



Meet **Sabrina**, undercover princess

No one in the boring neighbourhood knows that Sabrina Parslowe, the new girl in town, is really Princess Sabrina of the House of Valence, living undercover to keep her blue-blooded identity a secret.

A school trip to a museum promises to be a welcome escape from Sabrina's big fat lie of a life. But when the museum tour begins, Sabrina's worst fears are realised: There's an exhibition on royal families!

In one long, breathless race around the museum, the secret princess must call upon her devious Uncle Ernie, her friend Charlie and even the school bully, Awful Agatha, to keep everyone away from the shocking truth. Will Sabrina be exposed for who she really is?

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undercover
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For Review only

N.J. HUMPHREYS



NIGHTMARE AT THE MUSEUM

Princess  Incognito

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For our favourite bus driver ... thanks mate.

For Review only

INTRODUCTION TO ME AND MY BIG FAT LIE

My name is Sabrina Valence and I live a big fat lie. I'm 11 years old and I'm a princess. I'm serious. I'm not making this up. I'm not one of those soppy girls who fantasise about being a princess. I AM a princess. The trouble is, I'm a secret princess, which is a real pain in the backside.

My Uncle Ernie calls me "Princess Incognito", which sounds really daft. But then, Uncle Ernie is a bit daft. He's not even my real uncle. He's just mad. His real name is the Earl of Parslowe and he calls himself a "handyman". But I know what he really is.

He looks after me because I have no parents. All right, I do have parents but I never see them. I have to be careful what I write here because my eyes get all wet and sting-y when I think about my parents. I know I'm too old for all that weepy stuff, but even grown-ups cry when they lose their parents and I've lost mine.

And it's not even my fault.

It's the fault of dozy politicians who keep making the wrong decisions.

My official name is Princess Sabrina of Mulakating. I am the daughter of King Halbutt Valence and Queen Beverly Sisley. We are called the Royal House of Valence, which I was really proud of until my cousins started calling us the Royal House of Flatulence.

Flatulence is a posh way of saying too much farting!

But I'd rather have a smelly surname than the life I live now. It really stinks. My mum and dad sent me away because Mulakating is having something called a "civil war", which is violent and dumb. Half of Mulakating wants to keep the royal family and the other half wants to get rid of us. They say we cost too much money and never do anything, which is crazy.

My mum and dad cut ribbons, shake hands and wave at people all day long!

But I was still kicked out of my own country. Daddy said he was saving my life. I think he was ruining my life.

I left my home, my friends and even Miss Quick-Pants. She was my teacher at the Palace. Her real name was Miss Cruickshanks, but the young royals all called her Miss Quick-Pants. But most of all, I had to leave my parents.

That was the worst moment of my life.

But at least I've got Uncle Ernie. He took me to a housing estate in a rough neighbourhood in the middle

of nowhere and sent me to one of the worst schools in the world. We wear green blazers that look like vomit. We have a principal called the Cannibal. She doesn't eat people. Her real name is Miss Cannington, and the Cannibal is her nickname.

My teacher is called Miss Shufflebottom and that's not even her nickname.

Her actual name is Miss Shufflebottom!

Even a nickname couldn't be as funny as Miss Shufflebottom. I've told Uncle Ernie that he's not allowed to talk to her anymore because whenever he meets her, he says, "Hello, Miss Shufflebottom" and bursts out laughing!

Uncle Ernie has given me what he calls a "cover story". It's a made-up story about my fake life. I'm supposed to be this really boring, quiet girl from a really boring, quiet town and I live in a tiny house because my parents are working overseas. My previous life, my real life, no longer exists.

I spend all day telling lies, not little white lies, but ridiculous whoppers. I am the only 11-year-old in the world who gets told to tell lies and gets told off for telling the truth!

It's so confusing.

I can't tell anyone that I'm an expert in horse riding,

taekwondo and fencing and almost an expert in aikido. I can't say that I speak English, French, Spanish and some Mandarin. I can't say that I'm a princess in hiding, thousands of miles away from my parents and that sometimes, when I'm alone in my bedroom, my eyes start stinging and there's absolutely nothing I can do about it.

