



# Sabrina, undercover princess and local hero

When Sabrina and Charlie accidentally stop a crime outside an ice cream parlour, it becomes the worst day ever for a princess who needs to be incognito. No one can know of her royal identity, but being a crime stopper in a boring town where nothing happens has put her in the spotlight.

With the help of her Uncle Ernie and friends Charlie, Awful Agatha and Liam, she finds herself in crafty schemes to protect her true identity. But then, the Man in Black with the Long, Deep Scar shows up, and things take a darker turn.

For Sabrina, it's one plucky escape after another, until a mysterious policeman appears, and the secret princess has to make some tough decisions.



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 **WRONG TIME TO FIGHT CRIME**

N.J. HUMPHREYS

Princess  Incognito

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For Review only

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For Amelia.  
Keep reading.  
Keep dreaming.

# For Review only



## **AN UPDATE ON ME AND MY BIG FAT LIE**

Being a princess sucks. *Really* sucks. At school, the other girls, especially the younger ones, have dreams of being princesses. They're thinking of TV princesses, the ones who leave their castles and head to a big city to fall in love with a handsome actor with a dodgy accent.

But they're all fictional. I'm not.

I really did leave a castle, but I moved to a dump. All right, it's not a dump. It's a big housing estate in a small town where all the houses look the same and most of the shops are closing down.

Here, I'm known as Sabrina Parslowe and I live with Uncle Ernie Parslowe, whose crinkled face looks more like a parcel. Everything in that sentence is a whopping great lie, except the bit about Uncle Ernie — he does look like a crinkled parcel.

My real name is Sabrina Valence. My full title is Princess Sabrina of Mvlakating, daughter of King Halbutt Valence and Queen Beverly Sisley. Now, everything in that sentence is the truth, but I can't tell anyone, thanks to idiots back home. They're also known as politicians.

And they ruined my life.

They decided that Mlakating, my country, didn't need a royal family anymore and half of the population agreed and half of the population didn't. So they've been fighting about us ever since. My Dad calls it a civil war. But this isn't a civil war in a superhero movie. This is a real one, where people could actually die, people like my parents, people like me.

So Mummy and Daddy sent me away with Uncle Ernie, the Royal Handyman from the Palace. Only he's really neither a handyman nor my uncle. He's old and grey and has too many hairs up his nose, which he pulls out with his wrinkled fingers. But he protects me.

Oh, and women seem to think he's handsome.

Well, the old Cannibal does. She's our headmistress at my new school. Her real name is Miss Cannington, but everyone calls her the old Cannibal, which doesn't make much sense as she isn't old and she's also a vegetarian.

But my class teacher, Miss Shufflebottom, does shuffle her bottom. I'm not kidding. She really is called Miss Shufflebottom, so you'd think she'd make more of an effort not to shuffle her bottom. If I had a name like Miss Pickbogeys, I'd keep my fingers well away from my nose. But Miss Shufflebottom shuffles into class every day.

She's all right, really. They both are. They're just a bit wet and indecisive.

Charlie is the same. He's small and weedy and loves detective maths puzzles, but he was the first person to talk to me when I arrived at the worst school in the world. He knows I keep a secret about being famous, only he thinks my secret is that I'm a YouTube star.

I'm not a YouTuber. It's just that Charlie can be a bit dumb.

But we are almost best friends. I can't say that we're best friends, certainly not in public, because Awful Agatha gets jealous. She's the school bully and hates everyone, even herself sometimes. But she doesn't really hate me because we share similar, dark secrets about our parents.

I want to see mine again.

She wants hers to disappear.

So we've made a promise not to discuss our secrets because those secrets turn our stomachs to jelly. Our eyes also sting. Princesses are not supposed to cry in public. And if Awful Agatha cries in public, she usually punches someone.

I can't punch anyone, even though I'm trained in aikido and taekwondo. Uncle Ernie gave me awesome self-defence classes back at the Palace, when I was little. But that girl is not supposed to exist anymore.

**CHAPTER ONE**

Uncle Ernie calls me his Princess Incognito, like a hidden princess. I must stick to my 'cover story', which is a fancy way of saying I now lead a made-up life.

Unlike normal relatives, Uncle Ernie gets annoyed when I tell the truth. He insists that I must forget being a princess, forget being a royal and forget about my family. But how can an 11-year-old girl pretend that her real family doesn't exist?

It's mean and cruel.

So I keep this journal, which I write in private, usually when Uncle Ernie falls asleep and snores and farts in his armchair.

This is my story about a real princess being forced to live a fake life.

Luckily, my town is so mind-numbingly boring, nothing ever happens anyway. Today, I'm meeting Charlie and Awful Agatha. We're going to have an ice cream at the dullest town centre in the universe.

And nothing dangerous ever happens in a dull town centre, does it?

Charlie was getting on my nerves. We were supposed to be having mint chocolate chip at the new ice cream parlour, but he was being indecisive as usual.

Now he wanted chocolate ice cream with thick chunks of dark chocolate in it.

I pulled a face and pretended I was throwing up in the street. I'm a terrific actor.

"Chocolate ice cream looks like something we leave in a toilet bowl," I said.

Charlie's eyes widened. They were innocent and kind of handsome behind his round, rimless glasses. He was still much shorter than me. Sometimes, strangers called him my little brother and he hated that. We were the same age and in the same class at school, but Charlie was a bit of a munchkin. He was kind and clever, but he was very, very little. Uncle Ernie said we could stick Charlie on the top of a Christmas tree.

But Charlie's real problem wasn't his height. It was his fussiness. He fussed and dithered so much until he often got himself confused.

