



The Hanged Man and the Fortune Teller

Lucy Banks

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A troubled ghost asks whether love can survive death in Lucy Banks's compelling mystery, *The Hanged Man and the Fortune Teller*.

Two ghosts wander London. One has forgotten his identity and is losing his few remaining memories. The other, whom he knows only as the Fortune Teller, knows more about his past than she's telling. Together, they spend the years following a succession of lonely, heartbroken Londoners. As the ghost's memory gets worse, he faces the good and the bad in his past, at risk of losing it all forever.

This impossible-to-put-down story moves between time periods in a way that builds suspense about the nameless ghost's past. Enough groundwork is laid to allow for guesswork, and the mystery is exciting. Spellbinding prose captures every nuance, emotion, and detail from the many locations and time periods traversed. The ghost is sensitive to negative emotions, adding another layer of atmosphere to tense scenes. The club where Bernadette, one of the humans whom the ghost attaches himself to, goes to find her boyfriend oozes with uneasiness.

The ghost is a man of his era and holds some outdated views, and his capacity to learn and to consider other viewpoints is sympathetic. The Fortune Teller—who, fitting the stereotype, was a Romany woman in life—is an interesting secondary lead, with a backstory as tragic as the ghost's. True historical events are woven into the narrative, some in prominent ways. These are suspenseful additions, and they result in more questions for the ghost to address. He gets his answers in a quiet but rewarding denouement.

The Hanged Man and the Fortune Teller is a gripping paranormal mystery that holds attention from its first page to its last.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2019)

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