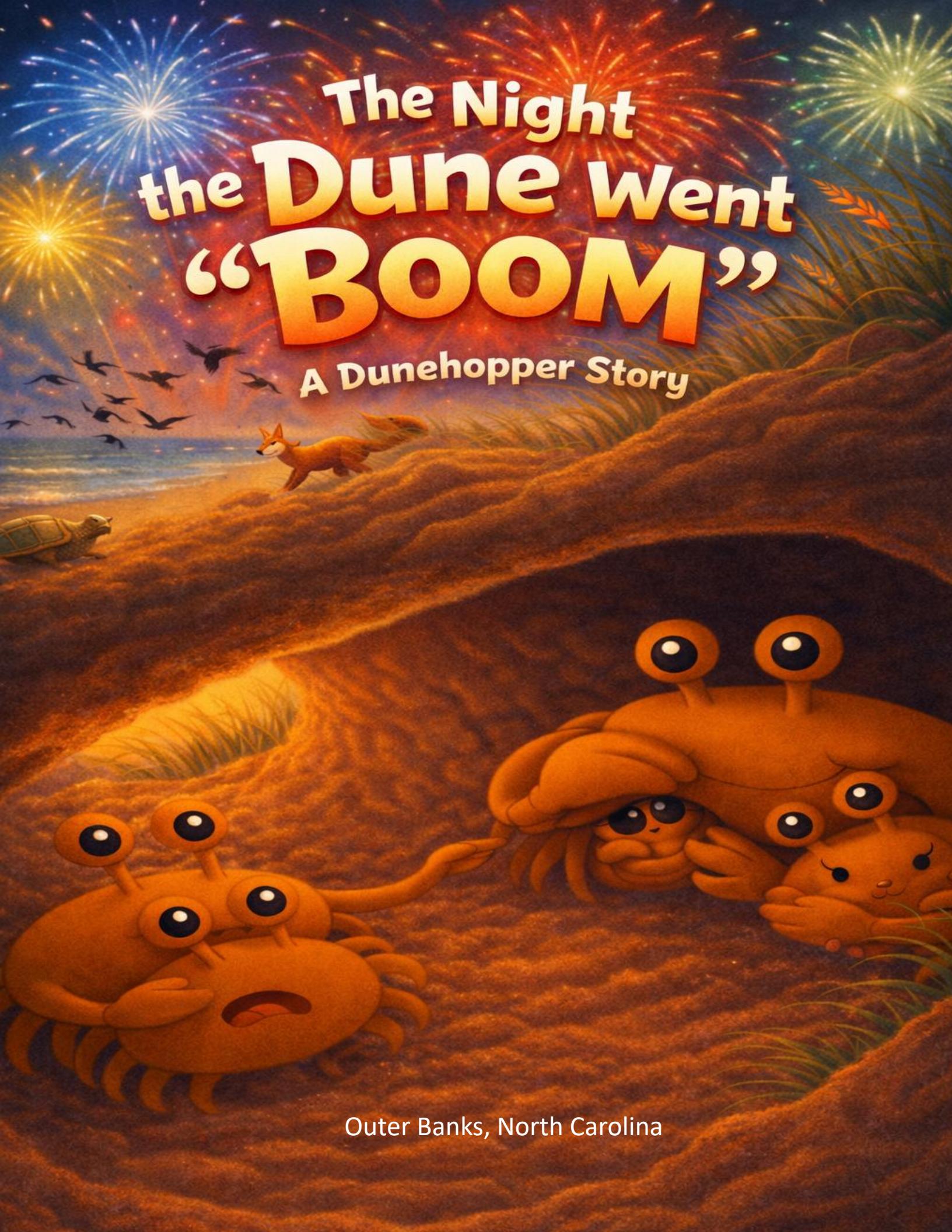


The Night the Dune Went “BOOM”

