

THE NIGHT THE SEA SERPENT GROWLED



Outer Banks, North Carolina

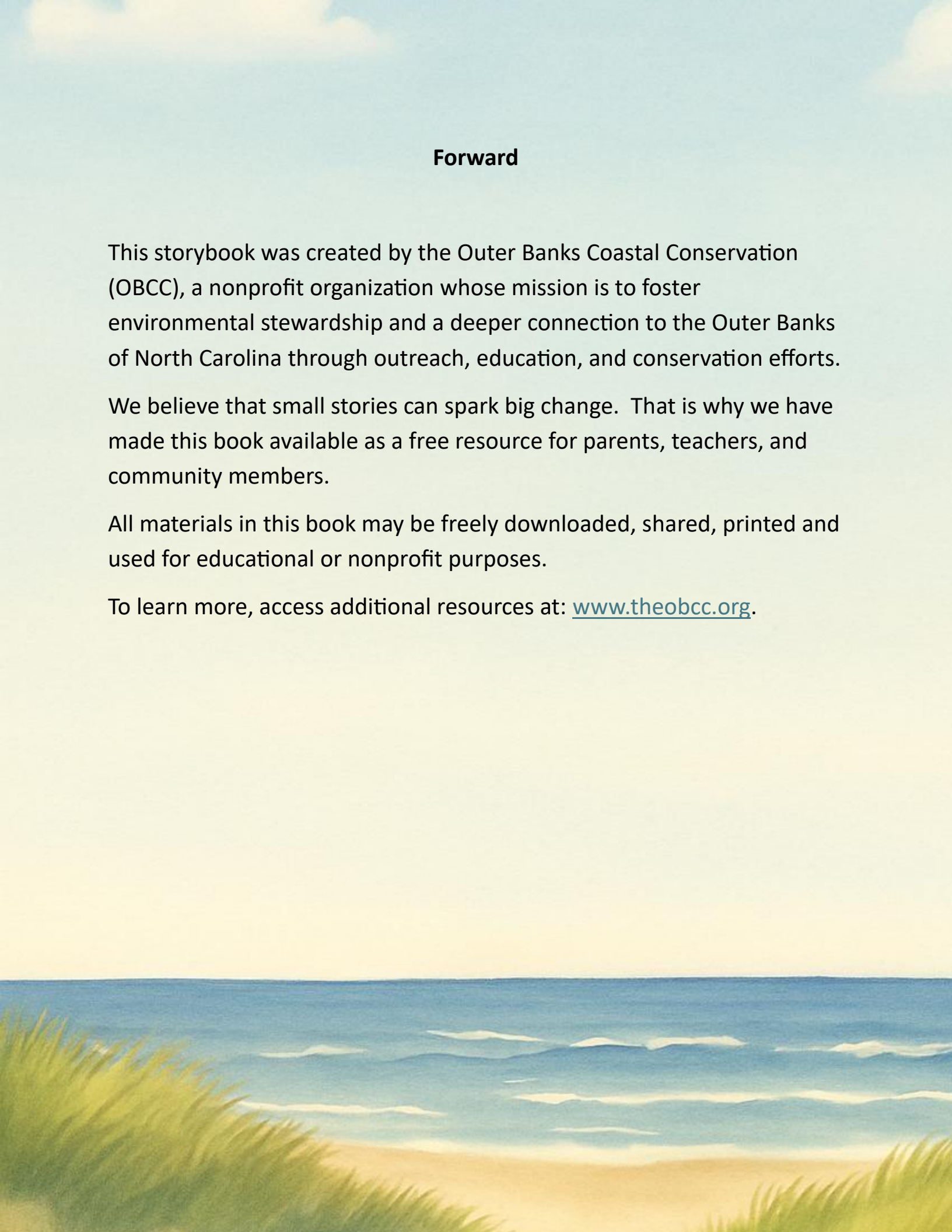
Forward

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.

