



# THE NEW STUDENT

RAFAK  
SKARZYCKI

Written by: Rafał Skarżycki

Illustrated by: Tomasz Lew Leśniak

Published by: Instytut Matki i Dziecka

Translated by: Anna Gordzialska i Magdalena Sikon

ISBN: 978-83-88767-80-7

Scientific patronage



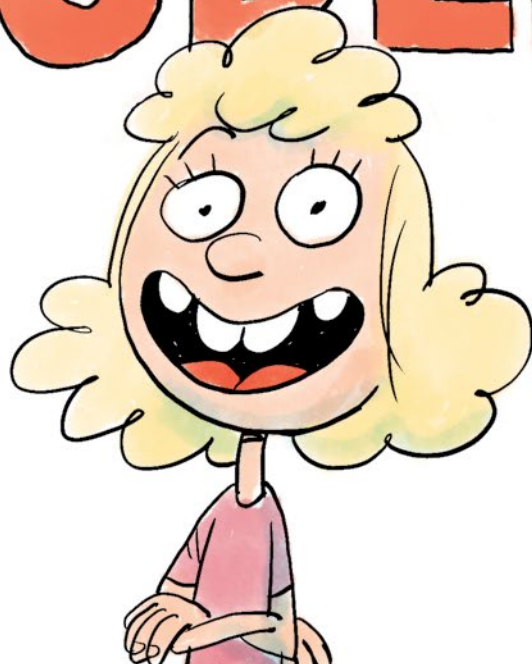
The publication is financed by the European Commission within the Erasmus + Program. The publication has been funded with the financial support of the European Commission. The publication reflects only the views of its authors and the European Commission and the Erasmus + Program National Agency are not responsible for its essential content.

FREE PUBLICATION



# THE NEW STUDENT

WRITTEN BY:  
RAFAK  
SKARZYCKI



ILLUSTRATED BY:  
TOMEK LEW  
LESNIAK



**Y**et before the beginning of the school year Anthony promised himself that in the third class he would stay away from troubles. He remembered perfectly the flood in the boys' toilet he succeeded to cause being in the second class and how playing with the school bus driver's navigation during a trip ended up with forced sleeping in the middle of a forest. Obviously those were only Anthony's most spectacle pranks thanks to which his report card, from the first to the last page, was filled in with lively correspondence between his teachers and parents. But this belongs to the past, it's over, dot. It's time for new Anthony, an ideal third class student with exemplary conduct in his school report. Anthony made a decision and wanted to keep to it. Sadly the world proved once again that it doesn't care about the right resolutions at all and already on the first school day put him to a hard test. The name of the test was ... Katherine.



‘My dear, quiet please!’

The class teacher clapped her hands and when the rumour of the students telling one another what incredible things they did on holiday stopped, she put her arm around a skinny girl with a small nose and curly blonde shoulder-length hair who was standing next to her.

‘Say hello to Kate, our new student.’

‘What a skeleton!’ thought Anthony and at no time he scolded himself for that thought. No troubles. I am finished with being the class troublemaker. The weight of the new girl is below the state average, so what? Let others make fun of that if they want. He, Anthony, is not going to comment upon this. Let the new one have peace and may she leave Anthony alone as well- that would be the best solution for everyone. Anthony smiled at his thought and probably that drew the teacher’s attention:

‘Where shall we sit you Kate? Anthony?’

Famous reflex of a troublemaker didn’t work at all this time and Anthony grinned even more instead of making a gloomy, deadly face, the face of a man next to whom you wouldn’t like to sit even a soulless thief and not to mention the new girl. And that decided the case.



‘Witek, go and sit in the first row’ decided the teacher ‘And you Kate sit next to Anthony.’

While Kate was taking her place there was not even a sign of smile left on Anthony’s face. Instead of this the new girl was greeted with frosty look of blue eyes. The new girl didn’t care about it at all – she reached out her right hand under the desk:

‘I’m Kate.’ The new girl’s hand was hanging in the air while heaven and hell were fighting for Anthony’s soul. This time heaven was the winner.

