

The Dunehopper

Family Food Pantry.



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.



On a bright, breezy morning on the Outer Banks, the Dunehopper family gathered outside their cozy burrow. Sea oats swayed softly, and the ocean hummed its familiar song.

Mama Dunehopper held a small woven basket filled with shells, dried seaweed snacks, and bits of driftwood fruit. "I've been thinking," she said gently. "Some families on the far dunes had a rough winter. Their food stores are low."

Sandy's eye stalks lifted with concern. "But how can we help them?"

Papa smiled. "By starting something special—a Dunehopper Food Pantry. A place where any crab in need can come for a little extra help."

Scout clacked his claws. "A pantry? Like a treasure box full of good things?"

"Exactly," Mama laughed. "A treasure of kindness."



Building Something Good

The whole family scurried into action.

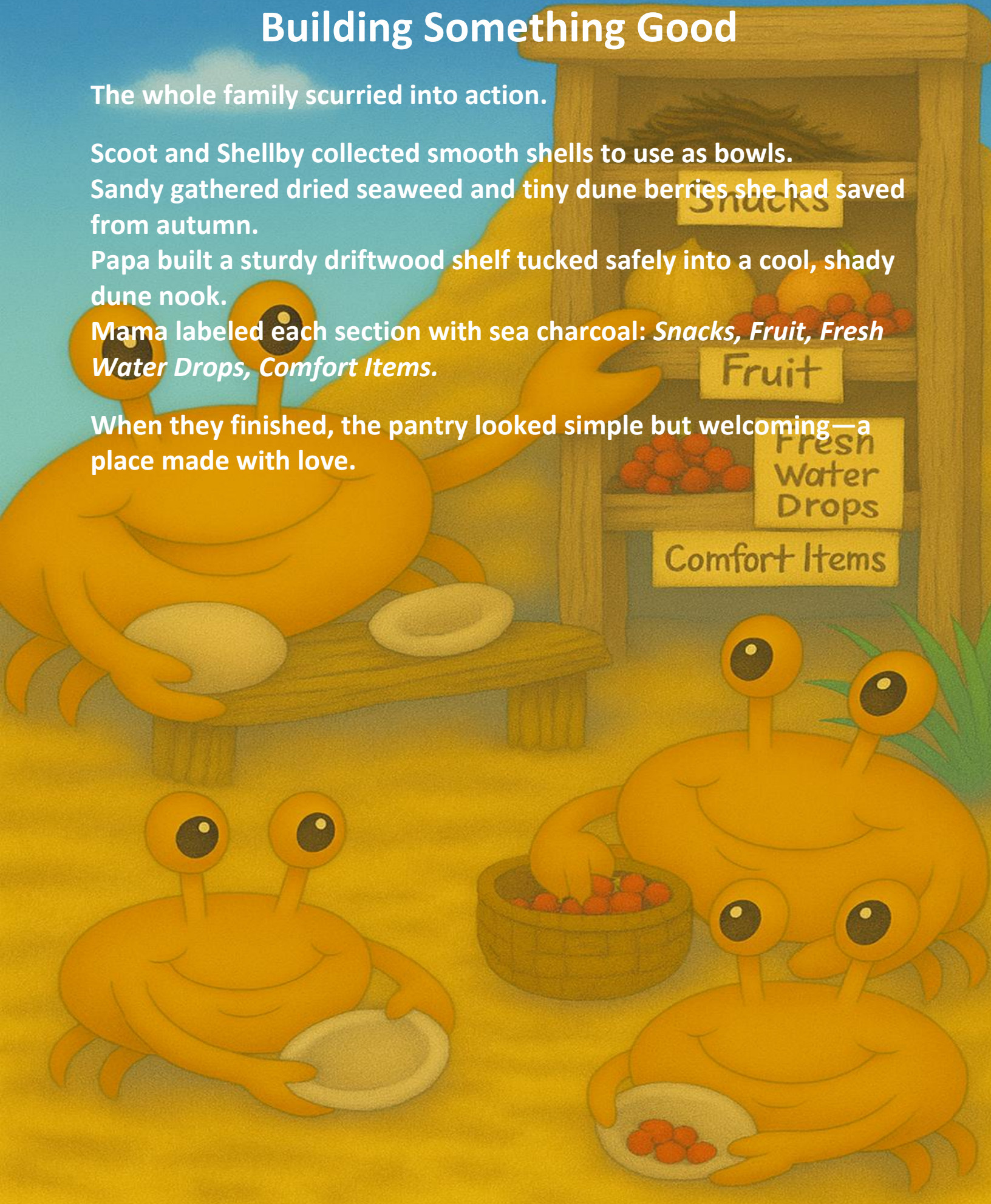
Scoot and Shellby collected smooth shells to use as bowls.