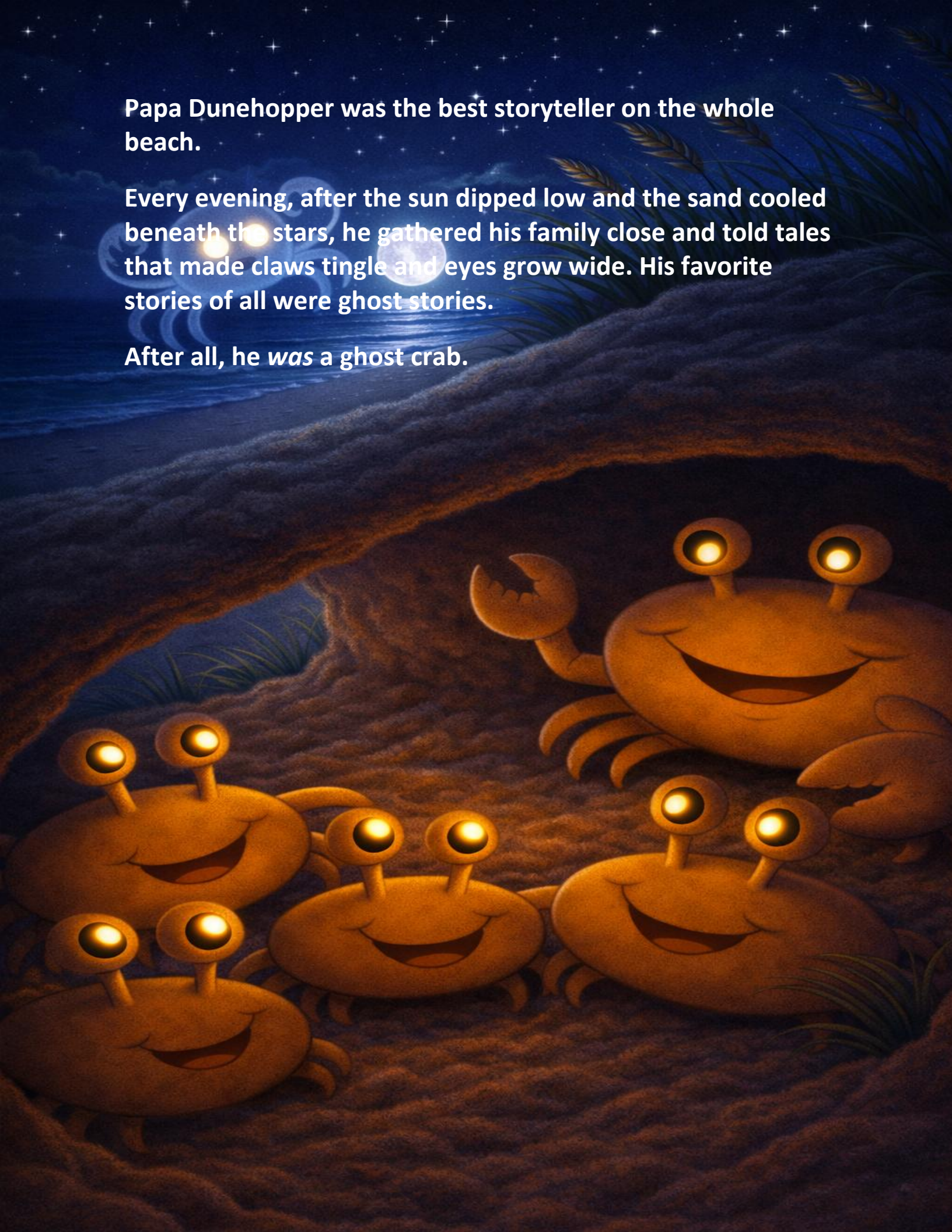
To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.



Papa Dunehopper was the best storyteller on the whole beach.

Every evening, after the sun dipped low and the sand cooled beneath the stars, he gathered his family close and told tales that made claws tingle and eyes grow wide. His favorite stories of all were ghost stories.

After all, he *was* a ghost crab.



One bright morning, Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby slung their knapsacks over their shells and scurried off to Sea Oats School, their claws clicking happily along the sandy path. Papa waved goodbye and headed the other way, off to his job as a mechanic at Dune Busters Dune Buggy Repair Shop, where he fixed squeaky wheels and sandy engines all day long.



Mama stayed behind in the burrow, tidying up and humming softly. As the sun climbed higher, her tummy rumbled.

“What should I make for dinner?” she wondered.

She tapped her claw thoughtfully.

“Lasagna with clams!” she said with a smile.



With her basket tucked under her arm, Mama headed down to the shore. Clam hunting wasn't easy. It took patience, sharp eyes, and a bit of luck. Mama waited as the waves rolled in and slid back out again, scanning the wet sand each time.

Swish... whoosh.

Nothing.

Then—*whoosh!*—a big wave rushed in and left something shiny behind.

"Aha!" Mama said.

She gently scooped up a clam and placed it in her basket. Another wave came in... another clam. Soon her basket was full, and Mama happily scuttled back home.



