

# Sea Queens of the Outer Banks



Outer Banks, North Carolina



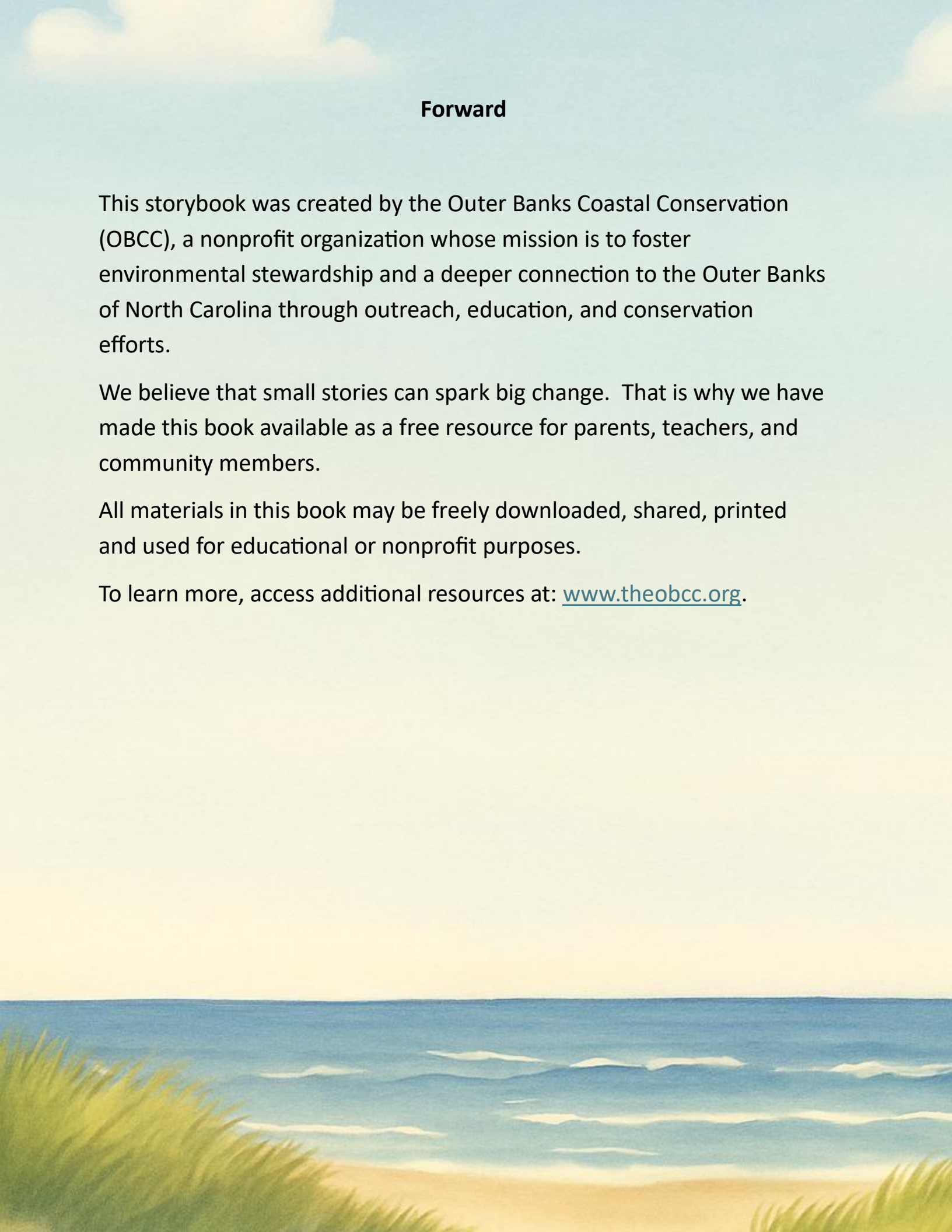
## Forward

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](http://www.theobcc.org).





# Chapter 1: The Secret of Shell Island

Long ago, when the Outer Banks were quiet sandbars dancing with wind and waves, curious children whispered tales of pirate queens.

