

Ember Fury

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Extract

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Fizzzzzz. . . crack. . . whoosh. . .

It was a tiny tongue at first, then it spread like a rippling, orange blanket over the floorboards and poured itself up the walls. My heart was pounding and there was a kinda buzzing in my head. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't move. Then I gasped.

'Cool!'

'Hey! What are you doing? You stupid. . . '

Finn grabbed my arm and I lost the rest of what he said in a blast of pain as my forehead slammed against the door frame and he yanked me outside into the darkness. He opened the car door and shoved me inside.

I was still watching the flames.

They'd already reached the

second cabin of the motel and

had started to tickle the roof.

Then the building sneezed,

an exploding, pyrotechnic

sneeze. Fountains of window

glass showering down on to

the ground.

'Let's get out of here!'

We'd not driven far when

the accident happened. I

saw the rabbit sitting in

the middle of the road and

jerked the wheel.

The car swerved
and we flew

into a **ditch.**



Within seconds, the police cars were everywhere, lights flashing. They put us both in handcuffs. Can you believe it? Finn wouldn't even look at me in the back of the cop car. I could see he was really angry but scared, too. He said, 'I told you this would happen. Didn't I tell you? You wouldn't listen, you crazy kid.'



That felt like a punch in the stomach. It hurt more than the gash on my head or the bruise on my shoulder that I got in the crash. I hated him! Not just because he called me a kid, but for loads of other reasons. I'd been so dumb. What an idiot! Stupid, stupid!

My shoulder really hurt, but not as much as the place in my chest where my heart used to be. It had been ripped out and was lying there on the desk in the police station, oozy and bloody. A lady cop, who looked really bored and fed up, had taken the handcuffs off, but you could tell from her face that she was thinking that it was a mistake because she was scowling as if I was some serial killer, a terrorist or a psychopath or something. To be honest, I wouldn't have had the energy to be a psychopath, I was so tired. Every time I moved it was like swimming through hot fudge sauce. If I'd tried to grab her gun – you know, like desperate, wild-eyed prisoners do sometimes in the movies – she'd have slammed me to the floor in an armlock before I could have taken a breath.

We were waiting for the other cop, the one with a big belly, who was calling my dad in Los Angeles. The door opened and big-belly cop walked in carrying a yellow notepad which he put down on the table. . . next to my oozing heart.

'Well, young lady, it appears you were telling the truth,' he said and looked at the lady cop. 'Hey, Betty. We've got us a gen-u-ine celebrity!'

'You don't say,' Betty replied, sneering.

Wait. You're thinking, hold it, pause, scroll back! I should start at the beginning. The beginning of the story. Fill you in on a few things. So, this is the bit where the screen goes wobbly to tell you there's a flashback coming. . .

my flight from
Heathrow to LAX
1st Class

Seattle



San Francisco

Denver

Chicago

DC

New York

Los Angeles

Las Vegas

Dallas

Miami



where Dad
lives and my
new mum makes
movies

USA



sneakers
that smell
quite cheesy



ACT ONE

me
in shock
when Dad said
he was going
to 'settle down'



Episode One

**First Class Boredom, Men in Dark Suits
and My Malibu Nightmare**



INT. JET AIRLINER, MID-ATLANTIC — NIGHT. The luxurious first class cabin is in almost total darkness. A narrow column of light pours down on to a window seat and a pile of very messy, bright, red hair, under a blue blanket. The redhead is reading.

poshAIR

VOICE OVER: That's me, three weeks earlier, so-called 'delinquent teenager', Ember Fury. It's Em for short and Ember Abigail Morton-Fury for long. Mum said she named me Ember when I popped out of her with all that bright orange hair. That's my real mum Amica Morton, not my new mum, Charity Lane. And yes, I do mean Charity Lane, the Hollywood actress. Charity is Dad's second wife and she's only ten years older than me. What a cliché, huh? They moved into a house in Los Angeles a few months ago, so that's why I'm in a jet, on my way from London to LAX to stay with them for the summer holidays. . . maybe longer. I visit my dad during every school break, in lots of different places,

wherever he happens to be touring. Well, when I say 'visit my dad' I mean his people, his entourage. Dad doesn't really do 'the dad thing'.

I don't remember my dad being around much when I was small, but when he was, he always seemed to be unpacking or packing for the next tour. He used to make jokes all the time about needing to take parenting classes because he didn't have a clue about raising kids, but my mum said that just being around when I was growing up would have helped. Me and Mum became kinda self-contained and learned not to need him, until Mum got sick. Dad was the one who paid the bills and bought us lots of fancy stuff, but I guess that's not enough, is it?





The air steward handed me a pillow and I put my book down.

‘Can I get you anything else, miss?’

‘Vodka rocks,’ I said with a grin. He didn’t smile back.

‘Yeah, right. Nice try,’ he said, and returned to the front of the plane and disappeared behind a curtain.

