

Scoot Dunehopper's Golden Lesson

A Beachtime Tale of Doing the Right Thing



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.

It was the Fourth of July on the sunny Outer Banks, and the Chen family had spread out their beach blanket and opened a big, colorful umbrella near the shore. Waves rolled in softly, seagulls called overhead, and the beach buzzed with happy sounds.



By lunchtime, little Janie Chen's tummy began to rumble. She took her mom's hand, and together they walked to the Hamburger Shack near the pier. Soon they were carrying back cheeseburgers, crispy fries, and a cold soda.



When they returned to their spot, Janie set her food down under a towel. Instead of eating right away, she smiled and said, “Can we go feel the water first?”

So Janie and her mom walked down to the shoreline, letting the waves splash over their toes.



Not far away, Scoot Dunehopper woke up from a cozy afternoon nap inside his sandy burrow.

“I’m hungry, Mama,” Scoot said, stretching his claws. “May I go look for insects?”

“Of course,” Mama replied. “Be safe.”



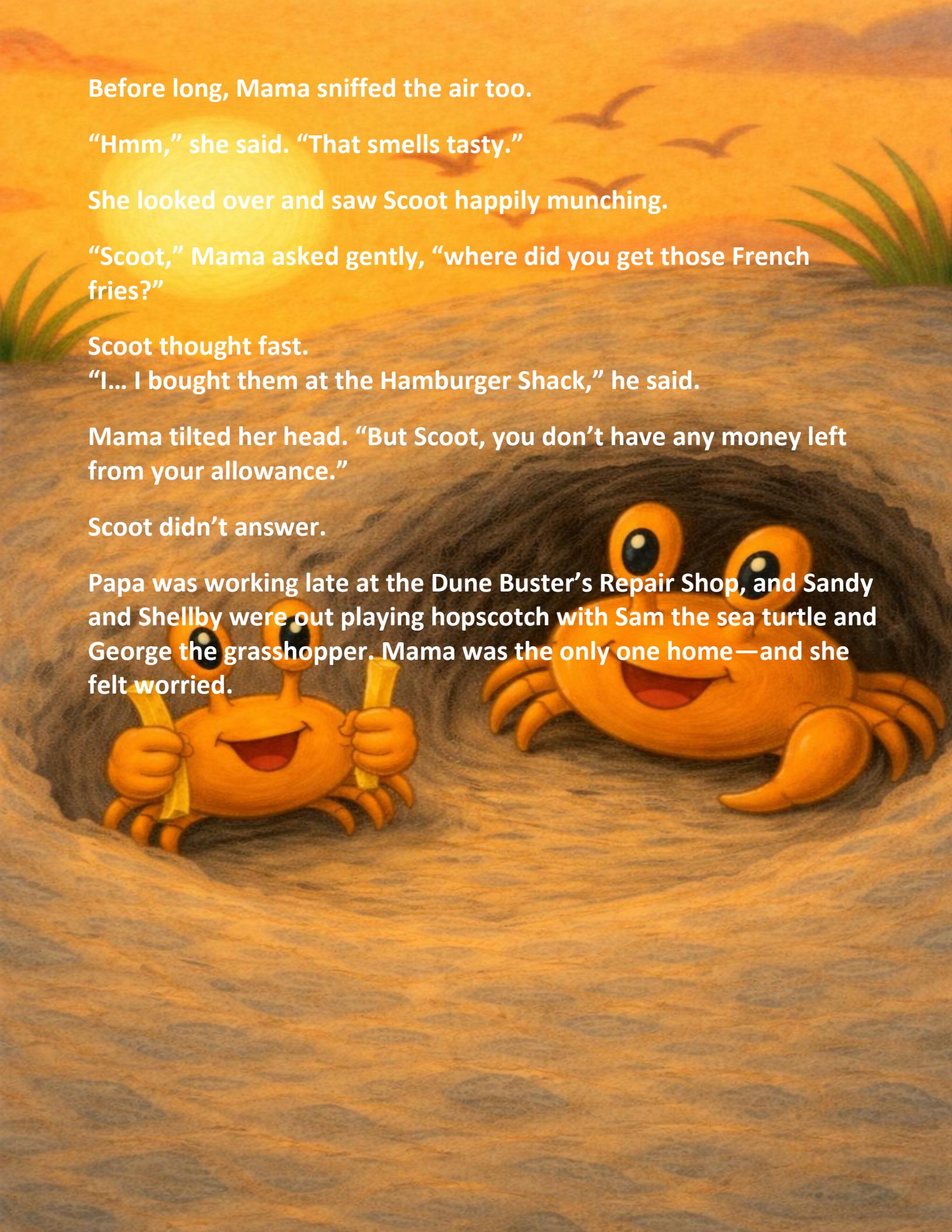
Scoot scurried over the dunes and onto the beach when suddenly—
Sniff! Sniff!