Some said they hid treasure in the dune grass. Others swore that on moonlit nights, you could hear them laughing on the breeze.

But the best stories came from Shell Island, a little beach near Ocracoke, where two brave girls once dreamed of the sea...





## Chapter 2: Anne and Mary Dream Big

Anne and Mary weren't ordinary girls.

While other children collected shells or flew kites, they traced pirate maps in the sand, practiced tying sailor knots, and watched fishing boats glide across the Pamlico Sound.

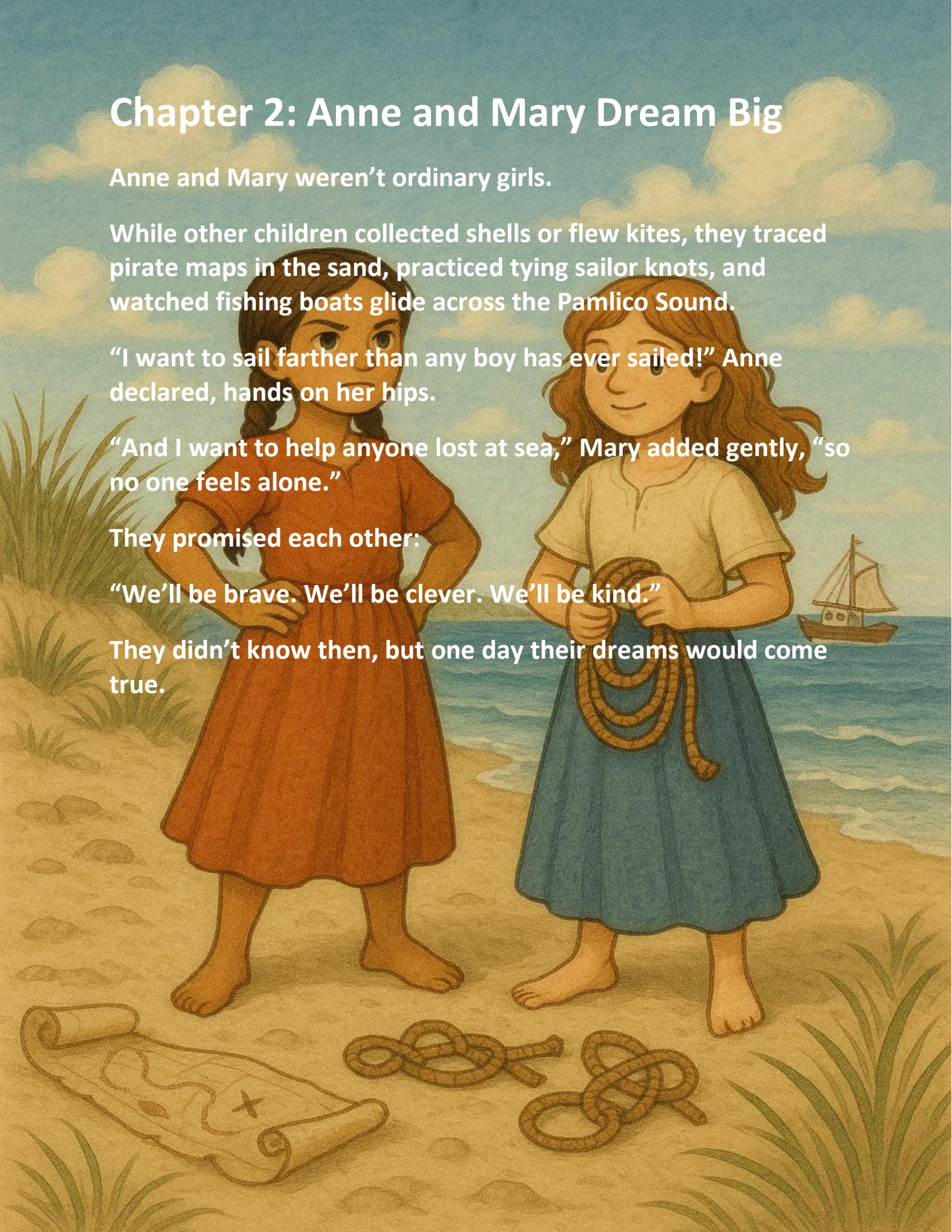
"I want to sail farther than any boy has ever sailed!" Anne declared, hands on her hips.

