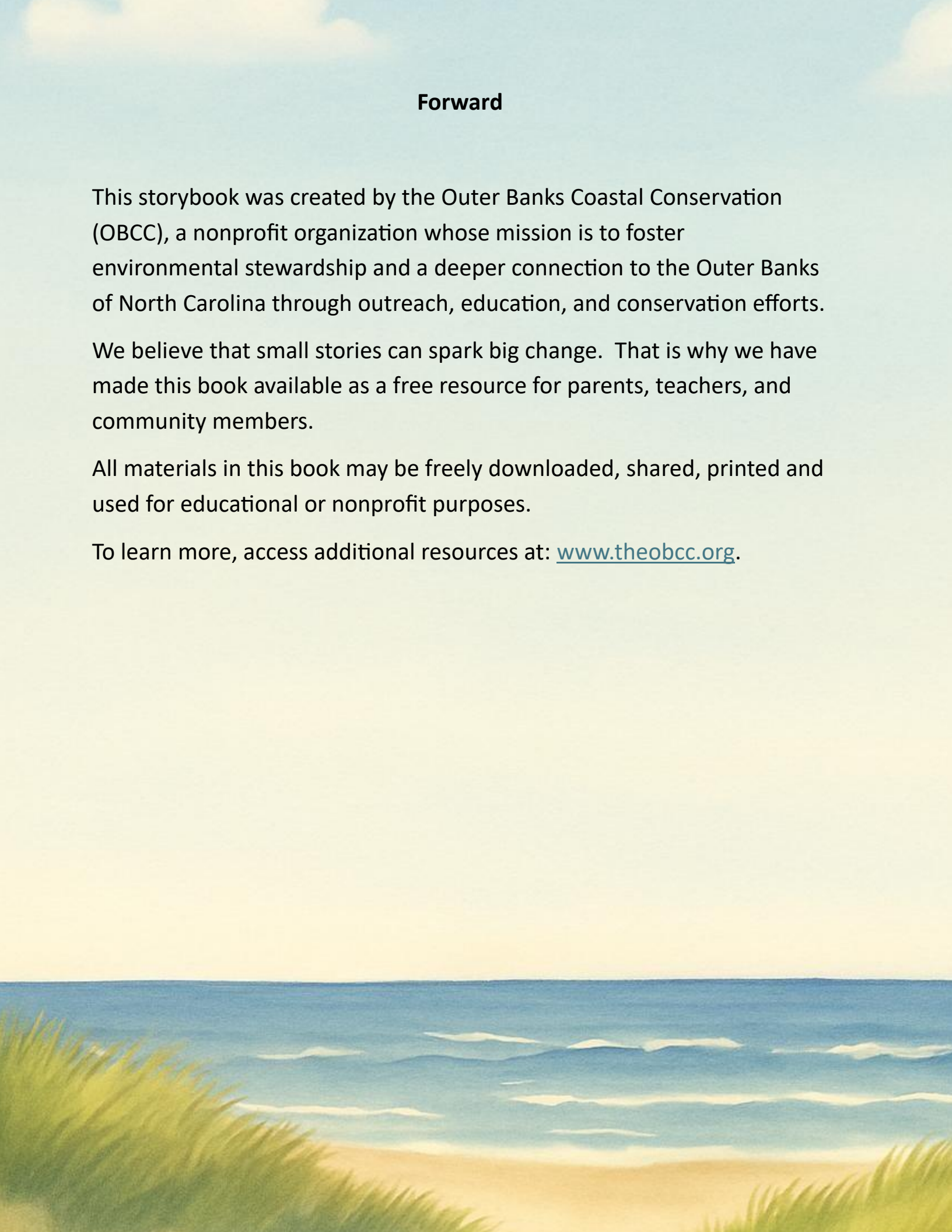
Forward

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.



The sun rose slowly over the ocean, painting the sky soft pink and gold. Waves whispered their morning hello, and sea oats rustled as if stretching awake.

Beneath a tall, sandy dune, the Dunehopper family stirred in their cozy burrow.

Mama Dunehopper opened her eyes first.
“Good morning, my loves,” she said gently.

Papa Dunehopper smiled and added, “Good morning, beautiful beach. Thank you for another day.”

Scoot blinked sleepily. “Papa,” he asked, “why do you always say thank you to the beach?”

Papa thought for a moment. “Because the beach gives us so much—food, shelter, and a place to play. When we say thank you, we remember not to take things for granted.”