Back in the burrow, she got to work. Clams on the bottom. A layer of fresh seaweed. More clams. More seaweed. A careful sprinkle of sea salt.

Lasagna-making took time—almost three whole hours—but Mama didn't mind. She wanted it to be perfect.



By the time Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby burst through the burrow entrance, Papa was right behind them, tired and hungry from a long day.

"Dinner's ready!" Mama called.

"We're having seaweed lasagna with clams."

Scoot's smile disappeared.

"I don't like clams," he said, wrinkling his nose. "Can I have a TV dinner instead?"

Mama shook her head gently. "No, sweetheart. This is what we have tonight."

Scoot crossed his claws and slumped into his seat.



That's when Papa cleared his throat.

"Well," he said slowly, his eyes twinkling, "this reminds me of a story..."

The children leaned in.

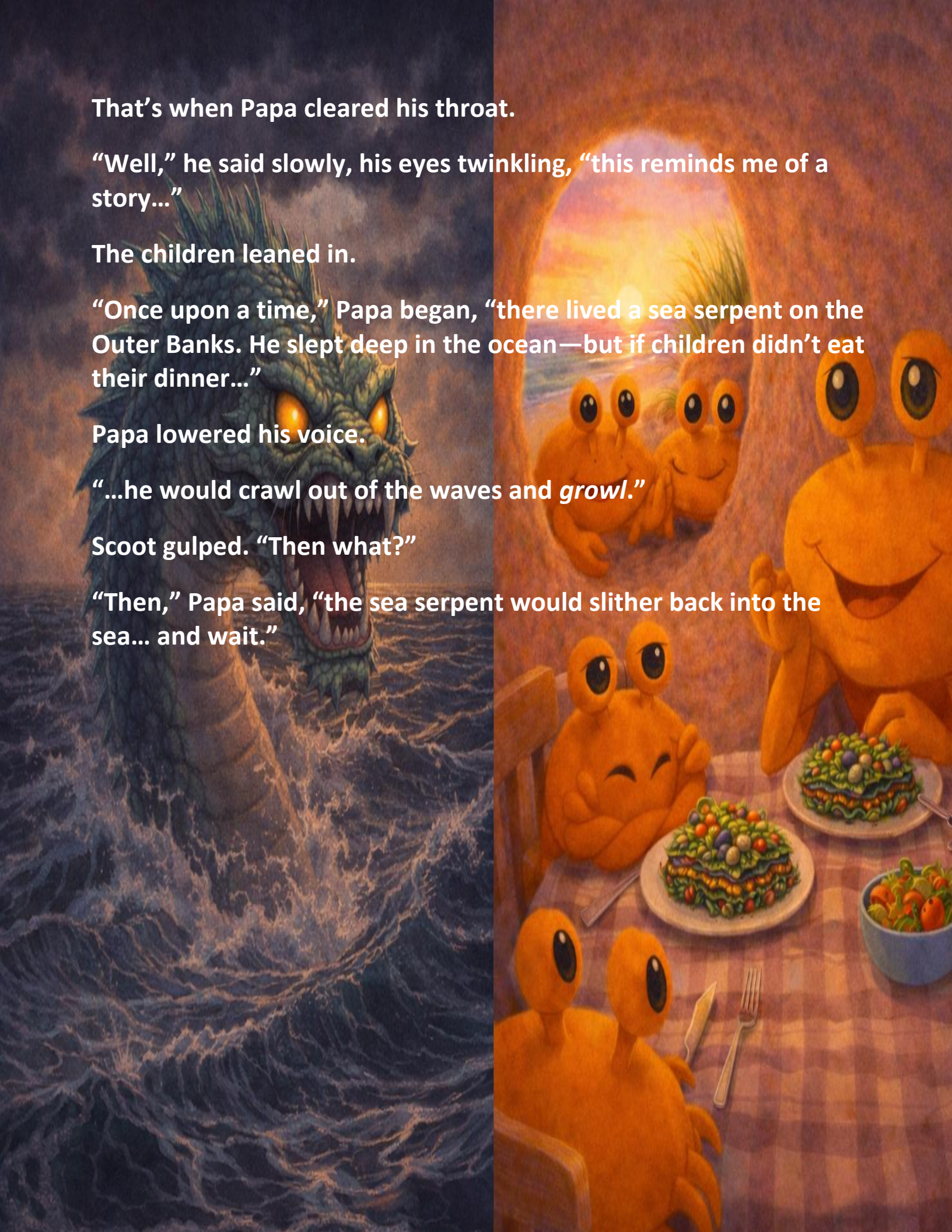
"Once upon a time," Papa began, "there lived a sea serpent on the Outer Banks. He slept deep in the ocean—but if children didn't eat their dinner..."

