

Sophie nodded. "Okay," she said glumly.

"Can I come, too?" asked Ella, climbing down the steps behind them.

"I don't think so, Ella," Sophie said. Making big plans like this was no job for kindergartners. "This is too important."

The bus roared away, and Sophie and Kate started up the hill to Kate's house. Sophie could hear Ella behind them.

"Wait for me!" Ella cried. "It's hard to run with all these—Oh, no! *My Slinkys!*"

Sophie whirled around to see Ella standing on the sidewalk. She was holding an empty box. And she was watching with wide, wide eyes as all twenty and a half Slinkys slinked down the street.

"My Slinkys!" Ella cried again. And she started running . . . right toward the road!

Sophie didn't even stop to think.

"No, Ella!" she cried. "Stay out of the street!"

She ran as fast as she could after her. Then she lunged for Ella's backpack and caught it by the



strap. She gave it a hard yank. But Ella's backpack slipped right off her shoulders!

"Ella!" Sophie cried again.

She reached out and grabbed Ella's shirt. And this time, she pulled even harder.

And this time, Ella stopped, her toes right at the edge of the curb.

The very next second, a car whizzed past them.

"Whoa!" said Ella.

"Wow!" said all the other kids from their bus stop, who had run up. "That was close!"

Sophie took a deep breath. Yes, it was!

Suddenly, Ella turned around and hugged Sophie's stomach. Hard!

"Sophie, you're my hero!" she exclaimed.

Sophie looked down at Ella's sandy-colored head. She winced as Ella squeezed even harder.

"Easy, Ella!" gasped Sophie. "That hurts. Besides, I didn't really do anything."

She tried to pry Ella off. But the kindergartner wasn't budging.

"Yes, you did!" said Ella. "You saved my life!"

"You really did," said Kate.

Slowly, Ella turned her head to peer down the street. "It's just too bad you couldn't save my Slinkys..."

Sophie looked down the street, too. She watched the Slinkys tumble on. They looked like an army of wild, rainbow-colored macaronis.

Then the car that had driven by them stopped at the bottom of the hill. The door opened, and their neighbor, old Mrs. Dixon, jumped out. She began to scoop up all the Slinkys.

"Yay, Mrs. Dixon!" shouted Ella. "Don't forget the pink one!"

Ella finally let go of Sophie. Whew. Sophie could breathe again. But she still had a tight, warm feeling in her stomach. Sophie could not help but grin. It was a good feeling!

"You know what this means?" said Kate. She grabbed Sophie's hands and swung them. "It means... knock-knock!"

"Who's there?" said Sophie.

"Sophie the," said Kate.

"Sophie the who?" said Sophie.

"Sophie the Awesome!" said Kate.

Sophie had to laugh. But then she shook her head.

"No?" said Kate.

"No," said Sophie.

Saving Ella's life was definitely name-worthy. But Sophie had an even more awesome name than "Awesome" now. A name that, she hoped, was a little easier to prove, too.

She put her hands on her hips and stuck out her chin. "It's Sophie the *Hero*, that's who!"