

## Much Easier Than Thought

Nina Melero

Arminda, like everybody else, had had more than seven lives. Among other things, she'd been a guitar, a glass of sherry, a paintbrush and an uppity, black little snake with a bad attitude. For a moment she wondered which of these past experiences might help save her now, her hands and feet tied, in the back of an unknown vehicle.

Driving the vehicle was a friend of her father's, who'd been dreaming about the gypsy girl's taut, firm flesh for months. Today he'd finally managed to trick her out of the house. He'd carried her off and punched her in the face, until she got the idea what he wanted.

While it was going on, Arminda knew she was dying. At first she struggled with all her might, but gradually fear, shame, rage throttled her being, extinguishing the candle she carried inside. As he broke her down, the girl began to experience powerless fury and a melancholy aversion to her own body, for being something others wanted and too weak to put up any resistance.

When he'd finished, the man tied her up and threw her into the back of the van. Arminda knew the next thing he'd do would be to get rid of her, but she didn't care. She couldn't feel anything any more.

At one particular moment, the van stopped. First, the man dragged her out by the hair; then he thumped her head repeatedly against the pavement, until it disintegrated in his hands. The last thing he did was to untie her and dump her body in an abandoned ditch where he was sure nobody would ever look for her.

It had been much easier than he thought. He got back in the driver's seat and took a bottle of beer from the glove compartment. Of course, it was warm. Why didn't they make glove compartments with inbuilt fridges? That way this wouldn't happen, he fumed. Back on the main road, he noticed a bee had entered the cabin. He opened the windows to get rid of the annoying buzzing sound, but the insect insisted on hovering dangerously close to his face. He took a swipe at it with his hand, the van swerved and slammed into a post.

It took a few moments for the man to come to. He felt confused and a bit battered, but otherwise OK. The windscreen was smashed. The bee was still there.

Bleeding and cursing, he raised his fist in order to destroy it, but the bee surprised him by flying into his mouth. He felt a hairy tingle on his tongue, and then a

sharp pain which paralysed his throat. He coughed, hawked, kicked out. Finally the swelling blocked his windpipe, preventing him from breathing. It was all over in five minutes. His motionless head lolled out of the window, giving the van a strange appearance.

It had been much easier than she thought. On losing the sting, like all bees, Arminda died at once, but she felt it had been worth it. No sooner had she thought this, she was a drop of water sliding between the man's lips and sinking into the earth.

Text translated from Spanish by Jonathan Dunne. Jonathan translates from the Bulgarian, Catalan, Galician and Spanish languages, including work by best-selling authors Manuel Rivas, Enrique Vila-Matas and Alicia Giménez-Bartlett. His translations have been nominated for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize and the Warwick Prize for Writing among others. He is the author of *The DNA of the English Language* (2007) and a collection of poetry entitled *Even Though That* (2004).