

SOPHIE *the* ZILLIONAIRE

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To Syd, for a zillion reasons



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Sophie stared at the thing in her hand. She turned it over carefully. It was paper, and it was green, and it had the number fifty all over it.

That was because it was fifty whole dollars!

Sophie could not believe it.

"I can't believe it!" she said to Kate Barry, who was standing beside her. Kate was Sophie's very best friend. "It's fifty whole dollars!"

Sophie looked down at the grass next to the sidewalk. That was where she had picked up the fifty-dollar bill. She hoped that there was even more money there! But there was not.

Still. She had fifty whole dollars. She was probably the richest girl in the whole world, she guessed.

(Well...maybe she wasn't richer than a princess. But she was richer than any ordinary girl in Ordinary, Virginia, she bet!)

Sophie wanted so badly to be special. Now she really was! And to think all she had to do was look down as she walked home from the bus stop.

"Where do you think it came from?" Kate asked her as they started to walk.

Sophie shrugged. "I don't know."

Then she got a feeling. It was not good. For Sophie to find money, someone else must have lost it first. But there was no one else around.

Sophie started to feel better. There wasn't anybody to ask. Plus didn't her big sister, Hayley, always say, "Finders keepers, losers sweepers"?

Sophie wasn't sure why losers had to sweep. But that was their problem. The fifty dollars was hers!

“So what are you going to do with it?” Kate asked. She grinned and licked her lips. “I think you should buy lots of gum!”

Sophie knew that Kate liked gum. A lot. This was mostly because her mom did not buy it—not since Kate chewed some, then tried to keep it behind her ear. It worked for a girl in a movie they saw. But it did not work for Kate. It got stuck in her hair, and her mom had to cut it out. Kate looked funny for a while. But she still liked gum just as much after all that.

Sophie thought about gum for a minute, then shook her head. “I’m going to keep the money. And tomorrow at school I’m going to tell everyone about it!” she said.

Sophie could picture the kids in her class. They would be amazed that she was so rich. They would never again call her just plain Sophie . . . or Sophie M. . . or even Sophie Miller.

Sophie waved the bill. “Thanks to this, I will be Sophie the Rich. No, wait!” She thought of something even better. “I will be Sophie the

Zillionaire!” Sophie gave the fifty dollars a big kiss. “What do you think?” she asked Kate.

Kate shrugged. “I’d still buy gum. But it *is* a better name than Sophie the Honest,” she said, grinning.

Sophie smiled back. Kate was the best. Sophie was very, very, very glad that they were friends again. Luckily, Kate had forgiven her for spilling a secret. Sophie had just been trying to be Sophie the Honest. That was the special name she had tried out before. Who knew it would cause so much trouble?

Sophie would not make that mistake again. One thing was for sure: Secrets would be safe with Sophie the Zillionaire!

Then suddenly, a thought popped into Sophie’s head. This fifty dollars wasn’t all the money she had. She had a bank full of money in her room.

Sophie grabbed Kate’s arm. “Come on!” she said. “Let’s go to my house and see how much there is in my bank to add to this!”

Kate shifted her backpack to the other

shoulder. "Sounds good!" she said. Then she stopped. "Ohhh, I can't."

"Why?" Sophie asked. Kate wasn't still mad at her, was she?

Kate made a blah face. "I have to get home for my piano lesson."

"Aw." Sophie nodded. She was disappointed. (But very relieved that Kate wasn't mad, too!)

She wondered if you could pay a piano teacher *not* to teach. Did she have enough money for that? Hmm...



"Mom, I'm home! And I'm rich!" Sophie yelled as she burst through the kitchen door.

Her mom stopped pouring iced tea. She held a finger to her lips. "Sophie, please—keep it down!" She nodded at the ceiling. "Max is napping upstairs," she whispered.

Sophie frowned. She did not understand. "Is he sick?"

Max was her brother. He was two. And he *never* took naps.

Her mom shook her head. "No. But he yawned, so I thought I'd try," she said. Then she took a sip of tea and smiled. "So, what do you mean by 'I'm rich'?"

Sophie held up her new fifty-dollar bill with both hands. "I mean this! It's fifty dollars!"

She thought her mom's smile would get bigger. But instead, it started to shrink. Her mom's eyes sure got bigger, though. "Where did that come from?"

"The sidewalk," Sophie said.

"You mean you found it?" her mom asked.

Sophie nodded proudly. "Yep!"

Sophie's mom didn't look any happier. "Well, someone must have dropped it. Did you ask everyone on the street?" she asked.

