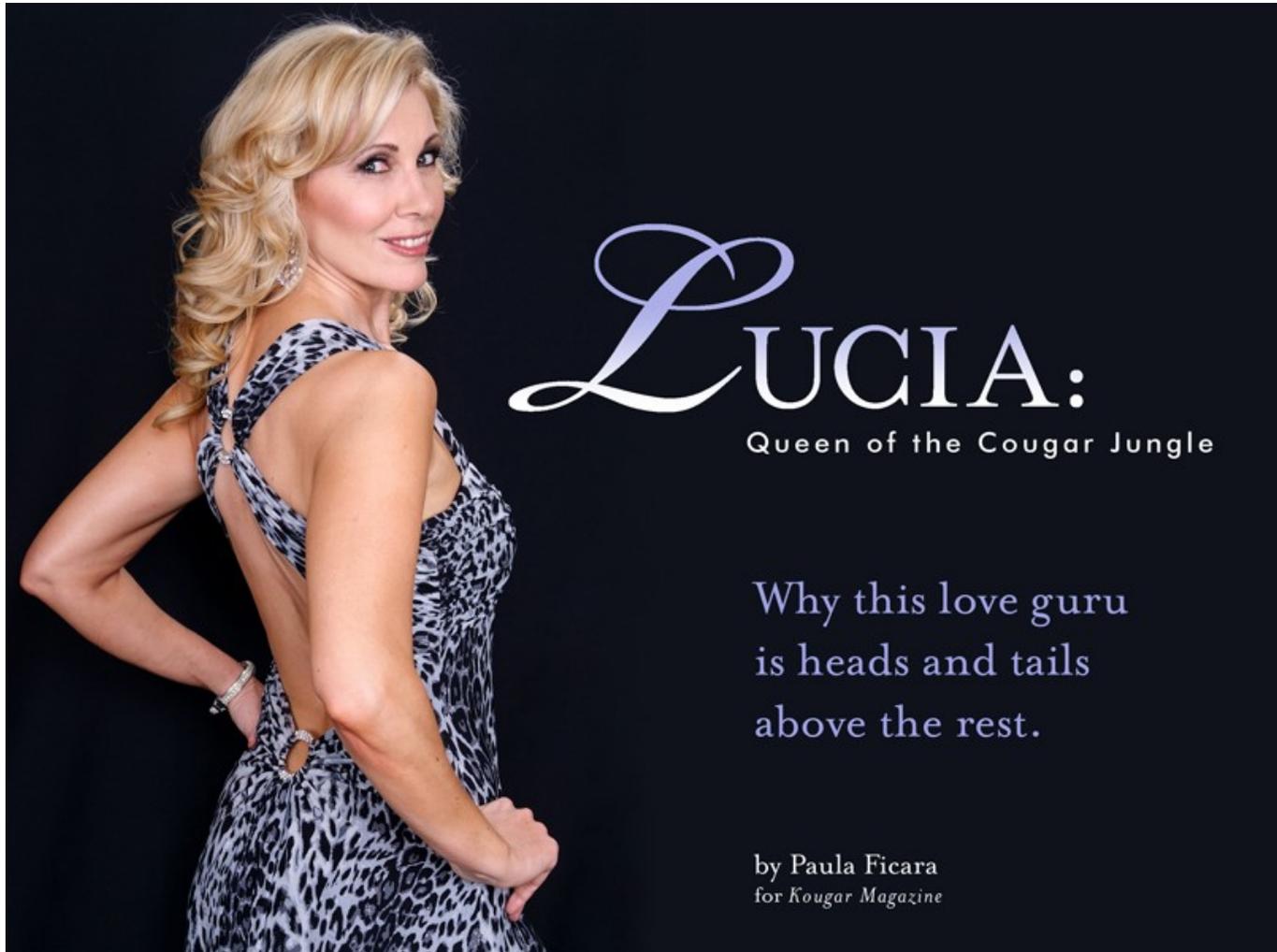


# FEATURES



"Can you take a picture?" Lucia asks from the makeup chair, handing her iPhone to Kirk, one of her cubs who's visiting the set. "I want to get behind-the-scenes," she says as the makeup artist dusts her face with powder.

Lucia, dubbed "Queen of the Cougar Jungle" in a recent television interview, is a renowned dating and relationship expert who's down-to-earth candor and sharp wit are quickly raising her to love guru stardom.

I perch atop a nearby counter to chat with our queen as she gets cover-girl ready. She takes me on a brief journey of her youth, which explains so much about the woman sitting in front of me now. I detect a very slight accent and ask her where she's from.

"I was born in a small mountain village in Calabria, a region in southern Italy. There was little work there so, when I was six years old, my family immigrated to Canada where I grew up."

That explains not only the accent but the worldly aura she possesses. She also exudes a strength and confidence that she attributes partly to her training in the military. As a young woman, Lucia joined the Canadian Army Reserve. For two and a half years she served as a truck driver with the 18th Service Battalion.

