JAN BRZECHWA

**Kaczka Dziwaczka**

**‘Wacky Ducky’**

Near a river, if you're lucky,

You might meet Ms Wacky Ducky.

Being wacky was her passion,

in her life, her moods, her fashions.

At a barber’s, she’d say:

‘Please, can I have some bottled cheese?’

At a church another time

she tried to buy a book of limes.

At a local army camp

she asked them for a magic lamp.

Other ducks were going spare:

‘Wacky Ducky, don't you dare!’

She would lay hardboiled eggs,

standing on her head, not legs.

And to spite the other ducks

she refused to ever quack.

Her use of toothpicks for combs

made the other duckies groan.

She ate some ribbon for tea

Claiming it’s pasta, you see!

Swallowing coins wrapped in paper

She said she would cough them back later!

Still, our Wacky little Ducky

Always seemed to come out lucky.

One sad day, a nasty crook

said: ‘Your goose is truly cooked!’

Having plucked our little duck,

he stuck her on an oven rack!

But dear Wacky wouldn't have it –

she just turned into a rabbit!

Served with beetroot, because

That's how wacky she was!

Trans. MK

**Jan Brzechwa  
*Market Stall***

Market days on market stalls  
Often carry talks and calls:

'Lean against me if you will,  
You seem wilting Mr Dill.'

'Not surprising, Chive, my friend,  
I’ve been here for days on end!'

Young Kohlrabi heard them out:  
'See that Turnip? – now that’s stout!'

Pea turns with a friendly pat:  
'How’s life Turnip? Better, that?'

'Thank you, thank you, Mr Pea,  
Things are settling down for me.

But that Parsley’s not too swell:  
Pale and thin, can’t sleep that well.'

'Oh that’s weak'  
Sighed the Leek.

Beet shuns Onion loud and clear,  
Still she teases, 'Beet, my dear,

Red and lonely is your life,  
Might be time to find a wife.'

But Beet turns his nose away:  
'Oh, just get yourself astray,

Some beet-sweetie I might try...  
You just make everyone cry.'

'Oh that’s weak'  
Sighed the Leek.

Bean’s repine comes from the rear:  
'Stop that clamber over here!'

Brussels Sprouts tilt up, all cross,  
'Who died and made you the boss?'

'Look who’s talking, cheeky parrot!'  
Hissed a flared up, reddened carrot.

'Let the Cabbage settle that!'  
'Settle that?! That empty head?'  
  
Cabbage breathes a weary sigh:  
'Friends, dear friends, do stop that cry,

What’s the point of all that whoop,  
We’re still ending up in soup!'

'Oh that’s weak'  
Sighed the Leek.

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

**Jan Brzechwa**  
***Thread and Needle Spun a Waltz***

Thread and needle spun a waltz,  
Needle – smoothly, thread with faults.

Needle’s moves hit perfect angles,  
The thread always gets a tangle.

Needle leaps for thread to follow:  
“Oh, you’re agile as a swallow!”

Needle whirls into tight stitch,  
Dashing by – thread follows each.

Needle’s up, thread’s to the side,  
Needle’s eye is open wide.

Nimble, fast, fit as a fiddle,  
'Oh,' the thread gasps, 'what a needle!'

And so they danced to setting sun,  
Until the dress was sewn and done.

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

**Jan Brzechwa**  
***Zero***

Downhill it rolled into view:  
“Make way, I’m coming through!  
I am a million score,  
Who knows? might even be more.”

With its typical zeal  
It shouted: “I’m bigger still!”

Always in search of applause,  
So proud of how bulging it was.

All whispered, far and wide:  
“Such belly must mean too much pride.”  
It took them a while to spot  
That all in all it was naught.

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

**Jan Brzechwa**  
*Beetle*

In the reed a beetle’s buzz  
And a famous buzz it does.

An ox asked in bovine bass  
“Why go buzzing in the grass?”