Papa lowered his voice.

"...he would crawl out of the waves and *growl*."

Scout gulped. "Then what?"

"Then," Papa said, "the sea serpent would slither back into the sea... and wait."



Scout pushed his plate away. "I don't believe it. I'm not hungry.
Can I go to my room?"

Mama and Papa exchanged a glance.
"All right," Mama said kindly.



That night, as the burrow grew quiet, Scoot lay awake in his shell-bed.

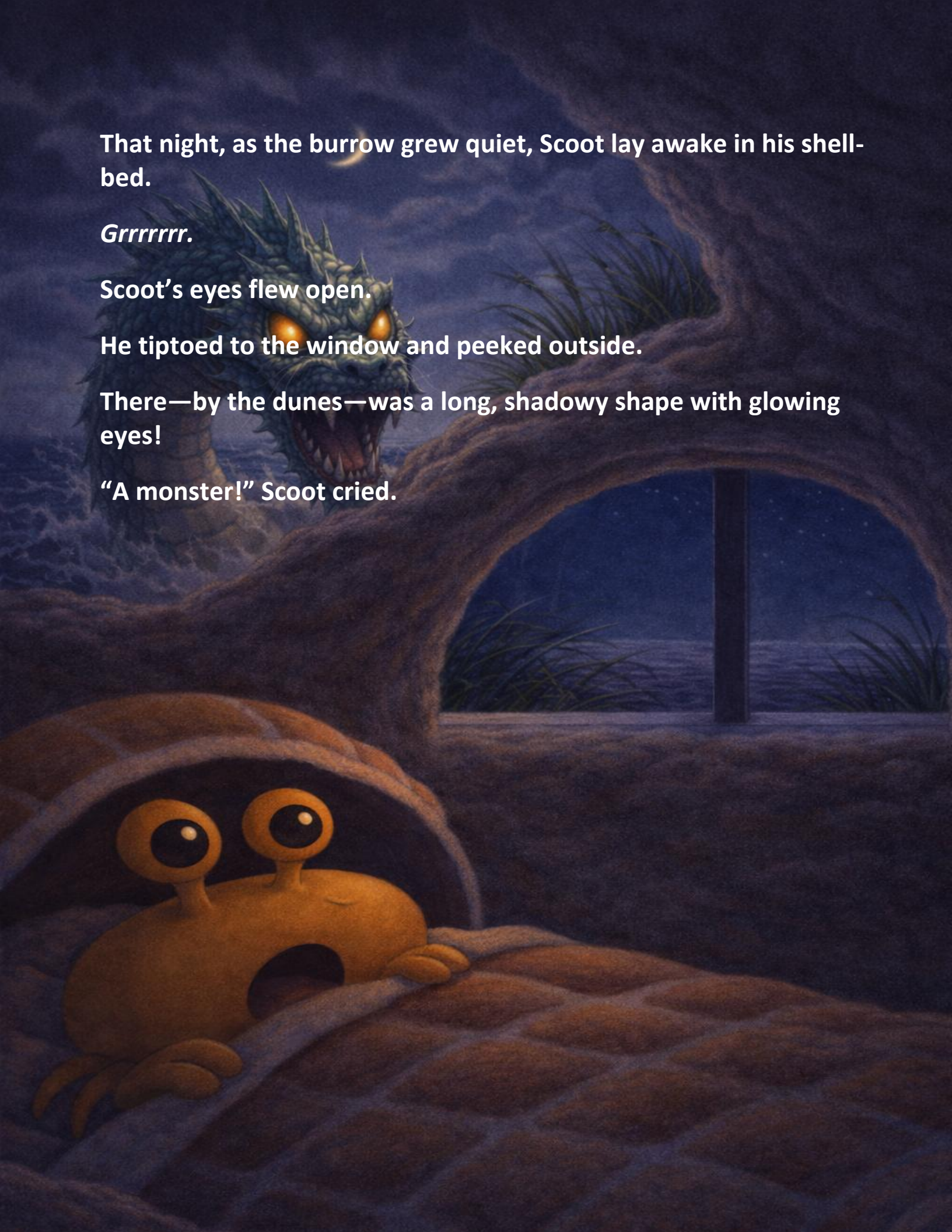
Grrrrrrrr.

