





STORY 1: Bye-Bye, Bernie

Klatter kabang kabang. Klatter kabang kabang. The old school bus rattled down the road and arrived in front of the school just as it did every school day. All the children poured out of the bus, laughing and talking, ready for another day at school. Then Mr. James, the bus driver, stepped off the bus.

“Good morning,” he said to Mrs. Marquez, the principal, who was greeting the children.

“Yes, it is a good morning, Mr. James,” she replied. “But old Bernie, your school bus, doesn’t sound so good.”

Bernie’s headlights flashed on and his windows opened just a bit so he could hear what was being said.

“No, he doesn’t,” replied Mr. James. “I think that old Bernie is about ready for the junkyard.”

Bernie couldn’t believe his ears. True, his paint was rather dingy and was peeling off in several places; many of his windows were cracked; most of his leather seats were torn and sagging; and he coughed black smoke now and then. But he wasn’t ready for the junkyard. Why, he wasn’t junk at all!

“Yes,” said Mrs. Marquez, “we should probably replace Bernie at the end of this year.”

Bernie didn’t like the sound of that at all. But what could he do? Just as Mrs. Marquez was saying goodbye to Mr. James, an idea came to Bernie. He’d run away. That way he wouldn’t have to go to the junkyard.



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So Bernie eased off his brake and started rolling down the little hill away from the school.

“Oh no!” cried Mr. James and Mrs. Marquez. “Bernie is running away!”

And indeed he was. With a klatter kabang kabang, Bernie rolled down the hill, turned the corner, and headed for the country.

“Away I go!” called Bernie, his tires barely touching the road as he flew past houses and stores and parks.

On and on he klattered, feeling the sun on his roof and hearing the wind whistle through his windows. Faster and faster he seemed to go. He was going so fast, in fact, that when he reached the curve just over the bridge, he couldn't quite make it. His tires squealed, he tilted up on two wheels, and then he flipped tires over roof and tumbled into the ditch alongside the river.







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"Oh, no!" exclaimed Bernie, his tires now flat and his fenders all dented. "What am I going to do now!" As he looked around, thinking about what to do, he saw empty cans and bottles, an old book, a T-shirt, and some tennis shoes. "I might as well be in the junkyard," he sighed. "This place is a mess."

All day Bernie sat there in the ditch, sure no one would ever find him. But then he heard a noise. He flashed on his headlights and saw Patti, one of the children that he usually took to school. Bernie took a breath and with all his might, he tried to honk his horn. All that came out was a little squeak. But it was enough, for Patti stopped, looked over the side of the bridge, and saw Bernie lying in the ditch.



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"Bernie!" called Patti. "We've been looking all over for you. Whatever are you doing down there?"

