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Lightning Strike!

BY R. LEBLANC

Craaack! The searing end of a lightning flash sent tremors down the veteran Douglas fir. A burst of flame exploded from its jagged top, followed by a thin spiral of ghostlike smoke winding upward into the predawn blackness. In a short time flames engulfed the old fir; and finally, weakened to the point that it could no longer stand, it crashed—a blazing incendiary—into the young spruce forest below.

There had been no major fire in the Prince George Forest District all summer, and David knew it could not last. Vancouver District had already lost three thousand acres in one fire, all in prime Douglas fir. The other districts in the province had also been hard hit. Now, as he boarded the Forest Service Cessna 180 for an early-morning fire patrol, David was thinking about last night's thunderstorm and the fire or fires he was sure it had started.

When David spotted the fire, it had already burned nearly five acres. The charred remains of the lightning-struck fir were lost amid the blackened waste left by the