Sandy gathered dried seaweed and tiny dune berries she had saved from autumn.

Papa built a sturdy driftwood shelf tucked safely into a cool, shady dune nook.

Mama labeled each section with sea charcoal: *Snacks, Fruit, Fresh Water Drops, Comfort Items*.

When they finished, the pantry looked simple but welcoming—a place made with love.



Neighbors in Need

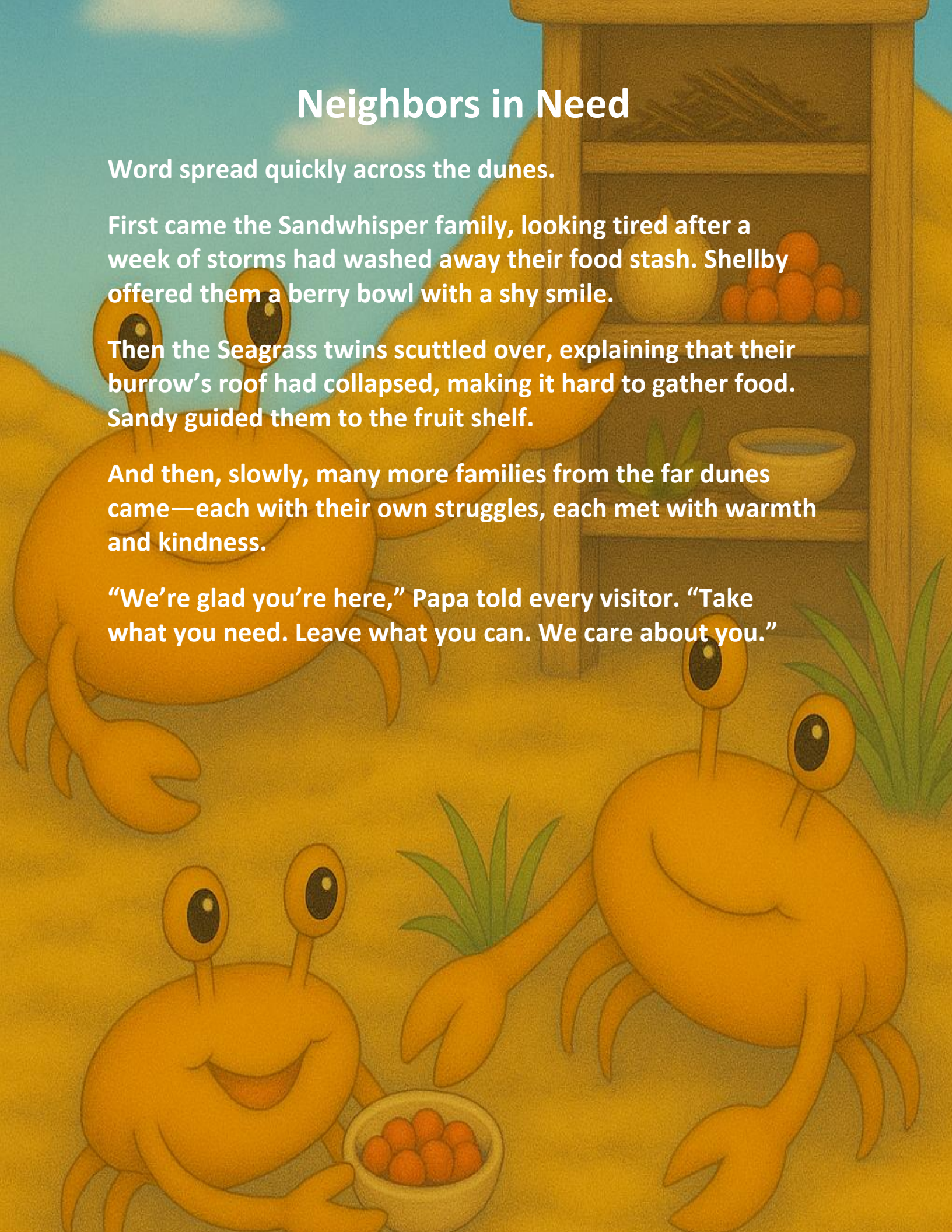
Word spread quickly across the dunes.

First came the Sandwhisper family, looking tired after a week of storms had washed away their food stash. Shellby offered them a berry bowl with a shy smile.

