The bird in the forest

Once there was a forest and in that forest there was a tree and in this tree lived a little bird. The little bird loved her home. She loved the leaves, the branches, the tree and the entire forest. It was her home.

One day the little bird smelt something strange. She flew up, high over the canopy and saw in the distance a fire, a great snake of flames and smoke coming towards her. She called down to her friends, "It's a fire, we must do something," but all her friends fled. "Run away with us," they called, "otherwise you will die."

But the little bird loved her home and would not leave it to be destroyed. She flew down to a stream by the tree in which she lived and dipped her wings into the water. She then returned to the sky and when she was over the fire, tipped her wings to release the droplets of water. The water hissed and fizzed away in the flames in an instant. She flew back to the stream and again wetted her wings before returning to the fire. She did this time and time again with the fire getting closer and closer to her tree.

Up in the heavens, the gods looked down and laughed at the futility of the bird's quest to save her home. But one god, the Eagle God, did not laugh. Filled with admiration, he swooped down from heaven and joined the little bird as she flew between stream and fire. "Listen, little bird," said the Eagle God, "You must fly away. Your attempts to put out the fire won't work and you will die."

"I don't care if I die," cried the bird. "I love my home and I will do everything I can to save it." The Eagle God was so filled with compassion that large tears began to drip from his eyes. They hissed and fizzled in the fire but these were big tears and soon there was stream of them, then a river and at last the fire was stifled. The Eagle God returned to heaven and the little bird to her tree.

And by spring, new shoots of life were peeping up through the carpet of ash on the forest floor.