



EXCERPT FROM *CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE*

by Jane Suen

Telly quickly lost track of time. Before he knew it, the day had flown by. Telly realized in a panic that he was going to be late picking up the kids at school. He whipped off his safety goggles and dust mask, brushed the sawdust off his t-shirt and jeans, and stomped his boots to shake off the wood shavings. He rushed out, hating to be late. He cursed under his breath. He'd never been late picking up the kids. Telly prided himself for being on time, especially on this job as the bus driver. None of the kids should ever have to wait on him. He dropped off his truck at the bus yard and drove the bus as fast as he dared. Pulling up in front of the school, he was relieved when he didn't see any kids in the schoolyard. He thought he had made it just in time. But, after he sat and waited, Telly began to think something was out of place. The bell should have rung at 2:30 p.m., and the doors should have opened. He checked his watch. It seemed to be working fine. It was 2:34 p.m.... but there was still no sign of any kids.

Telly's mind raced, trying to make sense of it. He was not supposed to leave the school bus until all the kids were on it; but, by this time there was no telling how much longer he would have to wait. His eyes searched the school, finally resting on the front door. To heck with it! Telly made a quick decision. Grasping the handle, he pushed open the bus door. As Telly rushed out of his bus to look around, his anger evaporated. A chill filled him, tightening its grip around his heart. He tried to shake it off, but with a sinking feeling, he felt it expand, right down to the pit of his stomach.

The school was strangely quiet, nothing, not a sound. He opened the front door. He heard nothing. There was no sign on the door, and no sign of any kids. Telly went to the principal's office to see if anyone was there. Empty. He peeked in the classrooms. Empty. He walked the halls. The only sound he heard was the clump-clump of his boots on the wooden floors. He looked in the schoolyard. Empty. Where is everyone?