A Dunehopper Story



Outer Banks, North Carolina

Forward

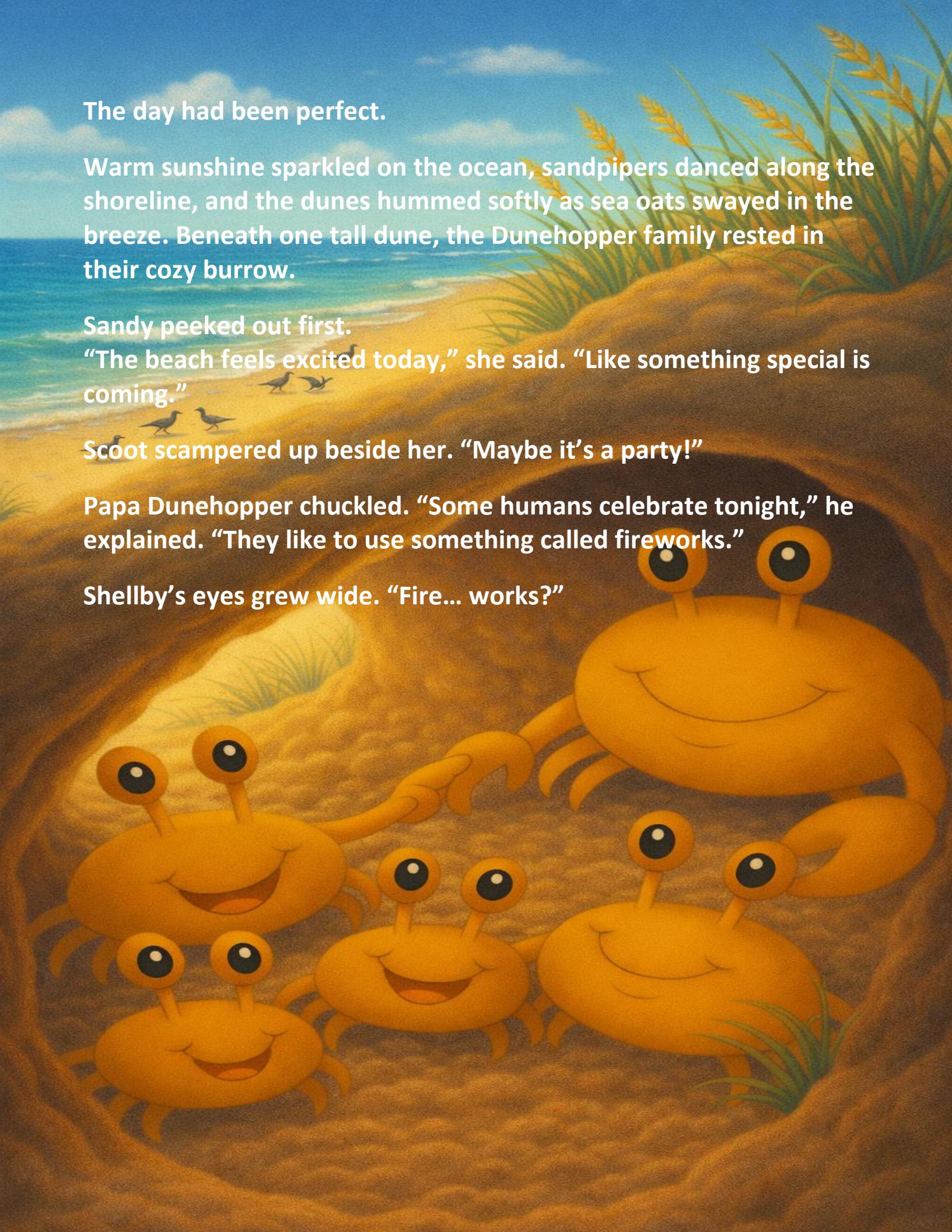
This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

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.





The day had been perfect.

Warm sunshine sparkled on the ocean, sandpipers danced along the shoreline, and the dunes hummed softly as sea oats swayed in the breeze. Beneath one tall dune, the Dunehopper family rested in their cozy burrow.

