

# Shellby

— AND THE —

## LIVING SHORELINE

A Dunehopper Ghost Crab Story  
About Working With Nature

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).



It was a bright July morning on the Outer Banks, and the sand sparkled like sugar under the sun. Shellby Dunehopper peeked out of her burrow and sighed.

All her friends were away on summer vacation.

“Maybe I’ll go explore the shore and look for seaweed,” Shellby said.

Mama smiled. “That sounds lovely — just be home by dinner.”



Shellby scurried down to the water's edge, where she nearly bumped into a small clam poking out of the wet sand.

"Oh! Sorry!" Shellby said. "I'm Shellby."

"I'm Luna," the clam replied. "I like watching waves... but lately, something feels wrong."

Shellby tilted her eyestalks. "What do you mean?"

"The waves are stronger," Luna said softly. "And the shoreline keeps shrinking."

Shellby's eyes widened. "If the shore disappears, where will we all live?"



Worried, the two friends hurried to visit Oscar the Oyster, who lived in a cluster of shells near the sound.

“Oscar!” Luna cried. “The waves are washing everything away. Can’t people just build a big wall to stop them?”

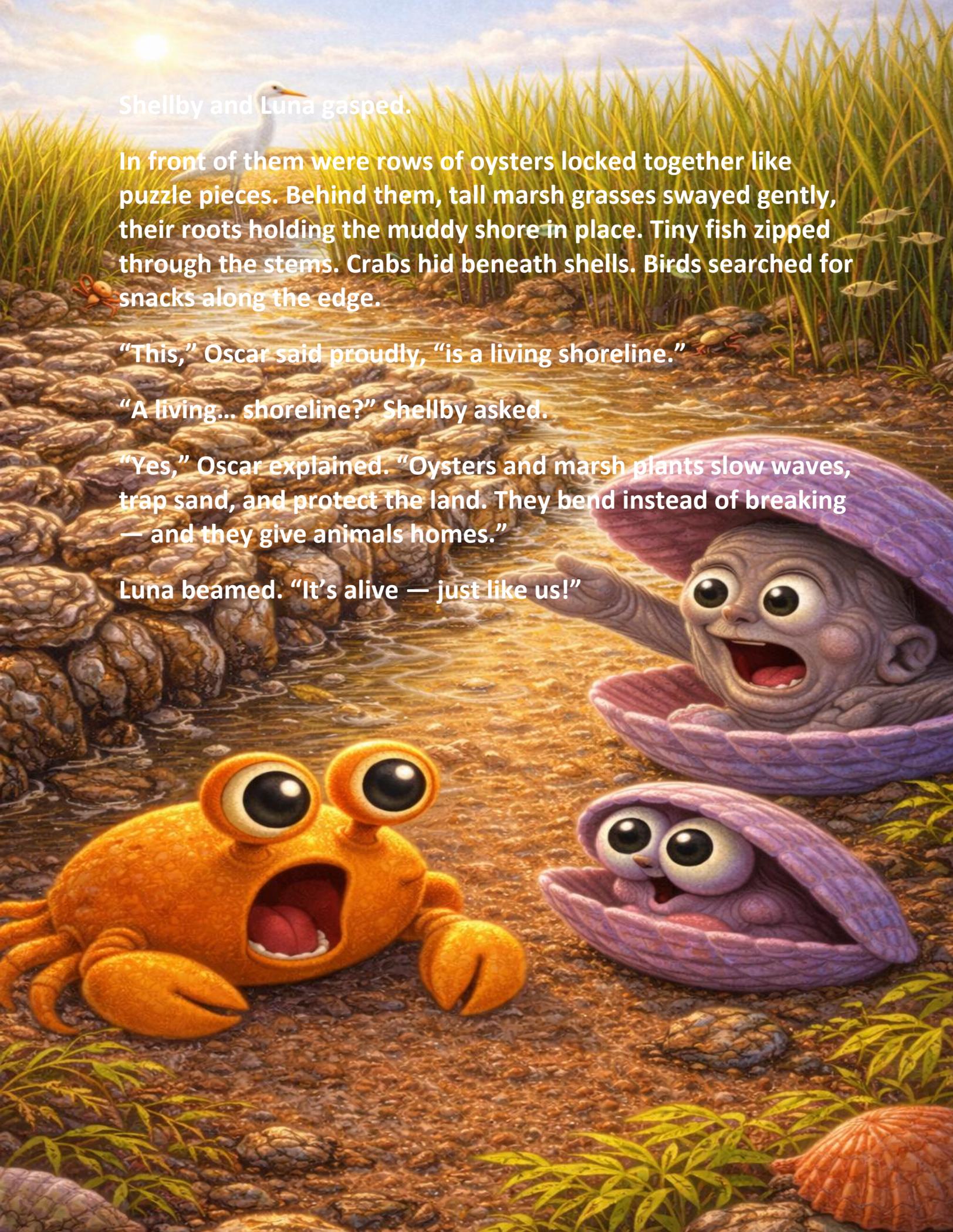
Oscar clicked his shell slowly. “People used to try that. But hard walls make waves bounce back even harder. They wash sand away and leave animals with no place to live.”

Shellby frowned. “So what *does* work?”

Oscar smiled. “Come look.”

He gestured with his shell.





Shellby and Luna gasped.