"Why would you throw chocolate ice cream down the toilet?"

I looked down at his puzzled face.

“Who’s throwing chocolate ice cream down the toilet?”

“You are. You just did, you said you left it in the toilet bowl.”

For someone who spent so much time with his head stuck in detective maths puzzles, Charlie could be really dim.

“I didn’t mean literally, did I? I mean, when we go to the toilet, what we leave behind looks like chocolate ice cream.”

Charlie scrunched up his face, as if he’d just smelled a rotten egg.

“Ew, that’s disgusting. Why are you talking about that stuff outside the ice cream parlour? That’s put me off chocolate ice cream for life.”

“Good, because those chunks of dark chocolate look like rabbit droppings.”

“Stop it, Sabrina.”

Charlie playfully elbowed my ribs. He had to stand on tiptoes to reach my ribs, but I didn’t mind. I saw his elbow coming a mile away. Uncle Ernie taught me to understand someone’s body language. I could’ve swatted Charlie aside, but he’s a friend.

That’s why the ice cream parlour was such a big deal. Most of the shops in our town centre had already closed down. There was a monster-sized shopping mall that had opened on the edge of town with thousands of parking spaces that everyone went to at the weekends.

No one really bothered with the dusty old shops in our town centre anymore. Just recently, a couple of stray dogs had a fight in the town centre and everyone stepped outside to watch. It was the most excitement we had seen in weeks.

But someone had been kind enough – or silly enough – to open an ice cream parlour and all the kids from my school kept hanging around outside, licking their raspberry ripples, trying to act cool.

The ice cream parlour was actually run by Liam’s mother, which was terrific for every student at our school, but a pain in the behind for me, since Liam was slightly obsessed with me.

He was probably the most popular boy in school, for the usual reasons that seemed to make all the girls go giddy, apart from me. He had a square jaw and black, floppy hair that teenage actors have on American TV shows. He was also captain of the school football team, which made him more popular. Now his mother ran the coolest hangout in town, he was even worse. He used to bore me to death with tales of last-minute goals. Now he waffled on about his mother’s butterscotch and sprinkles. He kept asking to take me down to his family’s ice cream parlour, but I had no interest in his mother’s sprinkles.

If I’m being honest, he probably had a crush on me, which didn’t flatter me at all. Liam reminded me of the dukes and princes back at the Palace, always showing off their latest skills. I think that’s the issue. He made me remember my old life and I didn’t want to think about that stuff, not while I couldn’t have it.

My other friend, though, always wants to punch him in the face. Awful Agatha had a real problem with Liam’s popularity and his mother’s ice cream, which she adored but couldn’t afford. That’s why she rarely turned up for our hangouts at the ice cream parlour.

“She’s late again,” said Charlie, checking his watch.

I sighed.

“She’s always late.”

“Why does she always arrive just *after* we’ve finished our ice cream?”

Like I said, Charlie could be really dim.

“Have you decided what flavour you’re having?” I asked, changing the subject.

“Well, I’m not having toilet bowl flavour, am I?”

“Have your rabbit droppings instead then. Just make a decision.”

I was being snappy with him. But the cool air whistled through our ugly, green school blazers. Both of us hadn’t bothered to bring coats. At least Charlie had trousers on. The girls’ black skirts were not only sexist, they weren’t warm enough either. My legs were turning into blueberry ice cream.

“But I really love the chocolate with the dark chocolate chunks.”

“Eat it then! Just don’t look down at your toilet for a week.”

Charlie poked his tongue out at me. His childish gesture made me giggle, which took my mind off the chilly air as we stood outside the ice cream parlour. The street was filled with litter. The whole place was an eerie ghost town with no life.

Then came the explosion.

Both Charlie and I stopped pulling silly faces. Our terrified eyes said everything.

No matter how smart or brave we are, we can’t hide fear. No one can. It’s stamped across our eyes, like one of those stamps that Miss Shufflebottom uses to mark our homework.

A dying town centre doesn’t make a sound like that. Where was it coming from?

There were no cars around. There were no vehicles of any kind. They were all parked on the edge of town, squeezed into that humungous shopping mall like sardines in a tin can.

Was it a bomb?

Who would bomb the world’s most boring town?

Why would they bother?

Would anyone even notice the damage?

As our brains scrambled to understand the explosion, we realised the sound wasn’t a big bang, but a shattering of some kind. It was glass. A window.

Someone had broken a large window.

We turned, just in time to see shards of glass skate across the pavement. The front window of the jewellery shop next door had been smashed into a million pieces. For a split second, it seemed to be raining glass.

A different sound replaced all that shattering. It was loud and high-pitched, like a baby screaming for a bottle. The jewellery shop’s security alarm was waking up our sleepy town. It was loud enough to wake up the dead.

Maybe it already had. A black spectre floated through the jewellery shop’s huge hole, where the window used to be.

I saw only black. Black gloves. Black trousers. Black shoes. Black jumper. Black sunglasses. Black bag.



But there was gold hanging out of the black bag, wriggling around like golden snakes trying to escape.

The black spectre headed in our direction. The black spectre was a man. He was running along the street, towards the ice cream parlour, towards us. The black hat and glasses mostly covered his face, but the fading sunlight caught one of his cheeks.

A long, deep scar on his left cheek.

A vicious snarl on his lips.

No fear on his face.

In the distance, a scared voice shouted, "Stop! Thief!"

He was running straight at us, expecting Charlie and me to step out of his way.

But I realised, when it was far too late to change my mind, that I was already clenching my fists.

# For Review only



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

N. J. Humphreys is a bestselling author with 22 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.