‘Anthony’ – the new girl had an unexpectedly strong and firm handshake. Anthony looked at her with interest.

‘I hope you’re not a bore’ – Kate winked at him and took a spinner out of her pocket. ‘So? You’re gonna show me what you can?’

And although Anthony really wanted to stay focused on the subject of the lesson and it was maths, he couldn’t reject that evident challenge. Yes, he had promised himself to be polite, but he didn’t want to be found a class quad or a coward.

‘Look at this’ Anthony took his own spinner out of his pocket and span it on his finger and a while later he started a complicated spinner ‘dance’ changing fingers smoothly.



‘Not bad’ Kate nodded her head with appreciation and spun her spinner. That was the beginning of a friendship but also of troubles.

*‘The student was playing with his spinner instead of paying attention during the Maths lesson’.* A note in your report card? Already on the first day at school?- Anthony’s mother put down the report card.



‘I’ll be better tomorrow’ – But it didn’t sound convincing. Mum decided not to go deeper in the subject and tousled her son’s hair.

But the next day started with another challenge. Early in the morning, even before the first lesson. To be specific, already in the cloakroom.

‘Shall we race?’ Kate’s eyes sparkled in a pert way.

‘Nooo...’ Anthony turned his eyes onto the floor and started to tie his left shoe.

‘The first in the classroom is the master’ insisted Kate.

‘I can’t.’

‘Are you scared?’

‘No..., I simply have a calf injury.’ Anthony smoothly moved from doing up his shoe laces to massaging his calf. The left calf, to make it clear.

‘Yeah...’ grinned Kate. Her first and second teeth were already adult teeth, on both sides, at the top she



had empty places left by her third baby teeth. ‘A sore finger and a headache are school excuses...’

‘But I...’ Anthony didn’t even get a chance to end his sentence. Kate slapped his arm and shouted:

‘Tag!’ And she started running ahead as quickly as she could. Anthony’s instinct was stronger than his will. He started chasing her. The classroom was on the second floor. Before they reached it Anthony managed to catch up his friend.

‘Tag!’ And he slapped her back as if he was rescuing her from choking up. Kate lost the rhythm of running only for a while and then she squinted her eyes as a snake getting ready for attack and started chasing Anthony. He turned around and cocked a snook at her. Kate’s face turned red. The girl speeded up as much as she could. She reached out her hand to grab Anthony who was still staring



at her and then... BUM! Both of them crashed with the wall. Well, at least that's what they thought. They quickly discovered that it was a very close meeting with the headmaster of the school. Still lying on the fallen down headmaster, Kate slapped the arm of Anthony who was getting up with difficulty.

'Tag....' Anthony looked at Kate with horror and the headmaster looked at her with amazement. She only added: - 'No slapping back.'

'My son is the biggest troublemaker in the whole school!' Anthony's mother wrung her hands and she would be right if it was in the second class. However, in the third class, it was different.

'No Mum! Mum!' Anthony protested. 'I am the biggest troublemaker ex aequo with Kate.'



‘What?’

‘Ex aequo means that we both have the same place.’ Anthony tried to explain.

‘I know what it means! I wanted.... well never mind.’ She looked at the report card. After only one month at school it was half filled with notes. ‘And Kate has the same number of notes?’

‘Well, in fact she has one more, but that doesn’t count because the teacher didn’t notice that when she crashed that window with a ball I was defending and she was just taking a penalty kick.’

Surprisingly, these explanations were not soothing for mum – she only sighed a few times.

‘And by the way,’ said Anthony. ‘Kate invited me to come and visit her at home after school. We are going to play a board game! May I go?’

‘Yes, yes, of course,’ mum was still staring at the report card, but Anthony didn’t pay attention to it. He raised his arms as a sign of a victory.

‘Yeah! You’re wonderful!’ – he hugged his mother tight. ‘I told Kate there wouldn’t be any punishment for activating the school foam extinguisher.’

