

The Empathy Heart

A Dunehopper
Story



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.



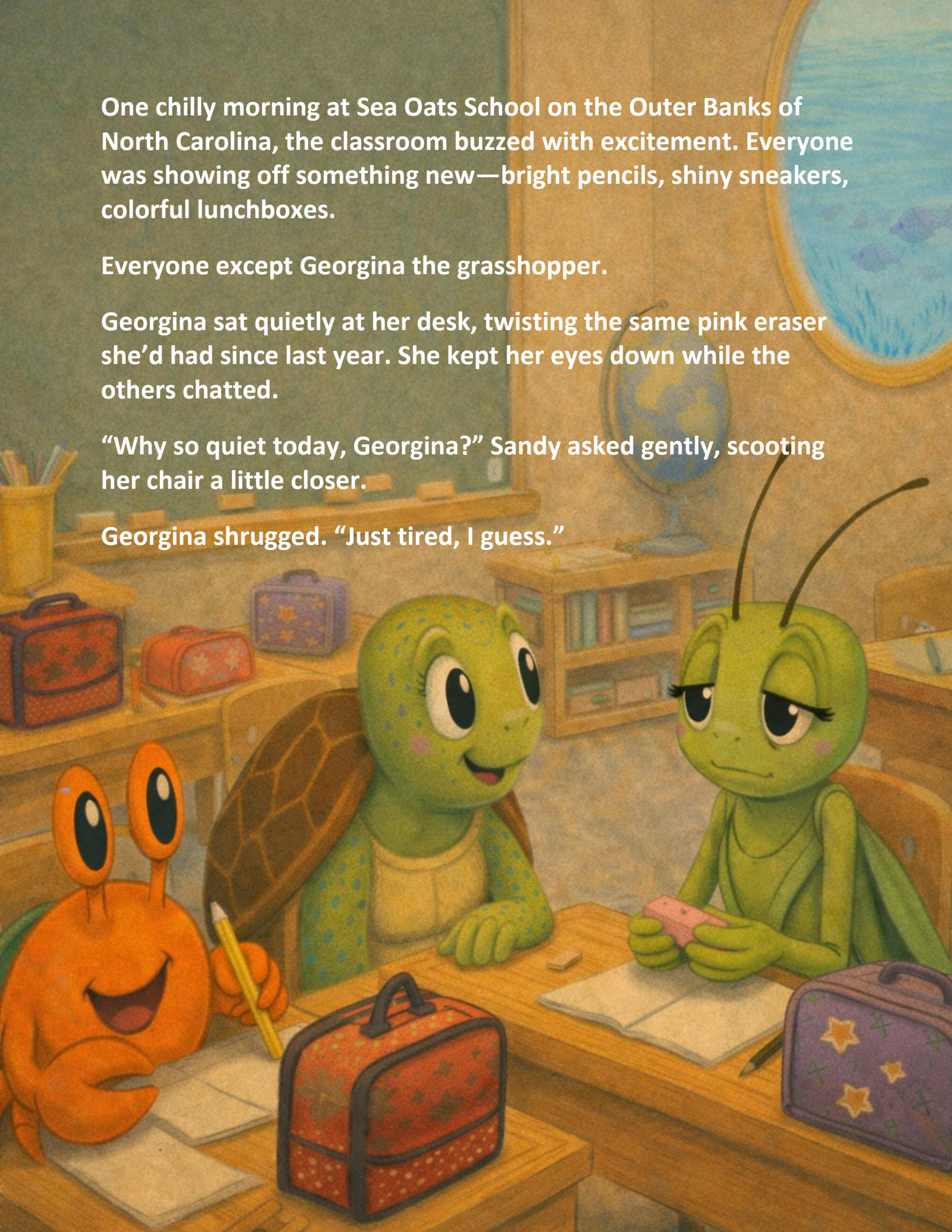
One chilly morning at Sea Oats School on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the classroom buzzed with excitement. Everyone was showing off something new—bright pencils, shiny sneakers, colorful lunchboxes.

Everyone except Georgina the grasshopper.

Georgina sat quietly at her desk, twisting the same pink eraser she'd had since last year. She kept her eyes down while the others chatted.

"Why so quiet today, Georgina?" Sandy asked gently, scooting her chair a little closer.

Georgina shrugged. "Just tired, I guess."



