

The Hanged Man – Synopsis

This is the story of the present reincarnation of the Marquis De Sade – a much less wicked man – who becomes involved in a love triangle involving his best friend and fortune-teller cum café owner, Celia, and his fallen angel he photographs back from the dead.

De Sade and Celia have a complicated sexual relationship, and they glean comfort from one another, neither admitting their love. Being an ex-fortune-teller Celia is able to tell De Sade's future, and he is ever worried about not having a future.

One day he develops his photos and discovers a face in all of them – the face of a young man who looks a lot like himself. He maintains a vigil for this man and discovers that he lives in a cathedral. His name is Smith, a vague and esoteric individual. He is also a lot closer to the original De Sade, wound up in the love of violence and brutality in sex.

Through a course of events, De Sade, no longer lonely, is drawn out from himself between his two lovers.

After an accident, he spends much time in the hospital and it is whilst there that Celia starts to claim a sexual ownership of him; this intimacy goes well beyond what they had before. The doctors discover he is pregnant.

Smith is absent, thought to have been the cause of the accident, pushing De Sade out a window. However, through unreliable psychiatric manipulation, De Sade is led to think that Celia and Smith have been colluding. After this savage news, De Sade goes into sudden labour and has a baby boy.

De Sade is now present in three forms: past (the baby – Ben), present (De Sade), and future (Smith).

After reconciliation, they decide to try and create a strange sense of family. While this works for a while, their eventual lusts and sexual histories create a rift. Smith becomes inordinately violent and rapes a boy, and then kills the two policemen who investigate.

Eventually, in desperation, he commits a brutal act against De Sade, and kidnaps Ben. Celia

is furious and they leave everything behind – her son, their cosy lives - in their search for the baby.

They reach a city and De Sade finds the cathedral that Smith had driven there. There is a confrontation, a conflagration, and Smith falls from the tower, killing the baby and himself (or does he?). He becomes The Hanged Man of the title, in reference to the Tarot card (at its essence, sacrifice) and the martyrdom of Jesus. The cathedral burns. Everything is reduced to what it was at the beginning of the story. Celia is cast as the manipulator of events for much of the novel and has nothing to show for her actions. She walks away into the night, leaving De Sade standing in the street, alive but alone once more.