“Why, you ask? Well, it’s a job,  
Better do a job than slob.”

“Any profit it can yield?”  
“What a question! See that field?

And that reed up to your knees,  
Meadows, thickets, woods and trees,

Even rivers there, you see?  
All those things belong to me!”

The ox reckoned: “That sounds fun,  
Easiest job under the sun!”

Came back home with a light head  
And went buzzing by the shed,

In a deep, ox voice of course.  
Meanwhile, farmer Bob stepped close.

“What’s all that?” he could but shout  
“Why’s my ox loafing about?!”

“Loafing? No no, don’t you see?  
All that buzzing here - that’s me!”

“Oh I’ll show you buzzing now,  
Back to work! Get to that plough!”

And he thought of such a chore,  
The poor ox could take no more.

Knock-off time, it trotted back.  
“I will give that bug a smack!”

But the beetle was not there,  
Somewhere else buzz filled the air.

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

**Jan Brzechwa**

**The Zoo**

Silly Billy in a zoo

Keeps on calling out: U-u!

What an ugly parrot, eek!

That giraffe is a tall freak!

Elephants should be on wheels!

And what’s up with all those seals?

Zebra needs a stripy bra!

Tiger’s claw..

And what a jaw!

And what's that under the roof:

Tortoise – cluck, cluck – what a goof!

And this birdie? Well, that’s rich!

Little birdie -

An ostrich!

Then he gets to camels’ pen

Looks in closely, looks again

Points through bars and states a fact:

Would be nice but it’s hunchbacked!

**TIGER**

Tiger, Sir, how is your day?

Pretty dull I have to say.

Would you like to leave this zoo?

Sure. Then I could feed on you!

**OSTRICH**

When she’s scared, you understand,

Ostrich sticks her head in sand,

She’s a wimp, agreed, alright…

But her eggs are quite a sight!

**PARROT**

Little parrot, over here!

Whisper something in my ear.

No! You’ll gossip, I can tell,

Soon each bird will know as well.

**FOX**

Dad and gramps red to their teeth,

This red tail is my bequeath,

And my name’s red fox, alright?

Move along or I will bite.

**WOLF**

Let me make it very clear,

About wolves like this one here:

Be glad it’s a picture really,

Otherwise he’d eat you, silly.

**TORTOISE**

Tortoise thought: let’s take the train,

But the fare is quite a pain.

Such a sum comes as a shock:

Will be faster if I walk.

**ZEBRA**

Is that zebra for real?

Does it somewhere live still?

Or did some silly fool

Paint these stripes on a mule?

**KANGAROO**

I say, that's one outsized shoe,

Mr kangaroo!

Yea, but that’s why every pair

Of my socks has a big tear.

**BUFFALO**

Let us go and say hello

To our favourite buffalo.

Buffalo, please don't say no,

Bow politely… there you go!

**BOAR**

Boars are boorish, boars are wild,

Boars' twin tusks are sharp and riled,

If you see one in the wood,

Climb a tree fast, understood?

**REINDEER**

As they visit the reindeer,

Ladies find his charm sincere

When he says: I’d really love,

To become milady’s glove.

**MONKEY**

Monkeys rarely touch the ground,

Monkeys love monkeying around.

Have a look at that baboon:

What an apish ape, that loon!

**CROCODILE**

Where’d you come from, crocodile?

Me? The Nile.

Let me out just for a while,

And I’ll take you to the Nile.

**GIRAFFE**

The giraffe’s main occupation,

Is her long neck’s elevation,

I admit I envy her,

I could never reach up there.

**LION**

Lion gets the lion’s share.

Lion mocks all foes a-scare,

For when he lets out a roar,

There’s no challenge anymore.

**BEAR**

Ladies, gents, meet our bear.

He's polite beyond compare.

Shake his paw, he’s very tame.

Doesn’t want to? That’s a shame.