At recess, the schoolyard filled with laughter as students raced to the swings and slides. But Georgina stayed behind, sitting alone on a bench. Her shoes were worn thin, and her jacket had a small tear in the sleeve.

Most kids rushed past without noticing.

But Sandy did.

She remembered something Mama once told her:

"Kindness begins when you notice someone else's hurt."



That evening, Sandy told Mama about Georgina.

Mama smiled softly. "Maybe tomorrow you can think of a small way to brighten her day."



The next morning, Sandy came to school with a plan. She packed an extra granola bar in her lunch. When Georgina wasn't looking, Sandy gently placed it beside her tray.

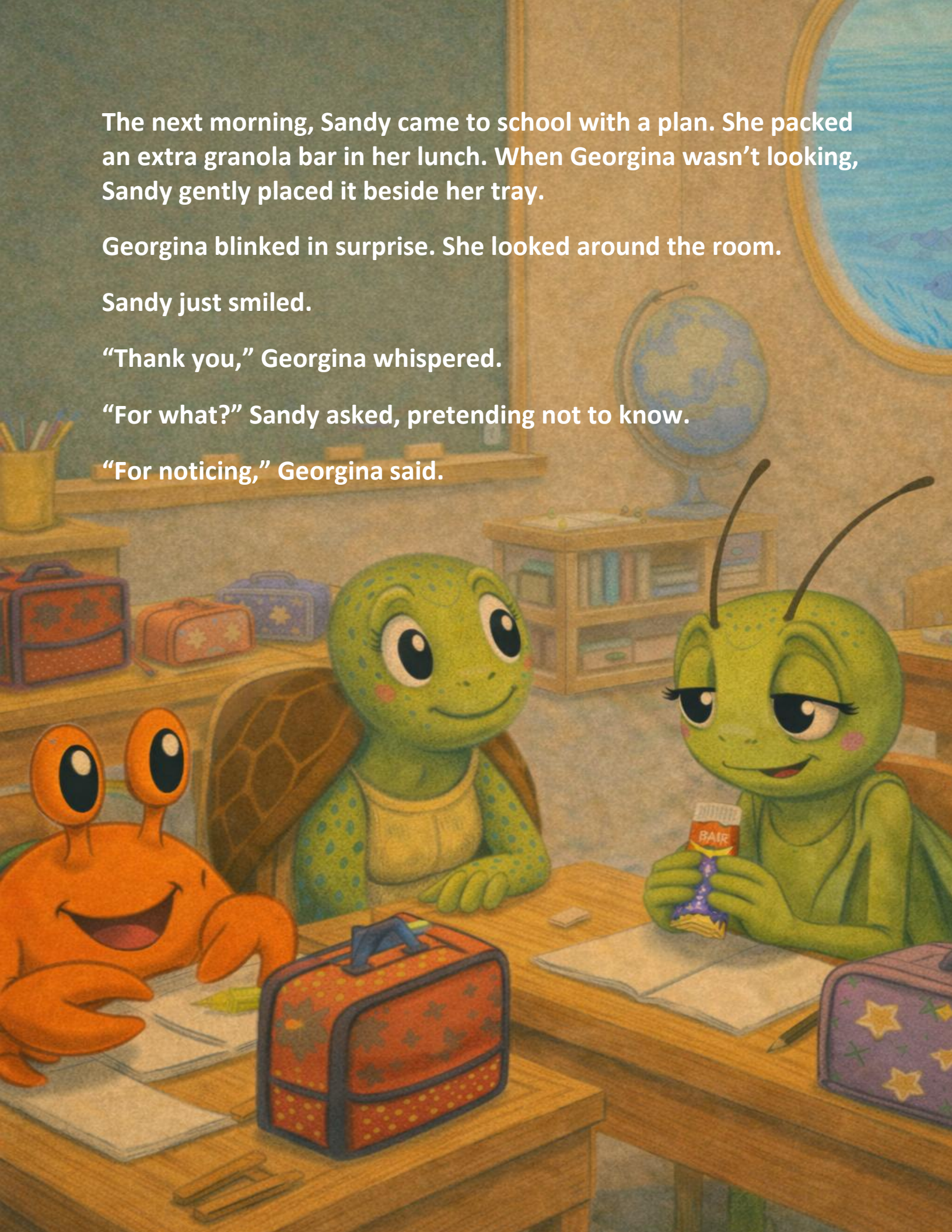
Georgina blinked in surprise. She looked around the room.

