

SOPHIE the SWEETHEART

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SCHOLASTIC INC.

New York Toronto London Auckland

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For the REAL Sophie the Sweetheart,
Sophie Joyce Miller



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ISBN 978-0-545-33074-9

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12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

11 12 13 14 15 16/0

Printed in the U.S.A.

40

First printing, November 2011

Designed by Tim Hall



Dear Ms. Moffly,
I love you.
Will you marry me?
Sincerely, Mr. Bloom

There. Sophie put down her pen. *That should work!* She grinned. Then she turned to her best friend, Kate Barry. Did she agree?

It was all part of their big plan, a plan they'd just made that afternoon in Sophie's room. A plan to get their third-grade teacher, Ms.

Moffly, to marry the fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Bloom.

At first, Kate had thought it was a little crazy. "Ms. Moffly?" she said. "And Mr. Bloom? Doesn't he wear *jeans*? Do you think Ms. Moffly's ever worn those?"

Then Sophie explained how much the two had in common: "They both teach at Ordinary Elementary School!"

And she pointed out how cool it would be if they got married: "That means a wedding! And of course that means we get to go!"

"Oh!" That made Kate's eyebrows bounce. Then she thought of something, too. "Hey! Know what else that means?"

"What?"

"It means a honeymoon!"

Sophie nodded. "You're right! Do you think we'd get to go on that?"

"Probably not." Kate shrugged. "But it might mean no school."

Oh. Well, that was almost as good. It fact, it

was pretty great. But not as great as the other thing Sophie hoped this plan would bring: an awesome, perfect name!

Sophie was tired — *exhausted*, even — of being Sophie the Most Average Girl in the Whole School. And she was determined to start being Sophie the . . . *anything*. Anything that made her stand out from the rest of the world.

And now she had the best idea! She had gotten it at the end of school that day. Ms. Moffly had been struggling with a box, and Sophie had run up to help.

“Sophie, you are such a sweetheart,” Ms. Moffly had told her.

And that was it!

Sophie the Sweetheart! Who could ask for a better name than that? All she had to do was keep being sweet and helpful to Ms. Moffly. And everybody else. It shouldn’t be too hard, Sophie figured. Not as hard as some other names had been. She was pretty good at being sweet — she just forgot now and then.

Of course, she had run the name by Kate first. "Ooh! I like it!" Kate said. "It makes me think of Cupid! All you need are some wings and a bow and arrow. Then you could make everyone fall in love!"

Sophie wasn't going to go *that* far. But it did give her a great idea. What could be sweeter than helping Ms. Moffly get a sweetheart of her own? Someone like Mr. Bloom...to help her carry boxes at home, too!

"So do you think it's okay?" Sophie asked Kate, holding up the letter for them both to read.

Kate nodded. "Yeah, it sounds good. Unless you want to use a joke."

"Like what?" asked Sophie.

Kate raised her eyebrows and grinned. "Like, knock-knock."

"Who's there?"

"Howard."

"Howard who?"

"Howard you like to marry me?" Kate giggled and slapped Sophie's back.

Sophie smiled, but she rolled her eyes, too.
"Good one. But I don't think so."

"Suit yourself." Kate grinned and read the note again. Then a thought seemed to grow inside her. She scratched a freckle on her neck.

"What?" Sophie asked.

"The handwriting," Kate said.

Huh? Sophie studied the page. "I tried to be so neat. And look, there's a heart above the 'i.'" She could have written in cursive, she guessed. But those *f*'s were so tricky.

"I think it might be *too* neat," Kate said.
"Grown-up writing never looks as neat as that."

Oh . . . right. Sophie thought about her mom's handwriting. That was a mess.

"Okay." She reached for a clean sheet of paper.
"Let me try again."

"Hang on. There's something else," Kate said.
Sophie froze her pen.

Kate went on. "I wonder if we should use first names. Like maybe say 'Dear Lila' instead."

"Good idea!" said Sophie, nodding hard. Why hadn't she thought of that?

"*Dear Lila . . .*" She started writing. Then she stopped. "Uh-oh. Do you know what Mr. Bloom's first name is?" she asked Kate.

