

BLIND DATE

by MaryAnn Diorio

"Cori, please say you'll go out with Craig! I promise I'll never ask you again."

Cori Ellis looked at the pleading face of her best friend. Already she'd declined Sara's request twice. Could she decline it yet again?

Cori sighed. "What's wrong with your cousin that he can't get a date for himself?"

Sara lifted her chin. "Nothing's wrong with him. Absolutely nothing. In fact, he can get a date any time he wants. He's gorgeous, Cori. Girls gravitate to him like bees to honey." Sara frowned. "Too bad he's my cousin."

Cori thought for a moment. If she said yes, Sara would finally get off her back about Craig Torres. Any "gorgeous" guy who was still single at thirty-two had to have something wrong with him. At least she had a good reason for still being single at thirty. She simply didn't want to get married. Why people had trouble understanding that—especially Sara—was beyond her.

"Sara, listen. Craig is looking for a wife. I have no intentions of ever getting married. So why lead him on by going out with him? That would be cruel."

Sara smiled. "Craig enjoys a challenge."

Cori broke into a laugh. "Whose side are you on? I'm your best friend, after all."

"Yes, but you know the old saying: Blood is thicker than water."

Cori drew her knees to her chest and leaned back into the brown leather sofa, her long blond curls cascading over her shoulders. "I'll tell you what. I'll agree to go out with Craig just once. And I'll do so only because you're my best friend. But make me a promise."

Sara's smile held mischief. "First you have to tell me what the promise is."

Cori raised an eyebrow. "Ah, you don't trust me."

"No, it's just that I don't give my word lightly." Sara tilted her head. "So, what's the promise?"

"The promise is you'll never bug me about Craig Torres again. Promise?"

"Promise!" Sara said, a bit too emphatically.

The twinkle in Sara's eye made Cori nervous, as if Sara knew something she didn't.

"So, why don't you want to get married?" Sara fluffed up the throw pillow behind her head.

"Because it's too confining. You know me. I'm a free spirit. The thought of settling down and not being able to go where I want to go when I want to go stifles me. Besides, you know as well as I do that once the romance wears off in a marriage, it's downhill all the way after that."

"Why, Cori Ellis! I've never known you to be so negative. What's gotten into you?"

Cori wished she knew. Was she becoming old and cranky before her time? Sara's question troubled her more than she wanted to admit. "Nothing's gotten into me. I've just decided I want to stay single the rest of my life, and I get irritated whenever anyone tries to get me to change my mind."

"But you sound so cynical about marriage."

Cori twisted a blond curl around her index finger. "If you look at the divorce statistics, who'd want to take the chance?"

Sara leaned forward. "Life is all about risks, Cori. When you marry, you take a risk, but if you seek God's will first, you won't make a mistake."

"Well, God hasn't told me to get married, so single I will stay." She slapped a palm on the arm rest.

Sara laughed and threw the pillow at Cori. "Mark my words, Cori Ellis. You're going to fall head over heels in love with Craig, and I'll get the last laugh."

"No way, Sara. I've made up my mind, and when I make up my mind, there's absolutely no changing it. Just ask my mother."

Sara stood up. "I'll call Craig and tell him you've agreed to go out with him. I'm sure he'll be calling you soon."

"I won't hold my breath," Cori said. But as Sara left the room, Cori found herself still waiting to exhale.

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