

# Sandy Saves a **Hermit Crab** Named Milo



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.

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One sunny morning on the Outer Banks, Sandy Dunehopper scuttled along the beach near the dunes, her eye stalks bobbing happily as sea oats swayed in the breeze. The tide had just gone out, leaving behind shiny shells, smooth stones, and tiny tide pools sparkling like mirrors.

“Good morning, beach!” Sandy chirped.

As she climbed over a small mound of sand, she suddenly heard a very soft sound.

*Tap... scrape... sigh.*

Sandy froze. “Hello?” she called gently. “Is someone there?”



Behind a clump of seaweed, she spotted something moving—slowly, awkwardly. It wasn't a shell. It wasn't a rock.

It was a plastic bottle cap.

And it was wobbling.

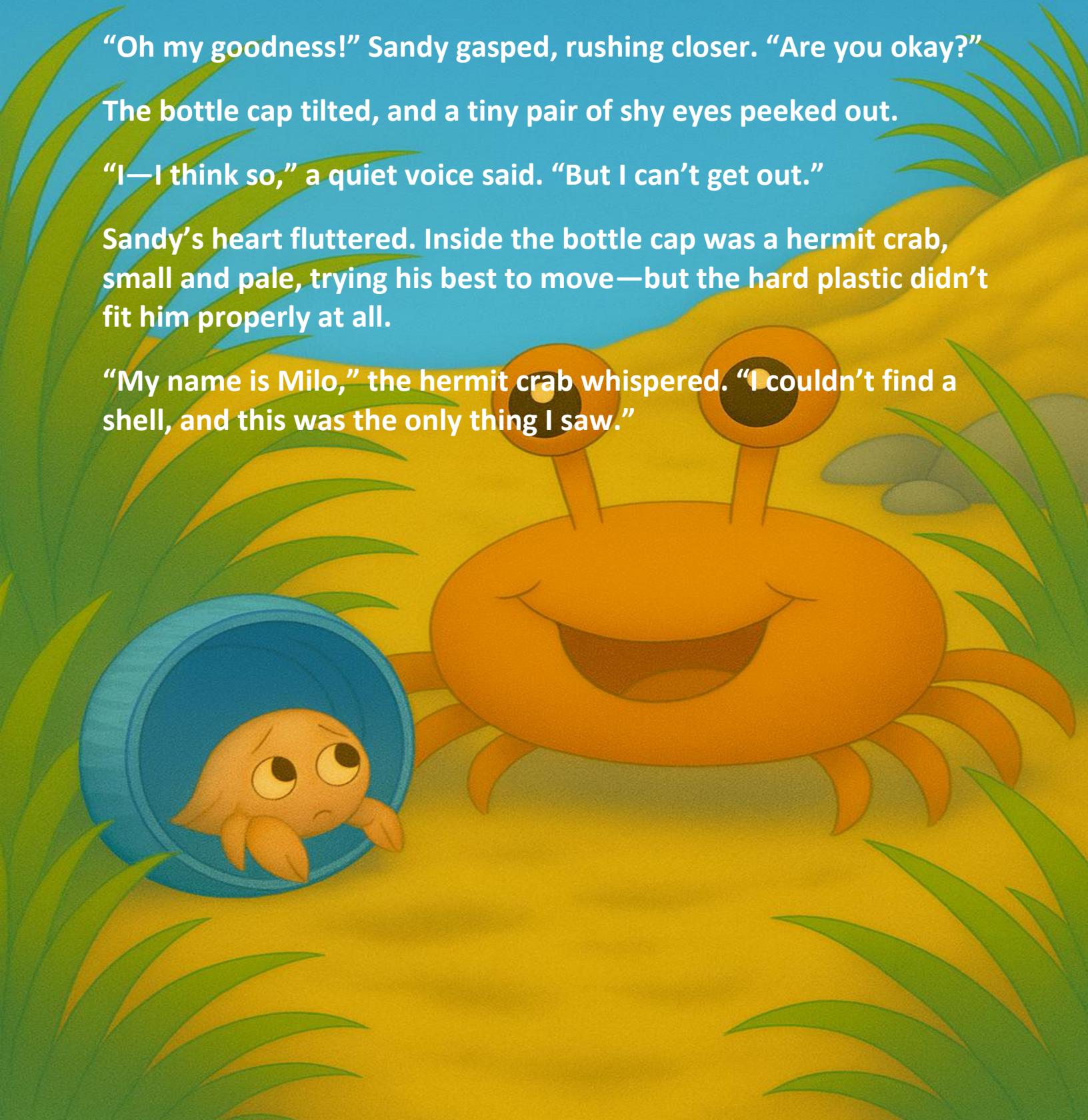
"Oh my goodness!" Sandy gasped, rushing closer. "Are you okay?"

