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Opening extract from

The Two Jacks

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For Jacks and Miss Wilsons everywhere

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Contents

1 Miss Wilson's First Day 1

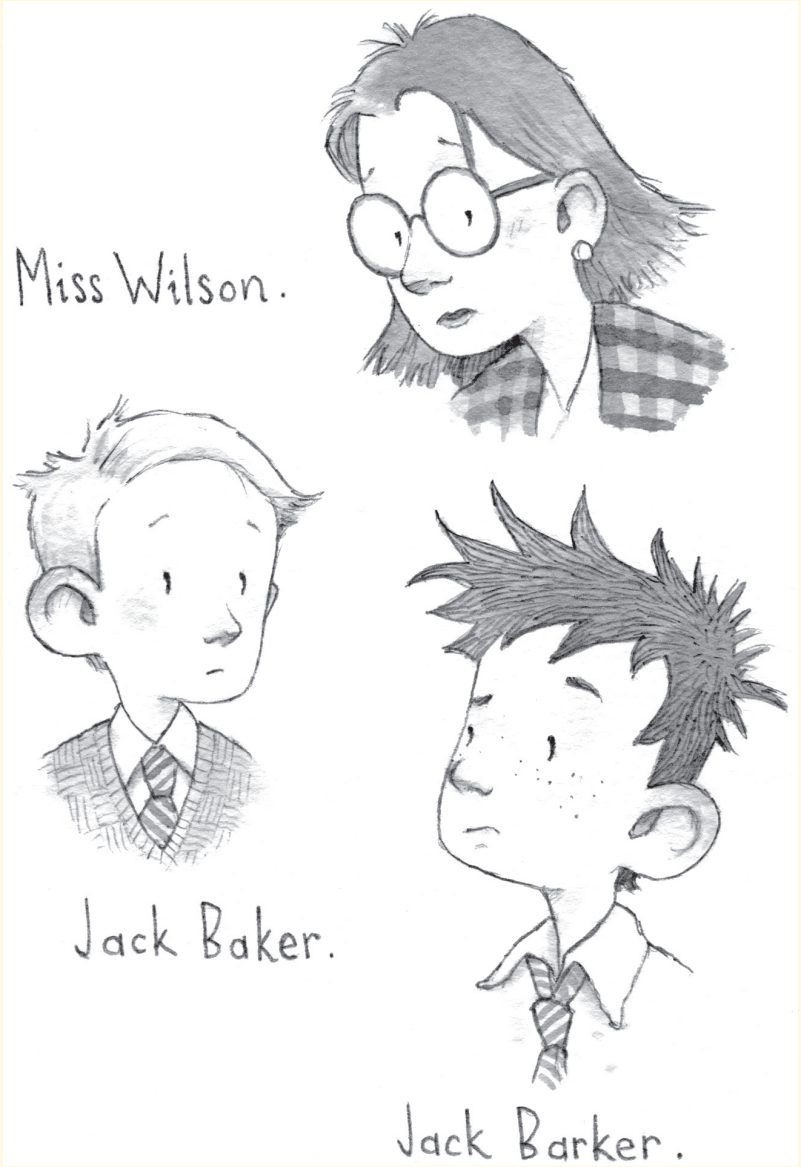
2 A Bit of a Mix-up 11

3 Jack BAKER's Story 20

4 Jack *Barker*'s Story 29

5 Miss Wilson Works it Out 38

6 A Fresh Start 49



Chapter 1
Miss Wilson's First Day

This is the story of two boys called Jack, one supply teacher called Miss Wilson and a small mistake ... that changed each of their lives forever.

The two Jacks lived in the same street, went to the same school, were both in Mrs Heath's class and had surnames which were nearly the same. Only one letter was different. One was Jack BAKER and the other was Jack *Barker*.

Nobody had ever muddled them up, though. For a start, they looked very different. Jack BAKER was quite short for his age, had red hair and was softly spoken. Jack *Barker* was big and dark and had a loud voice.