Kate did not. Too bad.

But someone else does! Sophie remembered. That someone walked in right then.

"Hayley!"

Sophie's big sister just happened to be in Mr. Bloom's class. Sophie waved the pen as her sister brushed past her bed. "We have a very important question for you!" she said.

Hayley kept walking toward her dresser. "No, I will *not* play Monopoly with you," she declared. "You guys always gang up against me, and it takes way too long. Besides, I'm here because I have to change for ballet. So you have to go right now."

Sophie sighed. She wished that, just once,

Hayley would remember this was her room, too. But she wasn't going to let that bother her. At least, not much.

"Don't worry. That wasn't our question," Sophie told her. "We just want to know Mr. Bloom's first name."

Hayley opened her top drawer and pulled out a leotard. "Mike." Then she turned as Sophie started to scribble. "Why do you want to know?"

"Well . . ." Sophie shared a look with Kate. They both shrugged at the same time. *Why not tell Hayley?* Sophie thought. She would find out soon enough!

"Here! You can read for yourself." She proudly showed Hayley her new letter. "I'm going to give it to Ms. Moffly. And she'll think that it's from . . . *Mike*. And when they get married, they'll invite everybody. Your class, too, I bet! And they'll live happily ever after. It's pretty *sweet* of me, don't you think?"

She waited for Hayley to answer. She was excited—and nervous, too. She knew that this

was a great idea. But Hayley didn't always see at first how great Sophie's ideas were.

Hayley's mouth twisted sideways. "This is interesting," she said.

Yes! Sophie took the letter back. Hayley liked her idea!

"I wonder if they'll ask their best students to be in the wedding," Hayley went on.

Be in the wedding? Ooh! "Like a flower girl?" Sophie asked. She had always wanted to be one of those!

Hayley nodded, then looked in the mirror and smiled. "You third graders might be flower girls. I'd be a junior bridesmaid, though."

"Oh, I hope it's not a long engagement!" said Sophie. She tried to do the math in her head. "Let's see.... If I give this note to Ms. Moffly first thing in the morning, how long will it take? A week?"

That was when Hayley's eyes got serious again. She turned back to Sophie and said very sternly, "You cannot give that note to her."



"It's my handwriting, isn't it?" Sophie sighed.
"I know. It's too neat."

Hayley shook her head. "Mr. Bloom's handwriting is a lot messier, yes. But that's not it. I'm talking about what happens when Ms. Moffly says, 'Yes.' And Mr. Bloom says, 'Huh?' because he doesn't even know he asked."

Oh.

Sophie nodded. "I see," she said, thinking hard. "So do you think the note should be from Ms. Moffly instead?"

"No." Hayley shook her head again. "Don't you read or watch TV? People go on *dates* first, Sophie. They don't just get married."

"They don't?" Sophie frowned. She thought that was exactly what they did.

"No." Hayley rolled her eyes, and she grabbed some tights from her drawer. "You'll know that when you're ten."

Sophie turned to Kate. She could tell this was news to her, too. But if Ms. Moffly and Mr.

Bloom had to go out on a date first, then that was what they would do.

Sophie slapped the paper down on her lap desk. Then she took her pen and went back to work.

Dear ~~Ms. Moffy~~, Lila,

I love you.

Will you ~~marry me?~~ go on a date with me?

Sinseerly, ~~Mr. Bloom~~ Mike

P.S. Then will you marry me?

When she was done, Sophie showed it to Hayley. "Better?" she asked.

Hayley slowly shook her head.

"Don't worry," Sophie said quickly. "I'll type it up so it looks official."

"Here's another idea," Hayley said with a sigh. "Ask Mom to invite them both to dinner." Then she looked at the clock. "Now get out. I have to change or I'll be late!"

"Whatever you say!" Sophie hopped off her bed. For once, she didn't complain. She grabbed Kate's hand and dragged her out the door. "We have a whole new plan to make!"

"Wow," Kate said. "Your sister sure knows a lot about love."

"Yep!" Sophie grinned proudly. "It must be in our blood!"