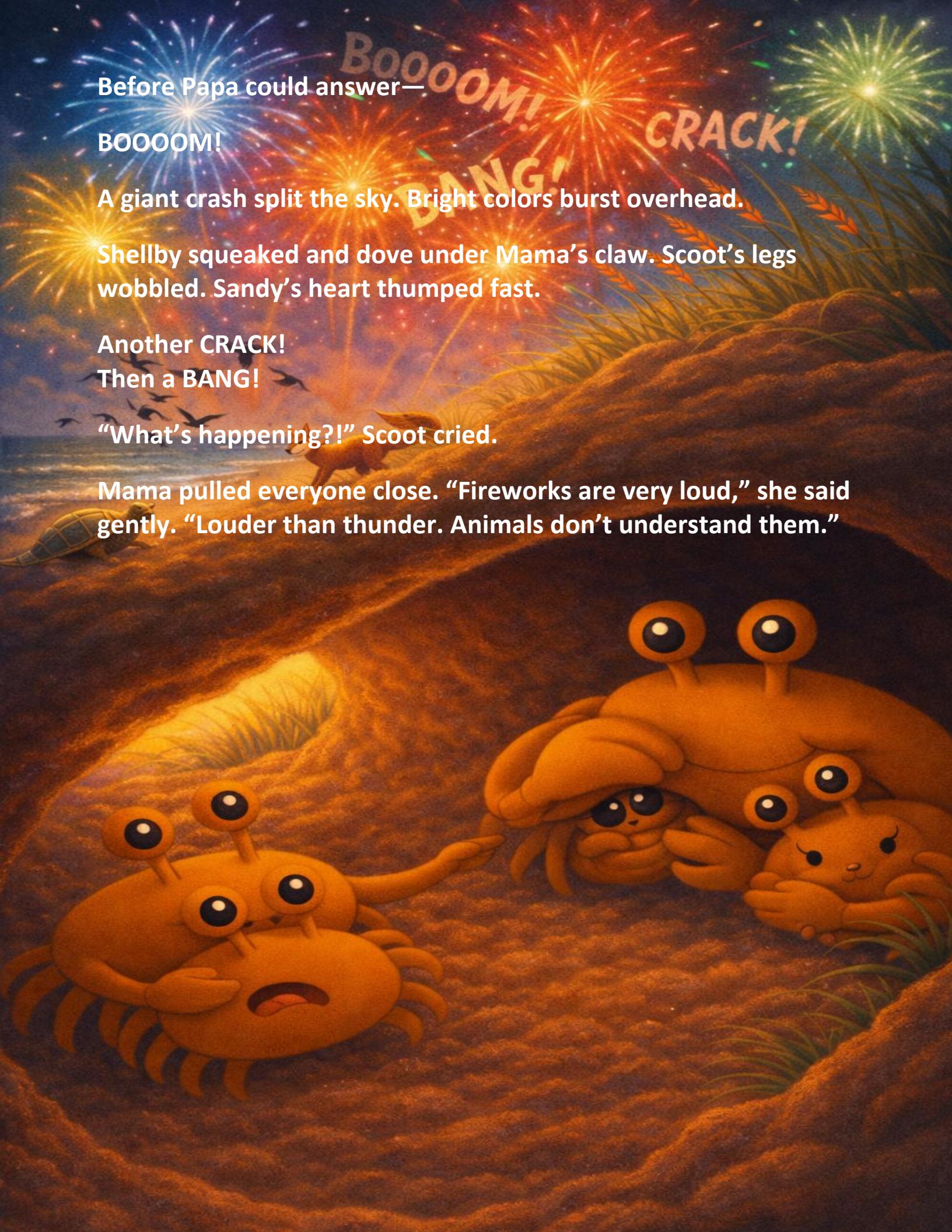
Sandy peeked out first.

"The beach feels excited today," she said. "Like something special is coming."

Scoot scampered up beside her. "Maybe it's a party!"

Papa Dunehopper chuckled. "Some humans celebrate tonight," he explained. "They like to use something called fireworks."

Shellby's eyes grew wide. "Fire... works?"



Before Papa could answer—

BOOOOM!

Boooooom!

CRACK!

BANG!

A giant crash split the sky. Bright colors burst overhead.