Then the Seagrass twins scuttled over, explaining that their burrow's roof had collapsed, making it hard to gather food. Sandy guided them to the fruit shelf.

And then, slowly, many more families from the far dunes came—each with their own struggles, each met with warmth and kindness.

"We're glad you're here," Papa told every visitor. "Take what you need. Leave what you can. We care about you."

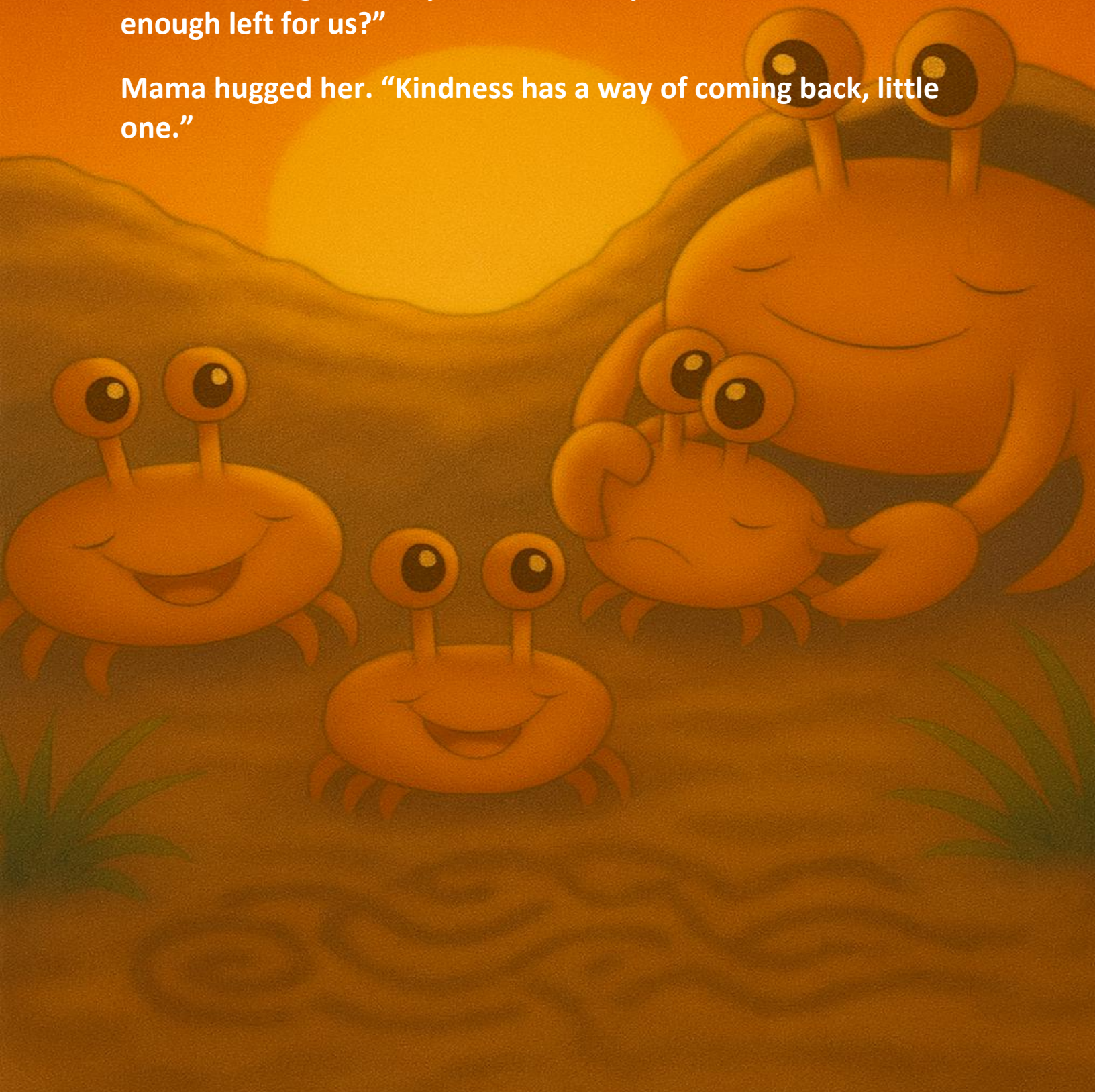


A Lesson in Caring

One evening, as the sun dipped orange behind the dunes, Sandy looked up at her parents.

“Mama... we gave away so much today. What if we don’t have enough left for us?”

Mama hugged her. “Kindness has a way of coming back, little one.”