**PANTHER**

Panther’s spotted head to toe,

But when it is time to go,

Dashing runs wind through her fur,

And spots can't keep up with her.

**ELEPHANT**

Our elephant named Moozit,

Has a trunk but doesn’t use it.

Why? Don’t stick your nose in that –

That’s his private etiquette.

**CAMEL**

Camel carries his two humps,

As if they were two gold lumps.

And gets pretty mad at me,

When he hears he can’t have three.

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

**Jan Brzechwa**  
***Lazybones***

Lazybones sits in his chair,  
Doing little more than stare.  
“Excuse me but that is not true!  
I am quite busy, thank you!  
Am I not sitting still?  
Have I not had a meal?  
Haven’t I just said squat?  
Scratched my head, did I not?  
And lost a shoe, just so you know,  
Well,… there you go!”

Lazybones sits in his chair,  
Doing little more than stare.  
“Well now, that is a lie!  
Washed my ears, didn’t I?  
Tore some buttons off clothes,  
Stuck a thumb up my nose.  
Had my hair cut in style,  
Wasn’t that worth my while?  
Lazybones sits in his chair,  
Doing little more than stare.

Waved off going to school, maybe another day,  
Didn’t do any homework, didn’t sound like much play,  
Gave up tying his shoes, was just too far to reach,  
Even saying “Good morning” felt like a waste of speech,  
Poochie didn’t get water – it was too far to walk,  
Didn’t feed his pet parrot, too much waste on the clock,  
Was about to eat supper, chewing just made him cough,  
Wanted to go to bed – too late – he dozed off.  
In his dream, he started working hard by some mistake,  
But it was so tiresome it stirred him awake.

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

**Jan Brzechwa**  
*A Strange, Strange Duck*

Under a bush, by the water,  
Once lived a mother-duck’s daughter,  
But rather than stick to the banks,  
She walked round looking for pranks.

She jumped in a barber’s chair:  
“I’ll have some cheese, my good sir!”

A pharmacy was round the bend  
“A quarter-pounder of milk, friend.”

Next came the laundry ramp,  
She asked for a postal stamp.

 Older ducks ruffled their feathers:  
“You won’t see us flocking together!”

She’d only lay eggs boiled hard,  
Adorned her crest with a card,  
Teased a few ducks and a chick,  
by combing herself with a pick.

She’d toss poppy seed in a flock  
and call out for poppycock.  
Munching old ribbons with foam  
She’d say it was pasta from Rome,  
And having swallowed some money,  
She swore: “You’ll get it back honey.”

The other ducks could but fret:  
“What good is a weirdo like that?”

Finally, as happens with luck,  
A man said: “Roast me that duck!”

A chef brought his craft to the spot,  
A baking pan and what not,

But then, right out of thin air,  
The duck-roast turned into hare,  
More still, neatly wrapped in sweet tuck.

Now, that’s what I call a strange duck!

(Translated by: Witold Wojtaszko)