The bottle cap tilted, and a tiny pair of shy eyes peeked out.

"I—I think so," a quiet voice said. "But I can't get out."

Sandy's heart fluttered. Inside the bottle cap was a hermit crab, small and pale, trying his best to move—but the hard plastic didn't fit him properly at all.

"My name is Milo," the hermit crab whispered. "I couldn't find a shell, and this was the only thing I saw."



Sandy frowned. “That’s not a shell—it’s trash. And it looks very uncomfortable.”

Milo nodded sadly. “It’s heavy. And it rubs my soft body. But hermit crabs need shells to live... and all the good ones were gone.”

Sandy knew this was serious. Hermit crabs don’t make their own shells—they borrow empty ones left behind by snails. Without a proper shell, they can’t grow, stay safe, or survive.

“Don’t worry,” Sandy said kindly. “I know just who can help.”

She scuttled as fast as she could back to the dunes, calling out, “Papa! Mama! Scoot! Shellby! We need help—right away!”





Soon the Dunehopper family gathered around Milo.

Papa Dunehopper studied the bottle cap carefully. "That plastic doesn't belong on the beach," he said. "And it's dangerous for animals who mistake it for shelter."

Mama nodded. "Hermit crabs have very soft bodies. They need real shells—smooth, curved, and just the right size."

Scoot looked around the sand. "But where did all the shells go?"

Papa sighed. "Many visitors take shells home as souvenirs, not realizing animals still need them."

Shellby clutched Mama's claw. "But shells are homes," she whispered.

"Yes," Mama said softly. "And taking too many can leave creatures like Milo with nowhere to live."

"We'll fix this," Sandy said confidently. "Let's find Milo a real shell."

Together, the Dunehoppers searched carefully near the tide line. They checked gently—only empty shells, never ones with animals inside.

“This one’s too small,” Scoot said.

“That one’s cracked,” Papa noted.

Then Sandy spotted it—a smooth, spiral shell with soft pink swirls, warm from the sun.



“Milo,” she said excitedly, “come try this one!”

With a little wiggle...  
and a careful twist...

*Pop!*

Milo slipped out of the bottle cap and into the shell.

His eyes lit up. “Ohhh,” he sighed. “It fits perfectly!”

Everyone cheered.



Papa used a stick to lift the bottle cap and place it into a cleanup bag. "This is why we always pick up litter," he said. "Even small trash can cause big harm."

Milo looked around at the beach, now safe and bright. "Thank you," he said shyly. "I was scared I'd never find a real home."

Sandy smiled. "You belong here. And so does your shell."



