

GEORGIA HAYES

FLASH 500

Something about his beauty and power and the sweetness in his eye gave me the courage to try him without a safety hat or any knowledge of his nature. I made a quick decision to pay the price they asked and plan for the long journey back to England.

Four months later, paperwork and negotiations completed, four days over sea and road, the big blue lorry came up the long track in the cliché of a thunder and lightning storm in June. How else could this mythical beast arrive, unload and stand in the stable, which looks barely big enough for a Velázquez horse prince, even before he stood on his hind legs to turn around?

Oh shit, I thought, I have done a foolish thing. How stupid to think I could manage such an amazing beast. On the first walk down the track we were worried, not knowing how to behave together. He hurried forwards looking at the English greenness and smelling new damp smells. He threw out his forelegs in his best, impressive Spanish walk; and on the end of his rope I struggled to control the power and was half dragged forwards, amazed, exhilarated and frightened.

I led him to a block of stone to mount him, but like a circus horse he climbed on top of it before me. We changed places and as I got on his back he leapt into the air. We were flying together. It could have been the start of a Wild West show and proof of my folly, but as we began to understand each other, he slowed to a calm and grounded pace.

Days went by and I, who had never worried for long about a subject, stared out of the corner of my eye at the biggest canvas that had leaned there for months seeming too big to dare to use. It could fit a horse full size and fit the grandeur of this animal.

It was a sudden and certain choice to go ahead and paint him – the same conviction that made me buy him, the same belief that it was finished, even though done so suddenly and sparsely and maybe even shockingly.

People who came to look were silent and worried, like the people who had talked of rashness when they knew that I had bought this horse from Spain and had advised me against it.

But he brought me good luck as his good luck brought him to me. The painting got through and was sent to Liverpool. There, it was chosen again and hung in the splendid hall. It was an end and a start of new things.

And now it has come to this. Your invitation came to write and seemed to demand that I take notice of it. So to my fumbling with words to tell a small, true story. But writing is not my natural bent and one day I hope you may look at my paintings and prefer them.

THE TRAP