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Nie bądz ciekawy, | | Don't ask him why, | To jego prywatne sprawy. | | Because he is very shy. |  | |  |  | | **WOLF** | **WILK** | | The wolf is dangerous, | Powiem ci w słowach kilku | | It can eat you up! | Co myślę otym wilku | | But not this one here | Gdyby nie był na obrazku | | It just makes you laugh! | Zaraz by cię zjadł głuptasku. | |  |  | | **BOAR** | **DZIK** | | A boar is wild, a boar is nasty, | Dzik jest dziki, dzik jest zły, | | His tusks are sharp but a bit rusty. | Dzik ma bardzo ostre kły, | | Whenever you hear: "beware of the hog" | Kto spotyka w lesie dzika, | | You better just run off! | Ten na drzewo szybko zmyka. | |  |  | | **REINDEER** | **RENIFER** | | A lady visited a reindeer, | Przyszły dwie panie do renifera. | | The reindeer looks at her politely and says: | Renifer na nie spoziera | | "I'm so delighted my dear, | I rzecze z galanterią: "Bardzo mi | | That you'll be wearing soft gloves from me". | przyjemnie, | |  | Że będą panie miały rękawiczki | |  | ze mnie". | |  |  | | **PARROT** | **PAPUGA** | | "My dear little parrot, | "Papużko, papużko, | | whisper something in my ear". | Powiedz mi coś na uszko." | | "I don't trust you my dear" | "Nic ci nie powiem, boś ty plotkarz, | | "I promise to keep it safe | Powtórzysz każdemu, kogo spotkasz." | | And not to give it away." |  | |  |  | | **BISON** | **ŻUBR** | | "Ladies and gentelmen | Pozwólcie przedstawić sobie | | May I introduce | Pan Żubr we własnej osobie | | Mr. Bison, just in front of you" | No, pokaż się żubrze. Zróbże | | "Try to be polite! | Minę uprzejmą żubrze. | | Smile! Oh, yes! That's just right!" |  | |  |  | | **OSTRICH** | **STRUŚ** | | The ostrich always hides his head in the sand | Struś ze strachu | | Because he's scared of everything around. | Ciągle chowa głowę w piachu | | Everybody calls him a coward | Więc ma opinię mazgaja. | | But he doesn't care | A nadto znosi jajka wielkości | | He just lays big eggs every hour. | Strusiego jaja. | |  |  | | **BEAR** | **NIEDŻWIEDŻ** | | Boys and girls | Proszę państwa, oto miś. | | Meet a bear | Miś jest bardzo grzeczny dziś. | | He has lots of fluffy fur | Chętnie państwu łapę poda. | | Ask him to touch you | Nie chce podać? A to szkoda. | | His paw is pretty |  | | He doesn't want to? |  | | What a pitty! |  | |  |  | | **MONKEY** | **MAŁPA** | | Monkeys are funny and gay, | Małpy skaczą niedościgle, | | Monkeys - just like monkeys - play, | Małpy robią małpie figle, | | Please, look at the chimpanzee | Niech pan spojrzy na pawiana: | | What a monkey! Can you see! | Co za małpa, proszę pana. | |  |  | | **TIGER** | **TYGRYS** | | "Mr Tiger, how are you?" | "Co słychać panie tygrysie?" | | "It's so boring in the zoo!" | "A nic. Nudzi mi się." | | "Would you like to be released? | "Czy chciałby pan wyjść zza tych krat?" | | "Sure, I'd eat you up, at least!" | "Pewnie. Przynajmniej bym pana zjadł." | |  |  | | **PANTHER** | **PANTERA** | | A panther has a lot of spots, | Pantera jest cała w centki, | | And she likes to run a lot, | A przy tym ma bieg taki prędki, | | When she runs, the spots just fly | Że chociaż tego nie lubi, | | That is what she doesn't like! | Biegnąc - własne cętki gubi. | |  |  | | **ZEBRA** | **ZEBRA** | | A zebra has many stripes, | Czy ta zebra jest prawdziwa? | | All of them black on white. | Czy to tak naprawdę bywa? | | But don't you think it's strange? | Czy też malarz z bożej łaski | | Maybe just for a change | Pomalował osła w paski? | | Someone painted an ox