"And I want to help anyone lost at sea," Mary added gently, "so no one feels alone."

They promised each other:

"We'll be brave. We'll be clever. We'll be kind."

They didn't know then, but one day their dreams would come true.





## Chapter 3: The Courage to Set Sail

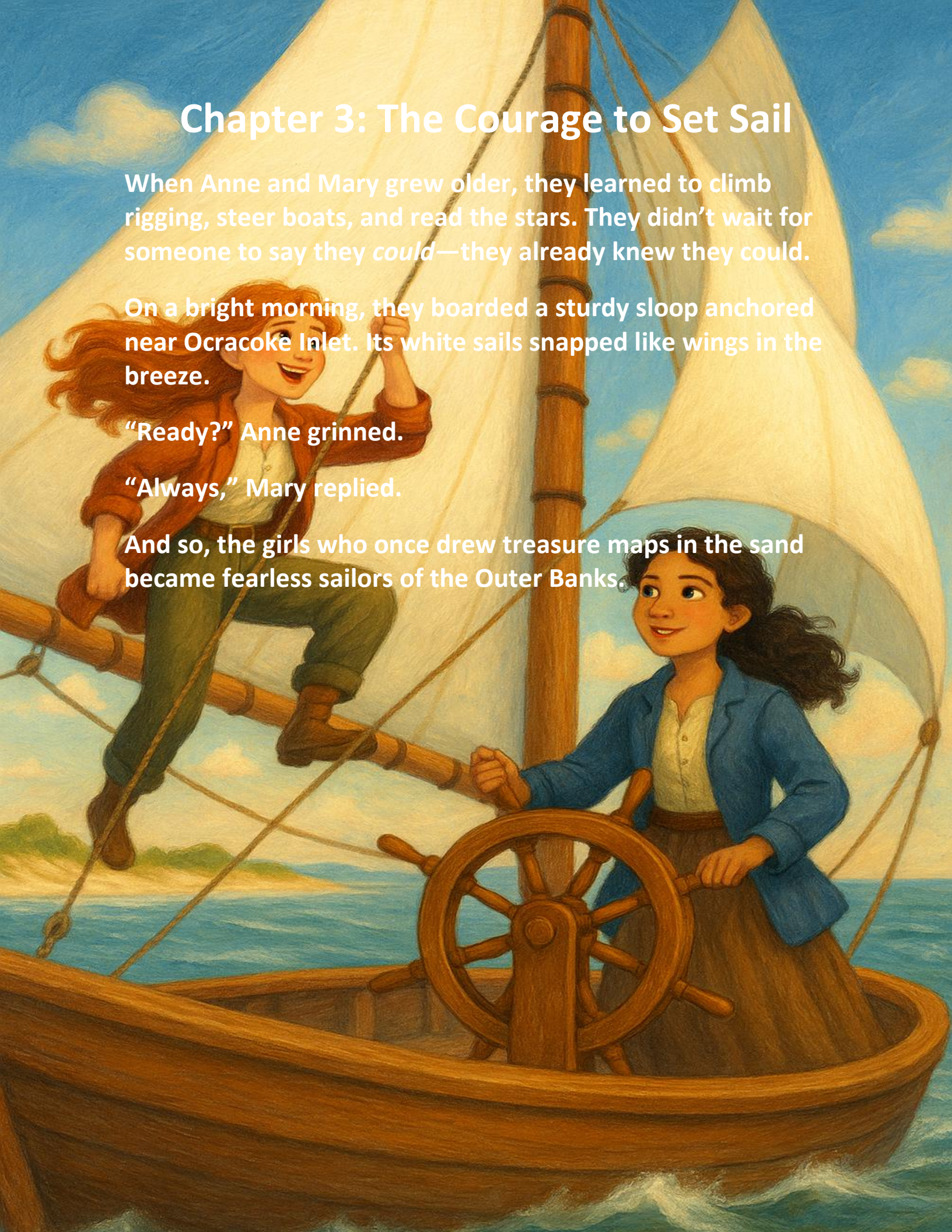
When Anne and Mary grew older, they learned to climb rigging, steer boats, and read the stars. They didn't wait for someone to say they *could*—they already knew they could.