‘Fathead!’ I whispered, and picked up my book again. The man across the aisle glanced at me. ‘What are you looking at?’ I asked. He shook his head and made a tsk sound. I wriggled about a bit, trying to get more comfortable, then squished the pillow up round my head and half closed my eyes.

Almost everyone was sleeping, some with those dumb eye shade things on, so that people know not to disturb them. The whole plane was really dark and kinda creepy, with a few kinda slashes of light piercing open paperback books and bouncing off the shiny head of the tutting guy across the aisle. There was a spooky, ghostly, swirling shape floating in front of him – the screen saver on his laptop. I couldn't get comfortable and I couldn't sleep. It was the noise. I was thinking, how could all these people sleep through it? Even when I put my hands over my ears I could feel the low growl of the engines. I didn't really want to watch another movie on the mini-screen that folded out from the seat in front and reading was giving me a headache, so I put in the earphones of my MP3 and selected 'most played' on shuffle.

As the band started playing inside my head, I looked over at the screen saver. Was it clouds or water? Maybe sand blowing across a desert? The sand became leaves and the leaves became rippling grass. The grass was a football pitch. Beckham's foot struck the ball and it sailed, in slow motion, into the corner of the net. The crowd roared. The goalkeeper trotted over, reached down and picked it up but it wasn't a ball any more. It was a white rabbit, nose twitching. The rabbit kicked its back legs, in a panic to escape, and the goalie dropped it. It hopped twice
then disappeared
down
a hole.



I suppose I should give you a bit more info. You would have seen the pictures of the wedding on the Internet and in the gossip mags. Don't say you didn't see them because I know you did. The designer dress, the celebrity guest list, the paparazzi. So boring! Then Charity flew off to shoot some lame sci-fi movie in New Zealand, or somewhere like that, and my dad went straight to New York to finish the tour with his band. I went back to school. About a month later, I got an e-mail saying I could come and visit their new house in Malibu at the end of term. Then, I suppose, because of the 'thing' I did (which you also saw in the news), my end of term was a bit earlier than expected. Oh, by the way, I guess you know that my dad is Lyndon Fury, the lead singer with Slap! I know, I know! Rock star dad, dead mother, actress stepmum, I've got to be a mixed-up kid, right?





**ARTIST WIFE
SUFFERING FROM
DEPRESSION
SAYS SINGER**

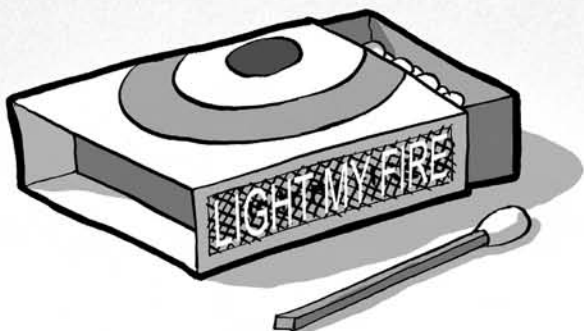


**ROCK
STAR
DAUGHTER**

**STARS OF
MUSIC & ART
SAY GOODBYE
TO AMICA**

Politicians joined painters and popstars in London today at the funeral of tragic artist and rock star wife, Amica...

You might think you know me, but you don't. Don't believe everything you read in those celebrity magazines. They tell lies and invent sensational, malicious stuff that isn't true - especially when my mum died. They don't know what it's really like being me. All those stories about me stealing stuff, getting drunk, being expelled from exclusive schools, burning a couple of them down - well, only some of that actually happened. I'm not a 'wild child' and I'm not an 'out-of-control rich brat'. OK? Everyone thinks I'm spoilt. You know, 'why is she such a bad kid when she had all that advantage?' But I didn't ask for the money and big houses and posh schools and all that. I just wanted a nice, normal home and a nice, normal family, but it didn't work out that way.



When I was little, about six or seven I think, I picked up a really pretty box of matches in a café in France. I liked how it rattled and carried it around in my pocket. The box was red, white and blue, quite 60s retro, with a sort of target on it and the words 'light my fire' on the side.

It was the first box in my collection.

Mum got sick soon after that. I think I always knew she might die because everyone started talking about what would happen to me if she wasn't around, like when she was in hospital and all that. I wanted to go with her, and when they said I couldn't. . . I set fire to my bed.

I was nine and at

boarding school when

Mum died.



fire noun combustion, destructive burning, flames, burning wood, coal or other fuel
fire alarm
fireball
firebomb
firebrigade
fire extinguisher

Pyromania means 'a mental derangement, excitement or excessive enthusiasm for fire'. That's what Dr Redmond at Orchard Farm said. The police called it arson - 'malicious setting on fire of house or other property'.



**STAR FURY
DEFENDS
'CONFUSED'
DAUGHTER**