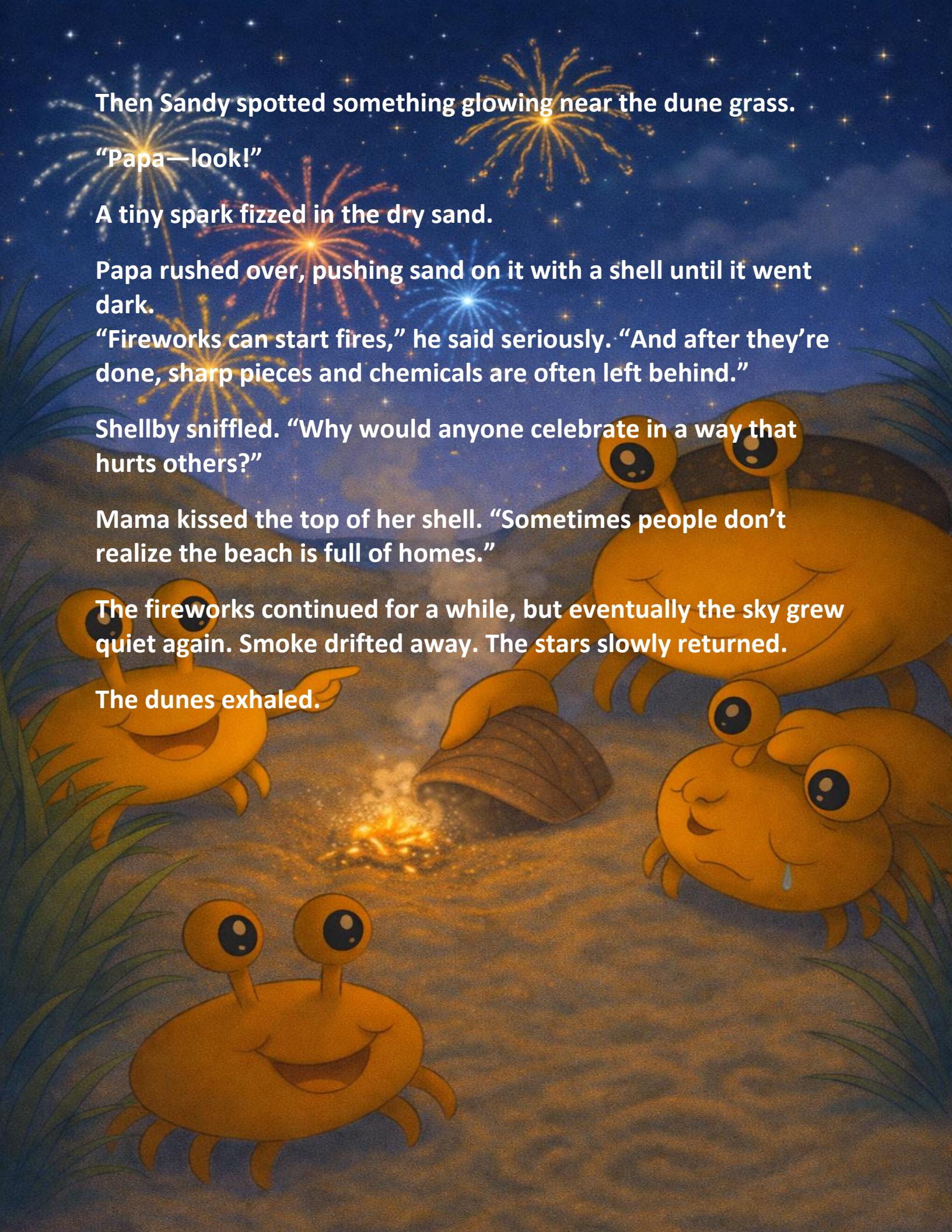
Shellby squeaked and dove under Mama's claw. Scoot's legs wobbled. Sandy's heart thumped fast.

Another CRACK!

Then a BANG!

“What’s happening?!” Scoot cried.

Mama pulled everyone close. “Fireworks are very loud,” she said gently. “Louder than thunder. Animals don’t understand them.”



Then Sandy spotted something glowing near the dune grass.

“Papa—look!”

A tiny spark fizzed in the dry sand.

Papa rushed over, pushing sand on it with a shell until it went dark.

“Fireworks can start fires,” he said seriously. “And after they’re done, sharp pieces and chemicals are often left behind.”

Shellby sniffled. “Why would anyone celebrate in a way that hurts others?”

Mama kissed the top of her shell. “Sometimes people don’t realize the beach is full of homes.”

The fireworks continued for a while, but eventually the sky grew quiet again. Smoke drifted away. The stars slowly returned.

The dunes exhaled.

The next morning, the Dunehoppers emerged to a changed beach.

Colorful bits of paper and plastic were scattered everywhere. Empty tubes lay near the waterline.