On a bright morning, they boarded a sturdy sloop anchored near Ocracoke Inlet. Its white sails snapped like wings in the breeze.

"Ready?" Anne grinned.

"Always," Mary replied.

And so, the girls who once drew treasure maps in the sand became fearless sailors of the Outer Banks.





## Chapter 4: Queens of Kindness

Some people called them pirates, but Anne and Mary had a rule:

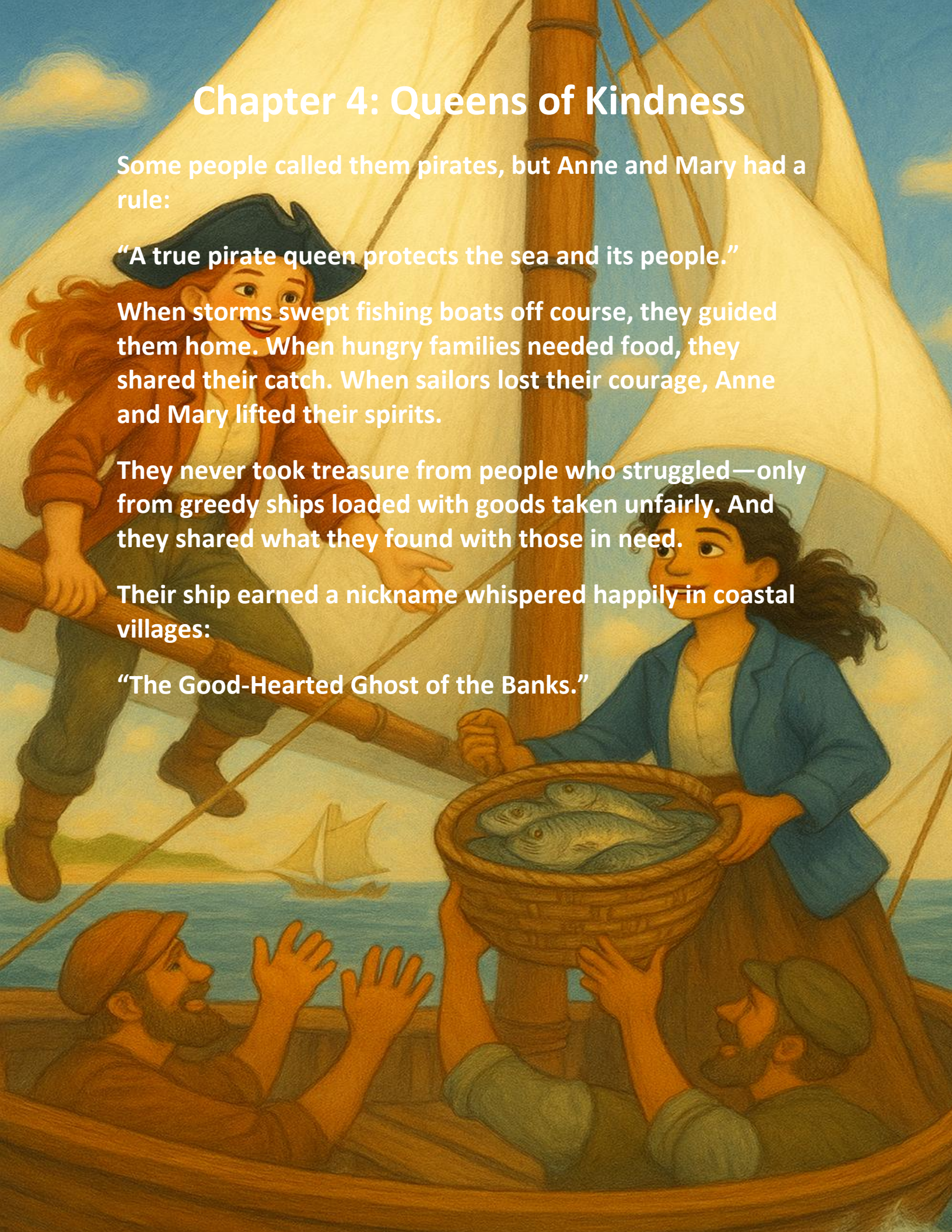
“A true pirate queen protects the sea and its people.”