Sandy just smiled.

"Thank you," Georgina whispered.

"For what?" Sandy asked, pretending not to know.

"For noticing," Georgina said.

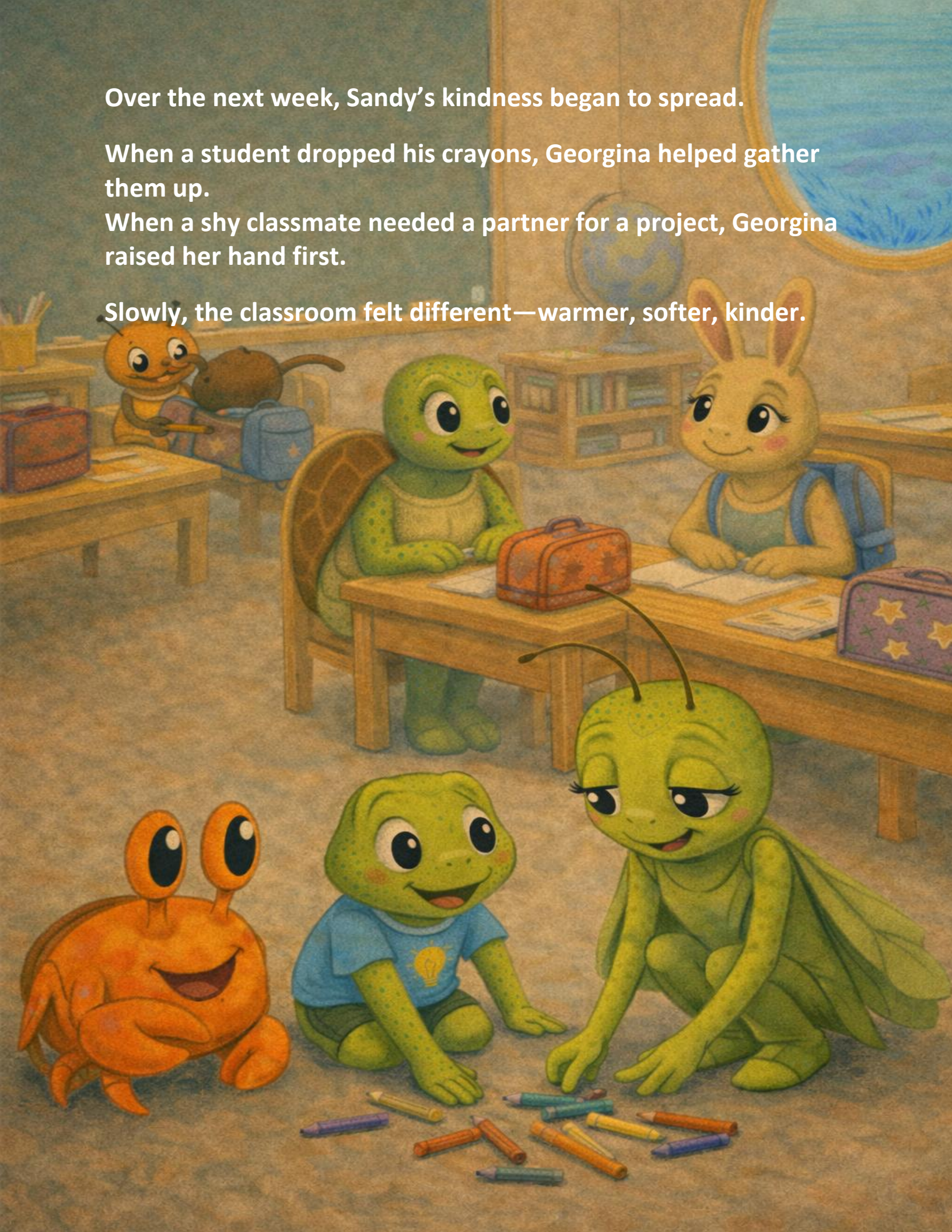


Over the next week, Sandy's kindness began to spread.

When a student dropped his crayons, Georgina helped gather them up.

When a shy classmate needed a partner for a project, Georgina raised her hand first.

