## The cooling ember

The living room was warmed up by the fireplace. The old man, sitting in his armchair, was staring at the enchanting flames slowly consuming the log. The heat from blazing red ember was sending a small scorching blow towards his face.
Looking at the battling flames made him think. These ephemeral flames were fighting, standing upon one another to build their best way up on the log and create new infant ones extending and reproducing this cycle, colonizing the timber until they were gone. It was funny to him, but this made him think of his life. He had fought all his days for his family, trying to leave a mark in this world. After all, the
cycle of life was not so different from a flame cycle.

He had met his wife during his early years, in a dancing hall during the town fest. He remembered how delicate she looked in her fancy dress. He had always liked her, but that night he decided to ask her for a dance. They danced along with the violin. "A beautiful night that was!" he thought. Two years later, after a long hike in the Alps, he proposed to her in front of a magnificent landscape of high mountains. Of course, she accepted.

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He was brought back to the fireplace by the voice of his wife behind him. The fire was still there facing him and the flames were still biting at the wood. A spark flew toward him with a cracking noise. A new thought called to his mind. After the wedding, he moved with his wife to work in a bigger city. He had found a job as a welder in a shipyard. This job was really difficult, and the sparks from the beautiful fireplace were nothing compared to those produced while welding. Every day looked the same back then, until one day when a new life was brought to the family: a beautiful tiny blond girl they called Sarah. Sarah was that new tiny flame tickling the log in the chimney. He could remember going home that day after a long day of work. And how happy he felt discovering little Sarah and the first look she gave him! He could feel his heart melting again just from the thought of it.

"Sarah, could you pass me the water please?" Asked his wife. "Of course, mom, and actually I'll just go get the dessert!"

Again, he came out of his thoughts. There was a faint smile on his face. He was happy to feel the presence of his wife and Sarah behind him. She was no longer the tiny little girl he could hold in his arms, but a beautiful woman now.

The heat from the fireplace's flames were now caressing his face with pleasant touches as they had grown less powerful. They were not fighting anymore but rather dancing together in harmony around what was left of the log. As if the life of the fire had slowed down and didn't need to fight as hard as it used to, just as when he finally retired after a hard laboring life. By then Sarah had grown up and was married herself. She had met John in university, where they both studied law. He was proud of her, and actually also proud of himself. He and his wife had worked hard all their life taking extra hours every week in order to allow their daughter to

go to school and access to a higher-class life than the one they lived. When he retired, Sarah had become an accomplished lawyer. A few months later, as he invited her to drink tea with John, she announced that she was with child and he was soon to be a grand-father. His tiny flame had grown bigger than he ever had been and was now about to revive the fire, as part of the flame cycle.

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Although, the fire in the chimney did not revive. There were no flames left, no more fighting, no more dancing around the log. All that was left were cooling embers, fading from red to black. He was no longer feeling the heat caressing his face, but rather a cold draft. Behind him his family didn't seem to notice the extinction of the fire. Sarah had come back from the kitchen with a cake filled with ten candles, singing. It was Mark's tenth birthday. The old man's wife and John started singing together. He could feel the excitement of his grandson wanting to blow out the candles. After all, children loved birthdays, a delicious cake followed by presents. "Such events don't happen every day!" he thought.

The room growing colder felt heavier on him. Even though he was feeling the excitement from the birthday celebration, he was starting to fall asleep. His family was still singing behind him as he heard the cake being placed on the table. He heard little Mark taking a big breath, and as he blew the candles, the cracking coal threw a last spark from the fireplace which flew in the air and the old man fell asleep.

By the time the flying spark slowly reached the floor, the living room was silent and all that was left inside was the smiling face of the old man, staring at the cooling ember.