

“Feeling fine and sandy”- Condensed Version for ages 6-7

Delilah loved the beach. The sound of the waves crashing against the shore, the smell of the salt water, and the feel of the sand between her toes were her favorite things. But, the best part about a day at the beach was making sandcastles!

Whenever Deliah and her mother visited Aunt Debbie’s shore house, they would set out to build the best castle on the beach. They always worked together, but Deliah was in charge.

One day, the trio built their best castle yet. It had huge walls and round towers. It had pretty patterns and designs on the walls. It had a little moat with seashells all around it. Delilah thought it looked like it belonged in a fairytale!

“You have a true talent for building castles!” Aunt Debbie said, as she pulled out her cellphone to take a picture.

Delilah sat next to the castle and laughed, “I just do my best.” She held up her purple shovel and smiled wide for the picture.

Delilah’s mother said, “There she goes again, with her signature pose.”

“It’s my way of showcasing a job well done,” Delilah said as she looked at the picture. She couldn’t wait to print it out and glue it into her scrapbook. Delilah just loved to collect pictures of her favorite sandcastles.

“Well, all that hard work made me hungry,” Aunt Debbie announced, “Let’s eat!”

The family walked out to a blanket that they had left farther up the beach. Aunt Debbie opened up a cooler and passed out turkey sandwiches, Delilah’s favorite!

When the family was almost finished eating, Delilah heard people laughing. She turned around to see a group of boys her age by the water’s edge. They were taking turns digging a hole. Every time someone would scoop up a shovelful, the others would cheer. The hole got bigger and bigger, and the kids kept working together. They were laughing and joking and seemed to be having the time of their lives. Delilah decided that she wanted to join them!

Delilah left her family and headed toward the boys. On her way, she passed her sandcastle and scooped up the purple shovel that she had left there. She looked at her castle again and thought about how much she enjoyed playing with the sand. She loved

building, but she loved digging most of all. She was excited to show her new friends what she could do!

The boys were still laughing as she got closer to them, but they stopped when they saw Deliah. One boy with red hair made an angry face and said, "What do you want?"

Delilah was surprised by the mean way he had said that. She frowned and held up her shovel. "I'm here to help you out! I'm the best when it comes to sand."

The red-haired boy laughed, "No way, digging is for boys! You would be no good at it. You need to stick to your sissy sandcastles!" He spit in the direction of Deliah's sandcastle, which caused the other boys to join his laughter.

Delilah began to cry. She turned around and ran back to her family.

Delilah's mother and Aunt Debbie were still on the blanket. When they saw her, both women gasped.

"What's going on?" Aunt Debbie asked.

Delilah cried, "Those boys wouldn't let me dig. They all laughed at me!"

Delilah's mother began wiping away Deliah's tears. "Oh honey, don't let them bother you."

"Your mother's right. There's no use taking that to heart." Aunt Debbie chimed in, while patting Deliah's knee.

Delilah closed her eyes and remembered how she felt when the boys laughed at her. If it shouldn't bother her, then why does it still? What if they were right, and she wasn't good at digging after all? What if all this time, when she thought she had talent, she was wrong?

Delilah began to cry harder. She slowly stood up and left her parents, needing to be alone. Still crying, she sat down next to her sandcastle.

"Hey!" A voice suddenly called. Delilah looked up to see a girl with red hair skipping toward her. She quickly dried her eyes and tried to smile as the girl sat down beside her. "My name is Lucy. I really like your castle!"

Delilah looked from Lucy, to the castle, then back at the group of boys who were still digging by the shore. "Thank you, but it's not really that great."

“Are you kidding? It’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. One day, I bet you will be the best builder in the world.”

Delilah’s eyes sparkled. She laughed, “Okay, you are right. I worked hard on this, and I know it looks amazing. Why should I let anyone tell me differently?”

Lucy frowned for a moment, then followed Deliah’s gaze to the group of boys. “Oh no, did you go to those diggers? That’s my brother over there, he *always* says mean things.”

Delilah’s smile widened. She held the sand dollar pieces even tighter. “You know what? Let’s give them a taste of their own medicine.”

Lucy jumped up. “You are brilliant! Let me grab my shovel.”

The two girls started digging. They couldn’t stop laughing as they talked and worked. After a while, they had turned the moat around the castle into a huge hole! The new friends were having so much fun that they did not notice when the group of boys walked over.