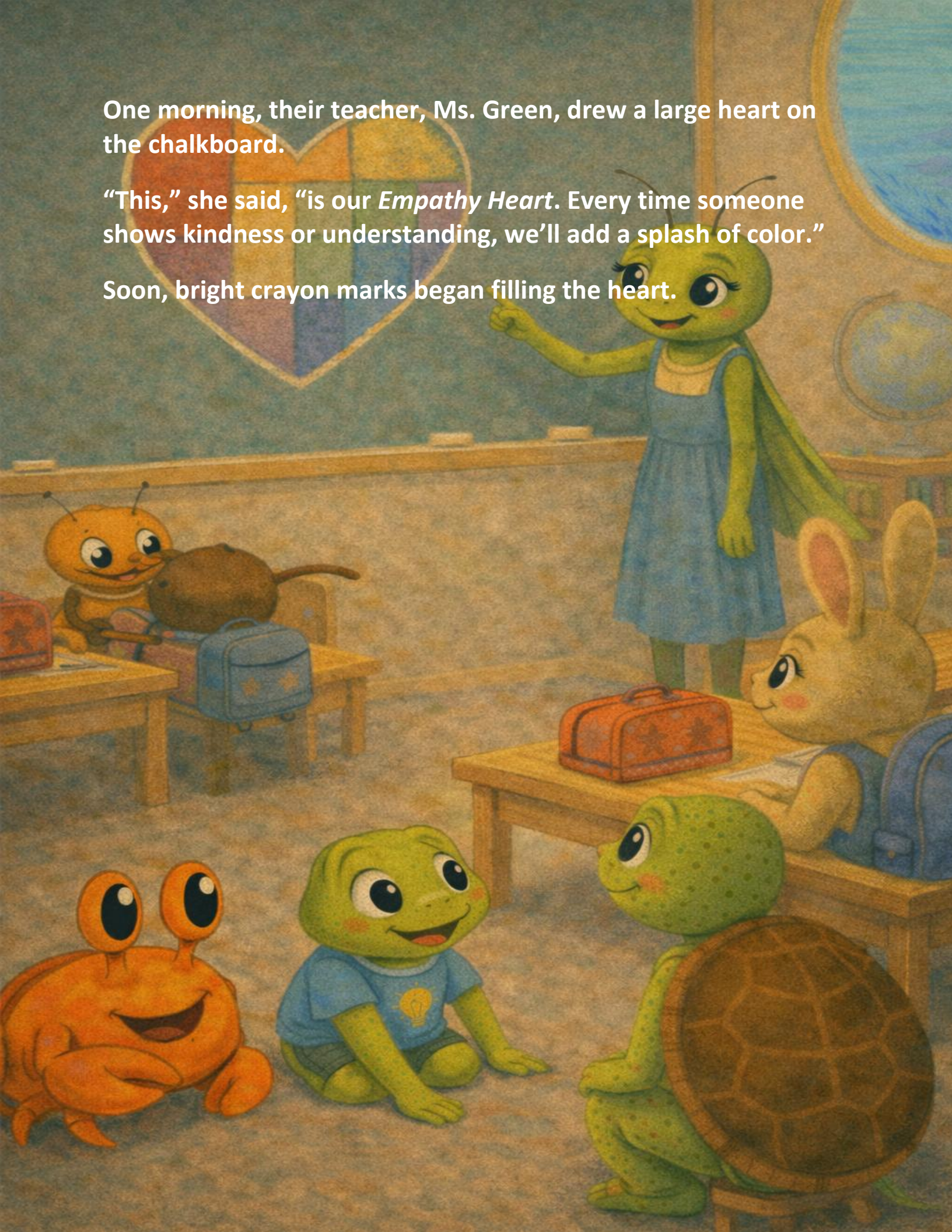
Slowly, the classroom felt different—warmer, softer, kinder.



One morning, their teacher, Ms. Green, drew a large heart on the chalkboard.