instead. |  | |  |  | | **FOX** | **LIS** | | Red-haired grandpa, red-haired dad, | Rudy ojciec, rudy dziadek, | | Red-haired tail is my pride, | Rudy ogon to mój spadek, | | And here I am - a red-haired fox, | A ja jestem rudy lis. | | And you better just run off. | Ruszaj stąd, bo będę gryzł. | |  |  | | **GIRAFFE** | **ŻYRAFA** | | Look at Mrs Giraffe, | Żyrafa tym głównie żyje, | | She always pulls her neck up, | Że w górę wyciąga szyję, | | I envy Mrs Giraffe, | A ja zazdroszczę żyrafie, | | I can't pull my neck up. | Ja nie potrafię. | |  |  | | **TORTOISE** | **ŻÓŁW** | | A tortoise wanted to make a trip, | Żółw chciał pojechać koleją, | | But the trains aren't cheap, | Lecz koleje nie tanieją, | | A tortoise is a mizer, | Żółwiowi szkoda pieniędzy: | | "On foot would be much wizer." | "Pójdę pieszo, będę prędzej." | |  |  | | **CROCODILE** | **KROKODYL** | | "Where are you from? Crocodile!" | "Skąd ty jesteś krokodylu?" | | "I am from the river Nile, | "Ja? Znad Nilu. | | Let me go out for a while, | Wypuść mnie na kilka chwil, | | I'll take you to the Nile." | To zabiorę cię nad Nil." | |  |  | | **KANGAROO** | **KANGUR** | | "Mr Kanga-Kangaroo, | "Jakie pan ma stopy duże, | | Why have you got such a big shoe?" | Panie kangurze." | | "That is why the kangaroos, | "Wiadomo, dlatego kangury | | Make holes in their shoes." | W skarpetach robią dziury." |     **Skarżypyta**  „Piotruś nie był dzisiaj w szkole, Antek zrobił dziurę w stole, Wanda obrus poplamiła, Zosia szyi nie umyła, Jurek zgubił klucz, a Wacek Zjadł ze stołu cały placek.”  „Któż się ciebie o to pyta?” „Nikt. Ja jestem skarżypyta.”    **Tattle – tongue**  Peter stayed home from school today,  Tom made holes in his desk they say,  Wendy’s place mat has a fleck,  While Zosha didn’t wash her neck.  Jerry lost his key, and Wally  Ate up all the cake, by golly.”  „Who asked you to vent your lung?”  „No one: I am Tattle – Toung.”      **Samochwała**  Samochwała w kącie stała I wciąż tak opowiadała:  „Zdolna jestem niesłychanie, Najpiękniejsze mam ubranie, Moja buzia tryska zdrowiem, Jak coś powiem, to już powiem, Jak odpowiem, to roztropnie, W szkole mam najlepsze stopnie, Śpiewam lepiej niż w operze, Świetnie jeżdżę na rowerze, Znakomicie muchy łapię, Wiem, gdzie Wisła jest na mapie, Jestem mądra, jestem zgrabna, Wiotka, słodka i powabna, A w dodatku, daję słowo,  Mam rodzinę wyjątkową: Tato mój do pieca sięga, Moja mama – taka tęga Moja siostra – taka mała, A ja jestem – samochwała!”    **Braggety – Ann**  Braggety – Ann in the corner stood,  Prasing herself, as only she could:  I have talent in excess,  Just look how beautifully I dress,  My face is radiant with health,  When I answer, I’m no fool,  I get the highest marks in school,  I out-sing any opera star,  And ride a bike so very far,  I am good at catching flies,  And I know where the Wisla lies,  I’m wise, petite and graceful too,  And sweet and charming through and through,  I give my word, because it’s true:  My family is the greatest, too:  My dad can reach the stovepipe tall,  My mama is a butter-ball,  My sister is so very small,  I’m Braggety-Ann, the best of all!    **Entliczek-pentliczek**  Entliczek-pentliczek, czerwony stoliczek, A na tym stoliczku pleciony koszyczek,  W koszyczku jabłuszko, w jabłuszku robaczek, A na tym robaczku zielony kubraczek.  Powiada robaczek: „I dziadek, i babka, I ojciec, i matka jadali wciąż jabłka,  A ja już nie mogę! Już dosyć! Już basta! Mam chęć na befsztyczek!” I poszedł do miasta.  Szedł tydzień, a jednak nie zmienił zamiaru, Gdy znalazł się w mieście, poleciał do baru.  