They behaved differently, too. You know how every class has the same cast of characters in it? There's the Joker and the Shy One and the Worrier and the Tell-Tale and the Boaster and the Chatterer and the Weirdo and the Two Best Friends Who Argue All The Time. Well, Jack BAKER was the Perfect Pupil and Jack *Barker* was the Naughty Boy.

They had always been that way – or at least, that's what everybody thought. Jack BAKER was the boy with his hand up first. He was the boy with the right answer, the boy with top marks. Teachers could rely on him to take the register to the office. He was the polite boy who was asked to look after any important visitors.

Jack *Barker*, however, was the complete opposite of that. He was the boy who wouldn't put his hand up, the boy who refused to do his work, the rude and cheeky boy who always misbehaved. He was the boy who had to be kept out of the way when anybody important came to visit the school.

The two Jacks had never taken much notice of each other. Jack BAKER was too busy being The Perfect Pupil, and Jack *Barker* had his hands full being The Naughty Boy. They might have wondered if they could possibly have anything in common.

And that's how things would have stayed … if it had not been for Miss Wilson.

Teachers come and teachers go, and halfway through this particular school year, one teacher went and another one came. Mrs Heath broke her leg playing football with the wild Year Six girls and she was taken to hospital.



So Mr Scott, the Head, had to find a supply teacher for Mrs Heath's class.

That supply teacher was Miss Wilson, who arrived at the school early the next morning. As usual, she felt quite nervous. In fact, she was starting to wonder whether she was really cut out to be a teacher. She couldn't seem to get a full-time job and the classes she taught were often difficult.

But then maybe that was her fault, she thought. The truth was ... she didn't feel sure of herself in front of a class and perhaps the children could sense her nerves. It was something she'd been worrying about, anyway. The trouble was, the more she worried, the less confident she felt.

"Ah, welcome to our school, Miss Wilson," said Mr Scott and shook her hand. "I can't tell you how relieved I am to have you here. I didn't think we'd get anyone at such short notice. Right, let me show you round before



our charming little horrors turn up and battle commences. If you'd just like to follow me ..."

Mr Scott gave Miss Wilson a lightning tour of the school. There was a lot for her to take in. Mr Scott showed her the hall, and the classrooms, and the staffroom, and where the tea and coffee and chocolate biscuits were kept, and where the teachers' toilets were. Then the other teachers began to arrive.

Mr Scott introduced her to some of them, and some of them introduced themselves, and soon Miss Wilson's head was spinning with names and faces she couldn't keep together. Then suddenly it was time to make for the classrooms and she found herself scurrying behind Mr Scott towards hers.

"Er ... is there anything I should know about the class, Mr Scott?" she said, breathlessly. Mr Scott was marching down the corridor and it was hard to keep up. Miss Wilson could hear children laughing and shouting in the

playground. “I mean, I would have liked to look at their records …”

“Oh, they’re a nice enough bunch,” said Mr Scott, breezily. “All the usual characters, plus one bright, very helpful lad, Jack BAKER, and one real scallywag, Jack *Barker*. You ought to watch out for those two. Here’s your prison cell … see you at lunchtime, if you survive till then, ha ha!”

Mr Scott strode on towards his office and Miss Wilson went into her empty classroom. Just then she heard a loud whistle blast outside, and the children quietening down as they lined up to come in. She gulped. She would be meeting her class any minute. What was it Mr Scott had said?

Something about two boys she should watch out for, one called Jack BAKER and one called Jack *Barker*. One was very bright and one was very naughty. Her head was still spinning with

the other teachers’ names and for a second she couldn’t remember which Jack was which.

Quick, quick, she thought, panicking slightly as she heard the children coming into the school. BAKER, *Barker*, bright, naughty, *Barker*, BAKER – yes, that was it, Jack *Barker* was the bright boy and Jack BAKER was the naughty one. Phew, she thought, it was a good job she’d got it sorted out.

But we know she hadn’t. And *that*, of course, was the small mistake …