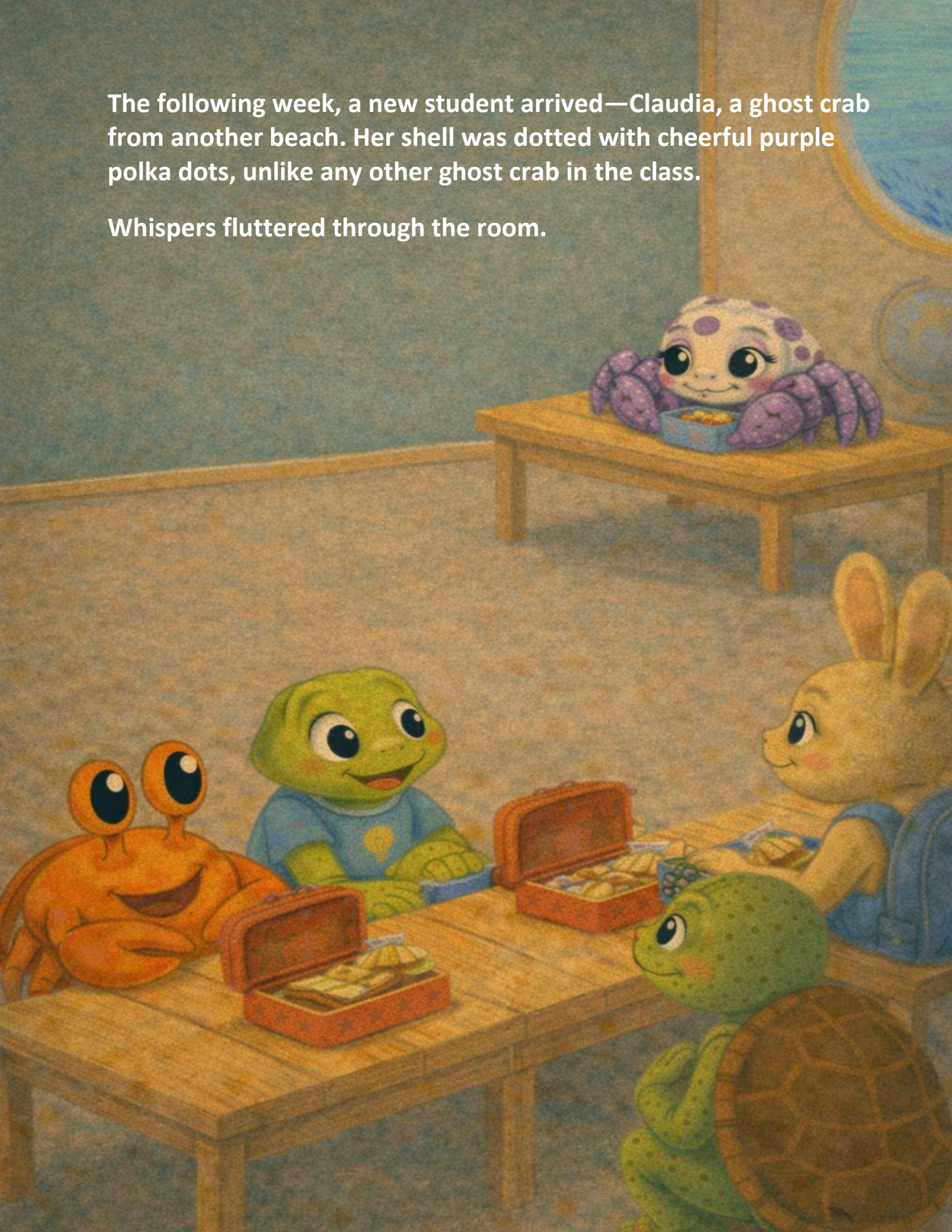
“This,” she said, “is our *Empathy Heart*. Every time someone shows kindness or understanding, we’ll add a splash of color.”

Soon, bright crayon marks began filling the heart.



The following week, a new student arrived—Claudia, a ghost crab from another beach. Her shell was dotted with cheerful purple polka dots, unlike any other ghost crab in the class.

Whispers fluttered through the room.



At lunchtime, everyone gathered in groups—everyone except Claudia, who sat alone with her lunch.

Scoot noticed.

He picked up his tray and walked over. “Mind if I sit with you?”

Claudia’s eyes lit up. “Yes... I’d like that.”

As they ate, Claudia explained, “I have a skin condition that gives me polka dots. Some crabs think I look strange.”