It's getting harder and harder to remember what is true and what is false.

At school, I have one friend, a tiny boy called Charlie. He knows I have secrets on the Internet so he thinks I'm a YouTube star!

And then there is Awful Agatha.

She's not as awful as she used to be, but she's still the school bully and most days can't remember if she likes me or not. She changes like the weather. She even likes being called Awful Agatha. I think she's getting suspicious about me though. She thinks I'm weird. And she's right. My life is weird.

That's why I keep this journal, just for me. This is the true story of a princess who cannot tell the truth, a princess with a terrible secret.

But today should be a good day.

Today, our class is going on a school field trip. We are off to the museum, which should be fun. I mean, it's a museum, right? What could possibly go wrong?

CHAPTER ONE

A funny little man stood up at the front of the school bus.

"My name is Alan," he said.

"Good morning, Mr Alan," everyone on the bus replied.

We were getting impatient. The bus hadn't even left the school yet because Liam wouldn't stop doing kick-ups with his new football. He was totally showing off in front of the girls, who kept giggling. I'm sure one of them had blown him a kiss.

Awful Agatha had blown him a raspberry.

By the time Miss Shufflebottom had shuffled everyone's bottoms onto the bus and confiscated Liam's football, we were already five minutes late.

And that's when the funny little man behind the steering wheel decided to stand up and give us a little speech.

"I am your bus driver today," said Alan.

"Good morning, Mr Alan the Bus Driver," we all shouted back, giggling.

"There's no need to call me Alan the Bus Driver. Just Alan will do."

"Good morning, Mr Just Alan Will Do," Awful Agatha said.

Miss Shufflebottom gave Awful Agatha one of her meanest stares. At least, Miss Shufflebottom thought she looked mean. No one else did.

Naturally, Awful Agatha didn't care. She never does. She was the meanest bully in the school and has already dragged me into two fights. But I wasn't scared. Uncle Ernie started teaching me taekwondo when I was four, back at the Palace.

Awful Agatha wasn't scared of anything either, except suspension. She never wanted to be sent home from school. She was strange. Every day, I think of ways to get back to my parents. Every day, Awful Agatha tries to think of ways to stay away from her parents.

So I knew she would be a million miles from caring when she made fun of Alan the Bus Driver. Even when Miss Shufflebottom and Miss Cannington stood behind him and pointed at Awful Agatha, she just slouched in her seat and chewed her gum.

In fact, Miss Shufflebottom and the old Cannibal made it even worse for poor Alan the Bus Driver. They were much taller than him, which made him look even funnier. It's really hard to concentrate when a big speech is coming from such a small man.

"Ok, boys and girls, now that I've got your attention, listen carefully," said Alan the Bus Driver. "Today, I'd really like to be something. What would I like to be?"

"Taller," shouted Awful Agatha.

Our giggling spread through the school bus. Even Miss Shufflebottom turned away.

Charlie was chuckling in the seat beside me and he didn't really like Awful Agatha, for two obvious reasons. First, he was much smaller and smarter than her, which are the

two things that school bullies always seem to attack. And second, as my closest friend, he couldn't understand why I would be friendly with a girl like her.

But I had my reasons. Awful Agatha and I both had family secrets. That's why I was the only person on the school bus brave enough to do what I did next.

"All right, Agatha," I whispered.

We gazed at each other across the aisle of the school bus. She had dark rings under her eyes and those horrible yellow clumps of sleep in the corners of her eyes. Her long, black hair was shiny, but not in an attractive way. It was greasy and knotty. She hadn't been sleeping or washing properly, again.

"Are you telling me to shut up?" Agatha hissed at me.

"No, I just want him to start driving so we can eat our sandwiches. I'm starving already. Are you?"

Awful Agatha didn't say anything. But she pulled that unusual face, the one that only I saw, the one that made her look soft.

"Yeah, a little bit," she whispered.

"Me too," I said and then I waved at Alan the Bus Driver.