“What is that amazing smell?” Scoot wondered.

His sniffer led him straight to the Chen family’s beach blanket. Under a towel lay something golden and delicious—French fries!

Scoot’s eyes grew wide. He grabbed two of the biggest fries he could hold and hurried back to the burrow.





Before long, Mama sniffed the air too.

“Hmm,” she said. “That smells tasty.”

She looked over and saw Scoot happily munching.

“Scoot,” Mama asked gently, “where did you get those French fries?”

Scoot thought fast.

“I... I bought them at the Hamburger Shack,” he said.

Mama tilted her head. “But Scoot, you don’t have any money left from your allowance.”

Scoot didn’t answer.

Papa was working late at the Dune Buster’s Repair Shop, and Sandy and Shellby were out playing hopscotch with Sam the sea turtle and George the grasshopper. Mama was the only one home—and she felt worried.

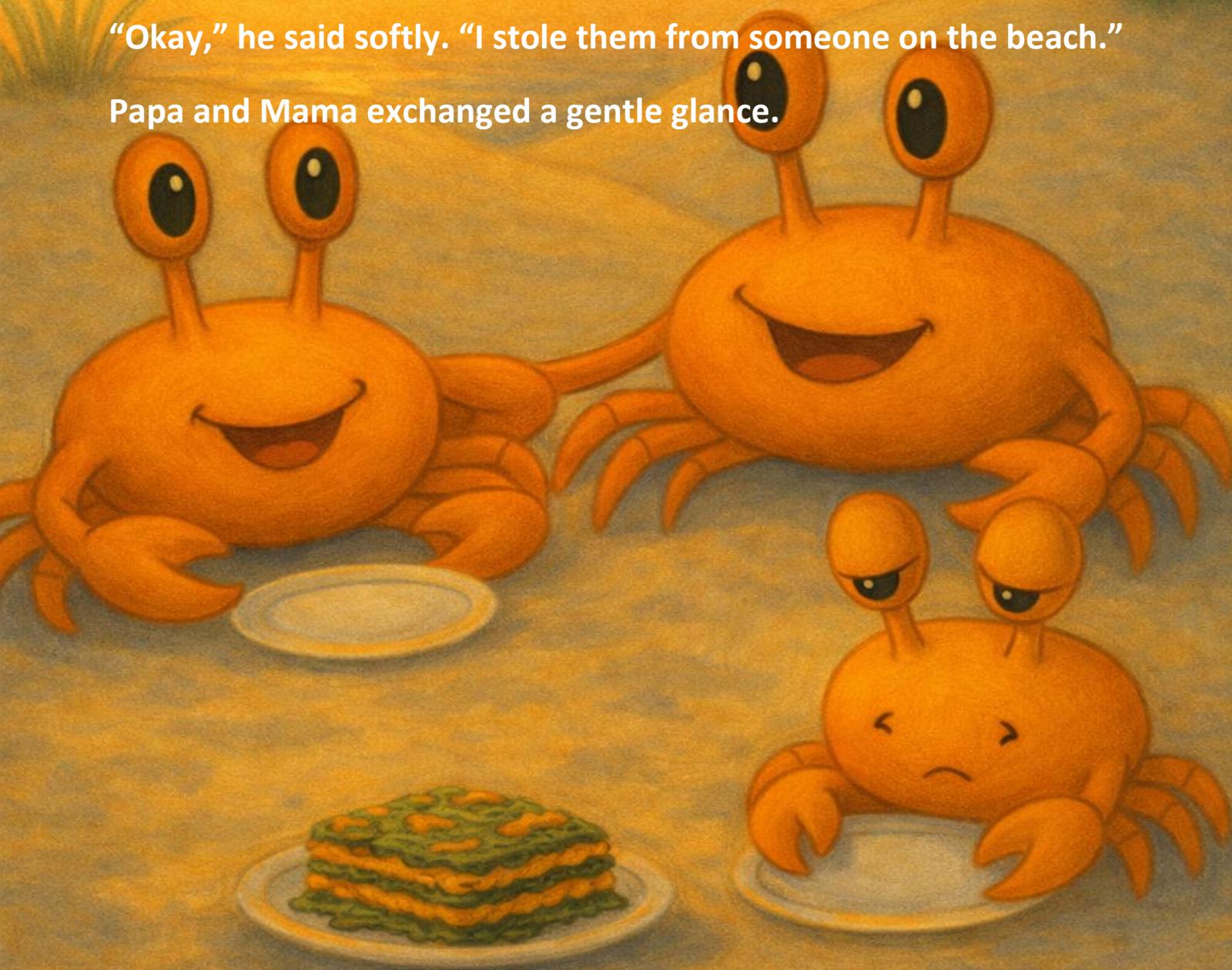
That evening, Papa finally returned home tired but smiling. Mama served her famous seaweed lasagna, and the family sat down together.

