

Translation of

**Georg Bydlinski / Jens Rasmus  
Der Zapperdockel und der Wock  
Bilderbuch  
Dachs Verlag / Patmos Verlagshaus  
Wien / Düsseldorf 2004  
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[with pictures]

**The Zapperdockle and the Wock  
Story by Georg Bydlinski, Illustrations by Jens Rasmus  
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**Translated by Helena Ragg-Kirkby**



The zapperdockle is small, uncertain, and a cry-baby. But he can't help it: that's just the way he is. The wock is big, strong, and rude. But he can't help it: that's just the way he is.

Can two characters like the zapperdockle and the wock ever learn to get along with one another?

After a few misunderstandings...who knows?

Once upon a time there lived a zapperdockle.

He wasn't too handsome, and he wasn't too ugly.

He wasn't too big, and he wasn't too small.

He wasn't too fat, and he wasn't too thin.

His moustache was precisely the same length as those sported by all zapperdockles: no longer and no shorter than most of the moustaches in zapperdockle land.

But all the same a passing wock said to him one day, "You ugly little zapperdockle! Stop twirling your moustache, or your finger will get stuck in it for ever and ever!"

Wocks wouldn't be wocks if they were pleasant. Even if a wock is in a good mood just for once and goes so far as to say hello, then he'll say something like, "bottom of the morning, you miserable scarecrow!" Or, if he's talking to a fellow wock, "rotten evening, you pathetic old water butt!"

Wocks are almost always fatsos, so 'water butt' suits them rather well.

But when the zapperdockle heard that he was ugly, his feelings were hurt. He stared down at the ground.

"Are you looking for something?" demanded the wock. "Have you lost a mouse or a house or a big fat louse?"

That's when the zapperdockle began to cry, because it had just struck him that the wock had called him small as well as ugly.

And he had grown two whole centimetres in the last few weeks!

His moustache grew wet and hung down like two thin fishing lines.

Great big zapperdockle tears fell onto the sand.

"It seems to be raining," said the wock. "Though it's funny – I can't see any clouds".

He picked a dock leaf and gave it to the zapperdockle.

"This will keep you dry," he said. "But you'll have to hold it under your eyes or it'll be no use to you at all, you desiccated cry-baby!"

The zapperdockle felt even more hurt, and cried all the more pitifully. A veritable river of tears streamed down to the ground.

Along comes some great flabby wock, he thought, and ruins everything for me!

Life is so miserable. As miserable as a black, black stone.

When zapperdockles cry, they turn transparent and people can read their thoughts.

“Life is as miserable as a black, black stone,” read the wock. “You’re a poet! But is that what you really think, you misery-guts? Let me tell you: life can be as joyful as a bright red garden hose!”

“Do you reckon?” sniffed the zapperdockle.

“A bright red garden hose?”

“At the very least!” replied the wock, quite forgetting to be unpleasant.

“Or a yellow windmill

or a tie with green spots”.

“Are you sure?” asked the zapperdockle.

For he personally was never very sure about anything he said or did.

Yesterday his neighbour had given him an apple.

He had taken a bite and had said enthusiastically “Wow, your apples are good!”

But the very next minute he was worrying about having said it.

“Oh, I hope he doesn’t think I meant to say that his pears and strawberries *aren’t* any good!”

The wock’s hard heart began to soften when he saw the tear-stained zapperdockle looking up at him.

All of a sudden he came across to himself as quite un-wock-ish – and he liked the feeling.

“Listen, little Zapp,” he said.

“You’re not that small, you know.

And before you turn the entire countryside into a bog with all that crying, let me tell you one thing:

Life can be as wonderful as a triple-layered cream cake

or a jar of gherkins complete with a watch-tower!”

The zapperdockle stopped crying.

He also stopped being transparent.

His moustache dried out and lost its mournful droop.

“I had no idea that a wock could be so much fun,” said the zapperdockle.

And he started to smile –

for the first time in a week.

“Zapp, you’ve done well,” said the wock, rubbing his hands together.

“You’ve stopped me from being bored.

I’ve been bored for seven whole weeks.

And when a wock is bored, he becomes even more unpleasant than usual –

Just to while away the time!”

The zapperdockle made up a rhyme, twirling his moustache as he did so.

“Right on top of a very tall rock

Sat a zapperdockle and a wock.

Cards or chess were their favourite lark

They played them even after dark.

The moss they sat on was as soft as it comes

Much to the joy of their two tender bums.”

“I knew you were a poet!” said the wock.

“Do you really think so?” asked the zapperdockle uncertainly.

“I never say anything I don’t mean!” said the wock.