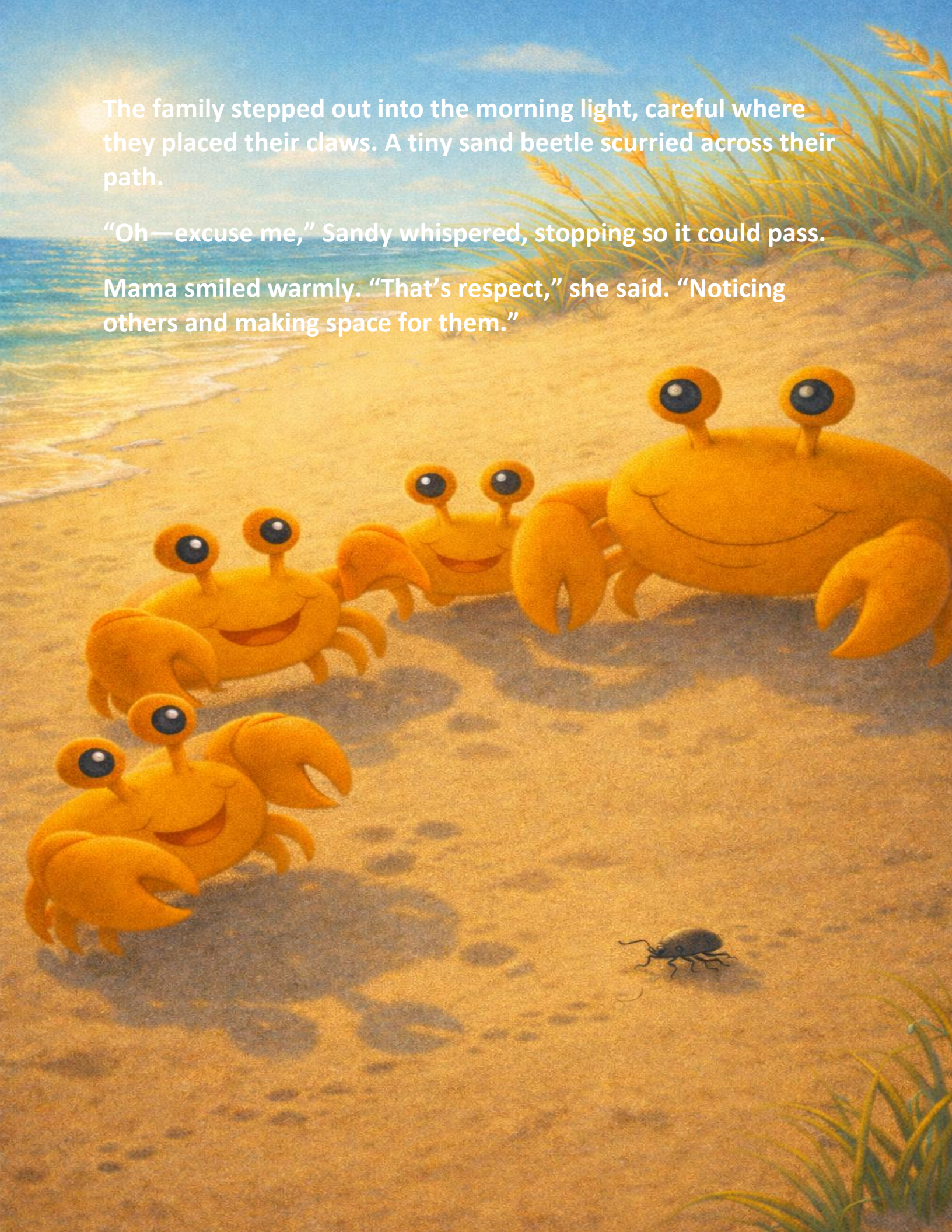
Sandy nodded. “Gratitude helps our hearts stay soft,” Mama said.



The family stepped out into the morning light, careful where they placed their claws. A tiny sand beetle scurried across their path.

“Oh—excuse me,” Sandy whispered, stopping so it could pass.

Mama smiled warmly. “That’s respect,” she said. “Noticing others and making space for them.”