Scoot's eyes flew open.

He tiptoed to the window and peeked outside.

There—by the dunes—was a long, shadowy shape with glowing eyes!

"A monster!" Scoot cried.



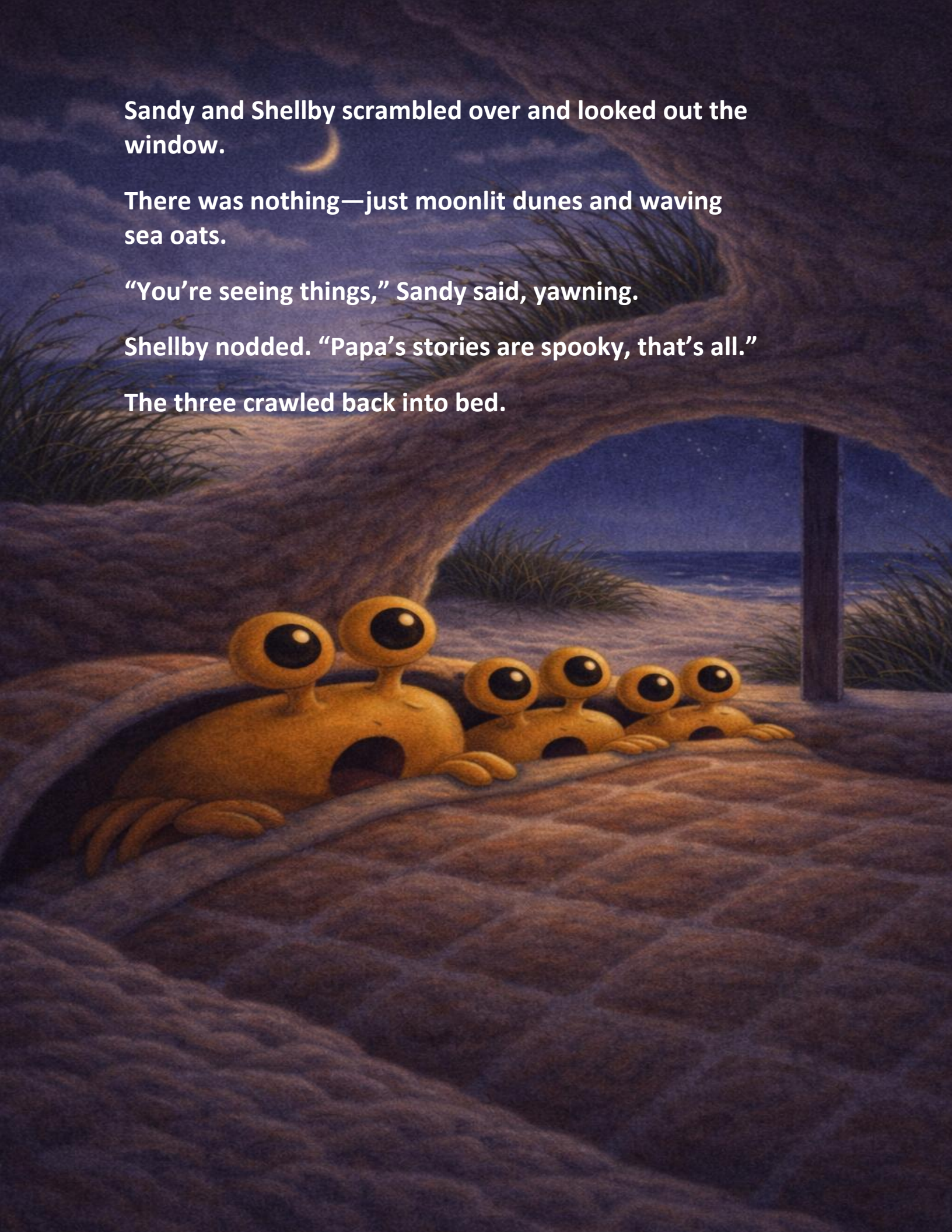
Sandy and Shellby scrambled over and looked out the window.

There was nothing—just moonlit dunes and waving sea oats.

“You’re seeing things,” Sandy said, yawning.