Są w barach – wiadomo – zwyczaje utarte: Podchodzi doń kelner, podaje mu kartę,  A w karcie – okropność! – przyznacie to sami: Jest zupa jabłkowa i knedle z jabłkami,  Duszone są jabłka, pieczone są jabłka I z jabłek szarlotka, i komput [placek], i babka!  No, widzisz, robaczku! I gdzie twój befsztyczek? Entliczek-pentliczek, czerwony stoliczek.    **A Sleigh-bell, a Fable**    A Sleigh-bell, a fable, a little red table,  And on this red table a basket quite stable.  The basket held apples, one apple had a worm  Who wore a green jacket and a fresh perm.  The worm said: „My parents and forefathers all  Ate nothing but apples from springtime ’till fall;  I’m fed up with apples,” he said with a frown,  I’d like a nice beefsteak,”and set out for town.  He walked for a week without changing his mind,  Then entered the very first bar he could find.  In bars –  it is known – a tradition prevails;  The waiter comes up and meny avails.  The worm reads the menu, and to his dismay  There’s nothing but apples in ample array:  Apple strudel – apple noodles – apple cake,  Apple fritters – apple critters – apple-bake,  Apple stew – apple soup – apple pie,  Apple this – apple that – me, oh my!  Now tell me – although your intention was firm,  Did you order your beefsteak, my dear little worm?  Just what did you eat, then? Prey tell if you’re able.  A sleigh-bell, a fable, a little red table.    **CHRZĄSZCZ**  W Szczebrzeszynie chrząszcz brzmi w trzcinie I Szczebrzeszyn z tego słynie.  Wół go pyta: „Panie chrząszczu, Po co pan tak brzęczy w gąszczu?”  „Jak to – po co? To jest praca, Każda praca się opłaca.”  „A cóż za to pan dostaje?” „Też pytanie! Wszystkie gaje,  Wszystkie trzciny po wsze czasy, Łąki, pola oraz lasy,  Nawet rzeczki, nawet zdroje, Wszystko to jest właśnie moje!”  Wół pomyślał: „Znakomicie, Też rozpocznę takie życie.”  Wrócił do dom i wesoło Zaczął brzęczeć pod stodołą  Po wolemu, tęgim basem. A tu Maciek szedł tymczasem.  Jak nie wrzaśnie: „Cóż to znaczy? Czemu to się wół prożniaczy?!”  „Jak to? Czyż ja nic nie robię? Przecież właśnie brzęczę sobie!”  „Ja ci tu pobrzęczę, wole, Dosyć tego! Jazda w pole!”  I dał taką mu robotę, Że się wół oblewał potem.  Po robocie pobiegł w gąszcze. „Już ja to na chrząszczu pomszczę!”  Lecz nie zastał chrząszcza w trzcinie, Bo chrząszcz właśnie brzęczał w Pszczynie.    **THE CRICKET**  In the swamps of Thistleville,  A little cricket chirps at will;  Much renown has come to Thistle  Thanks to Mr. Cricket’s whistle.  The ox inquired: „Now tell me, cricket,  Why do you chirp in the thicket?”  „I’ve been thus employed for ages –  That is how I earn my wages.”  „And just what are your wages, then?”  „Why, every grove and every glen,  And all the swamps and all the rills,  The meadows, forests, bogs and hills,  All the booklets, lakes and springs –  I’m the owner of these things!”  The ox then pondered pensively,  „This sounds like quite the life for me.”  So when he went back to the farm,  He stood and bellowed by the barn  In his gig booming bovine bass.  Meanwhile Matt approached the place,  Screaming loudly:”What’s this fuss? –  Oh, it’s my ox, you lazy cuss!”  „lazy, did I hear you say?  Why, I’ve been singing hard all day!”  „I’ll show you I can 'bellow’ too –  It’s back out to the fields with you!”  The ox such grueling labor met,  That he was wet with beastly sweat.  After work: back to the thicket,  To get even with that cricket,  But he had just left Thistleville  To chirp in nearby Whistleville. | | |  | | --- | |  | |