When storms swept fishing boats off course, they guided them home. When hungry families needed food, they shared their catch. When sailors lost their courage, Anne and Mary lifted their spirits.

They never took treasure from people who struggled—only from greedy ships loaded with goods taken unfairly. And they shared what they found with those in need.

Their ship earned a nickname whispered happily in coastal villages:

“The Good-Hearted Ghost of the Banks.”





## Chapter 5: The Storm of the Century

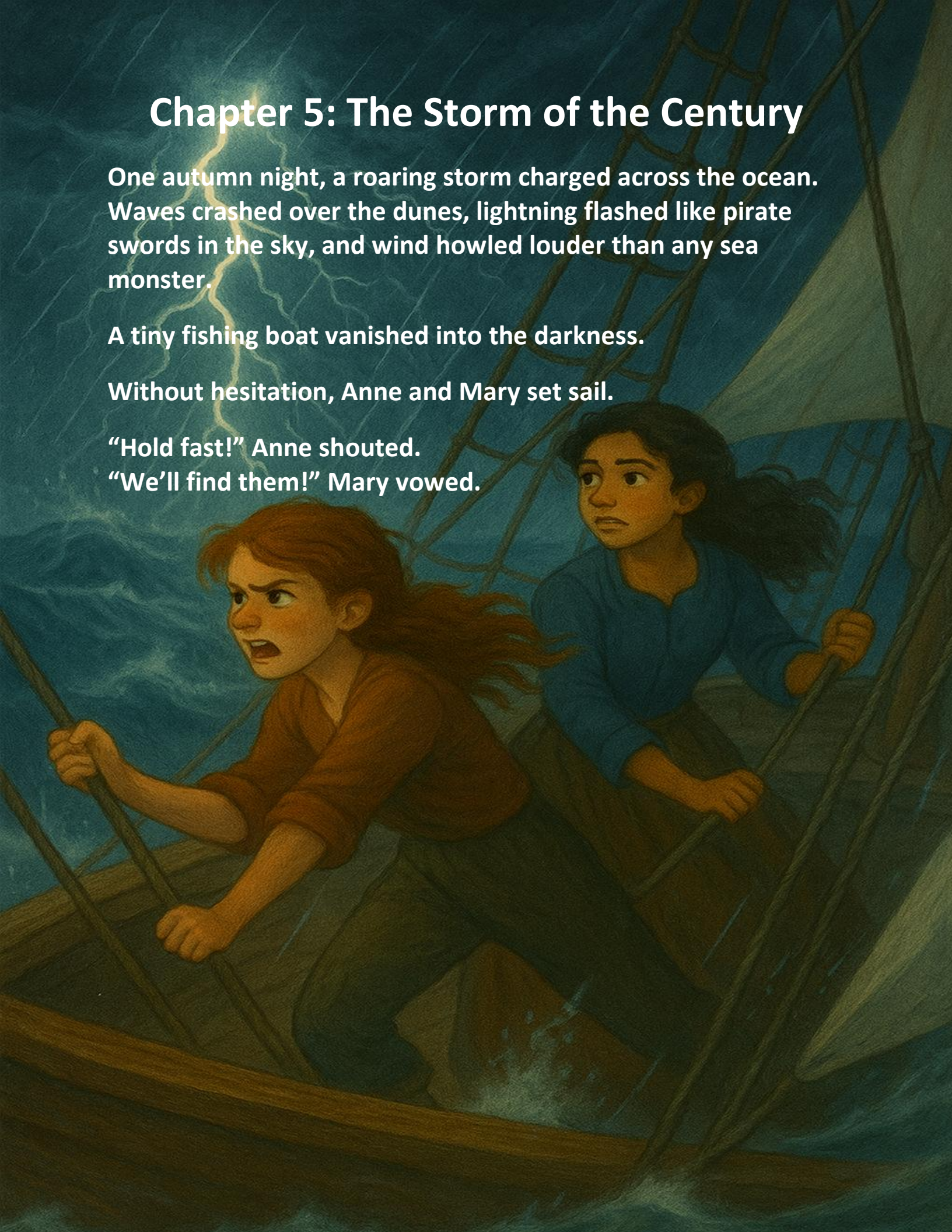
One autumn night, a roaring storm charged across the ocean. Waves crashed over the dunes, lightning flashed like pirate swords in the sky, and wind howled louder than any sea monster.

