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Opening extract from **Out of Control, Ms Wiz**

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OUT OF CONTROL,

Ms Wiz

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CHAPTER ONE

A PAIN ON THURSDAY

Have you ever seen an ambulance racing at top speed through the streets, overtaking cars, driving through red traffic lights, its siren blaring and its blue light flashing? Have you ever thought that it would be exciting to be riding in the back, behind the darkened windows of the ambulance?

Well, it isn't.

Jack Beddows loved going fast – he had always thought that he would like to be a fireman or policeman one day so that he could break the speed limit whenever he felt like it – but right now, as he lay in the back of an ambulance travelling at sixty miles an



hour down a busy street, he wasn't interested. In fact, he would have given anything to be back at home, lying in his bed, without this terrible pain in his stomach.

It was the worst stomach ache of all time and it had been getting more painful all day. It was so bad that he hadn't been able to concentrate at school. In the middle of the maths lesson, he had even started crying.

"Please, sir." Jack's friend Caroline had put up her hand. "Jack's feeling ill."

The new teacher, Mr Bailey, had continued writing on the blackboard. "I'm not surprised," he had said. "I felt ill when I looked at his work this morning."

"But sir—" Caroline had protested.

"Nice try, Jack," said Mr Bailey.
"Just in time for the maths test on Monday. Very convenient, I must say."

The ambulance took a corner with a screech of tyres. Jack groaned.

If only Ms Wiz had still been at school, he thought. She had been the class teacher last term and, whenever there were problems, she somehow made it better with her magic spells. There was certainly nothing magic about Mr Bailey.

When Jack hobbled home after school, he had found his father messing around with the car, as usual.

"Dad," Jack had said to the pair of legs sticking out from under the car.
"I've got a pain in my stomach."

His father continued working. "Have you been?" he asked eventually.

That was the sum total of his father's medical knowledge. Even when his little sister Jenny had complained of having toothache, it had been the same old question. Have you been?

By the time his mother had come back from the library where she worked, Jack had been sick twice.

"Down in the dumps?" she had asked cheerfully. "A bit under the weather?"

"No. Ill."

"Why not go and skateboard outside?"

"I'm too ill to skateboard."

"Ring the doctor, Dad," said Mrs Beddows. "I think it's serious."

It certainly felt serious, Jack thought as the ambulance finally came to a halt.

The doors swung open. Jack was put on a trolley and wheeled into the hospital.

The nurse in the main hall looked down at Jack. "How are we?" she asked.

Jack smiled weakly. "We're not very well," he said.

"Children's ward," said the nurse to the man pushing Jack's trolley. "The doctor will be right along. I'll get them to prepare the theatre."



Theatre? thought Jack as he was wheeled into a brightly-coloured ward. Here I am, dying, and they're talking about the theatre. Weird.

The other children in the ward stared as a nurse drew the curtains around Jack's bed.

"Just slip out of your clothes," she said, "and pop into this."



She gave Jack what looked like a nightie.

"I'm a boy," he protested feebly.

"And this is a gown," said the nurse. "Hurry up. The Consultant will be here in a minute."

Jack had just put on his gown when a tall man with a white coat poked his head around the curtains. The Consultant stood by Jack's bed and looked down at him like a vulture considering its breakfast. Behind him stood another doctor. She had her dark hair in a bun and wore rather peculiar glasses. Something about the way she smiled at him reminded Jack of someone he knew.

"Let's have a quick look at you," said the Consultant, pressing the right side of Jack's stomach with his cold hands.

"Ow," said Jack.

"Mm. Uncomfortable?"

"Yes," said Jack.

The Consultant turned to the nurse.

"Are the parents here?" he asked.

"They've been delayed," she said.

"Apparently they were trying to follow the ambulance and had a small disagreement with a double-decker bus. They're all right. They rang to give their permission to operate."

Jack groaned. His first time in hospital and his father had driven into a bus while chasing the ambulance. Typical.

"We're going to give you a little operation," the Consultant said to Jack, as if it were some kind of treat.

"We need to take out your appendix to make you feel better."

“What’s an appendix?”

“It’s a small, completely useless piece of gristle in your intestine,” said the Consultant. “I promise you won’t miss it. Now we’d better hurry because that naughty appendix really ought to come out soon.”

That’s just great, thought Jack, as he was wheeled off once again. I’m about to be cut open by someone who talks about a naughty appendix.

There was something else bothering him. It was the other doctor. Now where had he seen her before? He wished she were doing the operation. A lot of people smiled at the hospital but she was different – she looked as if she meant it.

“Mr Jones here is what we call the anaesthetist,” said the Consultant

when Jack arrived in another room.
“He’s going to give you a little prick
in the arm and you’ll fall asleep.”

Was Jack dreaming already? The
woman doctor had seemed to give
him an enormous wink, as if they
were old friends. As the anaesthetist
bent over his arm, there was a familiar
humming noise. The needle of the



injection suddenly bent over, like a wilting flower.

It couldn't be, could it? Jack looked at her more closely. The hair was different and she never used to have glasses, but there was something about the black nail varnish she was wearing. Now where had he seen black nail varnish?

"Funny," said the anaesthetist, reaching for another needle.

"A lot of funny things are happening in this hospital at the moment," said the Consultant. "Aren't they, Doctor Wisdom?"

Doctor Wisdom! It must be! She had promised she'd see him again. What were her exact words? "I go wherever magic is needed." He certainly needed magic now.

Jack felt the injection go into his arm. He heard a voice saying, "Now just count to three."

"Hi, Ms... Wiiiiii..."

And Jack was fast asleep.