After dinner, Papa asked kindly,
“Scoot, where did those French fries really come from today?”

Scoot looked down at the sand. His claws felt heavy.

“Okay,” he said softly. “I stole them from someone on the beach.”

Papa and Mama exchanged a gentle glance.



“Scoot,” Papa said, “sometimes a crab makes a wrong turn—not because their heart is bad, but because they’re tempted or afraid.”

Mama added, “Taking something that isn’t yours might seem like a quick fix, but it always leaves a heavy feeling inside. That’s your conscience tapping your claw, reminding you who you really are.”

“And lying,” Papa said, “is like digging weak tunnels in the sand. They may hide you for a moment, but they always collapse—and the truth comes out.”



Mama smiled warmly.

“Being honest takes courage. Owning a mistake takes even more. But telling the truth helps trust grow again—and helps you grow too.”

Papa said softly:

“A strong crab doesn’t take shortcuts.
A brave crab tells the truth.
And a good crab always tries to make things right.”

He rested a claw on Scoot’s shoulder.
“I believe in the crab you’re becoming.”

Scoot hugged his parents and whispered, “I’m sorry.”



The next morning, Scoot was digging holes near the shoreline when he saw Janie Chen building a beautiful sandcastle.

Scoot took a deep breath and walked up to her.

“Hello,” Scoot said. “I need to apologize. Yesterday, while you were in the water, I took your French fries.”

Janie smiled kindly.

“That takes a lot of courage to admit a mistake,” she said.



Then she held out a treat.

“Here,” Janie said. “This is for you.”

It was a funnel cake.

Scoot’s eyes sparkled.

“Thank you,” he said, smiling from claw to claw.

And that day, Scoot learned that doing the right thing always feels better than any stolen snack ever could.



Did You Know?

Ghost crabs, like Scoot Dunehopper, have an incredible sense of smell! They use it to find their natural food—such as insects, tiny clams, and bits of plants—but sometimes tempting human snacks can confuse them.

That's why it's important for people to keep food covered and clean up after beach picnics. Human food isn't healthy for wildlife, and it can teach animals to rely on snacks that aren't good for them.

Just like Scoot learned in this story, making honest choices and respecting others helps everyone—people and animals—share the beach safely and happily.

When we do the right thing, we protect both our community and the creatures who call the Outer Banks home.