A tiny fishing boat vanished into the darkness.

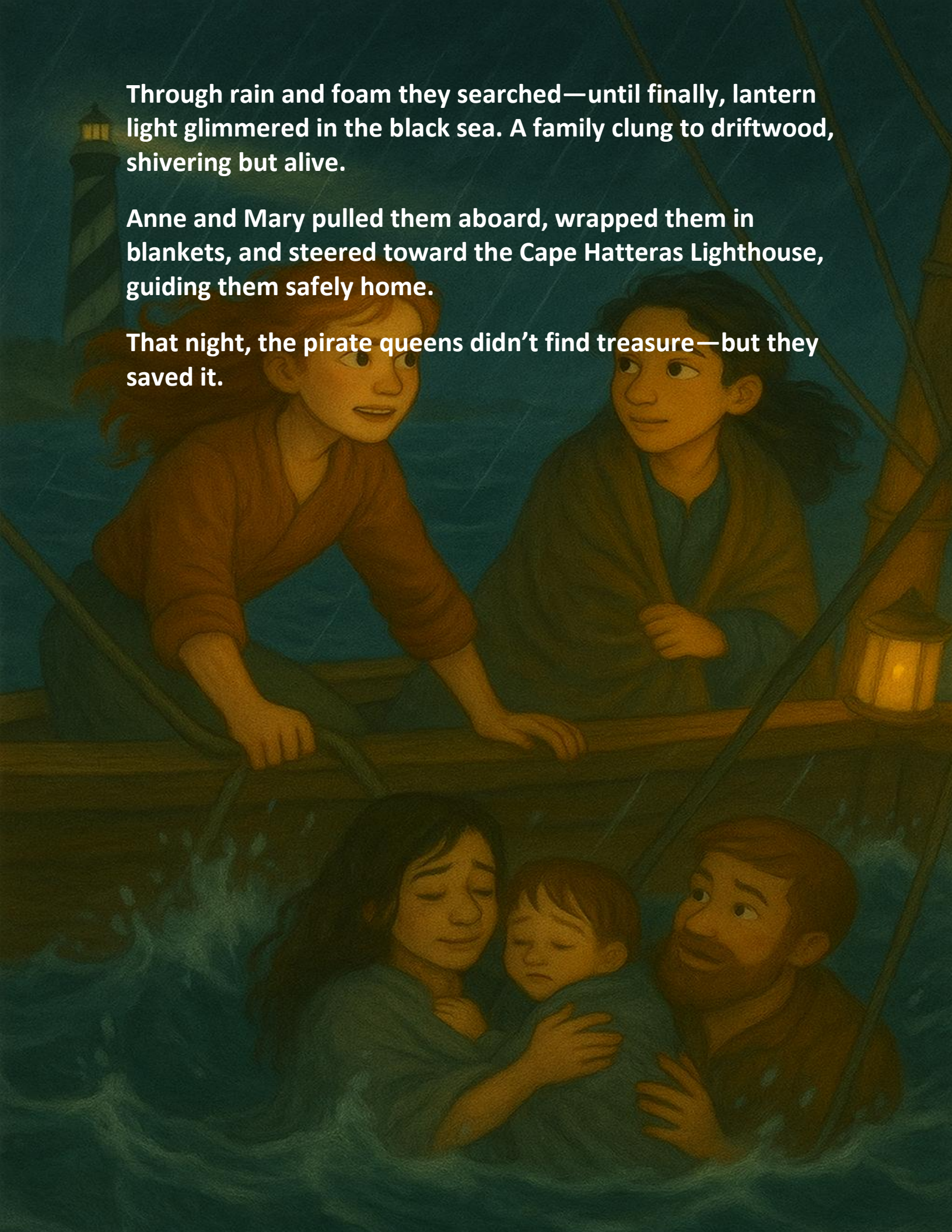
Without hesitation, Anne and Mary set sail.