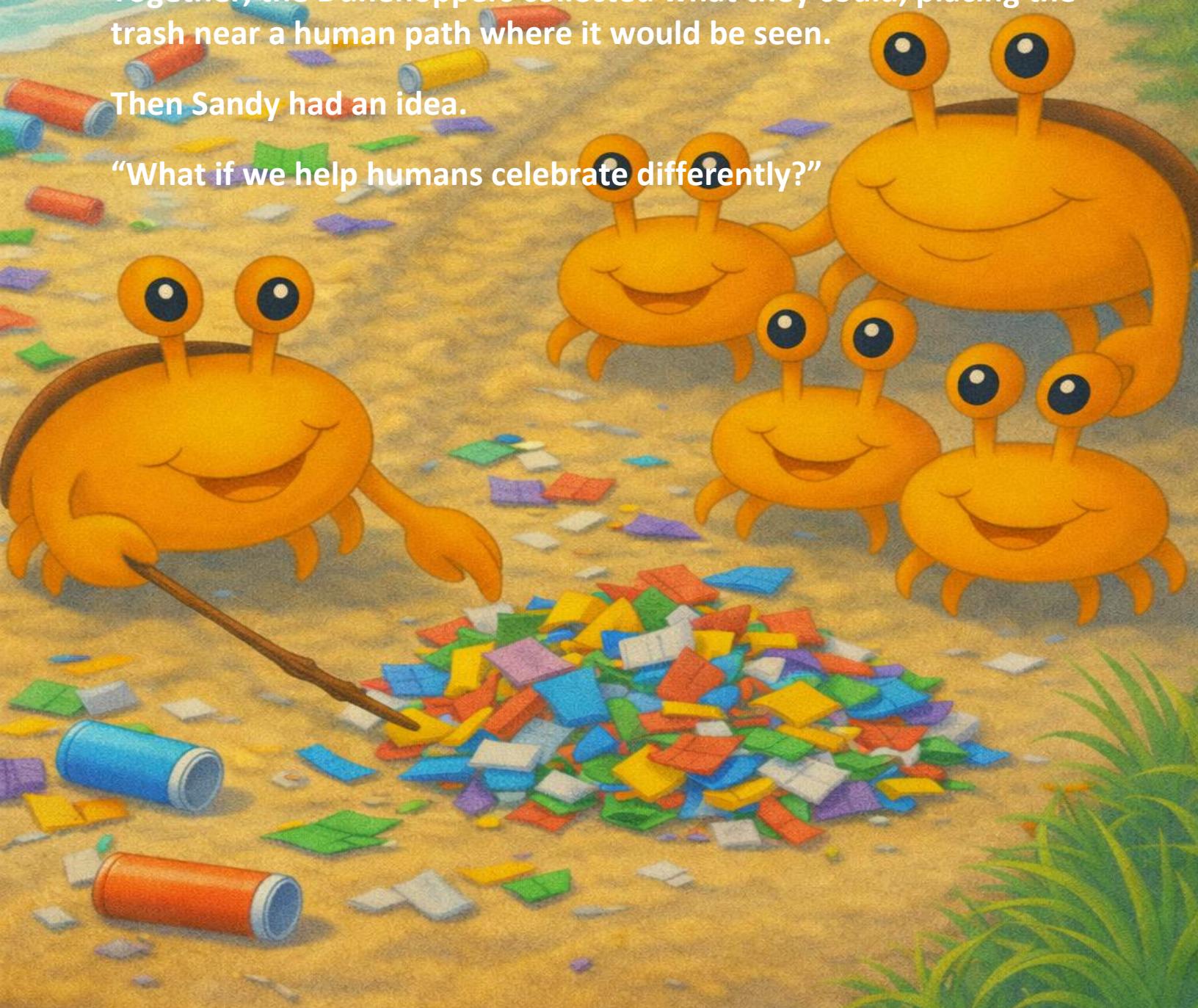
Scoot poked one with a stick. "This doesn't belong here."

"No," Sandy said. "And if it washes into the ocean, fish or birds could mistake it for food."

Together, the Dunehoppers collected what they could, placing the trash near a human path where it would be seen.

Then Sandy had an idea.