The next day lessons dragged on more than usually. Anthony and Kate were looking forward to hearing the last bell ring. It was hard for them to stay focused on maths, biology or Polish thinking about Kate's new board game. Taking into consideration the circumstances, only one note for talking during the classes for each of them was really nothing. Right after the lessons, Kate and Anthony ran into the cloakroom. Kate's mother was waiting there for them. They went home together. As soon as they got there and washed their hands, they started preparing the board game.

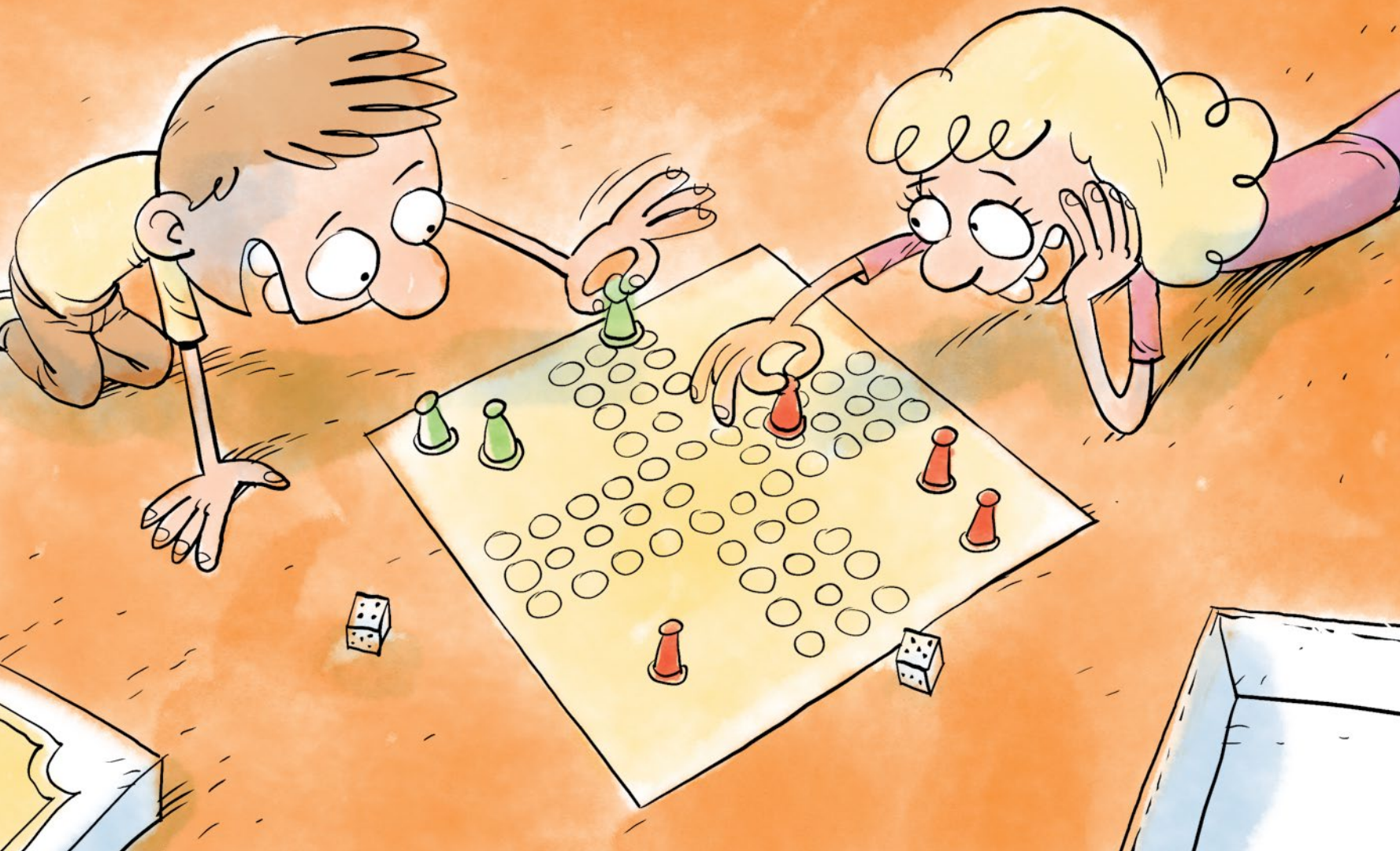
'I shall start, ladies first. '

'But I am your guest.' Anthony has already planned the whole strategy the key element of which was starting the game as the first.

