

# A FRIENDSHIP STORY



BY DANIJELA KNEZ AND IVAN DRAJZL



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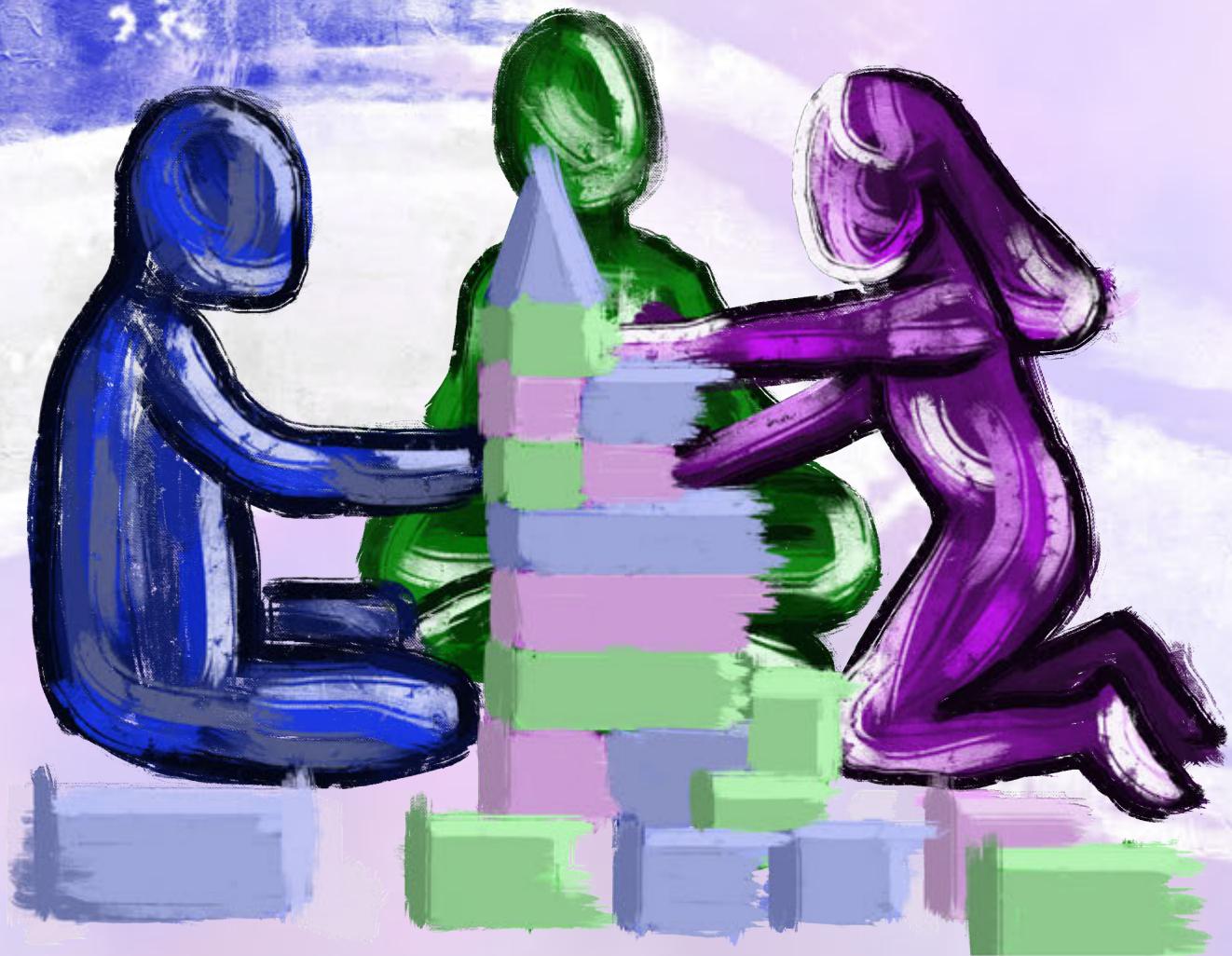
Luke loves to play, and just like any child he loves toys and games. He reads books and plays with toy airplanes and stuffed animals. He often uses his imagination, letting everything around him fade away as he plays. When this happens, Luke is very happy.