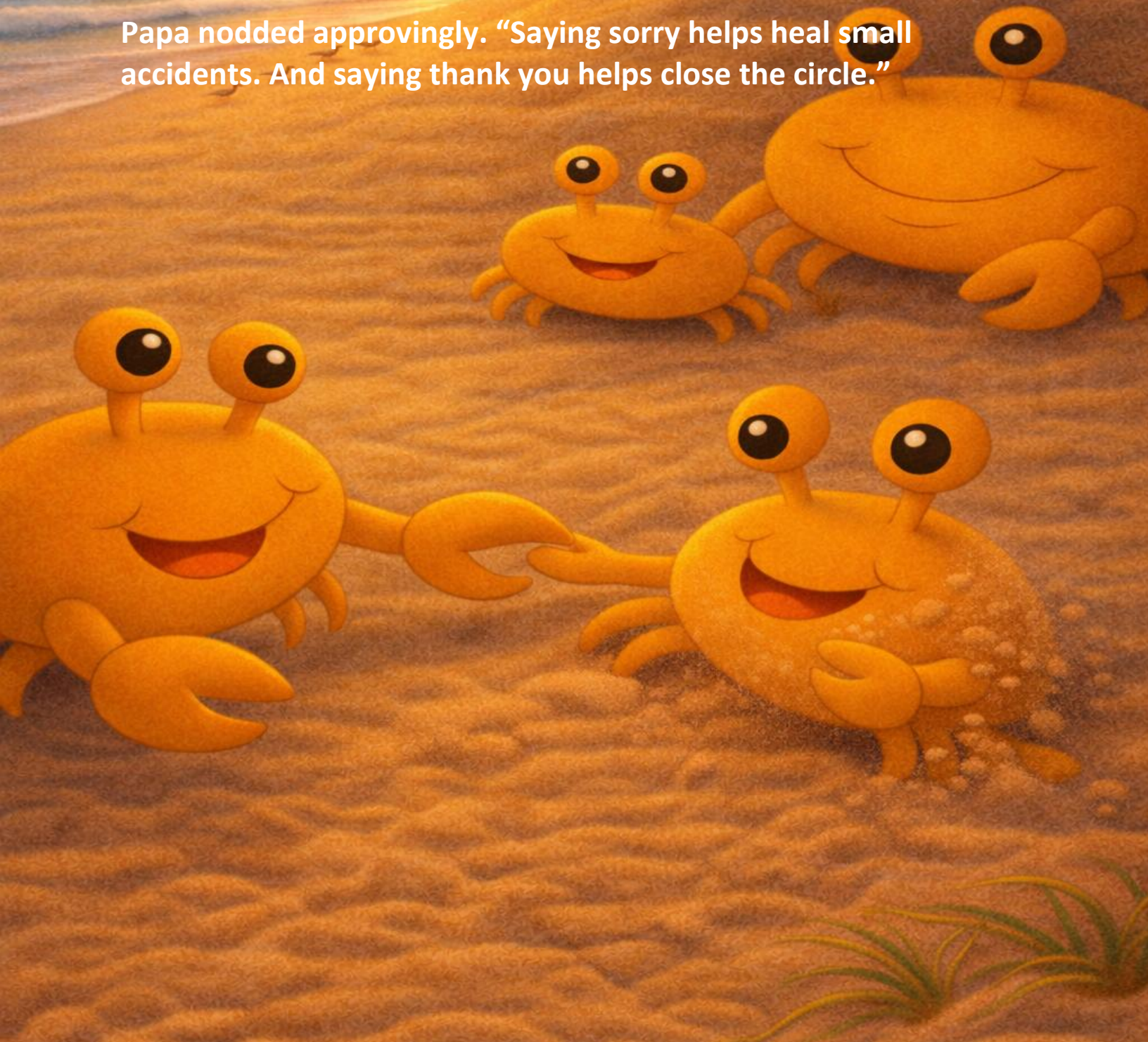
As they walked toward the shoreline, Scoot raced ahead—then slipped and bumped into Shellby.

Shellby tumbled backward with a soft *plop*.

“I’m sorry!” Scoot said right away, holding out his claw.

Shellby brushed off the sand. “Thank you for saying sorry,” she replied.

Papa nodded approvingly. “Saying sorry helps heal small accidents. And saying thank you helps close the circle.”



Soon, they heard a distressed cry overhead.

A young gull fluttered awkwardly near the dunes, one wing tangled in thin fishing line.

“Oh no,” Sandy whispered. “It looks frightened.”