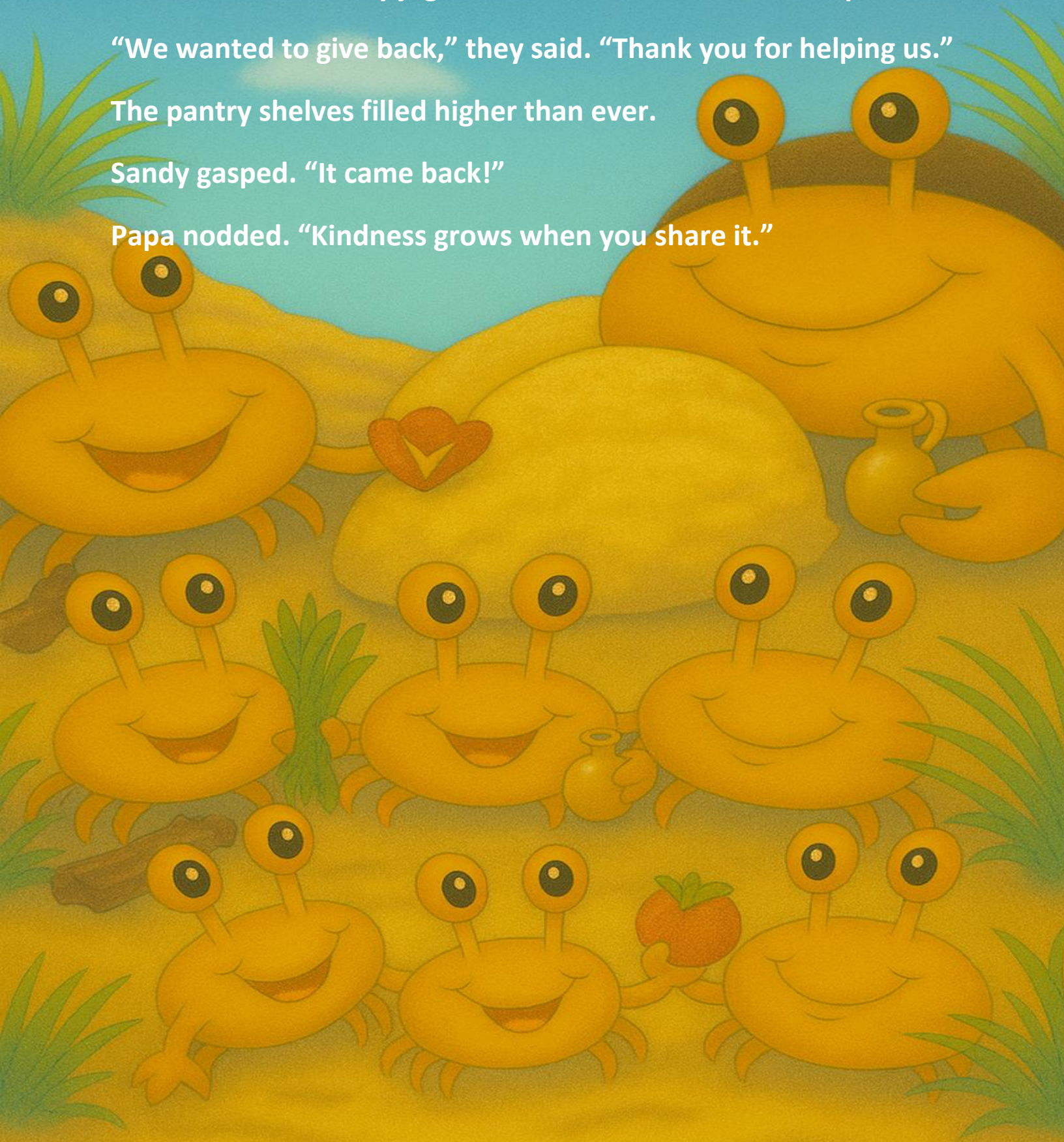
And just then, a line of neighbors appeared—families who had been helped earlier that week. Each carried something small but meaningful: a handful of fresh sea kelp, a shiny shell, a piece of driftwood fruit, a tiny jug of filtered water from the tide pools.

“We wanted to give back,” they said. “Thank you for helping us.”

The pantry shelves filled higher than ever.

Sandy gasped. “It came back!”

Papa nodded. “Kindness grows when you share it.”