But Luke is not *always* happy. He is living with a rare disease. It has a strange name that he cannot even pronounce. The disease is one that not many people have. It often makes him feel tired and sometimes causes pain. When this happens, he rarely goes outside to play. Even his imaginary world feels dull. This can make him sad and upset. It also makes it harder to make new friends.

Luke's Mom and Dad took him to see MAAAANY doctors in MAAANY hospitals. Luke did not always understand what the doctors were saying - all he wanted was to be well enough to play outside like the other kids.



Finally, it was Luke's first day at school. He was looking forward to meeting other children and making friends. Luke sat next to a boy named Steven, who invited him to sit and make a house out of building blocks. The house that they built was huge, and Steven and Luke were very proud of their creation. All of the other children gathered around to admire it.

Luke's first day was going well! But then it was time to play outside.

"Let's run!" Steven suggested.

"But I can't run," Luke replied frowning.

"Oh!" Steven said in surprise. "That's a shame, I really like running. I guess I'll see you later."

Steven ran out into the playground. Luke sadly stared out of the window at all the other kids playing outside.



As the days passed, Luke would often have to stay inside by himself because he wasn't able to run around with the other kids. He didn't want anyone else to know how sad this made him so he stayed quiet.

Sometimes, his Mom and Dad would pick him up early from school to take him to the doctor for check-ups. Once, Luke even had to miss a friend's birthday party because he had a hospital appointment. Luke became very upset. It didn't seem fair!





At school, some of the children started saying Luke was no fun and they didn't want to play with him anymore. One of his classmates didn't invite him to her birthday party because her mother had told her that it would be better if he didn't come.

"Why invite him when he doesn't even play with you?" she had said. "All he does is sit in the corner of the room while the other kids are playing."

And so Luke's sadness grew and grew.

But then one day, Luke's classmate Steven broke his leg and it had to be put in a cast. Together they sat and watched the other kids play. Steven found it frustrating to stay still all day.

"I'm sorry that you got hurt," said Luke comforting him, "I hope you can run again soon."





Later, Steven thought about how Luke must feel to be left out every day during recess. It was hard to be inside sitting down while seeing all the other kids have fun and play without you. He realized that it wasn't Luke's choice not to run with Steven and his friends—Luke could not play in the way other kids could.

After several weeks, Steven's leg finally healed, and he could run again. But he did not forget how sad he had felt while wearing his cast. He made up his mind to try to be a good friend to Luke.



Luke's birthday was coming up. Luke was afraid that no one would come to his party. He had noticed that many of the children had been avoiding him at school. What he did not know was that his friend Steven was preparing a surprise...

On the day of his party, Luke was waiting in the playroom. There was juice, cake and snacks - the only things missing were the other kids! Luke stared out of the window, hoping that someone would come. He waited and waited, and still no one arrived. Luke grew sad and disappointed.



Suddenly, he heard a loud noise coming from outside. Steven burst through the door. He was followed by all of the other kids from the class. Everyone had come to Luke's birthday! They brought building blocks and paint and paper. They played all sorts of indoor games together with Luke.

Before they had arrived, Steven had explained to the other children—" Luke likes playing games, but he gets very tired because his body works differently from ours. So it's better if we play indoor games". When the other kids understood, they were happy to join in too to celebrate Luke. Luke was delighted.



After his birthday party, Steven often sat next to Luke at school and the other kids played games with Luke inside too. Luke still had to go to the hospital a lot, but he never felt lonely at school again.



When Luke grew up, he became a famous painter, and many of his friends from his class came to visit his art shows. They would proudly tell the reporters and guests that Luke was their friend going back to when they were children. Luke never forgot the kindness of his school friends, and his friends learned how much fun can be had when everyone gets included!

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