

Mama Dunehopper's
Berry Happy
Mother's Day



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.

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To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.

It was Mother's Day weekend, and Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby Dunehopper were buzzing with excitement. They wanted to do something *extra* special for Mama—because Mama wasn't just their mom, she was the heart of the burrow. She kept everyone organized, comforted scraped claws, told the best bedtime stories, and somehow always knew where everything was.

"She does *everything* for us," Sandy said thoughtfully. "So we should do something she really loves."

Scoot snapped his claw. "Seaweed pancakes?"

Mama smiled politely from across the burrow. "I heard that."



Shellby tilted her head. “What about strawberries? Mama *loves* strawberries. Especially the kind you pick yourself!”

Sandy’s eyes lit up. “That’s it! Mama, Scoot and Shellby and I want to take you strawberry picking for Mother’s Day!”

“To Smith’s Strawberry Farm!” Scoot added proudly.

Mama’s eyes sparkled. “Oh, that sounds wonderful. That is so thoughtful of you,” she said, pulling them all into a sandy hug.



On Sunday morning—Mother’s Day—the whole Dunehopper family piled into the dunebuggy: Papa at the wheel, Mama beside him, and Sandy, Scoot, and Shellby bouncing excitedly in the back.



When they arrived at the farm, everyone gasped. Stretching out before them was a *sea of red*—row after row of strawberry plants dotted with bright, shiny berries.

“Now *that*,” Papa said, grabbing a bucket, “is a plentiful crop.”

They scurried into the patch, buckets swinging.



Sandy picked carefully, choosing only the biggest, ripest berries. Her bucket filled quickly. “These are the best strawberries I’ve ever tasted,” she said between happy munches—purely for quality control, of course.



Shellby, however, was having... a different experience.

She picked up a strawberry. "Too small." Toss.

Another. "Too bumpy." Toss.

Another. "This one looks suspicious." Toss.

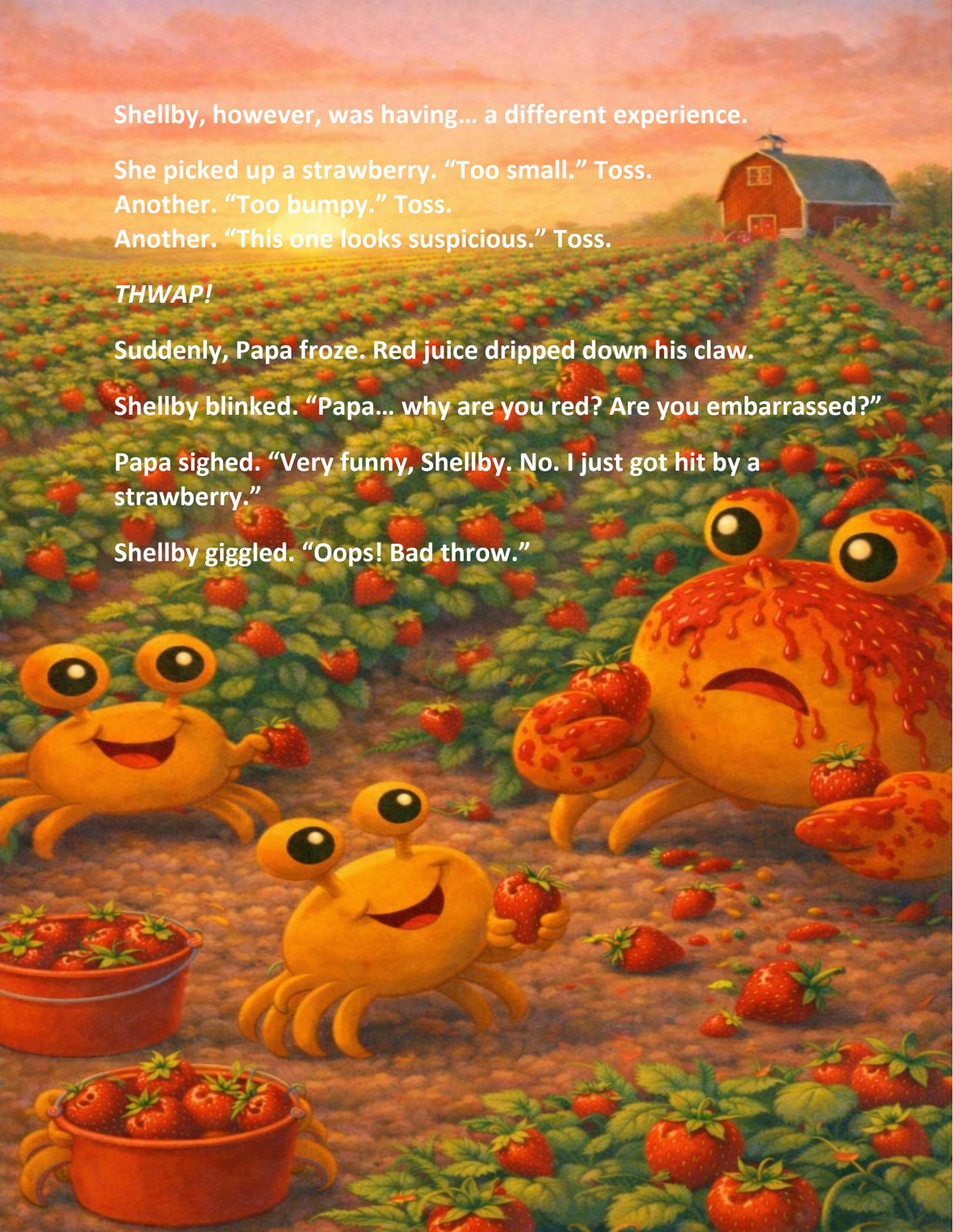
THWAP!

