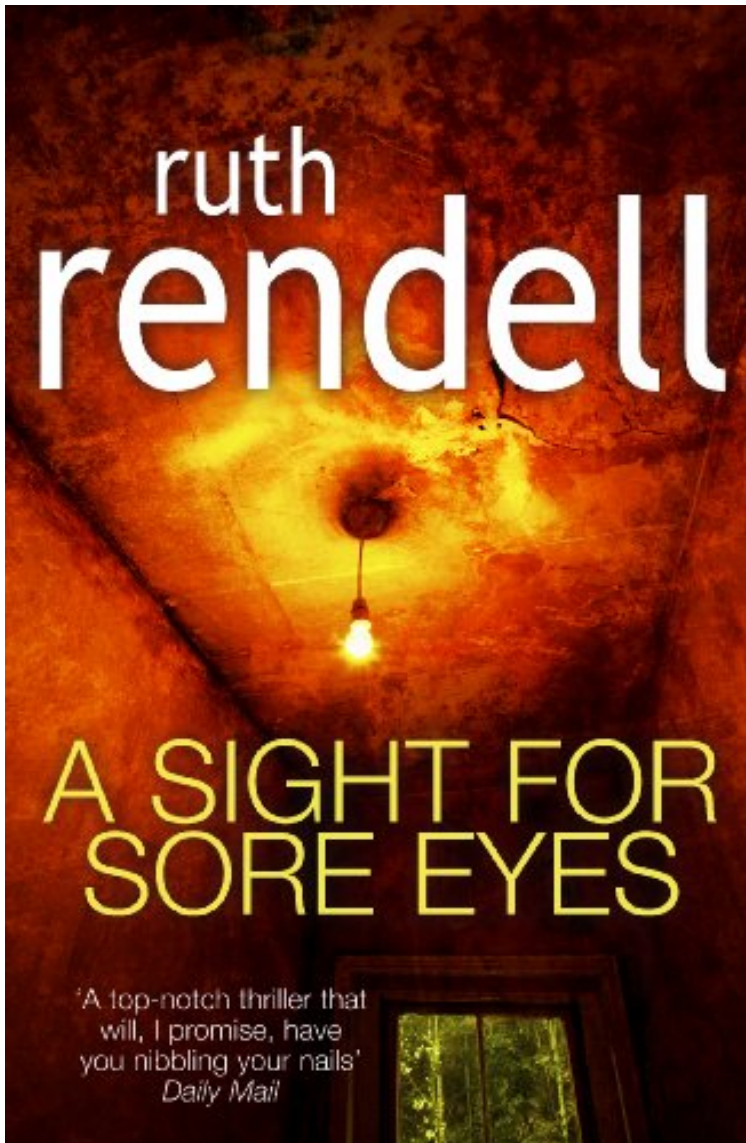


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# A Sight For Sore Eyes



*Par Ruth Rendell*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn traditional fairy tales the handsome prince rescues the beautiful princess from her wicked stepmother, and the couple live happily ever after.But in Ruth Rendell's dark and damaged contemporary universe, innocent dreams can turn into the most terrible living nightmares.Teddy Brex emerges from a loveless, isolated childhood as a handsome but autistic young man. Francine Hill, emotionally and mentally scarred by the murder of her mother, grows into a beautiful young woman, who must endure the overprotectiveness of an increasingly obsessive stepmother.Teddy Brex does ride to her rescue, but he is a man who has already committed two murders. In Rendell's dark criminal London, can anyone be trusted?.comNobody does North London squalor better than Ruth Rendell. Describing in vivid

