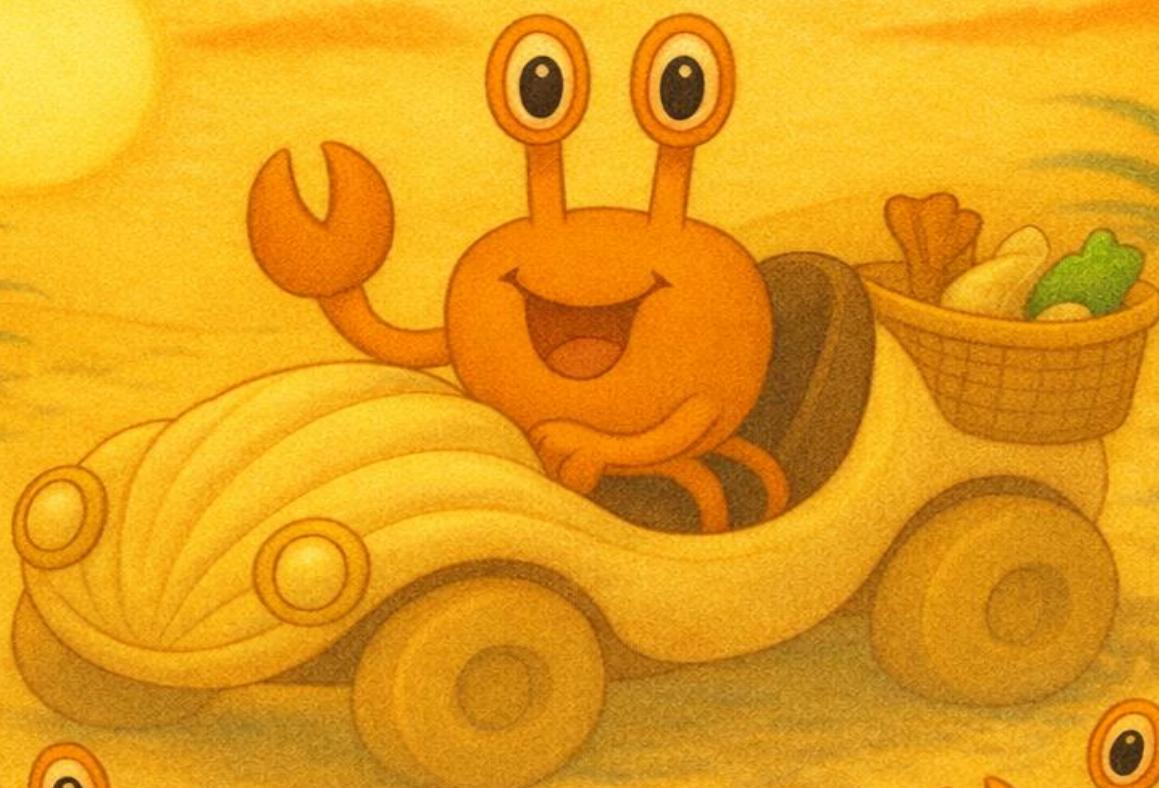


Sandy Dunehopper Learns to Drive.

A Dunehopper Family Story
About Caring for the Coast



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.