"I loved it. I learned to fire rifles, submachine guns, and pistols... and the ratio between men and women was 15:1! I had a great time!" [She laughs] "But seriously, I think everyone should experience some branch of the armed forces. It builds discipline and character."

After the reserves, Lucia took a completely different path and moved back to Milan, Italy, to try her hand at modeling. "I didn't become a top model, but I did well and lived there for six and a half years. Experiencing that culture completely changed who I have become today." Finally, her dream of being a singer/songwriter brought her to Los Angeles, where she remains.

**KM:** How did you become a dating and relationship expert?

**Lucia:** It is a talent I think I was born with - it just happened so naturally. I've had so much experience in relationships and made every possible mistake. With that, I've always learned from them and actively searched to improve. Over time, with experience and study, I've gained such a deep level of understanding of how men and women work in relationship it just made sense. I want to reach as many people as possible so that I can help free them from their delusions surrounding relationships and help them find the happiness they truly desire.

**KM:** When did your focus turn to cougars and being a role model for cougars?

**Lucia:** When I became old enough to be a cougar! [She laughs] It actually started in '05. I had already established myself as a dating and relationship expert. I had a show on public access and a column in a university ezine called *Campus Circle* ([www.campuscircle.com](http://www.campuscircle.com)). The *Tyra Banks Show* was looking for older women who were dating younger guys and...of course, [She laughs] I was, so I went on the show. It was the day of the show that I first heard the term "cougar" and its definition. And it grew from there!

**KM:** Have you always dated younger men?

**Lucia:** Well, no, because when I was 21 it was kind of hard to do!

[Laughter]

**KM:** Yeah! That would have been kind of scary!

**Lucia:** Um, I would say it was when I got into my mid-30s... [She thinks]...although, there may have been one or two in my mid-20s!

**KM:** As long as they were legal!

**Lucia:** Oh, yeah! They were legal!

**KM:** What is your true definition of a cougar?

**Lucia:** A cougar is a woman over 40 who dates men at least 10 years younger. She's in shape, happy, healthy, vibrant, confident, and looks younger than her age.

**KM:** You've given lectures on the "Cougar Revolution." What is it and what is this new fascination with the cougar?

**Lucia:** Well, for many years, once a woman was over 40, it was like she was forgotten about - no longer relevant. You know, people didn't want to think about a woman over 40 having sex. Especially having sex with a younger guy! (Although, guys have obviously been doing that forever.) Now, women are more financially independent, and there are now more women over 40 who are single and prefer younger men. They are really coming into their own. They're taking care of themselves and living full lives and they don't want to settle for a man their age or older who's gotten lazy and let themselves go. Younger men are fascinated with the cougar because she exudes youthfulness, but she's got the wisdom and confidence that younger women don't have, and that's hot.

**KM:** Even in the midst of this revolution, the term "cougar" still holds a negative stigma for some. What's up with that?

**Lucia:** Well, it's because the media still likes to depict the cougar as an older woman who has let herself go, who aggressively hunts younger men to the point of it being scary. And that's not the case at all! Because older women are usually more financially established, some feel they have to pay for everything - the media will focus on that and translate it as the older women paying the younger men for their company - as if that's the only way they could get them. But REAL cougars - we're beating them off with a stick! That's why I always advise cougars NOT to pay on dates. The man is still the man, and he wants to feel like a man, and if she starts paying for everything it makes him feel emasculated and like she's the "sugar mama."

**KM:** Can we ask how old you are?

**Lucia:** I'm old enough to be a cougar! Age is not important. People need to stop asking that because generally when they ask that, they can't help but judge you. They immediately think, "She looks great for her age!" or "She looks terrible for her age." or

"She looks her age." One of three categories. It's the only reason people ask, so unless you're working for social security, I'm not tellin' ya!

**KM:** Hear! Hear!

**Lucia:** Women turning 40 these days look great! It's no longer going to be, "Oh, you're 40." The-40-year olds of today are not the same as they were 20 years ago, and they're not going to be the same in another 10 years. They're going to be even hotter! I mean, I see women in their 30s now and I go, "Wow!"

**KM:** How do you feel about Botox and all that?

**Lucia:** I say, do what you've gotta do! I say, thank God for Botox! I love it!

[Laughter]

**KM:** What is your number one piece of dating advice for women?

**Lucia:** Let the man be the man, and the way you do that is to let him pursue you and move the relationship forward, and you just lean back and see what happens. If he's not pursuing - then he's not the one.

**KM:** So, say you're in a bar. Would you approach a guy if you found him attractive?

**Lucia:** No.

**KM:** How would you let him know you're interested?

**Lucia:** I would just look at him and smile.

**KM:** And if he doesn't come over?

**Lucia:** Next!

[Laughter]

I decide to bring Kirk "the Cub" into the conversation...

**KM:** How do you feel about that? If she looked at you and smiled, would you go over to her?

**Kirk:** I would definitely go over but, you know, it really depends on the guy. If a guy has been shot down 20 times, it's going to be harder for him to approach a woman. But that's the nice thing about an older woman; she can carry a conversation. If she likes you, she'll carry it for you. It's harder to talk to younger women because they won't. Not only that, but they're not as open.