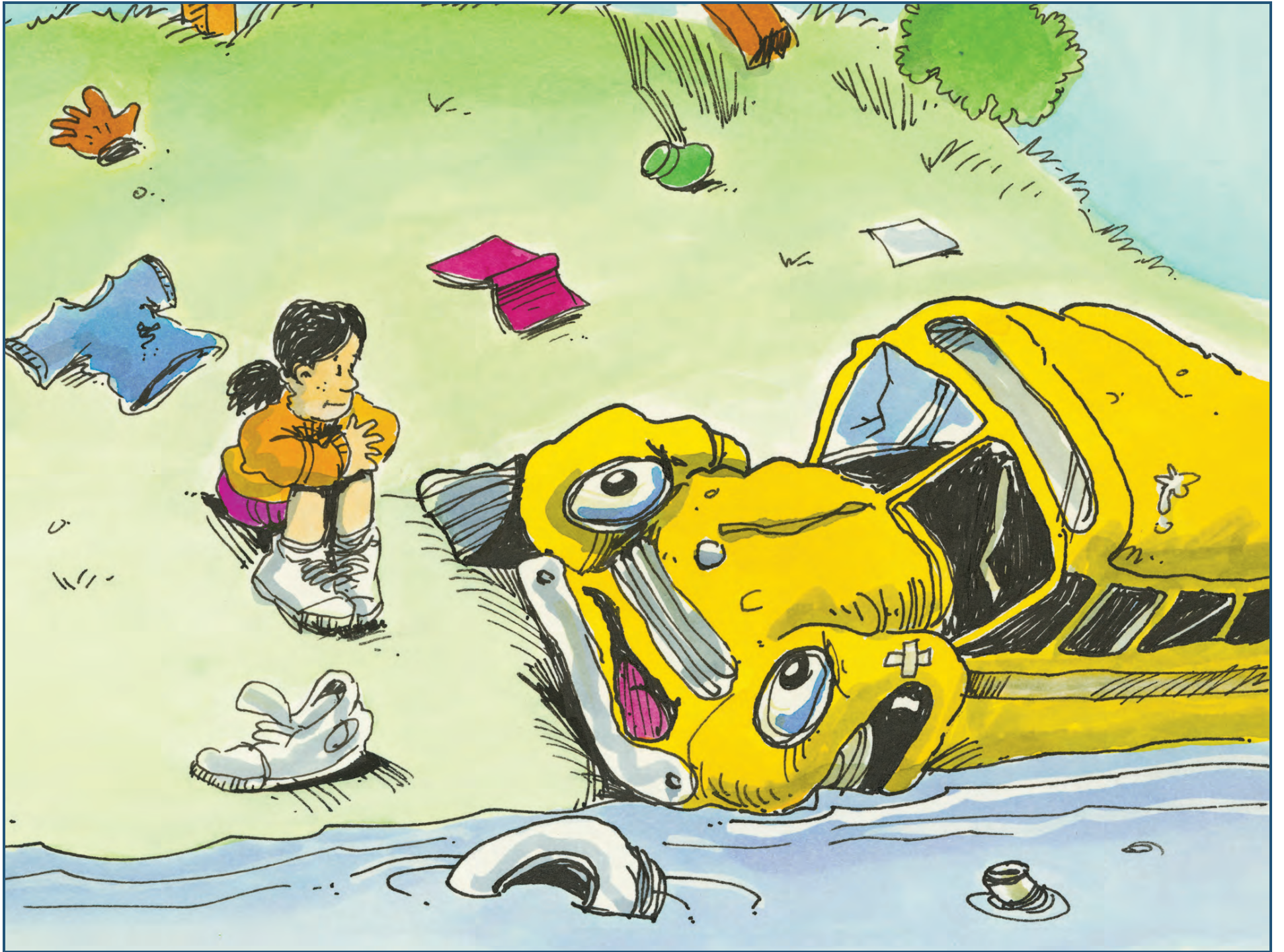
"Oh," answered Bernie, "I was running away so I wouldn't have to go to the junkyard, and I got going so fast that I couldn't get around the curve, and I tumbled right down into this ditch."

"Well," said Patti, climbing down into the ditch, "you certainly look as if you're ready for the junkyard now!"

Bernie propped himself up the best he could on his flat tires and said, "I may be battered, but I am not junk. I am Bernard Bartholomew Omnibus III, and I am made from valuable natural resources."

"From what?" asked Patti, looking Bernie over from top to bottom.

"Natural resources," repeated Bernie. "Things we get from nature, from the environment. Every single part of me comes from a natural resource."





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"Like what?" Patti wanted to know, peering in through Bernie's windows.

"Well," answered Bernard Bartholomew Omnibus III, "I am proud to say that my wooden steering wheel, for example, was made from a lovely tree. And my leather seats come from the hides of cows."

"Oh, I like trees and cows," said Patti, clapping her hands. "But what about the rest of you?"

"My tires," Bernie continued, "are made from rubber plants. My metal body is made from ore mined from the ground. My windows are made from sand. And even the gasoline that I need to run is made from oil, which is pumped out of the ground."

"Gee," said Patti, settling down in the grass in front of Bernie, "does everything come from natural resources?"

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Bernie. "The natural environment provides all the resources that we use to live. Trees are used to build houses and to make all kinds of paper. Plants and animals are used for food and to make the clothes you wear. Water is used to drink and to clean things. And oil, natural gas, and coal, which we get out of the ground, are burned in power plants to make electricity, as well as used to heat your home and to run cars and buses, like me!"

"And these natural resources are valuable?" asked Patti.

"Absolutely!" answered Bernie. "It takes time and money to get them and to make them into products. And some of them, like oil and metal ore, we can't get more of once we run out."

Bernie glanced at all the litter lying around him in the ditch, and then said sadly, "People are wasting natural resources as well as making a mess when they just throw out everything they no longer want, like these cans and bottles, that book over there, those old clothes."

"And you!" Patti spoke up as she jumped up off the ground. "I'm going to tell everyone that Bernard Bartholomew Omnibus III is not junk but is made from valuable natural resources!"

"Oh," replied Bernie, flashing his headlights and squeaking his horn, "thank you ever so much."

