Sample translation

by Rachel Reynolds

My embarrassing story

Nobody in the world would believe what has happened to me over the past few weeks. This is why I have decided to write down the entire story. It is dedicated to all those trapped in embarrassing families. People, one thing is certain: I feel your pain! After all, I live in the most embarrassing family ever.

If you are interested in reading my story, here it is:

Because of my embarrassing parents and their horribly embarrassing business, I had to change schools, then I had to give therapy to the school psychologist I was assigned to. On top of that, our crazy janitor almost shot me with a harpoon.

But that wasn’t even close to everything that happened! I was also chased by two nosy twins, who filmed me the whole time. And then there was blackmail on top of it. And Ben. Yeah... Ben.

But here’s everything from the beginning:

I’m Ruby.

My full name is actually Rubinia Rosalinda Black. That sounds awful, right?

And this name isn’t even close to being the worst thing in my life. For exactly eleven years, three months and eight days, I’ve been living with the most embarrassing family in the world. You shouldn’t think that I’ve been adopted, though - no, I actually checked into that. Unfortunately, nobody adopted me - my mother very personally brought me into the world on a hot July day.

My parents have quite frequently told me the story of my birth. This was it in a nutshell. My father and the midwife shouted “Push, push!” in unison. My mother gave it her all. She screamed and grunted and sang at the top of her lungs. You should know that my mother is talented when it comes to singing... doesn’t matter... At some point, I appeared! Little and wrinkly, but first and foremost, beet red! (Of course, I’d just reached the end of a stressful trip!)

And because I was so red, my mother shouted: “I have it! Her name will be Rubinia!”

Rubinia literally means “the red one.”

If there were a name equivalent for “beet red,” I would have gotten that one instead. Anyway, what followed was my first major embarrassing moment, which just happened to be captured on camera. The photo now hangs in our living room:

My mother dressed me in a onesie printed with the words *Little Pooper*. In the photo, I look weirdly wrinkly and my hair is messy. Oh man, I must have looked ridiculous in front of the entire nursery! Every day, the photo in the living room reminds me of that. And many embarrassing pictures followed that one...

We could actually open a Gallery of Embarrassment in our living room. Visitors would would come from far and wide to see it, no doubt.

I can’t tell you how often I’ve wished that my parents were just normal. Then I could be a normal kid at a normal school, and nobody would make fun of me. And I wouldn’t have needed to change schools either.

But, no. Even from far away, you’d notice that my parents are a few cards short of a full deck. Literally. It’s not just that my mother and father look like they’ve stepped out of an old black-and-white film. They can really lose it sometimes. When they fight, it’s a combination of a Punch-and-Judy show and a fairground dart booth. Some of our card sets have flown across the living room, and so we can’t really play card games any more. But that’s another story.

Oh! It’s already seven-forty. I haven’t had breakfast yet, but we have to leave in just a few minutes. I don’t want to be tardy on my first day at my new school! My mother has lectured me forever about how important it is to always be on time.

“Ruuuuubyyy!” Speaking of the devil... “Are you coming down? I made pancakes with strawberry syrup!”

Did Mom just say *pancakes*?

I looooooove pancakes with strawberry syrup.

My mother really is the best, so I’ll hurry. I’m pretty much ready anyway. I’m already wearing an exceptionally ordinary light blue dress, the perfect outfit for the first day of school. This is the most important thing. The right clothes for the right situation. But everyone knows that.

Especially when you start at a new school. You need to make sure not to do anything wrong. And I have to tell you that I’m incredibly nervous right now. After all, I’m not just changing schools in a normal way, but during the middle of the school year. Because a couple of drama queens at my old school tried their best to do me in. Because I’m supposedly weird. It’s not true. It’s just that my family’s weird. But nobody at my school can find this out.

“Rubinia Rosalinda Black!”

Aargh. Alright! I’m coming!

I run downstairs. Voilà, here is our kitchen! And now you can have a good view of my awful family.

On the far left, the little kid with the slicked-back black hair and the green eyes - yes, the one with the folded handkerchief sticking out of his shirt pocket - that’s my little brother Horatio. His full name is Horatio Fritz Black. He considers himself brilliant since he’s skipped two grades. Totally annoying. Although he’s only nine, he’s already a YouTube star. He makes up fake news about aliens and other nonsense which he posts online. Top ten videos about the most poisonous animals in the world, etcetera. Now you know who makes all those crappy videos which claim, for example, that Elvis was an alien. Or which assert that an alien brain washed up on some beach somewhere. MY little brother produces that garbage. And people actually believe that nonsense, and he gets millions of views. So twisted!