Delilah felt nervous at first. Would they make fun of their hole? What if they didn’t like her sand castle? She glanced at Lucy, gave her a smile. When she saw that her friend believed in her, Delilah realized that there was nothing to be afraid of. She knew what to do.

“Hi boys!” Delilah said. “Do you want help with your hole?”

By the time the sun began to set, a crowd had formed around the children. Delilah’s castle, beautiful from the start, now had a huge moat attached to a curving tunnel leading to the boys’ area. Their hole now had tiny sandcastles all around it. Taking a step back, Delilah smiled at their kingdom.

“Okay everybody, gather in!” Called Aunt Debbie, who held up her phone to take a picture.

Lucy put her arm around Deliah’s shoulder. The boys grouped around, all hooting and laughing. Delilah looked at the camera and held up her purple shovel. She knew that this picture would be her favorite addition to her scrapbook.

“Feeling fine and sandy”- Original Version for ages 8-10

Delilah loved the beach. The sound of the waves crashing against the shore, the smell of the salt water, and the feel of the sand between her toes were unbeatable. But, the best part about a day at the beach was making sandcastles!

Whenever Deliah and her mother visited Aunt Debbie’s shore house, they would set out to build the most beautiful castle on the beach. The three of them would skip to the water’s edge when the sun was shining high above. The sand would be warm and the water was always refreshing as they worked. They would build towers and turrets, and create a moat around the castle. They always worked together, but Deliah was in charge.

On this toasty August afternoon, the trio built their best castle yet. It was massive, so tall that it seemed to reach high into the sky. The detail was incredible, with detailed patterns and designs drawn into the walls. Small sand dollars surrounded its deep moat, and woven seaweed created a beautiful drawbridge leading to a conch shell entrance. Delilah thought that it was like something out of a fairytale.

“You have a true talent for building castles!” Aunt Debbie said, as she pulled out her cellphone to take a picture.

Delilah sat cross-legged next to the castle and laughed, “I just do my best.” She held up her purple shovel and smiled wide for the picture.

Delilah’s mother threw her arms up into the air, smiling. “There she goes again, with her signature pose.”

“It’s my way of showcasing a job well done,” Delilah giggled as dropped the shovel and reached for the phone. Her eyes lit up as she glanced over the images. When she got home, she would ask her mother to help her print the pictures. She would use her favorite scissors with the zigzagged blade to carefully trim the edges, then paste the snapshot into her growing scrapbook. Delilah took a moment to close her eyes and remember the other pictures that were glued inside the scrapbook; A collection of all of the sandcastles she had built before.

“Well, all that hard work made me hungry,” Aunt Debbie announced, “Let’s eat!”

The family trudged through the soft sand and settled onto a blanket that they had left farther up the beach. Stored inside the nearby cooler were turkey sandwiches and bags of potato chips, Deliah's favorite! The sound of crackling plastic soon joined the symphony of seagulls and breaking waves.

When the family was almost finished eating, a roar of laughter broke the peaceful beach sounds. Delilah turned around to see a group of boys her age by the water's edge. Each boy held a shovel, and they seemed to be taking turns digging into the sand. Every time someone would scoop up a shovelful, the others would cheer. The hole got bigger and bigger, and the kids kept working together. They were laughing and joking and seemed to be having the time of their lives. The sun was shining all around the group, and the nearby waves crashing seemed to call to Deliah. She thought aloud, "Today is a perfect day for digging."

Delilah left her family and headed toward the group of boys. On her way, she passed her sandcastle and scooped up the purple shovel that she had left there. She took a moment to admire her masterpiece again. She'd always had a way with the sand. She loved building and designing with it, but most of all she loved digging. It was exciting and dirty and always made her heart race. With a head full of hope, Deliah walked toward the boys feeling excited to put her talents to work.

The boys were still laughing as she got closer to them. One boy with curly red hair was about to lift a shovelful of sand, but paused when he saw Deliah. The laughter suddenly ended when the others noticed her, too.

"What do you want?" Snapped the red haired boy.

Delilah was surprised by the annoyed way he had said that. She frowned and held up her shovel. "I'm here to help you out! I'm the best when it comes to sand."

The red-haired boy laughed, "No way, digging is for boys! You would be no good at it. You need to stick to your sissy sandcastles!" He spit in the direction of Deliah's sandcastle, which caused the other boys to join his laughter.