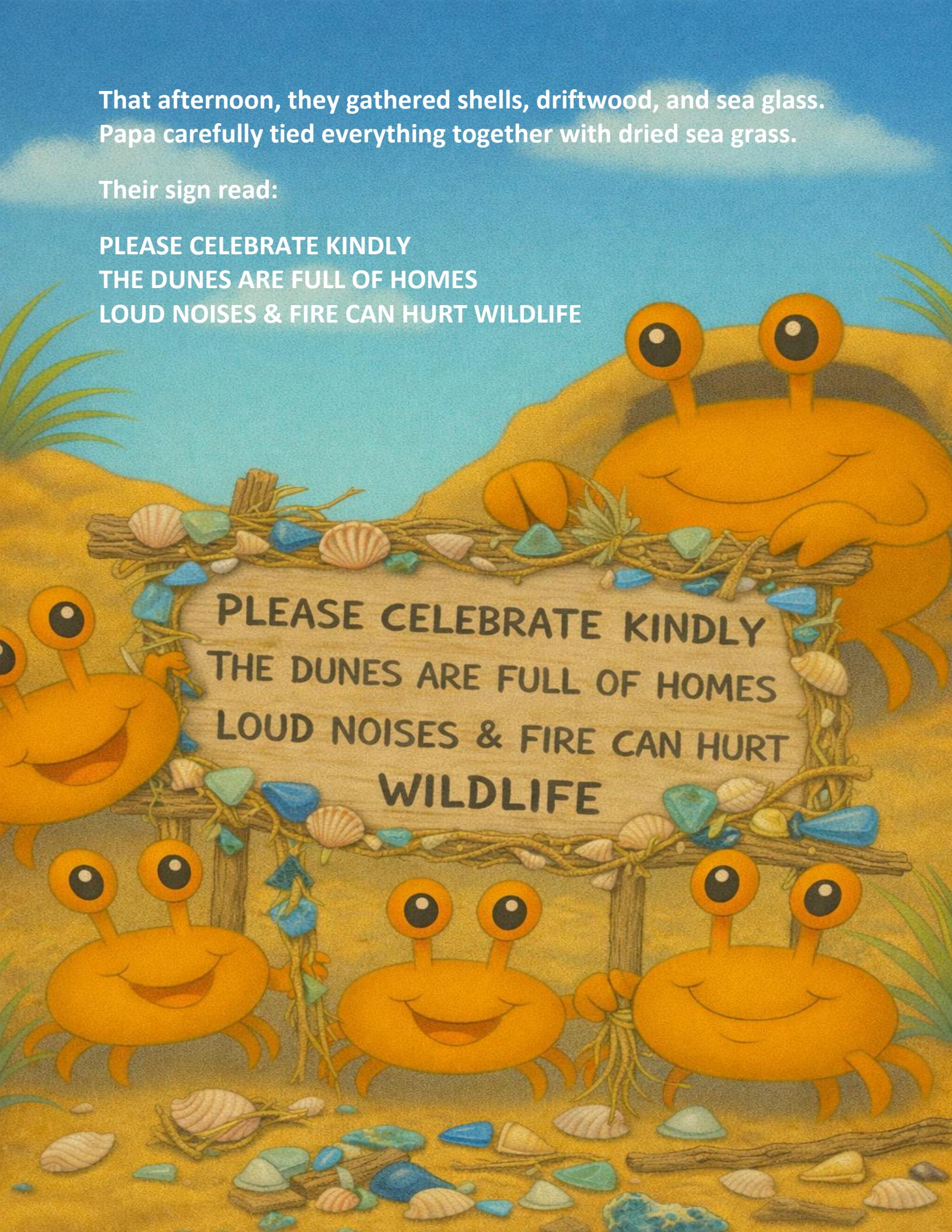
"What if we help humans celebrate differently?"



That afternoon, they gathered shells, driftwood, and sea glass. Papa carefully tied everything together with dried sea grass.

Their sign read:

PLEASE CELEBRATE KINDLY
THE DUNES ARE FULL OF HOMES
LOUD NOISES & FIRE CAN HURT WILDLIFE



PLEASE CELEBRATE KINDLY
THE DUNES ARE FULL OF HOMES
LOUD NOISES & FIRE CAN HURT
WILDLIFE

That evening, something wonderful happened.

People stopped. They read the sign. Some nodded. Some pointed quietly at the dunes. Families walked softly along the beach carrying lanterns. Children counted stars. Someone played gentle music.

No explosions.

