

## Matches

Emil's grandfather died recently, and the boy was grieving hard.

He was the only adult Emil considered his friend.

He listened to his stories with real interest, and his grandfather often repeated that fire cleanses — even though he used to be a firefighter.

He was very different from other adults and parents — those were boring and overly religious, almost crazy.

And grandfather, whom the parents called a godless man, said that smart adults invented their own Santa Claus for other adults — just to keep people obedient.

Almost like with kids. Thanks to his grandpa, Emil grew up fast and saw the world wider than his peers.

But he missed love from his parents and often cried at night, even in his sleep.

He was doing homework in his grandfather's old SAAB that stood in the garage, and when the glove box opened by itself, Emil was surprised and started looking inside.

There were only old papers and a full box of matches.

"Good for lighting the barbecue," thought Emil and smiled.

He lit a match and brought it to a spider making a web in the garage corner.

The spider flashed and vanished together with the web.

"Whoa," said Emil, and lit a candle stub on the shelf.

The candle disappeared.

He couldn't believe it and took out his magazine with naked women from his hiding spot - and slowly set it on fire.

It burned up and vanished. No ashes.

Emil realized these matches do the impossible — whatever they burn disappears completely.

Church.

That's what came to his mind.

That was the reason his parents weren't spending time with him.

That's what took all their attention and love.

The plan was simple — come at night, light it, and walk away.

There was no guard there.

He took some gas from the SAAB just in case.

For a while he stood and looked at the cross on the roof, lit by dim streetlights.

-“Let the fire cleanse,” whispered Emil as he set the church on fire.

He watched from a distance as flames covered it, flaring up bright — and then all disappeared, leaving just empty space surrounded by trees.

Emil, shocked by what he saw, came back home and lay down holding the box of matches.

He fell asleep with a hope that his parents would remember they have a son — a son who misses their love.

The End

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