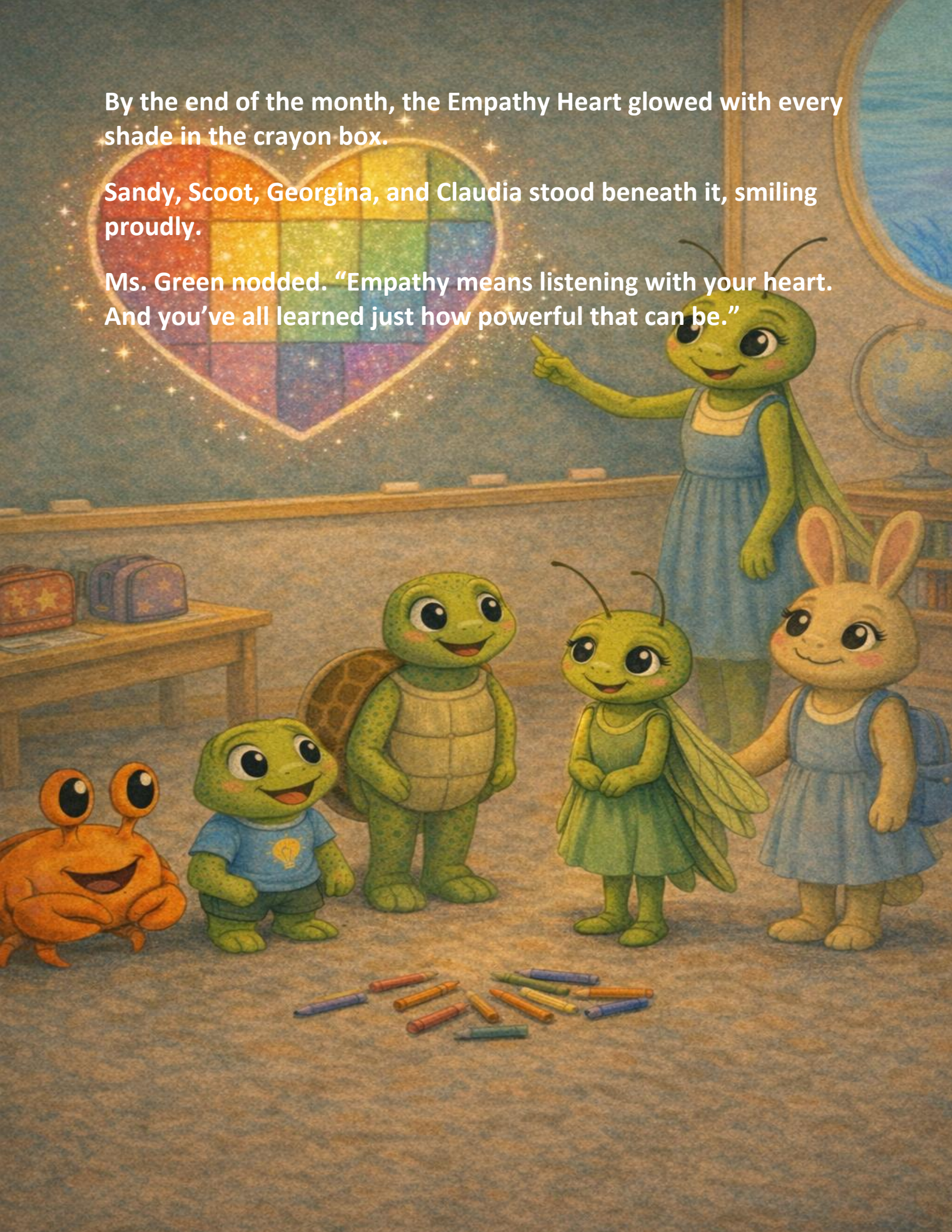
Scoot smiled. “We’re all different,” he said. “That’s what makes the world interesting.”



By the end of the month, the Empathy Heart glowed with every shade in the crayon box.

Sandy, Scoot, Georgina, and Claudia stood beneath it, smiling proudly.