Suddenly, Papa froze. Red juice dripped down his claw.

Shellby blinked. "Papa... why are you red? Are you embarrassed?"

Papa sighed. "Very funny, Shellby. No. I just got hit by a strawberry."

Shellby giggled. "Oops! Bad throw."



Scout, meanwhile, was focused on one perfect plant when—*rustle!*—a whole family of ants popped out of the soil.

“DRAGON!” Scout shouted, leaping nearly four feet into the air.

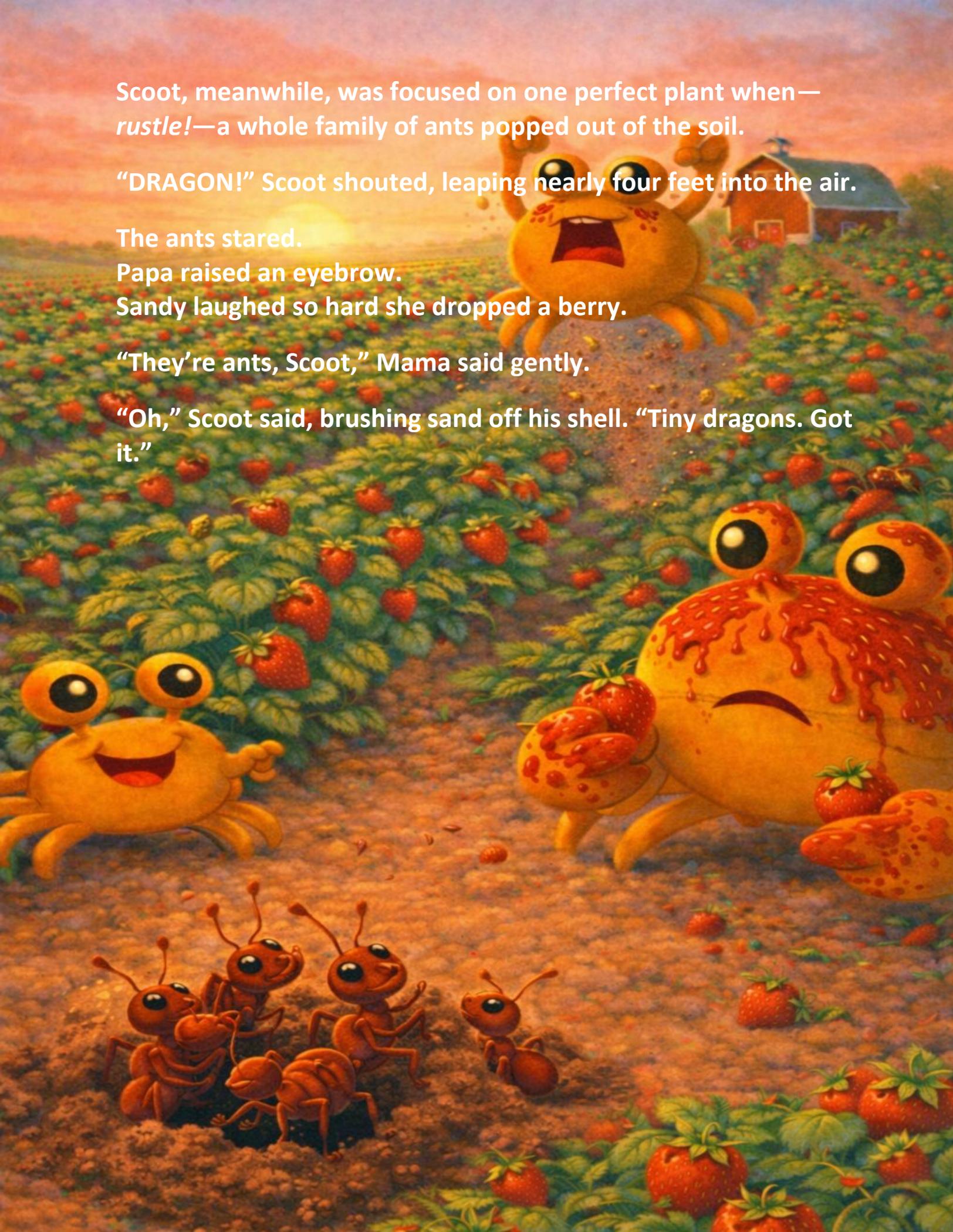
The ants stared.

Papa raised an eyebrow.

Sandy laughed so hard she dropped a berry.

“They’re ants, Scout,” Mama said gently.

“Oh,” Scout said, brushing sand off his shell. “Tiny dragons. Got it.”



Mama moved slowly through the rows, enjoying every moment.
Then she stopped.

“Oh my,” she said softly, holding up a strawberry shaped perfectly
like a heart. “This one’s for all of you.”

She pointed to each of them. “I love you.”



Papa's bucket was nearly full when he spotted one last berry. It had two little bumps on top.

"Well look at that," Papa chuckled. "This strawberry has ears. Must be a good listener."



At the end of the day, buckets overflowing and claws stained pink, the Dunehoppers wobbled back to the dunebuggy.

Scoot groaned. "Why are my legs doing this?"

Papa laughed. "That's the Strawberry Shuffle. Happens when you bend down too much."

Everyone was tired, sticky, and smiling.

Mama looked at her family and said, "This was the best Mother's Day gift ever."

That night, they planned strawberry shortcake—extra berries, extra whipped cream.



As the dunebuggy rolled home, the sun dipped low, painting the sky a glowing red—just like a ripe strawberry.

And Mama smiled all the way back to the burrow.



Did You Know?

Strawberries aren't actually berries at all! They're called aggregate fruits, which means the tiny yellow "seeds" on the outside are each their own little fruit. A single strawberry can have about 200 of these tiny seeds—more than almost any other fruit!

Strawberries grow best in sunny fields and are often picked by hand so they don't get bruised. That's why strawberry picking can be hard work—and why farmers, families, and even Dunehoppers do a lot of bending, reaching, and laughing in the rows.

And here's a sweet bonus: strawberries are packed with vitamin C, which helps keep bodies strong and healthy. Fresh-picked strawberries are not only delicious—they're full of goodness too!