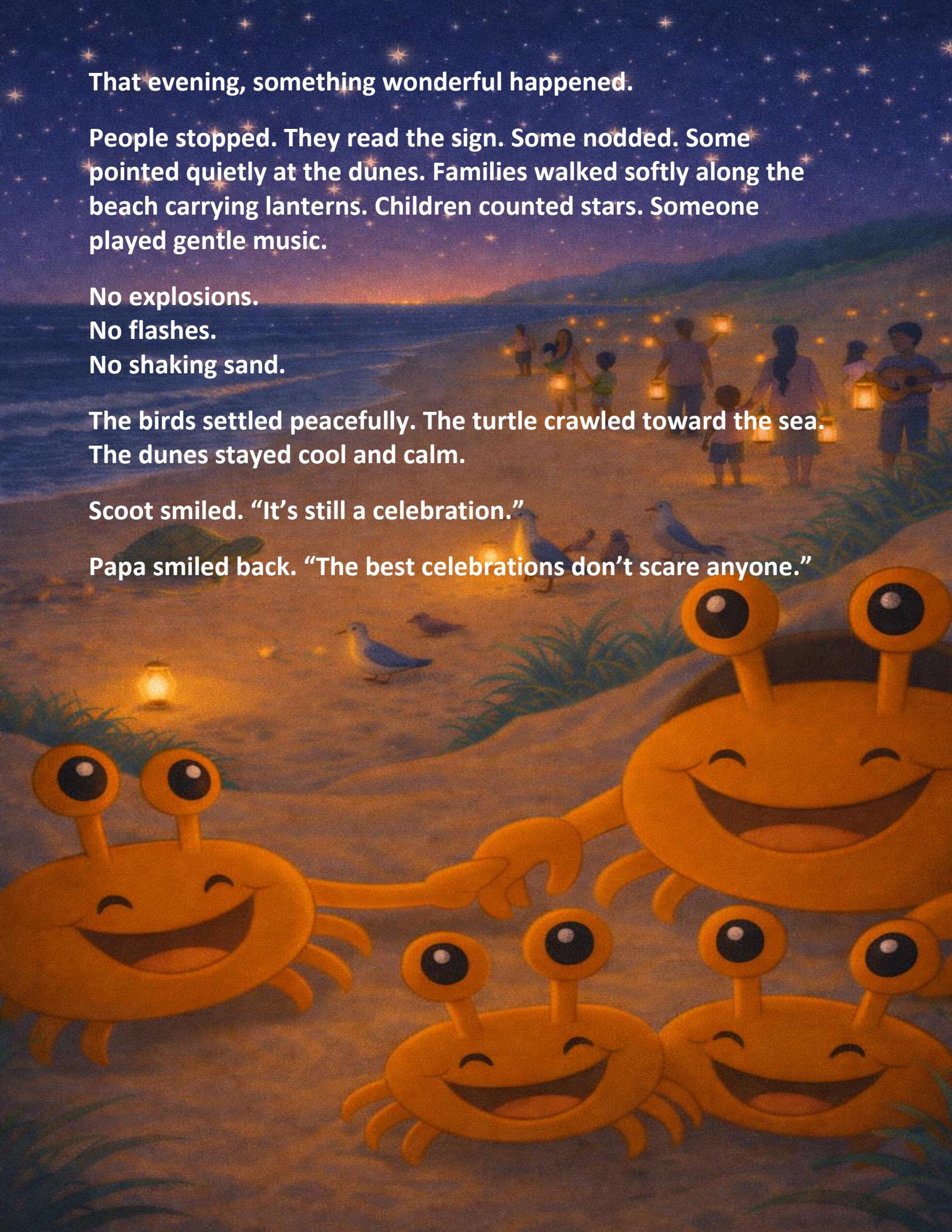
No flashes.

No shaking sand.

The birds settled peacefully. The turtle crawled toward the sea. The dunes stayed cool and calm.

Scoot smiled. "It's still a celebration."

Papa smiled back. "The best celebrations don't scare anyone."





As the moon rose, the Dunehoppers curled into their burrow.

The beach was safe.

The night was quiet.

And everyone—seen and unseen—could rest.



Celebrations are happiest when they keep people, animals, and nature safe. Quiet lights, kind choices, and clean beaches help everyone enjoy the night sky together.