**KM:** [Back to Lucia] Most younger women today are still terrified of getting older. What advice do you have for them?

**Lucia:** Don't buy into the beliefs that make it scary. The great thing about getting older is that you become wiser, calmer, and there's less drama. As long as you take care

of your body - work out, stay out of the sun, and EXFOLIATE, you don't have to worry about looking older, and therefore, getting older! [She laughs]

**KM:** It's that simple!

**Lucia:** It is! You know we're all going to get older so you might as well just go with it, not freak out, and make the best of it! I plan on looking like this when I'm 70!

**KM:** I have no doubt you will! So, dating - how many men have you dated at one time?

**Lucia:** [To Kirk, joking] Could you leave the room please? [To me] What's your definition of dating? You mean like, um...

**KM:** I mean whatever you think I mean!

**Lucia:** You mean sex?

**KM:** Do you consider sex dating?

**Lucia:** No...I mean...

**KM:** Well, does that include dinner?

**KM:** If it includes dinner, then sure, you can call it that!

**Lucia:** The most I've ever dated at one time was two...but I actually recommend three! A pair and a spare!

[Our laughter has elevated to cackling]

**Lucia:** Well, a lot of women nowadays are dating like it's 1950. They have this idea that they're going to date this guy for a couple of years then they'll get married. Well, how many times is that going to happen? How many two-year relationships are they going to have before they actually meet "the one"? Multiple bidders raise the price. Today, the greatest gift that a woman can give is not her sexuality, because everyone is having sex before marriage now. It's her exclusivity, and until what she wants is on the table, there's no need to be exclusive. Why put yourself in a contract that only you have signed? There are so many cases where the man wants the woman to be exclusive, but after a couple of years, when she's ready to take the next step, he's "not ready," or all of a sudden she's "not the one." And she's sitting there thinking, "I just wasted two years of my life!"

**KM:** Do you ever want to get married?

**Lucia:** If I meet the right man. I just haven't met him yet.

**KM:** What is your fashion advice for older women?

**Lucia:** It's not so much "age appropriate" as "body appropriate." I mean...well, I'm trying to put this delicately...

**KM:** Don't put it delicately! This is not a delicate magazine!

**Lucia:** Well, if you have a muffin top - you better hide that thing! So long as what you're showing looks good - show it. I mean, obviously if you're 50 you shouldn't be wearing little pink miniskirts. That's a bit ridiculous. But as long as you're not trying to look 21, you can certainly wear things of a younger generation - as long as your body looks good in them.

**Kirk:** It's hot when an older woman wears something sexy and you aren't sure how old she is. Older women know how to carry themselves so they can rock sexy jeans and heels. A lot is about how you carry yourself.

**KM:** Lucia, what do you see for yourself in the near future?

**Lucia:** I would like to have a reality show about cougars. I want to reach as many people as possible, and I think television is one of the best ways of doing that. I want people to know that life does not end at 40. It's just the beginning. Don't be afraid of it - it may actually be the best part of your life.

**KM:** Is it the best part of yours?

**Lucia:** [Smirking] So far.

**KM:** What new adventures have you found yourself on?

**Lucia:** Um, new adventures...

**KM:** Do they involve latex?

[Laughter]

**Lucia:** Yeah, um, I've come more into my own sexually as I've gotten older. I don't think a lot of women appreciate sex in their 20s. You know, when I was in my 20s my attitude was more like - hurry up and get it over with - but now it's like - you better last a long time!

**KM:** Do you have any advice for the bedroom?

**Lucia:** Well, I think as women get older, they are more aggressive. If it's not happening, you have to take matters into your own hands! No - but you know, as women get older, they're less willing to put up with bad sex...damn it!

**KM:** Like we mentioned earlier, a lot of people think cougars are really aggressive and hunt young men, but what you're saying is that they should sit back and let the men come to them. What's your advice on catching a cougar?

**Lucia:** [Thinking for a minute then smiling.] If you want to catch a cougar...don't be a pussy.

[Laughter!]

Lucia has been featured on *Dr. Phil*, *60 Minutes Australia*, *The CBS Early Show*, *The Tyra Banks Show*, *E! Entertainment*, *The KTLA Morning Show*, *Fox 5 News* and *Playboy Radio*. She was voted Miss Urban Cougar December 2005 by *Urbancougar.com* and has been interviewed for documentaries which aired on British TV network iTV and Current TV. She has most recently joined the popular cougar internet dating site [www.iCougarDating.com](http://www.iCougarDating.com) as their spokesperson.

You can listen to Lucia on her top rated radio show *The Art of Love* on L.A. Talk Radio, [www.latalkradio.com](http://www.latalkradio.com), at 3 PM Sundays PST. Visit Lucia's official website [www.theartoflove.net](http://www.theartoflove.net) to learn more about her or purchase her ebook *Lucia's Lessons of Love* at [www.lessonsoflove.net](http://www.lessonsoflove.net)

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