



A Sight for Sore Eyes

By Ruth Rendell

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A Sight for Sore Eyes By Ruth Rendell

A Sight for Sore Eyes tells three stories, and for the longest time, the reader has no inkling of how they will come together. The first is a story of a little girl who has been scolded and sent to her room when her mother is brutally murdered; as Francine grows up, she is haunted by the experience, and it is years before she even speaks. Secondly, we become privy to the life of a young man, Teddy, born of unthinking young parents, who grows up almost completely ignored. Free of societal mores, he becomes a sociopath, who eventually discovers that killing can be an effective way to get what he wants. Thirdly, we meet Harriet, who from an early age has learned to use her beauty to make her way in the world. Bored by marriage to a wealthy, much older man, she scans the local newspapers for handymen to perform odd jobs around the house, including services in the bedroom.

When these three plots strands finally converge, the result is harrowing and unforgettable. **A Sight for Sore Eyes** is not just the work of a writer at the peak of her craft. It is an extraordinary story by a writer who, after 45 books, countless awards, and decades of international acclaim, is still getting better with every book.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Nobody 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

From Publishers Weekly

A pair of English teens, Teddy and Francine (who have grown up in dysfunctional families where common parenting faults are taken to extremes), meet and think that in each other they might find the beauty and freedom their own lives are lacking. Their troubled affair takes a while to get going, but once it does, Rendell's sharp characterizations and idiosyncratic descriptions are riveting. Though several deaths occur in the book, the only real mystery is that of the murder of Francine's mother, which Francine overheard (near the novel's beginning) when she was seven. Instead, Rendell (Road Rage, etc.) focuses more on how a few sedately bizarre ticks can build exponentially into insanity. Francine's stepmother, for example, progresses from simple worry about her stepdaughter's well-being to obsessive anxiety that borders on dementia. Rendell follows the story's principal objects as closely as she does its characters: the diamond and sapphire engagement ring that Teddy's indifferent mother finds in a public bathroom; the video case in which Francine's mother hid her love letters, the painting of two young lovers that shows Teddy the perfect beauty he would kill for. Rendell leaves nothing and no one unaccounted for, from the looks given by the neighbors over the fence to the idle thoughts that pass through characters' minds when they scan a room. A tour-de-force of psychological suspense, the novel culminates in a dramatic climax that's as unforgettable as what has preceded it. Mystery Guild main selection; Literary Guild featured alternate; simultaneous audio and large print editions; author tour.

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From Library Journal

A little girl who sees her mother murdered. A rich woman bored enough to scout for lovers among the ads for handymen. A young man who murders to get what he wants. They all come together in Rendell's latest.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Larson:

Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to understand everything in the world. Each book has different aim or goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people truly feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They can be reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is reading a book. How about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, individual feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you will need this A Sight for Sore Eyes.

Jessica Jackson:

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