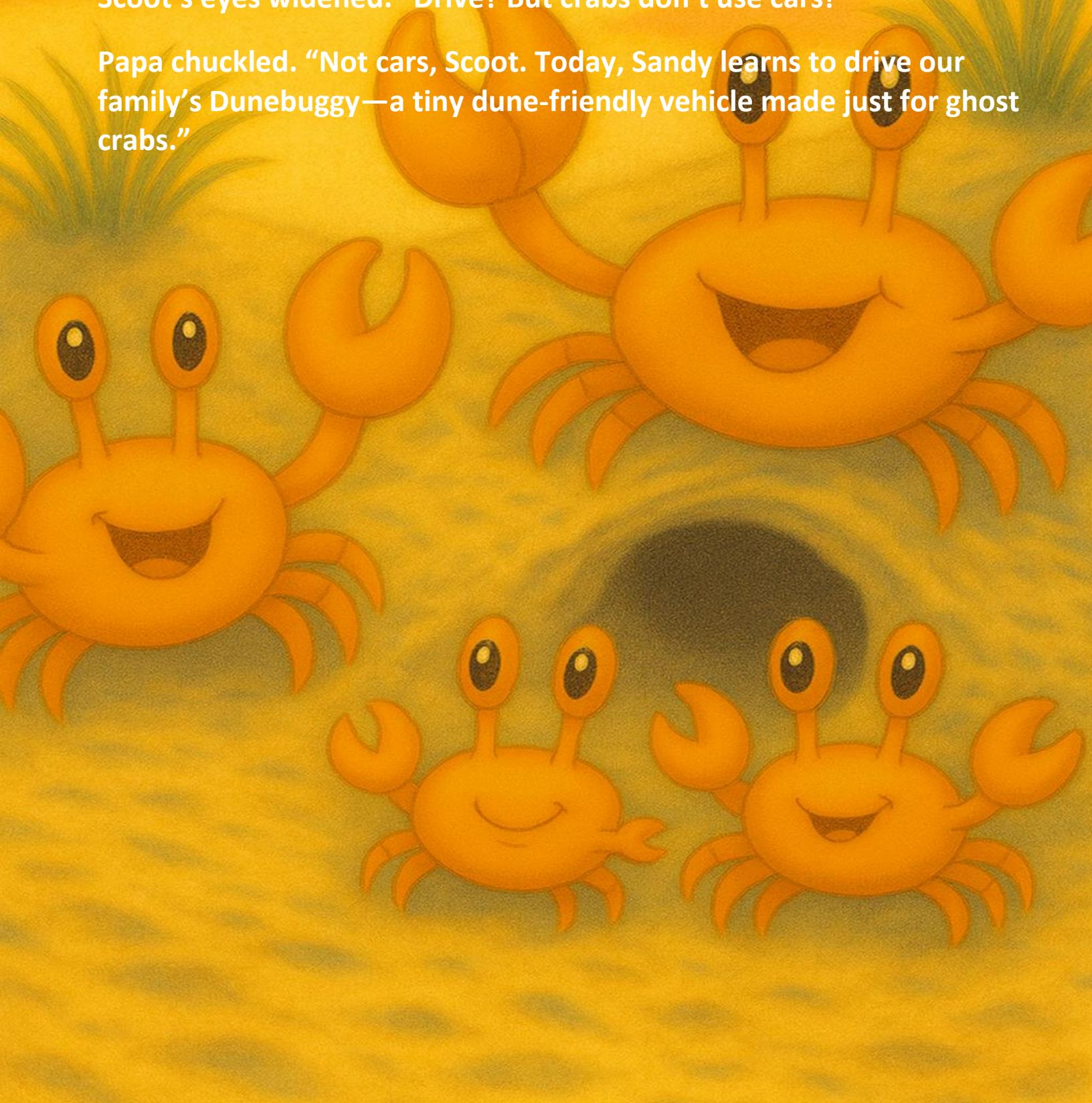


One breezy morning on the Outer Banks, Sandy Dunehopper popped out of the family burrow with a huge smile.

“Today’s the day!” she cheered. “Papa said he’s finally teaching me how to *drive!*”

Scoot’s eyes widened. “Drive? But crabs don’t use cars!”

