

Sample translation

by Melody Shaw

Lightning Strikes

Ouch, thought Lia. *That hockey ball must have knocked me out cold! That’s what you get for staying behind after sports class to practise hockey in the park.*

All Lia could remember was feeling as if lightning had struck her skull. After that, everything was a blank. The ball must have bounced off a tree trunk and hit her smack in the forehead. Lia touched the spot gingerly, feeling for a lump. Nothing there yet...

But it would definitely be only a matter of time before she looked like a teenage unicorn.

The most important thing right now was to get herself vertical again. It was the first warm spring day of the year, and here she was, in the middle of the park, lying on her back with arms and legs splayed out.

And while she had found herself a quiet spot among the trees to practise after the sports lesson finished, there were always a few other kids hanging around in the park after school.

And if they found Lia lying flat as a flounder on the grass, knocked out by her own ball...Urgh. It would be bad enough having to explain why she had a horn growing between her eyebrows.

Nope, lying still was not the thing to do.

Lia tried, and failed, to sit up. Her entire body felt as though it had been put together in the wrong order. Perhaps she’d been hit harder than she thought.

Groaning, Lia reached up to fidget with the arm of her glasses, something she always did when she felt stressed. Except there were no glasses there.

Oh no, that’s all I needed!

They’d probably flown off as she fell in the grass. If she wasn’t careful, she’d end up breaking her glasses into a million tiny pieces as well.

Lia blinked, and her eyes gradually focused. In fact, they were better focused than a pair of short-sighted eyes really had a right to be. *Perhaps a smack to the head did some good*, she thought.

The sun shone through some wispy cloud onto Lia’s face...she could see the first green buds sprouting on the trees...and then her own face coming into view.

Yes, no doubt about it, that was definitely her own face – staring intently at her through the missing glasses.

The face was also clearly sporting Lia’s snub nose with its freckles, and her mouth, which her mother repeatedly assured her didn’t look *at all* like it could eat a banana sideways. The mouth was now grinning at her from ear to ear – so widely, in fact, it could probably snap up two bananas in one gulp.

“Everything all right?” asked Lia’s mouth.

“I don’t think so,” replied Lia. “I seem to have a severe concussion and be seeing double.”

She struggled to concentrate. Yes, a concussion sounded about right – the ball had knocked her out, and now she was suffering from hallucinations. Other people saw stars after a blow to the head, she came face to face with herself.

“I know nothing about concussions,” said her double, fidgeting with the frame of her glasses and knocking them askew, “and clearly I know nothing about duplication spells either. You weren’t supposed to change at all, I only wanted to copy you. Useless pixie-compost.”

This was getting crazier by the minute. “I have to get to a doctor, right now,” murmured Lia, finally summoning the strength to sit up. Two foreheads came together with a crack of pain. Lia wondered faintly whether a unicorn could have two horns.

“You’re real!” she moaned.

Her twin rubbed her forehead. “Of course I am, what did you think?”

“But you look exactly like me! You’ve even got the same graze on the same knee, and the same Minnie Mouse plaster over it. Mrs Klein put it on me during hockey training. So embarrassing.” Lia couldn’t resist reaching out towards the girl crouching in the grass in front of her.

Lia’s double squealed as she touched the Minnie Mouse plaster. “Careful! That really hurts! Now calm down, we need to talk. First you need to understand we don’t look identical. To be honest, we don’t look the faintest bit alike. As I said, I messed up the duplicating spell. Totally. That’s why you’re now sitting in an unquestionably better-looking body, while I get to roam around with this.” She straightened the Minnie Mouse plaster with a scowl.

“What’s your name anyway?”

“Larissa, but everyone calls me Lia,” replied Lia automatically.

The second Lia giggled. “Well that’s as perfect as a bee on a blossom.”

“What is?” asked Lia, confused.

“Your name of course. I’m called Asalia Lalialia Pergusta von Silberhaar, but that’s obviously far too long, which is why I always insist people call me Asalia, which can easily be shortened to Lia.” Still grinning, Asalia grabbed Lia’s backpack and began rummaging through it.

“Hey, what are you doing?” Lia was too astonished to snatch her backpack away.

“I’m looking for a make-up case,” said Asalia. In your books and magazines, you human girls always carry one with you.”

Lia shrugged. “Perhaps, but I’m not even twelve until the summer, and just asking for something as simple as coloured lipgloss made my mother flip out.”

“But we need a mirror. Oh, here’s one in the side pocket.”

“Really?” Lia hadn’t even noticed the little mirror – but it was a brand new backpack. The moment she had got it, her old school bag with its shooting star motif had instantly looked childish in her eyes. Her mother had agreed to buy it because she felt guilty about yet another house move and wanted to smooth Lia’s start at a new school. Lia, on the other hand, had never had a problem with either the repeated house moves or changes of school. Quite the opposite, in fact – it brought colour into her life.

“OK, now take a good look at yourself in the mirror.” Asalia held the mirror up to Lia’s face.

Lia gave a yelp. A complete stranger was looking out of the mirror at her!