'Ok, let it be.' – Kate didn't look delighted.

Anthony threw both dice, but before he could count how many fields he should move on, something terrible happened.

The corner of Kate's mouth started to pulse steadily. A while later Kate fell down. Her legs and arms were moving in uncoordinated way throwing the counters off the board lying on the floor.



‘Hey, stop playing the fool! What are you do....’ The words stuck in Anthony’s throat. It didn’t look as playing at all. Foam appeared on Kate’s lips.

‘Help me! Help!’ cried Anthony terrified as he was.

In a second Kate’s mum was in the room. She kneeled near her daughter gently holding her head. She looked at Anthony who was white with fear:

‘Everything will be fine. Don’t worry.’

‘But I... I didn’t.... She just...’ – Anthony couldn’t gather his thoughts.





‘I know. I’m sorry. We should have told you, but... Kate didn’t want you in the class to know that she suffers from epilepsy. We hoped she would not have another attack.

Kate’s convulsion slowly ceased. Her mother wiped up her saliva and stroke her head. Unnaturally lifeless Kate’s eyes were restoring their glow. The girl was conscious again. She avoided Anthony’s look. She wanted to say something but her mother didn’t let her.

‘Sh... Come on, you will lay down and I will call Anthony’s parents.’ ‘Everything ok?’ – This question was addressed to Anthony who was breathing hard. His red cheeks became pale.

‘Yes. I guess so.’

Kate’s mum put Kate on the bed.

‘I’ll be back in a moment, I left my phone in the kitchen.’

Kate’s mum left the room, which was filled with an awkward silence. Kate avoided looking at Anthony. Tears appeared in her eye corners.

‘It’s ok, you can start laughing’ – she finally said.

‘What?’

‘Call me a weirdo. Jelly. Anything you manage to come up with. You can tell everyone in the class. I won’t go there anymore. I’ll change the school.’

Anthony hardly swallowed saliva. At last Kate looked at him. She had red eyes.

‘Come on!’

‘That’s how it was in your last school? You had an attack and they laughed at you?’

‘Congratulations Sherlock Holmes. And you know what? I don’t care about it. I don’t care about you!’

‘But...’

‘But what?’ Kate lifted on her elbows though she was weak.

‘But I do care about you.’ – Anthony finally managed to say it. ‘You are my best friend. We do everything together. We talk, we play football, run together in the field. We do everything that...’ He bit his tongue but Kate ended up the sentence:

‘...that *normal* children do. Is that what you wanted to say?’

‘*Healthy*, that’s what I wanted to say. I didn’t know you are.... that you suffer from epilepsy.’

‘Well, now you know and you can go and look for another friend.’  
‘No way!’ Although it was hard Anthony was looking right into Kate’s eyes. ‘You