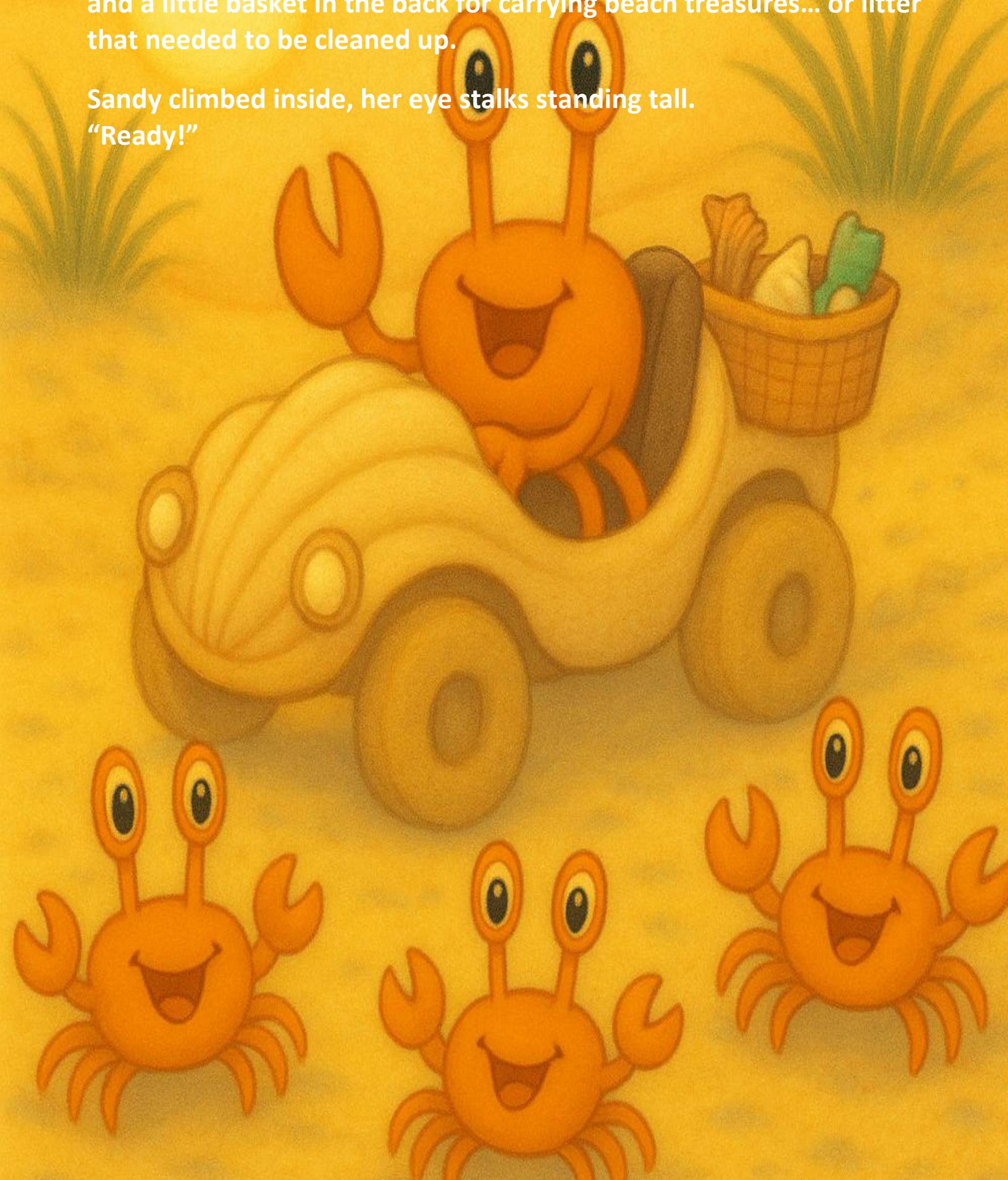
Papa chuckled. “Not cars, Scoot. Today, Sandy learns to drive our family’s Dunebuggy—a tiny dune-friendly vehicle made just for ghost crabs.”



The Dunebuggy was shaped like a seashell, with soft sandy wheels and a little basket in the back for carrying beach treasures... or litter that needed to be cleaned up.

Sandy climbed inside, her eye stalks standing tall.

“Ready!”



Lesson One: Stay on the Path

Papa pointed toward the sandy trail that wound between the dunes.

“Sandy, the number one rule of driving on the Outer Banks is to stay on marked paths. Dunes are fragile, just like we learned after the big storm.”

Sandy remembered the morning the Dunehoppers discovered their dune washed away and how everyone—crabs, humans, and even waving sea oats—worked together to rebuild.

She steered carefully, keeping her wheels on the packed sand path.

“Just like humans should!” she said proudly.

“Exactly,” said Papa. “When we stay off the dunes, we help sea oats grow strong. And when sea oats grow strong, dunes protect everybody.”