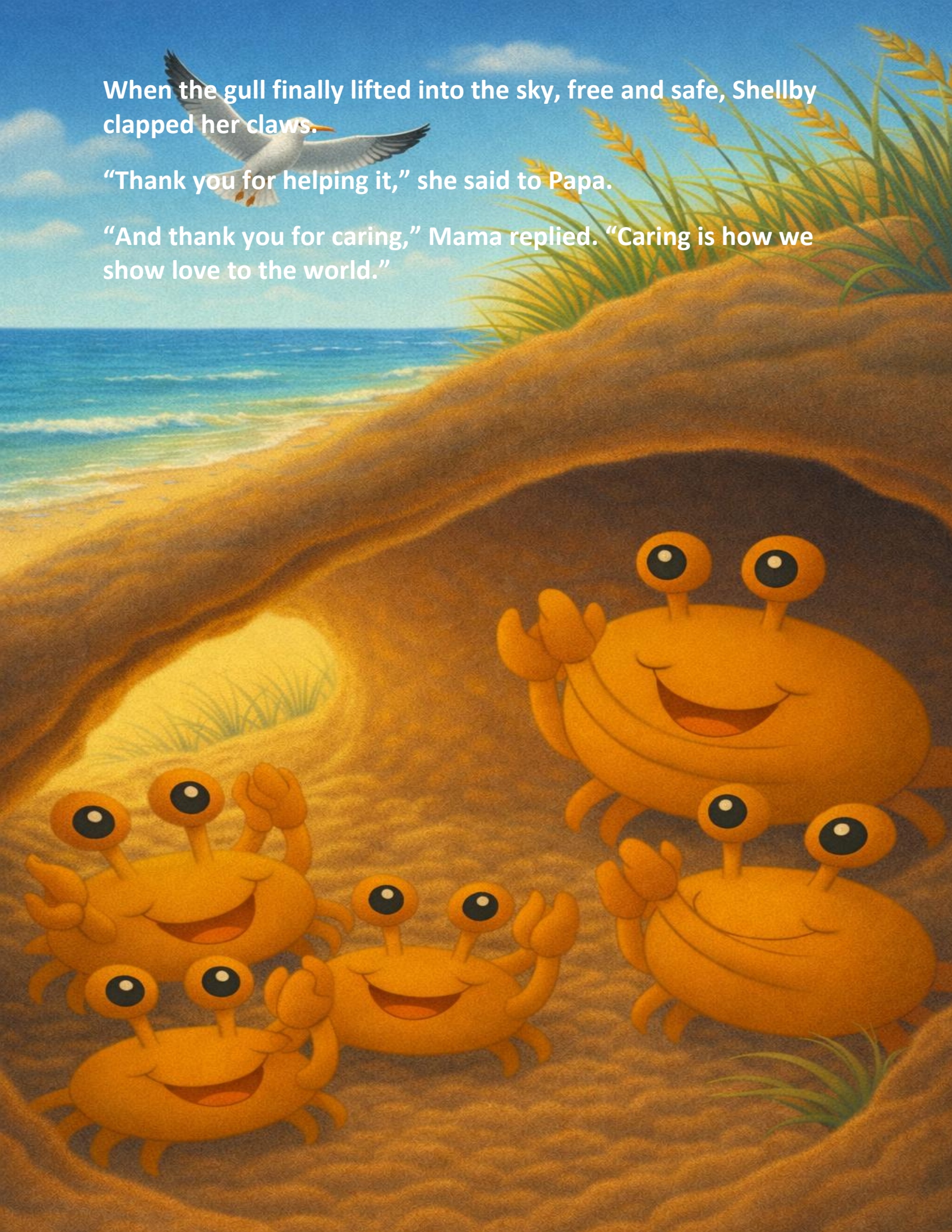
Papa moved slowly and carefully, loosening the line while Mama stood guard.



When the gull finally lifted into the sky, free and safe, Shellby clapped her claws.

“Thank you for helping it,” she said to Papa.

“And thank you for caring,” Mama replied. “Caring is how we show love to the world.”



The family continued along the beach, where smooth shells glimmered in the sand.

Scoot reached toward one—then paused.

“May I take this?” he asked.

Papa smiled. “Thank you for asking. But remember—shells are homes. We can admire them, but we leave them for those who need them.”

Scoot gently set the shell back.

“Please keep someone safe,” he whispered.



Later, a breeze kicked up, scattering sand into Shellby's eyes.

"Oh!" she cried.

Sandy hurried over. "Are you okay?"

"Yes," Shellby said, blinking. "Thank you for checking on me."

Mama hugged them both. "Kind words are small, but they make big differences."



As the sun climbed higher, the Dunehoppers headed home.

Sandy sighed happily. "Today felt peaceful."

Papa nodded. "That's what happens when we move through the world with respect."

Mama added, "When we care for others, use polite words, and practice gratitude, we help make the beach—and ourselves—a better place."



The family curled together in their burrow, the dunes humming softly around them.

And as the tide rolled in and out, the Dunehoppers rested, knowing that kindness—like the ocean—always finds its way back.



Did You Know?

Kind Words Help People *and* the Planet!

💖 Kind words really matter!

Saying please, thank you, excuse me, and I'm sorry helps people feel safe, respected, and cared for—just like the Dunehoppers show us.

🦀 Animals notice kindness too.

When people move slowly, speak gently, and act with care, wildlife is less scared and more likely to stay healthy in their homes.

🏖️ Respect keeps beaches peaceful.

Pausing to let a beetle pass, leaving shells where they belong, and helping animals in trouble all protect the beach community—big and small!

🌿 Gratitude helps us protect nature.

When we say thank you to the beach, we remember that it gives us food, shelter, and beauty. Gratitude helps us take only what we need and care for what we share.

💫 Small words can make big waves.

Kindness spreads—just like ocean waves. One gentle word or thoughtful action can inspire others to do the same.

