



EMPTY eyes

QREADS

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Sue had just come home from work when she heard someone knocking. On her way to the door, she caught herself reaching up to adjust her glasses. It was an old habit. She smiled when she remembered that she didn't need to fiddle around with glasses anymore.

At that moment, the front door swung open. Her husband, Brad, stood in the doorway.

"Brad! What are you doing home so early?" Sue exclaimed.

Brad grinned. "I've been home all afternoon. I just dashed off to the store. I have a surprise for you."

Sue frowned. "Oh, no, don't tell me I forgot our anniversary!"

"Nope!" Brad crossed his arms over his chest. His eyes sparkled merrily. "Go ahead, you get two more guesses."

She thought for a moment. "Not my birthday. Not a national holiday. Not—"

"Out of time," Brad said, "and out of guesses!" He grabbed his wife's hand and pulled her into the dining room.

Sue drew in her breath. The table was set with her best china and silver. Glowing candles and fresh flowers decorated the center of the table.

"What's going on?" she asked. Then she snapped her fingers. "Wait! I think I know—you got a raise."

Brad looked stunned and a bit disappointed. "How did you know?"

Sue laughed. "Just a lucky guess."

"I made us a great celebration dinner," Brad went on. "And that's just the beginning." He reached in his pocket and handed Sue a brochure.

She glanced at the front cover. *Welcome to the Painted Desert Resort*, it said. *Count on Mesa, Arizona, for fun in the sun!* She squealed with delight. “You already did it? You made a reservation for us?”

“I did!” Brad said, looking very proud of himself.

“After all that nagging—”

“Yeah, well, you *did* keep reminding me,” he laughed. “And I also found this brochure on my desk this morning. So...” His voice trailed away.

“. . . it all worked out perfectly,” Sue finished his sentence.

“Yeah.” He frowned a little. “I still can’t believe I got that raise. Just last week our accountants said we were looking at cutbacks. I can’t figure out—”

“Oh, Brad, I’m so excited. When do we leave?” Sue cut in.

“Friday after work, just as you had suggested. If we get going about—”

At the same time they both smelled something burning. Brad howled as he dove

into the kitchen. A minute later he returned, holding out a smoking pan of badly scorched vegetables.

Sue laughed at his expression. Her husband looked like he'd just lost his best friend. "I'll make a fresh batch," she told him. "And while I do, you can tell me what resort activities really turn you on. There are so many choices!"

Over dinner, Brad asked, "Are you sure you want to go back to a place you've already visited? Maybe we should try a new resort."

Sue looked horrified. "Brad, *no!* When my boss decided to send his employees to this resort, I thought it was a crazy idea. Our company had suffered a lot of losses, just like yours. Then, something changed overnight. All of a sudden my boss said we could use a break. And, hey—he was paying the bill!"

A wistful smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. "Little did I know how good I'd feel. You'll thank me after we've been there a few days."

Brad sighed. "I hope you're right. But I

still think we should have chosen a resort in another state. You know—get some relief from the Arizona heat.”

“There are plenty of things to do indoors,” Sue said. “We can use the exercise room, go see a movie, shop—”

“Aha!” Brad grinned. “*Shop?* So that explains why—”

Sue laughed and threw her napkin at him.



Brad and Sue left Tucson right after work on Friday. As they inched north along the highway toward Mesa, Brad started grumbling. “I was afraid of this. Look at this awful traffic! It’s bumper to bumper.”

“Maybe there’s been an accident,” Sue said. “Why don’t I put in a CD? Some relaxing music ought to—”

“No, no, turn on the radio!” Brad snapped at her. “Find a news station. Maybe we can find out what’s causing this ridiculous traffic jam.”

Saying nothing, Sue sat back and stared

out the side window. After a minute Brad said, “Sorry. I guess I’m just a little on edge. You’re right. I *do* need a vacation.”

Sue didn’t answer, so Brad stumbled on, hoping he’d say something to make her forgive him. “Hey, even shopping sounds good,” he said. “Or maybe I could do what you did and get fitted for contact lenses. It’s pretty amazing that you were able to do that at a resort.”

Sue turned to him with an eager smile. “They have *everything* at the Painted Desert Resort! They’re really big on fitness. They have the most amazing programs and classes and—”

“All of which is added onto our bill at the end of the week, right?” Brad cut in. “But I guess the idea is that you feel so good, you don’t care.”

Sue sighed. “Come on, Brad, don’t be so negative! It’s all part of our stay. We only pay for our meals and our room. Everything else is on the house.”

Raising his eyebrows, Brad looked

QREADS

SERIES 1

Black Widow Beauty

Danger on Ice

Empty Eyes

The Experiment

The Kula'i Street Knights

The Mystery Quilt

No Way to Run

The Ritual

The 75-Cent Son

The Very Bad Dream

SERIES 2

The Accuser

Ben Cody's Treasure

Blackout

The Eye of the Hurricane

The House on the Hill

Look to the Light

Ring of Fear

The Tiger Lily Code

Tug-of-War

The White Room

SERIES 3

The Bad Luck Play

Breaking Point

Death Grip

No Exit

No Place Like Home

Outcast

The Plot

Something Dreadful Down Below

Sounds of Terror

The Woman Who Loved a Ghost

SERIES 4

The Barge Ghost

Beasts

Blood and Basketball

Bus 99

The Dark Lady

Dimes to Dollars

Read My Lips

Ruby's Terrible Secret

Student Bodies

Tough Girl