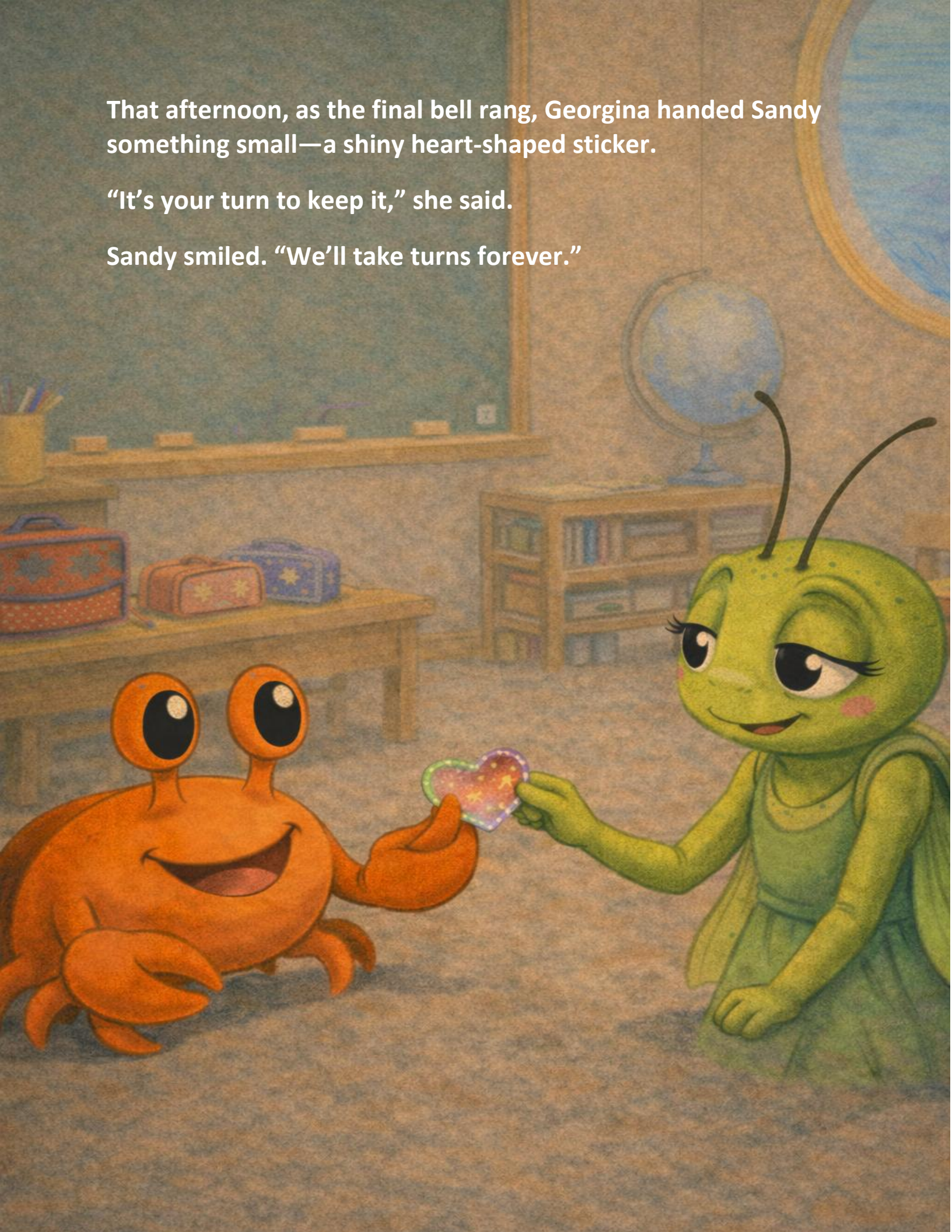
Ms. Green nodded. "Empathy means listening with your heart. And you've all learned just how powerful that can be."



That afternoon, as the final bell rang, Georgina handed Sandy something small—a shiny heart-shaped sticker.

“It’s your turn to keep it,” she said.

Sandy smiled. “We’ll take turns forever.”



Moral of the Story

Even the smallest act of kindness can make someone's day brighter—and kindness grows when you share it.

Did You Know?

- *Empathy* means understanding and caring about how someone else feels — it's like having a "heart that hears."
- Even small acts of kindness — like sharing a snack, helping a classmate, or offering a smile — can make someone's whole day better.
- Studies show that kindness can actually make *you* happier too! It helps your brain release "feel-good" chemicals like serotonin and oxytocin.
- When one person is kind, it often inspires others — creating a *chain reaction* of caring, just like the Empathy Heart in Sandy and Georgina's classroom.
- You don't need something big or fancy to show kindness. The most powerful gifts are free: noticing, listening, and sharing from the heart.

