The Damp Log

The biggest log wouldn't catch. Andrés shifted the paper for the third time and blew until his eyes filled with smoke. His daughter was sitting on the floor. She handed him a twig she'd been keeping in her pocket.

He told her it wouldn't last. The girl held it for a moment and then set it down on the hearth.

When Andrés went looking for more paper, he saw a pile of dry branches on the windowsill that she had collected that afternoon. He came back with his hands full. They put in the twigs one at a time, watching to see which caught first. The big log took quite a while to warm up.

Before she went to bed, the girl carried two more twigs to the windowsill. Her father waited for her to go upstairs, then went out to the yard to find two more.