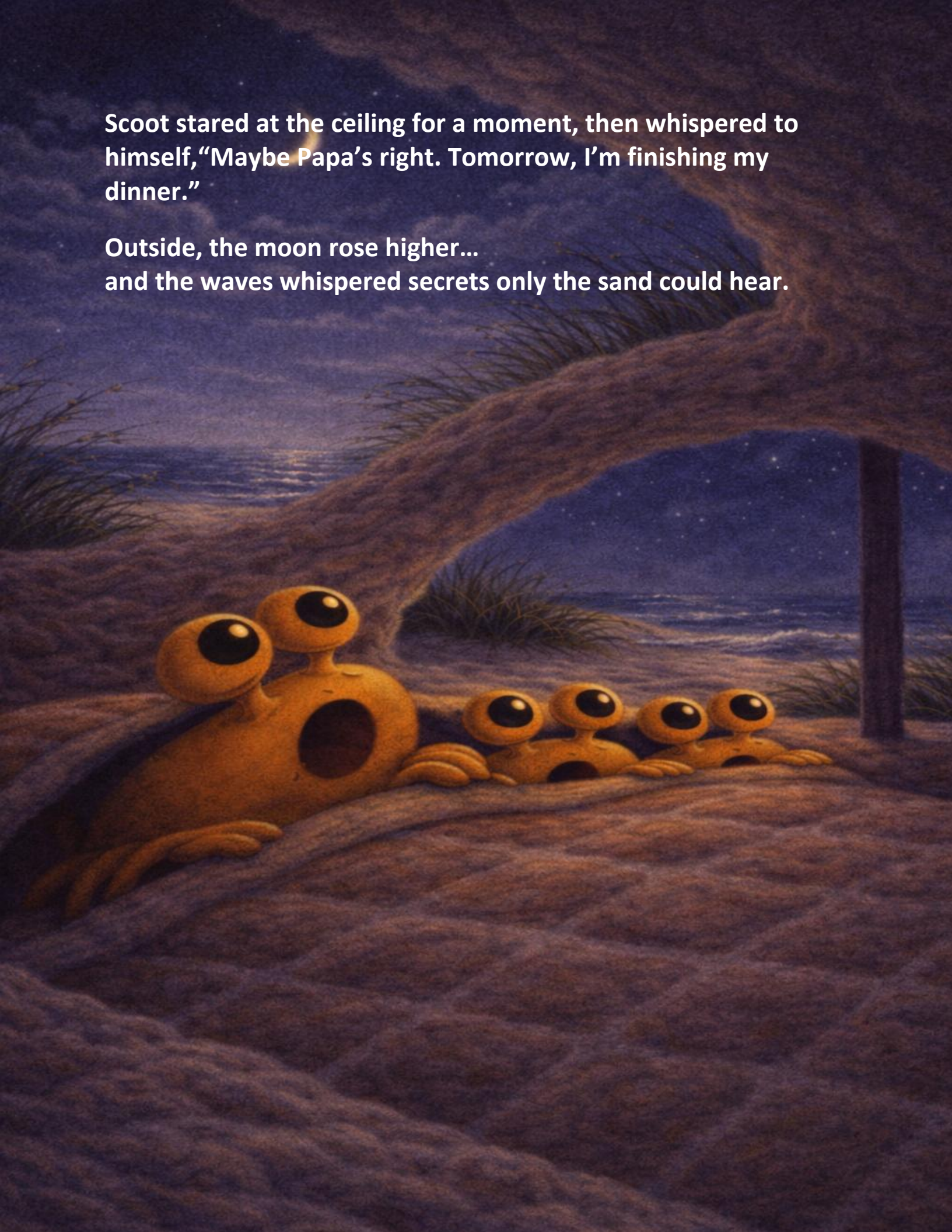
Shellby nodded. “Papa’s stories are spooky, that’s all.”

The three crawled back into bed.



Scoot stared at the ceiling for a moment, then whispered to himself, "Maybe Papa's right. Tomorrow, I'm finishing my dinner."

Outside, the moon rose higher...
and the waves whispered secrets only the sand could hear.



Did You Know?

Did you know that real ghost crabs come out mostly at night, just like Scoot? That's because nighttime helps keep them cool and safe from predators.

Ghost crabs dig deep burrows in the sand where they sleep, hide, and stay cozy—just like the Dunehopper family!

When the moon rises, ghost crabs listen carefully to the sounds of the beach. The crashing waves, rustling sea oats, and even spooky noises are all part of the shore's nighttime music.

And here's the fun truth:

Sometimes what sounds scary in the dark is just the ocean doing what it always does.

So next time you hear a growl at the beach... it might just be the waves saying goodnight.

