

## **Crooked 10\* (Krzywe 10)** **by Ewa Nowak**

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A group of teenagers go on holiday to a house in *Krzywe*, a village in the Polish lake district of *Mazury*. They are looked after by a childless couple, but the teenagers are more or less left to their own devices. *Hadrian* is one of them; he is exceptionally handsome and very popular with girls. *Hadrian* is a model; his strong-minded mother runs his career with an iron hand and even during the holiday she sets up a photo session for him. Another teenager, *Dominika*, a younger sister of *Magda* whom we met in the earlier novel “Anything but a Mint”, finds herself attracted to *Hadrian* because of his popularity and good looks. She does not allow herself to see that *Hadrian* completely ignores her while it is someone else who gives her discreet, but nevertheless noticeable signs of affection. The development of *Dominika*’s misplaced emotions is one of the main plots of the novel.

*Alicja* is yet another teenager from Warsaw who came to spend her holidays in the countryside of *Krzywe*. She is wise, but her veneer of self-confidence conceals low self-esteem. She lets it be assumed that she has a boyfriend, although she does not. Still worse, she fabricates letters that her imaginary boyfriend sends to her. Her story has an unexpected outcome: she falls in love with a boy from *Krzywe*, who had also been pretending to be someone else.

The book skilfully and sensitively presents the burgeoning problems of adolescence. A truthful gallery of adult characters is equally portrayed: the inhabitants of *Krzywe* with their problems so very different from those of the citified teenagers from Warsaw and teenagers’ parents, who bear the responsibility of having inflicted the consequences of their life’s choices on their children. The novel touches upon the problems of adoption, the creation of one’s own image and conformity with social trends. At the same time, this novel is set in a beautiful neighbourhood during idyllic summer holidays: the mood throughout is buoyant.

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\* Translator’s note: The title in Polish literally refers to the address of the summer house where the novel is set (house no. 10, village of Crooked), and does not necessarily have any associations with any 10 people in the novel.