

# Flaming Beauty

*by* Matt Potter

No one around the long table wore a grin or a smile or even a slight smirk.

“How did it escape our quality control?” said Vivian, bristling beneath her Chanel suit and perfect make-up. “And who ordered an entire lake of the stuff?”

“You did, Vivian,” I said.

“The question was rhetorical, Robert.” Vivian sat down. “How was I to know it bursts into flame when you rub it into your hair?!”

An enormous dam of expensive shampoo — our newest product — foamed in the backblocks of the company's manufacturing plant. It was too costly to dump. And would prove even costlier if we put it on the shelves of every supermarket in Australia.

“We're always talking about niche marketing,” I said.

Twenty honcho heads swivelled in my direction.

“So market it to pyro-maniacal beauty contestants.”

Twenty honcho mouths gaped.

Okay, it was a long shot but who in that room wasn't desperate to shift that shit? All our jobs depended on it. And maybe we could create retail history at the same time.

Jumping up, I grabbed a whiteboard marker. “What are some of the words and images we could use?”

*Raven-haired*, I wrote on the whiteboard.

*Flowing*, someone called out.

*Volcano*, said someone else. *Lava*. *Changeling*.

“I'm thinking meteors, I'm thinking lightning,” I said. “I'm thinking women with their hair on fire being extinguished by hunky firemen.”

Vivian raised an eyebrow. “What's the slogan?”

I looked at all the faces around the table.

“*Now you're cooking.*”