**As the sun began to lower, Milo scuttled happily toward the rocks, his new shell shining.**

**Before he left, he turned back. “I’ll tell the other hermit crabs,” he said. “Maybe together, we can remind humans to leave shells where they belong.”**

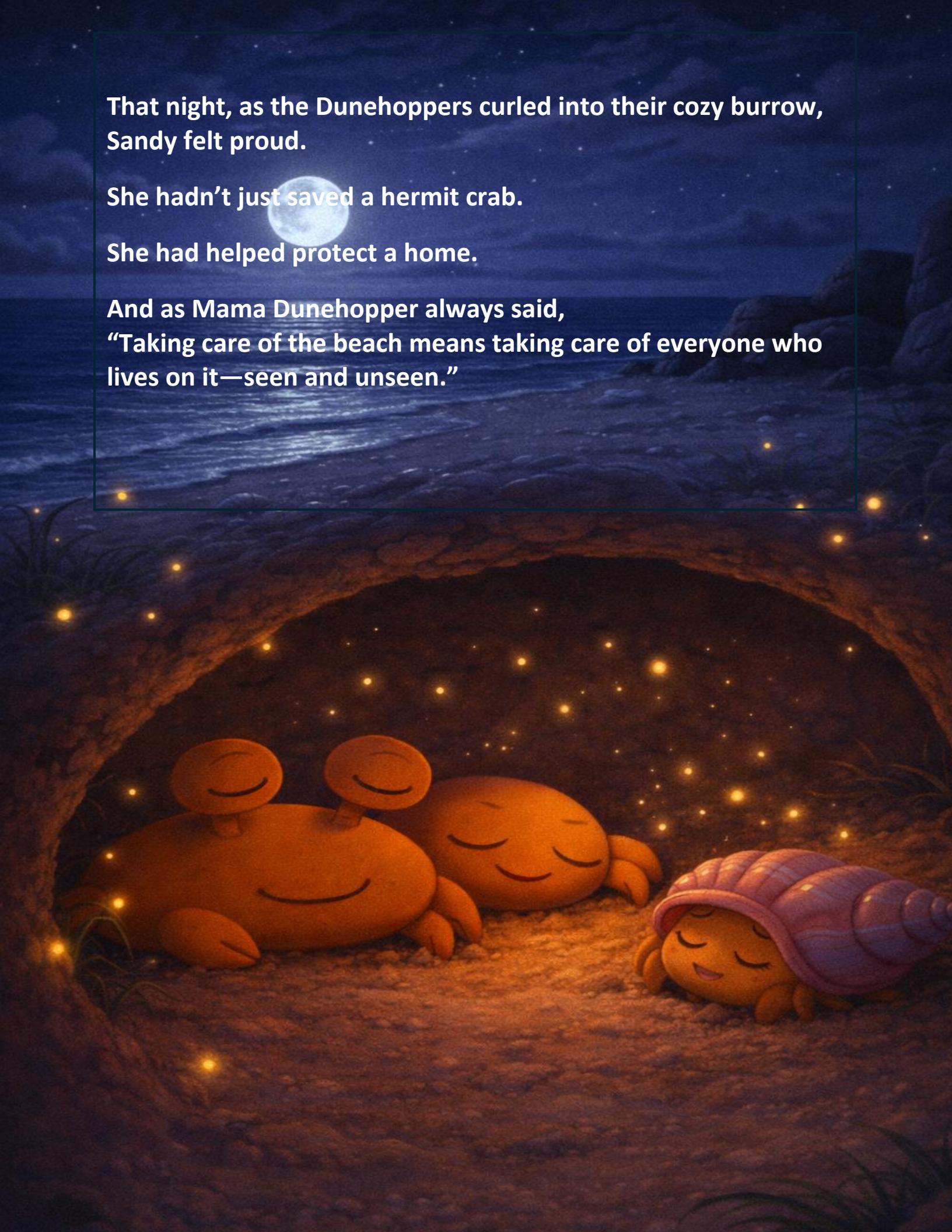


That night, as the Dunehoppers curled into their cozy burrow,  
Sandy felt proud.

She hadn't just saved a hermit crab.

She had helped protect a home.

And as Mama Dunehopper always said,  
“Taking care of the beach means taking care of everyone who  
lives on it—seen and unseen.”



## Did You Know?

- Shells are homes for many animals—leave them on the beach.
- Litter can hurt wildlife, even small pieces like bottle caps.
- Healthy habitats help animals survive.
- Helping even one creature can make a big difference.

