



## Discussion Questions

### *Hot Down Under* in *The Firefighter*

by Susan Lyons

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Thanks so much for reading *Hot Down Under*. I hope you enjoyed it, and I'd love to hear from you. I'm happy to provide bookmarks and autographed bookplates; just send me your name and address. Please visit my website for info on other titles, insights into how each book came about, excerpts, a monthly contest, and other good stuff.

Now settle back, kick off your shoes, and make sure you've got a nice glass of wine (Australian, if possible), a tinnie of beer, a latté or a cup of tea, and let's reflect on the book.

1. *A warm-up question*. What three adjectives would you use to describe Tash? Mick? Yourself? Your partner, if you currently have one?
2. *Heroines*. What qualities do you like to see in a heroine? Did Tash make a good heroine? Why, or why not? What did you like about her? Was there anything you disliked about her? Would you want her as a friend at the beginning of the book? How about at the end of the book. And what about Nana? Do you see her as a heroine?
3. *Heroes*. Is Mick hero material for you? Why, or why? What do you like best about him? Was there anything you disliked about him? Would you want to get involved with a man like Mick? Why, or why not?
4. *Family*. Tash and Mick are both loyal to their families and take their responsibilities seriously. What responsibilities do they each take on, and how do they handle them? Should they take on those responsibilities? Is it fair of parents to ask adult children to do things like care for an elderly grandmother or a brother with mental disabilities?
5. *Geography*. Not only do Tash and Mick come from different parts of the world, but they both love their own homes and their families. Do you see a solution for the two of them, if they want to pursue their romance? Have you ever been in a long-distance relationship? What problems did you run into, how did you deal with them, and how did things work out in the end? Can you imagine moving across the world to be with the person you love?
6. *Mick's baggage*. Mick is carrying around some baggage related to his brother's accident. How does he feel, and do you think his feelings are justified? Tash points out that Mick may not be saving the world but he's saving individuals, and each person is important. Do you

agree? Do some jobs have more “value” than others? Do you think his promise to look after Davy is born from guilt, responsibility, love?

7. *Life and death.* When Tash wakes up to find the house is on fire, she’s determined to save her grandmother. Is she brave or foolish? Have you ever been in a situation like that? – if so, what did you do? Afterwards, she holds things together until she sees her charred purse, and it truly sinks in that she and her grandmother could have ended up like that. Have you ever had that kind of emotional reaction, where you’re coping and being strong until one small thing “flips the switch” and the emotion comes pouring out?
8. *The yellow brick road.* Nana has always referred to Australia as Oz, which made Tash think of *The Wizard of Oz*. Now Tash finds herself in a strange country, and she’s acting differently than ever before. Is she sort of like Dorothy, landing in a strange place and having to deal with both allies and enemies as she follows her own yellow brick road? Why does she act differently? – is it Australia? the fire? Mick? being away from her parents? the influence of Nana?
9. *Nana.* If you were Nana’s child or grandchild, what would you think of her desire to stay in Australia? Would you be hurt? Can you understand how she feels? Do you think she’s crazy to take up with a man she hasn’t seen in half a century? Is she flaky and eccentric, spontaneous and passionate, or all of those things?
10. *Hot sex.* If you could have one of Tash’s sexual adventures – in the shower, in bed, in the change room at the lingerie shop, in the hot air balloon, etc. – which one would you pick? What appeals to you so much about it?
11. *Defining incidents.* Nana says that some lives are strongly influenced by defining incidents. For her, it was getting pregnant as a teen. What was it for Mick? For Tash? Have you had a defining incident in your own life, and how did it change you?
12. *Home is where the heart is.* What does that saying mean to Nana? To Tash? What do you think it means to Mick? How do you interpret it for yourself?

I’d love to hear your thoughts on some of these questions and issues!