In front of them were rows of oysters locked together like puzzle pieces. Behind them, tall marsh grasses swayed gently, their roots holding the muddy shore in place. Tiny fish zipped through the stems. Crabs hid beneath shells. Birds searched for snacks along the edge.

“This,” Oscar said proudly, “is a living shoreline.”

“A living... shoreline?” Shellby asked.

“Yes,” Oscar explained. “Oysters and marsh plants slow waves, trap sand, and protect the land. They bend instead of breaking — and they give animals homes.”

Luna beamed. “It’s alive — just like us!”



Over the next few days, Shellby watched the living shoreline at work. When strong winds blew, the oysters softened the waves. After a storm, the shore stayed firm instead of washing away.

“The plants don’t fight the water,” Shellby said. “They work with it.”

Oscar nodded. “That’s the secret.”

Soon, Luna nestled safely beside the reef, helping clean the water as little fish darted past. The shoreline grew stronger — not with concrete or walls — but with shells, roots, and teamwork.

As the sun set, Shellby smiled.

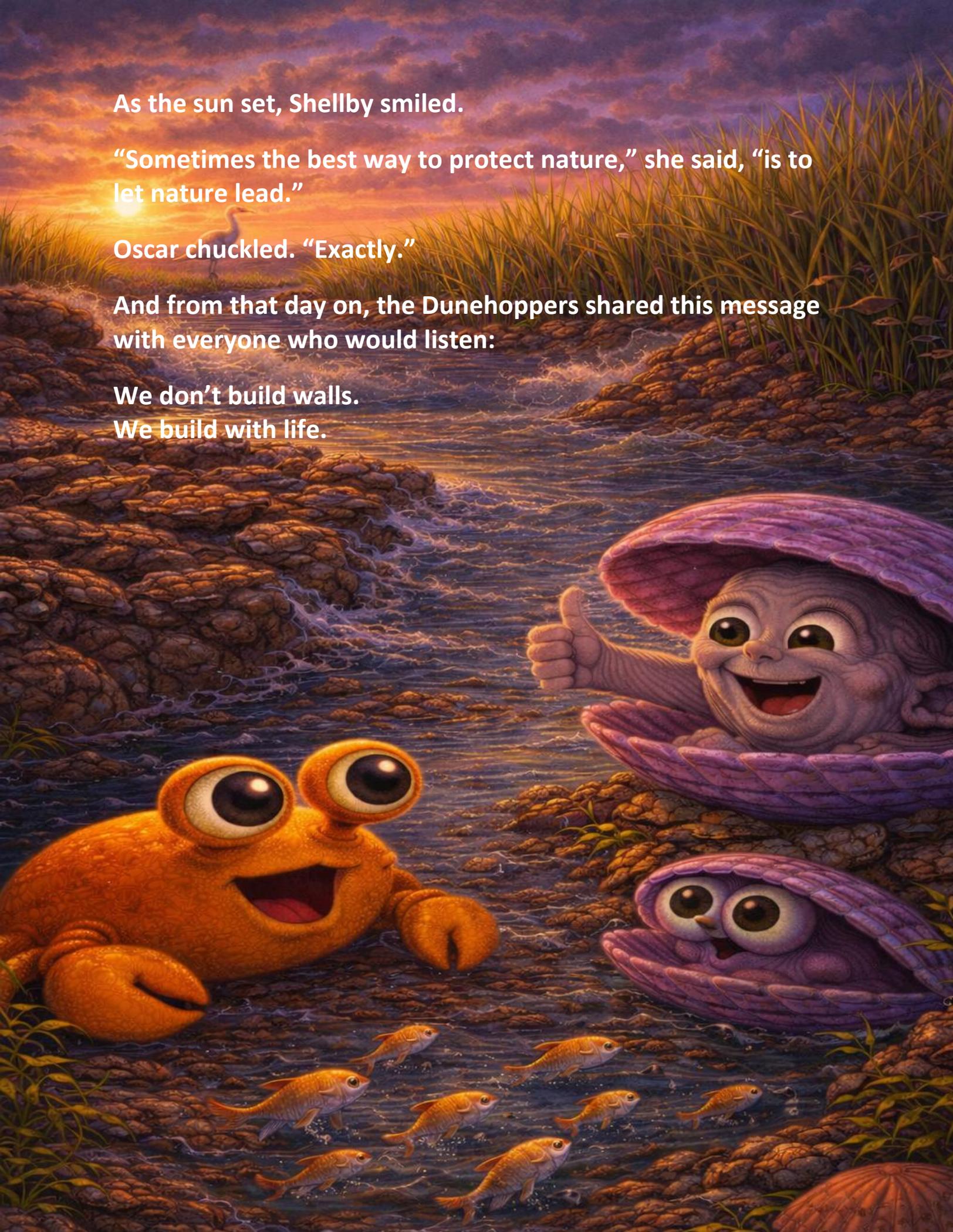
“Sometimes the best way to protect nature,” she said, “is to let nature lead.”

Oscar chuckled. “Exactly.”

And from that day on, the Dunehoppers shared this message with everyone who would listen:

We don't build walls.

We build with life.



# Did You Know?

A living shoreline is a natural way to protect coasts from erosion and storms. Instead of using hard walls, people restore oyster reefs, plant marsh grasses, and protect wetlands.

Living shorelines:

- Slow down waves
- Prevent erosion
- Provide homes for animals
- Clean the water
- Grow stronger over time

Living shorelines keep coasts healthy, wild, and full of life.