“Hold fast!” Anne shouted.

“We’ll find them!” Mary vowed.





An illustration depicting a rescue at sea at night. Two young women, Anne and Mary, are on a wooden boat, leaning over the side. They are wearing warm clothing and looking down at a family in the water. The family consists of a woman, a young child, and a man, all wrapped in a blue blanket. They are in the dark, choppy water, looking up at the boat. In the background, a lighthouse with a striped tower and a glowing light is visible on the horizon. A lantern is lit on the boat, casting a warm glow. The scene is set against a dark, rainy night sky.

Through rain and foam they searched—until finally, lantern light glimmered in the black sea. A family clung to driftwood, shivering but alive.

Anne and Mary pulled them aboard, wrapped them in blankets, and steered toward the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, guiding them safely home.

That night, the pirate queens didn't find treasure—but they saved it.



## Chapter 6: Legends of the Outer Banks

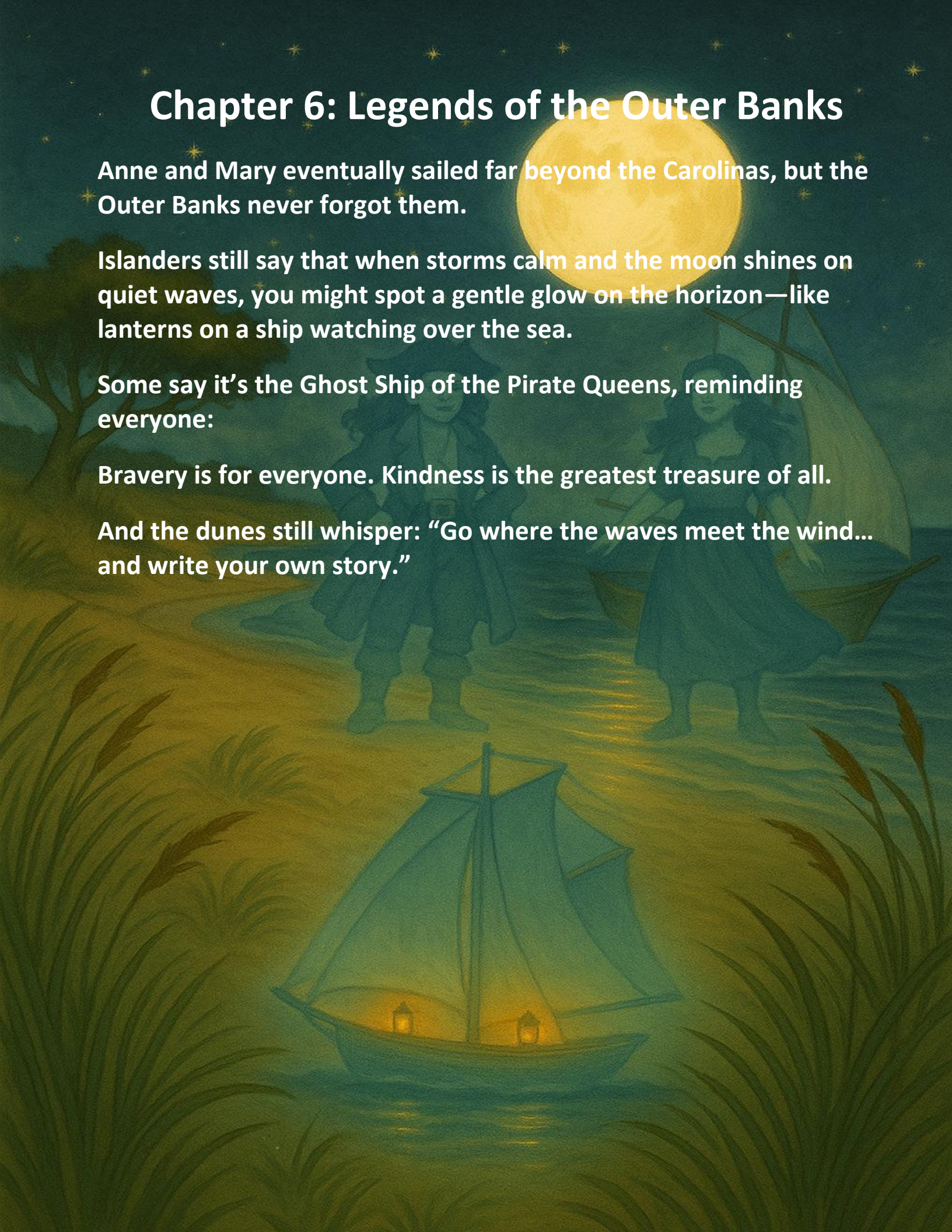
Anne and Mary eventually sailed far beyond the Carolinas, but the Outer Banks never forgot them.