detail the cultural sewer in which a monster named Teddy Brex grows up, she uses hideous furniture, slovenly housekeeping habits, even his mother's diet while pregnant to root us in the setting's hopeless ugliness. In contrast, Rendell introduces people and places of stunning beauty: Francine, a mentally fragile girl who became mute after witnessing her mother's murder; and Orcadia Cottage, scene of a famous painting that is at the center of much of the story's anguish. "It was far and away the most beautiful place he had ever seen," Rendell writes when Teddy--a gifted woodcrafter--first views the cottage. "The proportions of this hall, this room... the windows, the walls, the carpets, the flowers, the furniture, the paintings, all of it dazzled him." Teddy is another of Rendell's frightening moral cripples, a seemingly ordinary person capable of the vilest crimes. When he becomes obsessed with Francine after meeting her at art school, we know to expect murder--we just aren't sure when, or who will be the victim. Equally vile is Julia, Francine's stepmother, a psychologist of such immense and malevolent ineptness that we would swear she couldn't possibly exist if real life hadn't taught us otherwise. Other important characters are Harriet, a faded beauty who connects the past to the present; Teddy's uncle Keith, who first recognizes the boy's madness; and a bright red, lovingly restored Edsel, which becomes a hearse. Like all of her books, Rendell's latest is really about the secret acts of insanity that occur behind closed doors. Among her best books available in paperback are *From Doon with Death*, *A Guilty Thing Surprised*, *The Keys to the Street*, and, from the excellent Inspector Wexford series, *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*, *Road Rage*, and *Simisola*. --Dick Adler

Extrait They were to hold hands and look at one another. Deeply, into each other's eyes. "It's not a sitting," she said. "It's a standing. Why can't I sit on his knee?" He laughed. Everything she said amused or delighted him, everything about her captivated him from her dark red curly hair to her small white feet. The painter's instructions were that he should look at her as if in love and she at him as if enthralled. This was easy, this was to act naturally. "Don't be silly, Harriet," said Simon Alpheton. "The very idea! Have you ever seen a painting by Rembrandt called *The Jewish Bride*?" They hadn't. Simon described it to them as he began his preliminary sketch. "It's a very tender painting, it expresses the protective love of the man for his young submissive bride. They're obviously wealthy, they're very richly dressed, but you can see that they're sensitive, thoughtful people and they're in love." "Like us. Rich and in love. Do we look like them?" "Not in the least, and I don't think you'd want to. Ideas of beauty have changed." "You could call it 'The Red-haired Bride.'" "She's not your bride. I am going to call it 'Marc and Harriet in Orcadia Place'--what else? Now would you just stop talking for a bit, Marc?" The house they stood in front of was described by those who knew about such things as a Georgian cottage and built of the kind of red bricks usually called mellow. But at this time of the year, midsummer, almost all the brickwork was hidden under a dense drapery of Virginia creeper, its leaves green, glossy and quivering in the light breeze. The whole surface of the house seemed to shiver and rustle, a vertical sea of green ruffled into wavelets by the wind. Simon Alpheton was fond of walls, brick walls, flint walls, walls of wood and walls of stone. When he painted *Come Hither* outside the studio in Hanging Sword Alley he placed them against a concrete wall stuck all over with posters. As soon as he saw that Marc's house had a wall of living leaves he wanted also to paint that, with Marc and Harriet too, of course. The wall was a shining cascade in many shades of green, Marc was in a dark-blue suit, thin black tie and white shirt, and Harriet was all in red. When the autumn came those leaves would turn the same color as her hair and her dress. Then they would gradually bleach to gold, to pale-yellow, fall and make a nuisance of themselves, filling the whole of that hedge-enclosed paved square and the entire backyard to a depth of several inches. The brickwork of the house would once more be revealed and the occasional, probably fake, bit of half-timbering. And in the spring of 1966 pale-green shoots would appear and the leafy cycle begin all over again. Simon thought about that as he drew leaves and hair and pleated silk. "Don't do that," he said, as Marc reached forward to kiss Harriet, at the same time keeping hold of her hand and drawing her toward him. "Leave her alone for five minutes, can't you?" "It's hard, man, it's hard." "Tenderness is what I want to catch, not lust. Right?" "My foot's gone to sleep," said Harriet. "Can we take a break, Simon?" "Another five minutes. Don't think about your foot. Look at him and think about how much you love him." She looked up at him and he looked down at her. He held her left hand in his right hand and their eyes met in a long gaze, and Simon Alpheton painted them, preserving them in the front garden of Orcadia Cottage, if not forever, for a very long time. "Maybe I'll buy it," Harriet said later, looking with approval at the outline of her face and figure. "What with?" Marc kissed her. His voice was gentle but his words were not. "You haven't any money." When Simon Alpheton looked back to that day he thought that this was the beginning of the end, the worm in the bud showing its ugly face and writhing body among the flowers. From

the Hardcover edition.