Delilah's heart seemed to fall to her feet. She felt tears swell up behind her eyes. She turned on her heel and ran. She kicked up sand with every embarrassed stride until she reached her family's basket again.

Delilah's mother and Aunt Debbie were playing a card game, but dropped the cards when they saw Deliah storm up. "What's going on?" Aunt Debbie gasped.

Delilah sat down next to her mother and leaned against her shoulder. She let the tears that she had been holding stream down her cheeks. "Those boys wouldn't let me dig. They all laughed at me!"

Delilah's mother grabbed a napkin from the nearby cooler, and began wiping away Deliah's tears. "Oh honey, don't let them bother you."

"Your mother's right. There's no use taking that to heart." Aunt Debbie chimed in, while patting Deliah's knee.

Delilah closed her eyes and remembered how she felt when the boys laughed at her. If it shouldn't bother her, then why does it still? What if they were right, and she wasn't good at digging after all? What if all this time, when she thought she had talent, she was wrong?

Delilah began to cry harder. She slowly stood up and left her parents, needing to be alone. Tears welled up in her eyes until she couldn't see in front of her. Suddenly, she felt something crack beneath her feet. She opened her eyes to see that she had crushed a sand dollar.

With a gasp, Delilah fell to her knees and scooped up the crumbled white pieces. Looking around, she realized that this sand dollar had been laid out in front of her sand castle's moat. The pieces in Deliah's hands were shattered and sand battered. Directly below were even smaller bits peppering the sand. She realized that if she hadn't stepped on the sand dollar, she would have kept walking straight into her masterpiece.

"Hey!" A voice suddenly called. Delilah looked up to see a girl with red hair skipping toward her. She quickly dried her eyes and smiled weakly as the girl sat down beside her. "My name is Lucy. I really like your castle!"

Delilah looked from Lucy, to the castle, then back at the group of boys who were still digging by the shore. "Thank you, but it's not really that great."

"Are you kidding? It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. One day, I bet you will be the best builder in the world."

Delilah's eyes sparkled. She laughed, "Okay, you are right. I worked hard on this, and I know it looks amazing. Why should I let anyone tell me differently?"

Lucy frowned for a moment, then followed Deliah's gaze to the group of boys. "Oh no, did you go to those diggers? That's my brother over there, he *always* says mean things."

Delilah's smile widened. She held the sand dollar pieces even tighter. "You know what? Let's give them a taste of their own medicine."

Lucy jumped up. "You are brilliant! Let me grab my shovel."

Lucy and Deliah set out to dig. They began at the entrance of Deliah's sandcastle, widening the moat until it was a few feet wide. From there, they worked together to make it deeper and deeper. The bright skies slowly turned to orange, then pink. They couldn't stop laughing as they talked and worked. The girls were so involved with their moat that they almost didn't notice when a cluster of shadows fell over the hole.

Delilah looked up. The group of boys, including Lucy's red-haired brother, had surrounded them. Delilah's heart began to race. Would they make fun of their hole? What if they didn't like her sand castle? She glanced at Lucy, who had a steady and reassuring smile on her face. Delilah looked over to where she had placed the broken sand dollar, and suddenly she knew. When she was unsure of herself before, she became so overwhelmed by worry that she almost forgot what was important. She was forced to take a break when she stepped on the shell, which ended up being what saved her prized work. It was that, combined with Lucy's friendship, that taught her to value herself first. She looked around at her family's castle, which was now made better by the enormous moat that she made with her new friend. She knew what to do.

"Hi boys!" Delilah said. "Do you want help with your hole?"

By the time the pink sky began to turn into a flurry of purples and magentas, a crowd had formed around the children. Delilah's castle, beautiful from the start, was now surrounded by a huge moat. The moat was attached to a tunnel that curved and swirled its way to a larger hole, the one originally built by the boys. Now, however, their

hole was dotted by smaller sandcastles. Taking a step back, Delilah grinned at their kingdom.

“Okay everybody, gather in!” Called Aunt Debbie, who had long ago joined the crowd to cheer the children on. She held up her phone to take a picture.

Lucy put her arm around Deliah’s shoulder. The boys grouped around, all hooting and laughing with pride. Delilah looked at the camera and held up her purple shovel. She knew that this picture would be her favorite addition to her scrapbook.