But there’s one thing I can tell you: In reality, that alien brain was nothing but a mound of vanilla pudding!

You already know my mother. Celeste Matilda Black. She has the same hair color as my little brother and me. Actually, the same as everyone in my family: pitch black. She loves quirky dresses and skirts, and always wears red lipstick. Wherever she goes, she leaves behind a scent of perfume and cake. Yes, cake! Mmmm, yummy... My mom runs a small café. The ideal opportunity presented itself when she met my dad and moved in with him in the old villa. The owner of the cemetery café passed away, and she was able to take over the business. Sometimes people accuse her of poisoning

them, but that’s just ridiculous, of course. It was her life’s dream to bake wedding cakes. Well, now she can live that out here.

While baking, my mother loves to sing Broadway songs. She sometimes uses one of her spoons as a microphone - so embarrassing! But she’s still very sweet and enjoys bringing joy to other people. However, they don’t always see the joy in her efforts...

My father, the man with the mustache sitting beside my mother, is my father, Alois Black.

My father is... uh... well... how should I put it... he’s a designer.

Together, my parents are totally crazy. They don’t really know what they want. They start out fighting like cats and dogs, but the next thing you know, they’re sitting cozily together, calling each other the most revolting nicknames.

It’s terrible! The only person who understands me even a little is my Grandma Ottilie, my mother’s mother. Yes, the woman with the long white hair.

My grandma runs a flower shop at the cemetery, and when she isn’t working there, she can usually be found in the garden. She has her own greenhouse, where she raises medicinal herbs that fight all sorts of illnesses. I think that’s why she has so many friends with whom she has recently started working out.

And then there’s my older brother. The skinny guy with the metal-rimmed glasses and the ears that stick out is Constantine Otto Black. He’s fifteen and does his own thing. He mounted a camouflage net in his room (with all its leaves, his room looks like a jungle now), and he hung his bike, as well as several guitars, on the wall. He plays in a band called Inlmhwmg (the acronym for *I Never Leave My House Without My Guitar*). The band’s actually pretty good. However, they’ve been looking for a new singer for a long time. Finding good singers doesn’t seem to be all that easy to do...

Several exotic animals live in Consti’s room. (He has recently started disliking his nickname - I don’t get it.) He owns two snakes, a chameleon, a collection of tarantulas, and a rat named Anthrax.

He named the rat after the highly infectious anthrax pathogen, not for the famous 90s heavy metal band which was also named for the highly infectious anthrax pathogen.

Anthrax is very clever. Consti has taught her all kinds of tricks, but you can see that for yourself. Besides that, Consti collects all sorts of bones - it’s practical for him that we live at a cemetery. THAT is the worst part of it all! It truly is! I don’t only have a totally bizarre, extremely embarrassing family - we live IN the cemetery, not AT the cemetery. And my family is totally tied up in the cemetery business. My mother doesn’t run a normal café, but the cemetery café! And my father isn’t a normal furniture designer... he designs subterranean furniture, specifically caskets!!! Yes, I can already hear you: WICKED! HOW SPOOKY! HOW GROSS! HOW EMBARRASSING!

That’s what the kids at my old school thought, too. And that is why absolutely no one at my new school can find out anything about this!

[...]

My first day of school - couldn’t have been more embarrassing!

Thanks to the pancake drama, we were almost late getting away... My mom quickly pulled a coat over her nightgown, and a few minutes later, we were sitting in our car. What do I mean by car? We were sitting in a catastrophe! My parents happen to drive an old Mercedes, but not a typical one. A hearse!

Aargh! Why in the world can’t my parents just be NORMAL? The most critical thing at a new school is that you make a good first impression... You can’t just drive up in a hearse... That’s an absolute no-go!!! I felt so ashamed that I sank as deep as I could into the seat.

Luckily, I was able to convince Mom to drop me off at the corner.

In my filthy, blood red spider dress, I took off toward my new school. A voice inside my head kept saying, “Ruby, it all comes down to self-esteem. If you like yourself, others will like you, too.” It was my mother’s voice. She’d been reading her self-help magazine again. *Psychology for Home Workers - How to Tighten Your Loose Screws Yourself.* At least, that’s what I thought it was called. She had subscribed to it recently.

Since then, Mom had been annoying all of us with her proverbs.