Islanders still say that when storms calm and the moon shines on quiet waves, you might spot a gentle glow on the horizon—like lanterns on a ship watching over the sea.

Some say it's the Ghost Ship of the Pirate Queens, reminding everyone:

Bravery is for everyone. Kindness is the greatest treasure of all.

And the dunes still whisper: "Go where the waves meet the wind... and write your own story."





An illustration of two young women dressed as pirates, standing on the deck of a ship at night. The woman on the left has long red hair and wears a brown pirate coat and hat. The woman on the right has dark hair and wears a blue pirate coat and hat. They are both smiling. In the background, a large full moon hangs in a dark blue sky filled with stars. A ship's mast and rigging are visible on the right. In the distance, another ship is visible on the water under a smaller moon.

## Did You Know?

- Anne Bonny and Mary Read were real female pirates from the 1700s.
- They sailed trade routes that included the Carolina coast.
- Some legends say they stopped at inlets near the Outer Banks while traveling north.
- Many brave women also lived, fished, farmed, and captained small boats along the Outer Banks during that time—quiet sea queens in their own way.

## Lesson from the Pirate Queens

You don't need a ship to be a pirate queen.

All you need is a brave heart, a clever mind, and a kind spirit.

Because true heroes don't just search for treasure—  
they make the world brighter wherever they sail.



An illustration of three pirates on a ship at night. A large, bright full moon hangs in a dark blue sky with small white stars. The pirates are shown from the chest up. On the left, a woman with long red hair and a red coat. In the center, a man with a beard and a blue coat. On the right, an older man with a white beard and a green coat. They are all looking towards the right. A wooden basket filled with fish is in the bottom left corner.

# References

Anderson, R. C. (2000). *Pirates: Predators of the Seas*. The Lyons Press.

Baer, J. (2011). *Famous Female Pirates: Anne Bonny, Mary Read, and Grace O'Malley*. Heritage Books.

Britannica. (2024). *Anne Bonny and Mary Read*. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anne-Bonny>

Cape Hatteras National Seashore. (2023). *Maritime history of the Outer Banks*. U.S. National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/caha/learn/historyculture>

Carpenter, D. (2015). *The real pirates of the Carolinas: Legends and lore of the Atlantic coast*. University of North Carolina Press.

Gordon, L. (2017). *Women pirates and the politics of the high seas*. Routledge.

National Geographic. (2022). *The Golden Age of Piracy*. National Geographic Society.  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history>

National Park Service. (2023). *Cape Hatteras Lighthouse: History and significance*. U.S. Department of the Interior. <https://www.nps.gov/caha>

Outer Banks History Center. (2024). *Pirates and privateers in North Carolina waters*. North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Rediker, M. (2004). *Villains of all nations: Atlantic pirates in the golden age*. Beacon Press.

Seabrook, C. (2019). *Stories from the Graveyard of the Atlantic: Shipwrecks and legends of North Carolina's Outer Banks*. Coastal Heritage Press.

Smithsonian Magazine. (2021). *Uncovering the myths of Anne Bonny and Mary Read*. Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com>

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (2020). *North Carolina maritime heritage and folklore*. North Carolina Digital Heritage Center.