Lesson Two: Drive with Care—and Clean Up

As Sandy practiced turning, she spotted something tangled near the high tide line.

A plastic bottle.

Then a snack wrapper.

And a piece of fishing line.

“Oh no,” Sandy whispered. “Someone forgot to take care of the beach.”

Papa nodded. “Driving isn’t just about getting somewhere. It’s about taking care of the places we love.”



Lesson Three: Watch for Wildlife

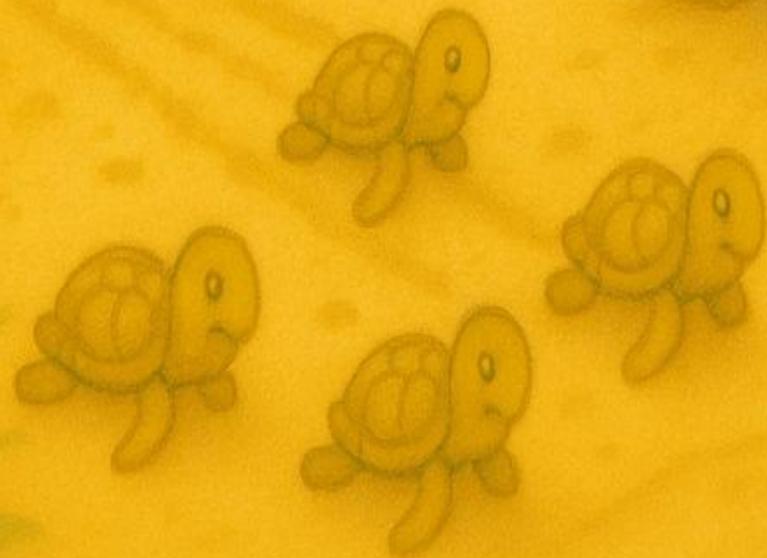
Farther down the beach, Sandy saw a tiny set of tracks—zig-zaggy lines leading toward the water.

“Turtle hatchlings!” she gasped.

Papa smiled. “Good eye. When we drive—even tiny crab vehicles—we must watch for wildlife. Everyone on the beach needs space.”

Sandy gently turned off the Dunebuggy’s humming engine and waited while five baby turtles toddled their way to the ocean.

“Go, little buddies!” she cheered.



Lesson Four: Reuse, Reduce, Restore

After the turtles were safely in the waves, Sandy noticed a pile of driftwood and broken shells washed up nearby.

"Can we do something with these?" she asked.

"All great drivers look for ways to *restore* what storms change," Mama said. "Let's use some pieces to help block blowing sand from burying young sea oats."

The Dunehoppers worked together.
Sandy placed driftwood at an angle.
Scoot anchored it with smooth shells.
Baby Shellby sprinkled a few dune-grass seeds they carried from yesterday's conservation lesson.

When the little project was done, the dune looked a bit stronger.

Sandy beamed.

"Driving is kind of like caretaking!"

Papa winked. "Now you're getting it."

Sandy's First Solo Ride

As the sun dipped low and painted the beach gold, Papa stepped aside.

"Sandy," he said, "take the Dunebuggy for your first solo drive—just to the end of the path and back."

Sandy gulped.
She checked the path...
Checked for wildlife...
Checked her basket...
And then took a deep breath.

Off she went—smooth, steady, careful, and proud.

The sea oats rustled. "You're doing great!" they whispered, bending as if cheering her on.

When Sandy returned, the whole family clacked their claws in celebration.

"You did it!" Scoot shouted.



Mama hugged her. “You drove with care—for the dunes, for the animals, and for yourself.”

Papa wrapped his claws around all of them.

