

On Sight

By C. Jade Wyton

Isabel Parker dropped something off at her niece's house and has been exploring around the town that Becky calls home. Shadow Oaks is a very interesting place, she thinks. The people here all seem so lovely! Well. Most people.... Becky's father, Kenneth Bloom, sees Isabel as she explore the strip mall, and they discover that their old fight response is still very much on sight.

Contains violence, mentions of abuse, and mentions of racism.

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It had been a long day for Isabel Parker.

She'd realised that, after doing some shopping with Becky yesterday, she'd accidentally ended up with one of her niece's bags! So she'd brought it down and dropped it off at Becky's house.... Nobody had been home (of course not! It was 2:30 on a Monday! Becky had *school!*), so she'd gone around to the backyard and left it with Don in the shed, giving him the instruction to tell Becky about it when she got home.

Then Isabel had intended to go back to Warm Waters, but... it had seemed such a waste to drive all the way down here to just drop something off and not actually *do* anything or *see* anyone....

So she'd spent the last hour driving around and taking in all of the Shadow Oaks sights that Becky had been telling her about.

There wasn't much. But that was alright. The strip mall had so far been the most interesting place; she'd pulled over, there, and decided to have a look around.

The stores were *fascinating*.

She was also fairly sure that the owners of the tattoo parlour were Jareth's parents... though, she hadn't asked about him as she'd explored the inside of the store.

The last person she had asked about being related to someone else based on their race was Orson— And Becky had made it *very* clear it was not an appropriate thing to assume.

Even if she *was* decently sure of it being the truth (as when she had first walked into the store they had mistaken her for Becky until she'd turned to face them) she didn't want to risk offending them. So she'd just listened to them tell a story about Becky eating rocks when she was young, and tried not to be too terrified of Troy (Troy? She was pretty sure he had said his name was Troy) as he laughed and showed off those big, sharp, gold-tipped teeth that made up his underbite.... And she tried not to stare at those terrifying tattoos up his arm.... Or those —Isabel shivered— *piercings* he had on his shirtless *nipples*.

He looked *exactly* like the types of orcs her father would rave about after watching the news....

Though he'd acted more civil in those ten minutes than Leon ever did in

Isabel's entire life. Troy didn't raise his voice or refer to her as "woman" even once....

It was clear where Jareth got his wonderful personality from.

She wished her father could be even *half* as decent as Troy or Jareth were!

Hm....

For a moment, Isabel paused; standing to the side to let some highschool students pass her (they did a double take as they did, though she wasn't entirely sure why)....

Maybe she could walk her father down a hill that ended on a busy street, and let go of his wheelchair so he would roll into traffic. Claim that he slipped out of her hands....

*What was she thinking?!*

'Sorry— Sorry!' Isabel whispered, quickly tracing Hastur's holy symbol into her chest. *'Sinful thoughts. Horrible, sinful thoughts. Forgive me, Lord. Forgive me.'*

Her prayer drew some more looks. But only briefly as the people around her went back to their own business.

Isabel let out a long sigh and lowered her hand to her side.

She didn't want to go home.

She didn't want to face that horrible man.

She didn't want to clean his messes.

She didn't want to cook his meals.

And she didn't want to take the brunt of his bad moods.

She wanted....

She wanted to be a child again....

She wanted to catch frogs in the creek.

And steal the fifty-cent chocolates from the local corner store.

And forget how to put on makeup so she could learn it all over again.

And...

*And she wanted Barbra back.*

Isabel sighed at the thought, and began down the street again.

Life was terrible.

Life was horrible.

Life was nothing but endless suffering—

*Ooooh!*

*A hopscotch court?!*

Isabel was immediately distracted as she hopped her way over the chalk game that had been scribbled onto the pavement; grinning widely as the children who'd drawn it laughed and clapped.

She gave them a cheerful goodbye, and then continued down the street.

*What had she been thinking about again?*

Something about... frogs?

No, certainly not. She hadn't thought about frogs in *years!*

Well, whatever it was couldn't have been important!

Isabel paused her steps as a bee buzzed by her face; letting the little insect fly past her to land on a beautiful display of flowers outside the florists' shop.

*Ah, it had been years since a boy had given her a bouquet like that....*

Maybe she should date, again? Becky had mentioned something about an app called “Tinder” once, on her social media. Maybe it was worth looking into.

Anything to stop this horrible, crushing loneliness—

*No, no!* Isabel pushed the thought away. *She wasn’t lonely! She had too much to do to be lonely. And she’d met far too many of Becky’s wonderful friends to be lonely!*

What a silly thought she’d had—

‘KEN, NO!’ cried a loud, almost-familiar voice that Isabel couldn’t quite recall.