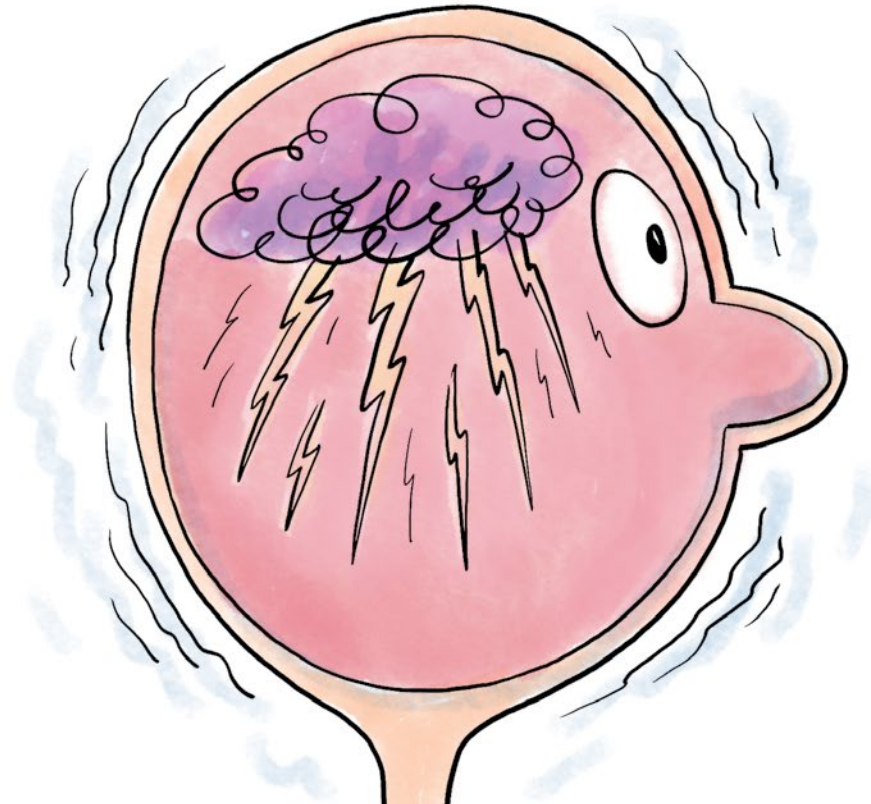
are my best friend. And best friends don't stop being best friends just because someone is ill. Don't change the school, please.'

Before Kate replied her mum returned.

'Anthony, your dad will be here in a while.'

The next days were very hard. Kate didn't appear at school. Anthony was really worried that she was going to change the school and maybe even move somewhere. He was afraid to visit her at home or call her and ask. At home his parents talked to him about Kate's illness - epilepsy. Anthony found out that it was a chronic brain illness which may have many various symptoms. You can't get infected with it and the treatment may last really long. The most important thing for Anthony was if Kate recovers from her illness one day. Anthony's Parents said it was possible depending on Kate's situation. They also asked Anthony not to tell anyone in the class about Kate's illness - they didn't know whether she and her parents would want this. Anthony felt a little bit offended because of that request - it was obvious for him that one should not reveal secrets of one's best friend! If Kate doesn't want to tell anyone about this, he, Anthony will be

silent as the grave. And so he was silent for the next few days, more and more worried that he had lost his friend.



At last, to be specific on Wednesday, Kate returned to school. She appeared in the classroom with her mum and the school psychologist. The teacher asked everyone to be quiet though she didn't really have to.

'Kids, as you probably have noticed Kate wasn't at school for the last few days. It was caused by some illness.'

'It must have been gastric flu. I also caught it before the weekend,' said Witek and Anthony wanted to punch him in his head. Surprisingly Kate smiled.

'No. I have an illness which will not leave me just like that. It is called epilepsy and I want to tell you something about it today.'

It got really, really quiet in the classroom. Kate started to talk. Her mother helped her and then the school psychologist explained some things. When Kate looked at Anthony he showed her two thumbs up. He was really happy and proud that he had such a friend. The kids had a lot of questions, e.g. how to behave in case of an attack (first of all call adults), whether Kate will recover (according to the doctors there was a big chance to avoid the next attacks of the illness), if it is really ok for Kate to raise the roof playing with Anthony (happily yes - she



can do almost everything what other children, not suffering from epilepsy, do). When Kate, her mum and the school psychologist answered all the questions, Kate took her place, next to Anthony.

‘I’m so glad you came back.’

‘You say so because if I changed the school you would again be the worst troublemaker alone’ - Kate smiled and Anthony pretended to be offended.

‘You know!’ - And after a while he added - ‘Well..., there is some truth in it. I somehow cannot avoid troubles.’

And then they both started laughing loudly. And this time, although the lesson was still on, they didn’t get any note in their report cards.