"Sorry about that, Mr Alan. Can we go now?"

"In a minute," the little man said.

And then he stared at me, for ages. It was really awkward.

"Have I seen you before?"

My cheeks were on fire. Most people, most normal people anyway, hear this question all the time. They're always bumping into people. They bump into each other at school, in the supermarket, on a train, on a bus, in the street, in the park,

everywhere. But I don't bump into people. Ever. At the Palace, I was never allowed to bump into normal people because a princess was never allowed to go to normal places. Now, I don't bump into normal people outside of school because Uncle Ernie never allows his hidden princess to go to normal places. So when I'm recognised, I panic.

Being recognised by strangers can only mean one thing.

They know who I really am. They know I am Princess Sabrina Valence of Mulakating. And then my secret is out.

And then my life is in danger.

And Alan the Bus Driver had recognised me. It was so obvious.

Uncle Ernie wasn't sitting beside me with all his hidden gadgets to save me. Charlie was sitting beside me with all his detective maths puzzles. They wouldn't save me.

Liam was sitting behind me, burping. His burps wouldn't save me.

On the other side, Awful Agatha was clenching her fists, probably deciding which student she was going to punch later at the museum. Her fighting wouldn't save me.

I was on my own.

"No, I don't think so," I said.

Alan the Bus Driver wasn't convinced. He wandered down the aisle of the bus.

"Have you been on my bus before? I take students to the museum every day. Have you been on one of my school trips?"

"Er, yeah, maybe."

I thought my brain was going to explode and splatter against the bus window like cold porridge.

"You told me you've never been to this museum before," Charlie said.

"Shut up, Charlie."

Charlie was sweet and kind and almost cute with his short hair and glasses. But his mouth was always five seconds faster than his brain.

"Maybe I visited with my Uncle Ernie," I said. "I can't really remember."

"Yeah, nor can I," said Alan the Bus Driver.

I had done a brilliant job of confusing him. Another little white lie had saved me. I was turning into a fantastic liar.

Alan the Bus Driver returned to the front of the bus. It was hard to see him. His head only just poked out above our seats.

"Ok, I think we're ready to leave now," he said.

We all cheered.

"I just have one more thing to say."

We all booed.

"There is only one rule," said Alan the Bus Driver. "You must follow all my rules. That means no eating, no drinking, no shouting, no singing, no spitting, no swearing, no fighting, no wrestling, no nose-picking, finger-flicking, hair-pulling or clothes-ripping, no peeing, no pooing, no kissing, no wooing, no farting, no burping, no vomiting, no slurping and no talking, especially no talking, unless it's an emergency, like one of you is on fire or something. Apart from that, you can

do whatever you want. So sit back, relax and enjoy your trip to the museum.”

Charlie took a deep breath and raised his hand.

“Er, excuse me. Are we allowed to sleep?”

“Only if you don’t snore.”

Alan the Bus Driver sat behind his huge steering wheel. The old guy looked liked a baby in a toy car. He turned a key. Suddenly, the school bus was full of spitting, farting, burping and vomiting noises.

It was the engine!

The bus bounced away from the school like a dizzy kangaroo.

“Come on, you silly old girl, get us to the museum in one piece.”

Alan the Bus Driver talked to his bus, as if the bus was a real person.

He made me laugh.

He saw me watching him, through that large mirror stuck to his windscreen.

“I’ve definitely seen you before,” he said, peering over the top of his glasses. “By the end of today, I will remember who you are.”

He made me stop laughing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

N. J. Humphreys is a bestselling author with 20 titles to his name. An engaging, witty storyteller popular with kids, he grew up in London and saw his first work published at 11, when he was picked to read his funny school journal to the world's toughest audience—hundreds of kids from his council estate. They laughed. He hasn't looked back since.

Among his many children's books, Humphreys' *Abbie Rose and the Magic Suitcase* series are entertaining eco-adventures about a smart, feisty girl on a mission to save endangered animals. He is currently working on the animated TV series with an international broadcaster.

He is based in Singapore.