For example, when Consti rammed his knee into our table and slammed his fist onto the tabletop in frustration, my mother called out: “Consti, you need to understand the table’s perspective. It’s been standing there for over a decade. Please apologize to it!”

But back to school.

There I was standing in my “designer” dress, when I suddenly heard a woman’s shrill voice behind me: “Sweeeeeeetheart!”

I rolled my eyes. Parents could be so embarrassing. If that were my mother, I would sink into the ground. Thank goodness my mother was already on her way back home.

“Little spider legs!”

Oh nooooo! My heart stopped beating for a few seconds. There could only be one person in the world who called her children her little spider legs!

As if in slow motion, I turned around.

There she was. MY MOTHER. Standing and waving. Holding MY snack container. Her nightgown was peeking out from under her coat. The one with the kissing bats!

“You forgot your snack, sweetie!”

I quickly snatched the container from my mother and whispered: “Thanks, Mama.”

I wanted to slip away as unobtrusively (haha) as possible, but out of the corner of my eye, I saw that a bunch of curious students had already gathered around our hearse. I had lost.

“Is that your limousine? It’s really nice. Are you the new girl?” a girl beside me suddenly asked. “Milly, camera up.”

And just like that, I was in the middle of an interview! So much for flying under the radar… “Lily and Milly, the twins. We want to know! Who is the new student whose snack was delivered by limousine? Is she a princess? The daughter of a wealthy industrial family? Or possibly a pop star we’ve never heard of in our little town?” the girl with curly blonde hair rattled off into

the camera, without pausing to take a breath. Behind the camera, her just-as-curly-haired twin sister nodded energetically.

“Um, I’m Ruby!” I said quickly.

“Cool name!”

Yeah. I had been smart enough not to give them my full name! Their reaction would have been quite different if I had.

I didn’t have much time to mull this over, since the next barrage of questions was already being launched at me.

“Where did you come from?”

“From my house.”

“What class are you in?”

“Class 6c, I think.”

“That’s great! We are, too. What’s your favorite food?”

Oh no! Don’t say pancakes with strawberry syrup, Ruby! Do NOT say pancakes with strawberry syrup! “Pancakes with strawberry syrup,” was naturally what I said. As soon as I spoke those words, I felt like the camera was zooming right in on the giant spot on my dress.

“What’s your favorite color?”

“Um… red?” (That was obvious, unfortunately.)

“And what do your parents do?”

BANG! There it was: the question I’d been afraid of. The question that would blow my cover if I wasn’t careful… The question about my extremely embarrassing family and their business… The question that I couldn’t answer honestly if I didn’t want to commit social suicide at my new school on my very first day… The question that posed the greatest threat to me.

I will not answer any questions unless my attorney is present, I thought. But I said: “Well, uh, my mother runs a café and bakes cakes… and my father, well, he’s a furniture designer…”

Excellent! I’m so glad that I remembered the responses I’d prepared earlier.

I was about to relax a little, but then I noticed that the twins didn’t seem satisfied with my answer! They wanted more information...

“Oh, how exciting! Where can you go to see the things your dad makes?”

I gulped and glanced around for help... Where could someone go to see the caskets my father builds? This question wasn’t so easy to answer, not without sounding really strange...

“Yeah, well, his... uh... things... are underground... I mean, in the underground...”

“In the underground scene? Then he must really be in demand! He must have lots of customers, right?” the twins squealed.

“His customers are usually cold... um... I mean, they’re pretty cool,” I stammered.

“Wow! An underground celebrity artist! It sounds like we have a new VIP family in town!” Lily crowed into the camera.

VIP family! There was no way this going to help me keep a low profile!

BAM! At that very moment, a ball slammed into my head, knocking me to the ground. With that, my interview came to an end.

On the one hand, I was grateful to escape from the clutches of the curious twins.

On the other hand: Could there have been a more embarrassing way to start my first day at a new school?

I remained stretched out on the ground and held my head. I was going to have a huge bump.

“Ohhh, sorry!” I heard all of a sudden, as someone stretched a hand out toward me.

My first thought was to slap the hand away. This had to be biggest moron in the school! Couldn’t he watch what he was doing? This stupid, idiotic… cutest boy with the most adorable tousled hair I’d ever seen!!

The boy smiled as he helped me up. He studied me closely…

“Cool spider!” he added. Shooting me a grin, he turned around.

Oh, I thought, I have it bad… I stared after the boy, totally dazed.

RIIIIIIIIING!!!

The school bell clanged to life, and everyone rushed into the school. We had five minutes to reach our classrooms. But I had no idea where I was going…