



The Cougar Club

By Susan McBride
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Introduction

Meet three women who aren't about to run and hide, just because the world says they should be on the shelf and out of circulation:

Kat Maguire: her life seems perfect until she loses her high-powered advertising job and catches her live-in lover in a compromising position with his computer!

Carla Moss: this sexy TV news anchor is in danger of being replaced by a twenty-something blond bimbo. Wasn't it just yesterday that she was the up and coming star?

Elise Randolph: a married dermatologist, Elise thinks her plastic surgeon husband is playing doctor with someone else.

Kat firmly believes that aging gracefully isn't about giving up; it's about living life with your engine on overdrive. So this unofficial "Cougar Club" quickly learns three things about survival of the fittest in today's youth-obsessed society: true friendship never dies, the only way to live is real, and you're never too old to follow your heart.

Questions for Discussion

1. Kat stayed with her younger boyfriend, Roger, even after she caught him cheating. It takes a second act of indiscretion on his part before she leaves him. Why do women stay in bad relationships? Is it because they think they can fix things? Or do they fear being alone?
2. After many years in New York City, Kat has lost touch with Carla and Elise, finally reconnecting with them when she needs them most. Do you believe that best friends can stay friends forever, despite time and distance? What makes some friendships so fleeting and others last a lifetime?
3. Kat, Carla, and Elise are all having "mid-life crises," involving careers and relationships. Is there something in particular about being forty-something that makes people reassess their lives or feel compelled to start over? Is it due to society's distaste for growing older? Or is it something more internal?
4. Even though Elise is a dermatologist and treats Carla with Botox, she doesn't use Botox on herself. Why do some women choose to accept the inevitable effects of aging and others work so hard to fight them?
5. Carla's job as the nightly anchorwoman for Channel Three puts her in front of a large audience. Even though she takes great care of herself, at 45 she knows her days on-air are numbered. She notes that: "Aging anchormen are like Santa Claus. The more pot-bellied and bald they get, the more revered. Anchorwomen, on the other hand, are pretty much like Kleenex: disposable and always replaceable with a newer, prettier box." Do you believe that's true in other occupations, too?
6. Carla's bad experience with marriage has soured her on commitment; but her feelings for Randy change as the novel progresses. Why does she come to regard him as important in her life and more than just a flavor of the month? Is there any one particular turning point?
7. Elise's relationship with her husband seems to have changed without her noticing. How does this happen in a long-term partnership? Do you think she focused too much on her son and her career? Should she have seen the signs that something was wrong well before she did?
8. According to Kat, "If you don't live each day like it's your last and wake up every morning excited about what you're doing, for God's sake, move on. It's never too late to find your passion." Do you agree with this philosophy? How are you following your passion?
9. What about Kat, Carla, and Elise inspired you? Did any of these characters or their actions make you change your mind about what it means to be a woman over forty today?

About the Author

Susan McBride is an official member of *The Cougar Club* and proud of it. Named one of *St. Louis Magazine's* "Top Singles" at 40, she met and (happily) married a younger man. Susan debuted on the literary scene with her award-winning Debutante Dropout Mysteries, including *Blue Blood* and *Too Pretty to Die*, and also pens *The Debs* young adult series.