But Ken— Ken was Becky’s father?

Isabel made to turn around but only got halfway before she felt somebody slam into her, tackling her into the ground.

Something in Isabel clicked when she heard Ken Bloom’s voice shout at her— Something old and deep inside her from many, *many* years ago bubbled to the surface, and she felt something uncontrollable and angry and unfinished escaping her soul’s depths as Ken was yanked away before his punch could land.

‘I’LL KILL YOU, YOU *WHORE!*’ Ken shouted as Isa pulled him back.

‘OH *WILL YOU?!!*’ Isabel shouted, her old instincts kicking into gear as she rolled to her feet and raised her voice. She’d had this fight with Ken a hundred times in her youth, and she couldn’t stop herself as it started all over again.

‘VOUS AVEZ ÉCHOUÉ LA DERNIÈRE FOIS!’

‘JE VAIS BRISER TA TÊTE VIDE COMME UN ŒUF!’

‘OH WILL YOU NOW?!’ Isabel screeched. ‘YOU DO THAT AND YOU’LL END UP WITH *ANOTHER* HATPIN THROUGH YOUR HAND!’

‘I WILL COUPE TES CHEVEUX AGAIN!’ Ken threatened. ‘ALL OF IT THIS TIME! AND I’LL FAIRE UNE CORDE WITH IT SO I CAN STRANGLE YOU!’

‘I WILL COUPE TA BITE! COUPE TA BITE RIGHT OFF YOUR PATHETIC PRETZEL BODY!’ Isabel approached Ken now, as Isa continued dragging him back. ‘AND THEN EVERYONE WILL CALL YOU NO COCK KENNETH!’

Ken broke out of Isa’s grip and tackled Isabel again; sending them both tumbling backwards into the display of flowers.

Petals flew everywhere and old pot water rained down over the pavement— Over the pair who wrestled on the ground.

It wasn’t a particularly impressive fight. At least not physically. Both of them were severely unfit, and neither had fought like this in over a decade— But their energy was a terrifying one as they tumbled off the sidewalk and onto the road, blocking traffic as they screamed horrible threats and profanities at the top of their lungs.

Isabel sunk her teeth into Ken’s arm and he pulled back, giving Isa an opportunity to grab him and throw him backwards.

‘*ENOUGH!*’ Isa screeched, standing between the pair. ‘I am putting an end to this *now!*’

Both Isabel and Ken went quiet, shrinking down under the drow’s furious gaze.

‘Both if you! Stand up! Now!’

Both rose to their feet.

‘Ken!’ Isa rounded on Ken. ‘I know you don’t like Isabel, but *tackling her in the street* is *not* the answer! Apologise.’

*Apologise?*

Isabel felt a smug pride wash over her.

*Kenneth Bloom* was being told to apologise to *her?! Ooh....* She'd never felt this smug before in her *life!*

Ken crossed his arms childishly and turned away. 'I do not owe that coup de poignard dans le dos, vol d'emploi, baisé son patron *whore* an apology!'

'Hey! Je n'ai fait que deux de ces choses!' Isabel retorted.

'Isabel! *Shut up!*' Isa snapped. 'Ken! *Apologise! Now!*'

Ken looked like he was in pain; which Isabel savoured for a long moment before Isa spoke again;

'Oh, *look* at you two! What would Becky say?!

Isabel's heart dropped to her feet.

And by the look on Ken's face, so did his.

'She would be *miserable* if she saw this!' Isa scolded. 'So *apologise*, Ken.'

Ken took a deep, deep breath. And then slowly approached Isabel, holding his hand out as he did.

After a moment of hesitation Isabel took his hand and shook it gently.

'I'm... *sorry*,' Ken was clearly using all his willpower to force the word out. 'I... *shouldn't*... have tackled you....'

'That's alright,' Isabel replied; letting out a deep breath. 'I... don't actually want to castrate you.'

'I'd hope not,' Isa sighed, putting her hands on her hips and shaking her head. 'Honestly. You'd think after so long you two wouldn't still be on-sight like this! At least *talk* to each other for a minute or two before getting in a fist-fight! *Ugh....*'

'S... sorry, Isa,' Ken rubbed his arm anxiously. 'I, uh.... I'm going to go sit in the car.'

'I think that's a good idea,' Isa agreed. 'Isabel?'

'*Mm!*' Isabel stood up straighter as Isa addressed her.

'Go home.'

—END—

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