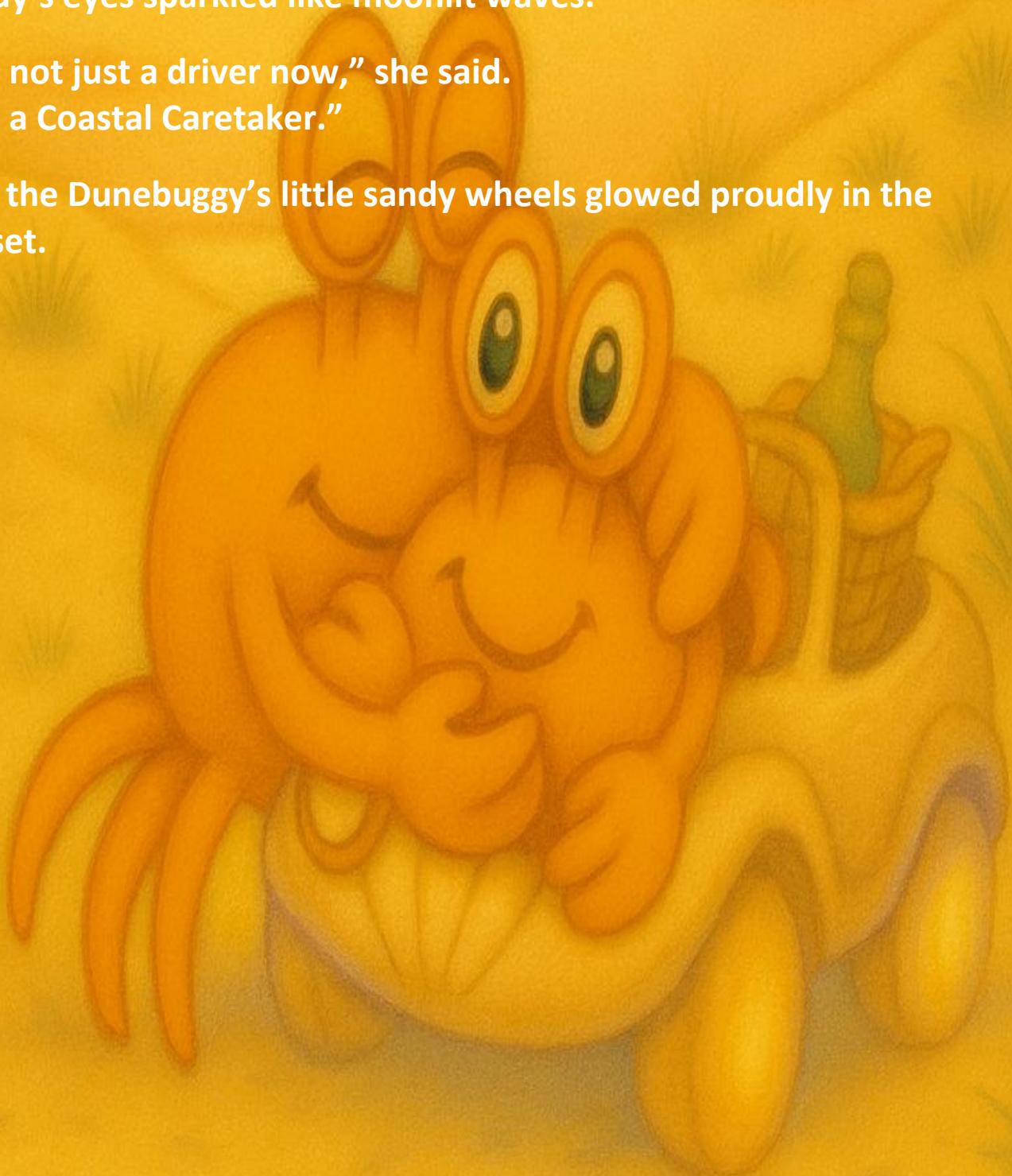
“Driving isn’t just about moving forward,” he said. “It’s about protecting the coast we call home.”

Sandy’s eyes sparkled like moonlit waves.

“I’m not just a driver now,” she said.

“I’m a Coastal Caretaker.”

And the Dunebuggy’s little sandy wheels glowed proudly in the sunset.



Did You Know?

On the Outer Banks, staying on marked paths protects dune grasses like sea oats, whose roots hold dunes together during storms.

Even tiny footprints—or tiny wheels!—can damage young plants.

Cleaning up trash, watching for wildlife, and using eco-friendly transportation all help keep beaches healthy for crabs, birds, turtles, and people.