And not just a strange girl, it was a completely outlandish creature with huge blue eyes that sparkled as though they were set with crystals. Its face had an unearthly beauty, and was framed with shining silver hair shot through with blue streaks. On its head perched a silver, crystal-studded circlet that shimmered like stars.

Asalia grinned. “Not bad, hmm? I told you you’d got the better deal. Although...” She gazed at herself in the mirror. “I always wanted a sprinkling of these. You call these dots freckles, don’t you? I painted some on my face once – it was a total fail.”

“Who are you?” gasped Lia. “I mean, who am I?”

“An elf princess from the noble family of the royal Aureliants. To be precise, I’m the daughter of Queen Fetania Salira Nox and her consort Tetastis Rufur von Silberhaar.

Obviously. Who else in the Otherrealm looks so fabulous? Did you notice the exquisite sweep of my cheekbones? Or my luscious full lips? Honestly, ordinary elves would give their plantling for features like these.”

Elf princess? Von Silberhaar? This girl clearly had a super-sized ego with a sprinkling of crazy. Overwhelmed, Lia grasped her hair in her hands. It was much smoother and softer than her curls. She felt for the silver circlet with her fingers.

“Careful with the tiara,” warned Asalia. “Now it’s crooked. If my noble lady mother were to see that, we’d be in deep trouble. No – not us. Just you.” The idea seemed to please Asalia. Lia, on the other hand, was not at all pleased, despite now having a coronet. “This is a disaster,” she spluttered through the luscious full lips. Even her voice sounded odd – far too much like a bird twittering.

“Oh, it’s not nearly that bad,” said Asalia airily. “You can count yourself lucky my spell didn’t work out as I’d planned. If it had, you’d still just be you, hanging around alone in this dreary field. It’s really quite an honour for you to be occupying my body.”

After a moment’s hesitation, Lia gazed down at herself. Her head began to spin.

She had no idea whether her legs were still her own legs, but they were certainly no longer wearing her shorts. Instead, a dress made of some kind of spacey fabric, knotted at one hip, draped diagonally over shimmering silver leggings. And in place of her trainers, she now seemed to be wearing ankle boots made of such soft leather they looked more like socks and felt as though they were barely there. Lia took a cautious glance at her hands. Not a single freckle to be seen on skin as pale and translucent as her mother’s best porcelain.

Relieved she was still sitting down, Lia murmured “I don’t feel well.”

“Because you’re so happy?” asked Asalia, the self-styled elf princess.

“No, because I’ve got the most massive concussion of all time.”

Lia wobbled to her feet, shouldering her backpack. Then she looked around in search of her hockey stick. The stupid ball could stay wherever it had landed.

“What do you think you’re doing? You can’t just walk off! We need to decide what to do.”

Asalia waved her hand in front of Lia’s face. “Hellooo?! I’m talking to you!”

Lia turned her head away. “I don’t talk to hallucinations.”

“Don’t talk nonsense. It hurt badly enough when we banged heads just now, didn’t it? How could I not be real?”

“Because you’re claiming to be an elf!” Lia was practically shouting now. “And there’s no such thing, except in fairy tales.”

Asalia stared through Lia’s glasses in disbelief. “But you humans know full well that elves exist. Why else would you put elf sculptures in your gardens? You write whole books about us. You’re fans!”

“Sorry, elves are pure fantasy.”

Asalia gave a dismissive wave of her hand. “Most humans are too underdeveloped to see through the veil separating your world and the Otherrealm. Perhaps your easily-concussed brains are just a bit too small.”

“Cheek!” protested Lia. That really was going too far.

Lia strode out of the clearing and hurried across the park. Asalia followed on her heels, chattering non-stop. Lia paid no attention. She even ignored the kids from the next class, sitting on a park bench and playing on their phones. It occurred to her that Lars, the class bully, might look up and ask where the fancy dress party was, but even that was not enough to bother her.

Passing a few people out walking, Lia began to calm down. No-one stopped to stare at her, which meant her crazy glitter-princess-with-silver-blue-mane appearance really was all in her imagination. She was concussed, and it would surely just be a matter of time before the babbling Asalia disappeared into thin air.

Leaving the park and trotting past the rush-hour traffic jams in the town centre, Asalia did indeed stop her chattering, but only to replace it with sighs of “Amazing,” and “Just like in City-Style Magazine, only waaaay coooler,” until finally her (really, very wide) mouth stood open in awe. It was so quiet, Lia wondered whether her body-double had disappeared. She savoured the thought for a moment. As she risked a glance over her shoulder to check, she spotted two reflections in a shop window. There was Lia, dressed in shorts with her hair tied up in a messy bun. In front of her hovered a delicate creature straight out of a fantasy comic. Complete with pointy ears.

Sample Translation “Lia Stormgold – The Power of Crystals” (A. Ley)

Unfortunately, the pointy-eared fantasy character with its glittering tiara was also carrying a school backpack and hockey stick.

There she stood – Lia Dornmeier, newly-crowned elf princess.