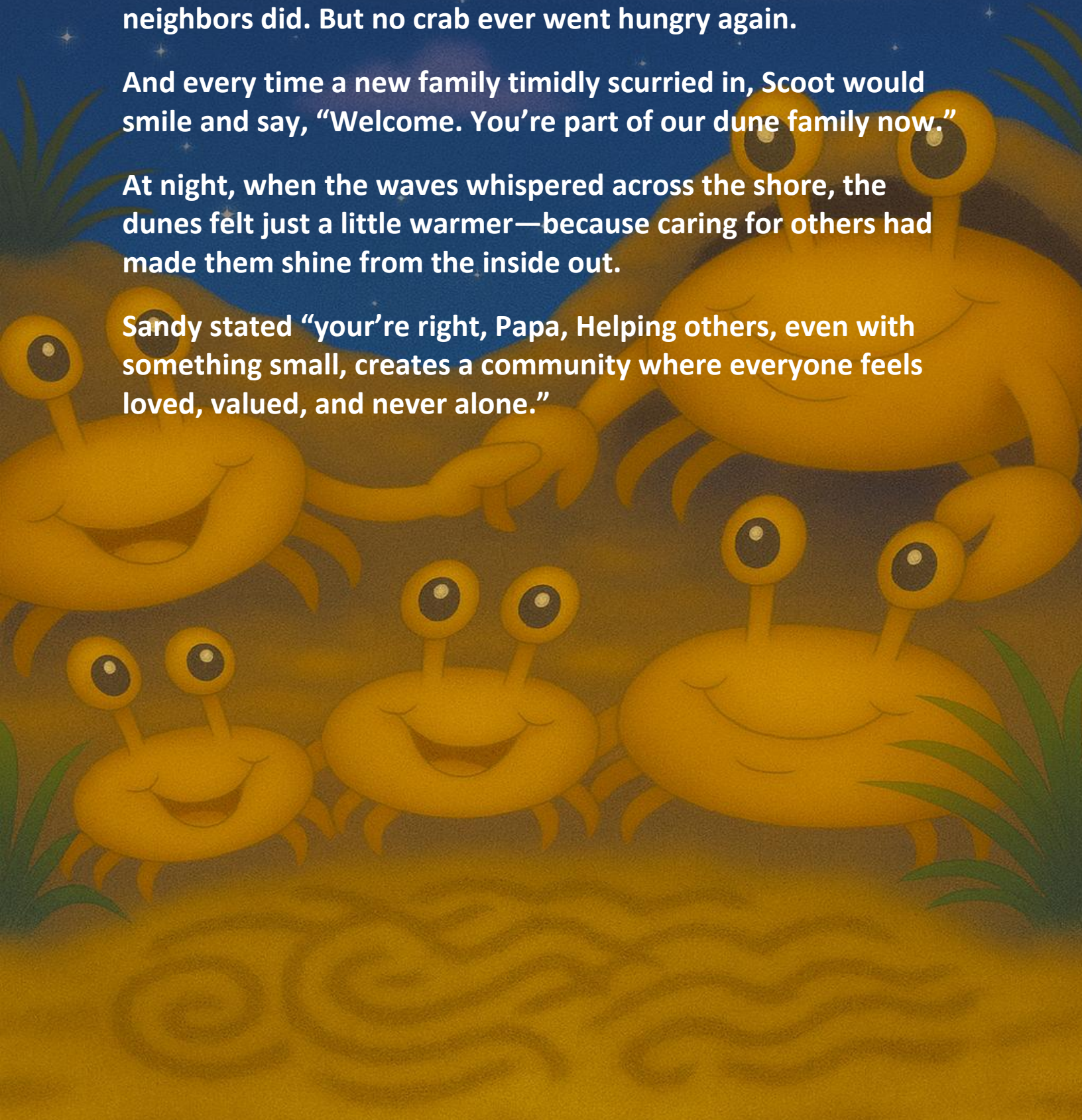
A Community of Caring

From that day on, the Dunehopper Food Pantry stayed open year-round. Sometimes they filled the shelves. Sometimes their neighbors did. But no crab ever went hungry again.

And every time a new family timidly scurried in, Scoot would smile and say, “Welcome. You’re part of our dune family now.”

At night, when the waves whispered across the shore, the dunes felt just a little warmer—because caring for others had made them shine from the inside out.

Sandy stated “your’re right, Papa, Helping others, even with something small, creates a community where everyone feels loved, valued, and never alone.”



Did You Know?

Ghost crabs, like the Dunehoppers, are real animals that live on sandy beaches—especially along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. They dig burrows in the dunes to stay cool and safe, and they usually come out at night to look for food. Ghost crabs help keep beaches healthy by cleaning up tiny bits of food and sea life, kind of like nature's recyclers! When we protect dunes and share beach spaces kindly, we help ghost crabs—and many other animals—feel right at home, just like in the Dunehopper Food Pantry story.