Sophie shrugged. "I wanted to. But there wasn't anyone to ask," she said.

BAM!

THUD!

THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP...

Sophie looked up. She knew those sounds well. They were the sounds of Max jumping out of his crib and knocking things down.

Her mom looked up, too, and sighed. She turned back to Sophie.

"That's a lot of money to find, Sophie," she said. "But it's a lot to lose, also. I think you should ask all our neighbors if they lost fifty dollars. If they say yes, you'll have done a good thing by returning it. If they say no, you can keep the money."

THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP...

CRASH!

Sophie's mom put down her glass and stood up. "Here I come, Maxie!" she yelled.



A little while later, Sophie left the house with heavy shoulders. But she came back with a big smile.

She had asked all the people on her street if they had lost money. And they had all said no!

Plus she had gotten lots of "What a *good* girl you are to ask's"!

It almost made her think her name should be Sophie the Good. But “Good” was so boring compared to “Zillionaire.” No. She would stick with the name she had picked. Especially now that she was allowed to keep the fifty dollars.

At last, it was time for Sophie the Zillionaire to see how much money she had!

Sophie ran up to her room. She shared it with her sister, Hayley, who was ten. It had been *all* Hayley’s room until Sophie was born. And Hayley always reminded her of that.

Sophie went to the bookcase that was all hers. She grabbed her horse bank off the shelf.

Sophie’s horse bank was one of her favorite things. She had painted it at her friend Eve’s birthday at the pottery-painting place. That was the day she decided that horses were her favorite animal. After dolphins. And kittens. And meerkats.

The horse’s legs were folded, like it was lying on the ground. It was mostly brown, like a real

horse, but it had a long rainbow tail. It made Sophie very proud.

The horse bank was much better than the coffee mug she had painted another time. That had been for her dad. She had tried to paint a picture of him on it, but he thought it was Tiptoe, their kitten. She just decided to let him think that.

Sophie yanked the rubber patch out of the horse's tummy. Then she shook the bank—hard—so all the money fell out.

“One, two, three . . .”

First Sophie counted all the dollars. They were mostly from her grandparents. For her birthday they always gave her as many dollars as her age. And since she had not spent that year's dollars yet, there were at least eight of them.

There were also some dollars from the tooth fairy. Plus tons of coins. Sophie added them all up.

Nineteen dollars and forty-nine cents—pretty good.

Then she added the fifty dollars.

That came to \$69.49!

Sophie pushed a loose tooth with her tongue. As soon as it came out, the tooth fairy could leave her another dollar. Or maybe even two.

Sophie could not believe it. She was even richer than she had thought!

Plus she was a very good adder, which a zillionaire should be, for sure.

Sophie started to count her money one more time, just to make sure she hadn't missed any.

That was when Hayley walked in.

"What are you doing?" she asked Sophie.

"Counting my money. That's what zillionaires do," Sophie said. It was a fact.

"There is no such number as a zillion," Hayley said. She sounded bored. But she looked a tiny bit interested. "Hey, how much do you *have*?" she asked.

Sophie sat up very straight. "Sixty-nine dollars and forty-nine cents," she said.



“Really?” Hayley sounded impressed. This made Sophie even happier. “How did you get that much?”

Sophie told her all about the fifty dollars.

“Wow! So I guess you won’t mind giving me all your pennies,” Hayley said.

Sophie’s eyebrows bunched together. “What are you talking about?”

“My class is collecting pennies all week to help kids. They’re going to build schools in parts of the world where kids don’t have them,” Hayley said.

“They’re going to build schools out of pennies?” Sophie asked. That sounded like a silly plan.

“No, the pennies will *pay* for it,” Hayley said, rolling her eyes.

“They will?” Sophie said. That plan did not sound much better. What could a penny pay for? Not even a brick, she bet.

Then Hayley explained that one penny was not much, but a whole bunch could add up to a lot of money.

“Other schools all over the state are collecting them, too. Last year they raised more than twenty thousand dollars!” Hayley said.

Twenty thousand dollars! Sophie thought.

She looked down at her piles of dollars and coins. Then she sighed, scooped the pennies up, and handed all nineteen to her sister.

“Thanks!” Hayley said, giving her a big smile.

“You’re welcome,” Sophie told her. And she meant it, too. She was glad Hayley had her brown pennies. Her money looked much more silvery and pretty without them, she thought.

Then she thought about the kids who would have to go to school—because of her.

Hmm. Now that Sophie was a zillionaire, she would have to make it up to them somehow.