

King Jack of Timber Rock

“And now,” says Phillip, stepping forward to place a crown made of twigs and grass on Jack’s black curls.

“And now you are King Jack of Timber Rock!” cries Phillip. There is the cheering of the other boys who crowd around Jack and Phillip, then the loud laugh of Carlos, and the high-pitched cackle of Finn.

“You’re gonna be a great king, Jack.” says Sam, patting Jack on the back. “I already am,” says Jack with a smile bright as the sun.

“If you’re such a good king, then prove your mightiness with a battle!” cries a voice. Jack and Sam look up to find Alexander, emperor of Buck Creek.

“What do you want, Alex?” asks Sam.

“What do I want? I just told you what I want, you fool! I want a battle! And that’s Emperor Alexander to you, Sam. Or, if you want, Alexander the Great.” says Alexander with an evil grin on his face.

“We won’t fight with you until we have a reason to fight,” says Jack smartly.

Alexander pauses and then says, “I do have a reason to fight, Jack. I want to take over Timber Rock. If you lose, you get nothing. If we win, we will have control over both Buck Creek and Timber Rock. But, if you win, you just get Timber Rock. Deal?”

Jack grins. “Deal,” he says.

“When’s the fight taking place?” asks Phillip.

“Tomorrow after school at about 4:30. We’ll have the battle at Crimson Meadows.” says Alexander. He turns around, the rest of Buck Creek following him.

“Do you think we’ll win, Jack?” asks Finn when they leave. Jack smiles at his friends. “Of course. We have more boys than them. And stronger boys. I think this’ll be an easy battle.” says Jack.

At school the next day, Jack sits in class. He’s too excited for the battle to pay attention, and one of Alexander’s boys is sitting in front of him.

Jack knows the boy’s name is Keith. He has white-blond hair, pale skin, and shining, blue eyes. Keith is Alexander’s strongest member of Buck Creek.

After class, Jack walks up to Keith. “What’s up?” asks Keith. “I just wanted to say: good luck out there today. I know you're the best kid in Buck Creek. I feel as if you should be emperor, not Alexander. And if you lose, well, that just shows how bad of an emperor Alex is.” says Jack.

Keith raises his pale eyebrows. “I know you’re just talking. You don’t really think I’m better than Alexander. You just want me to rebel against my emperor. And I won’t.” says Keith.

Jack sighs. “Whatever you want. But you can always switch to Timber Rock. We need someone like you on our side.” says Jack.

“No thanks.” grunts Keith.

Back at Timber Rock, Jack cries, "We are gonna win the battle today!" All the boys applaud.

"Hey, King Jack," says a voice behind Jack. The boys gasp and Jack spins around. A girl is standing on the rock.

"Who are you?" asks Sam, but Jack recognizes her from school. She's on the basketball team.

"My name is Maya." says the girl. "And I'd like to join Timber Rock."

Another gasp and Carlos says, "Sorry, but no girls allowed." Maya frowns, but Jack has an idea. They could use her. She's tall and looks pretty strong. She'd do them some good in the battle coming up.

"Ok. You can join. And you better be honest about joining, too. No spying on us for Buck Creek. I'm the king of Timber Rock and I make the decisions." says Jack. The boys look surprised at Jack, but they agree. So does Maya.

"Jack, it's 4:20. We'd better go." interrupts Sam.

When Timber Rock gets to Crimson Meadows, Buck Creek is already there. Alexander eyes Maya suspiciously.

"She's our new member. And she's good, too." says Carlos.

Phillip is the one to call when the battle begins. He also explains the rules.

“No blood should be spilled. No weapons should be used. If someone uses a weapon, their gang automatically loses. If someone breaks any of the rules I just said, not only will their gang lose, but they will also be excommunicated from their gang forever. This also means they will not be allowed in either Timber Rock or Buck Creek. Does everyone understand?” says Phillip. The kids nod.

“Good! Begin the battle!” cries Phillip.

Jack is immediately taken on by a short boy with green eyes. Jack manages to tackle him to the ground and knock the wind out of him. Jack looks around. He sees Finn and a Buck Creek boy named Peter wrestling each other to his left. On Jack’s right, Maya is taking on two boys at once. One boy just happens to be Keith.

Jack looks for Alexander, but the emperor is nowhere to be found. But then all of a sudden, Alex is upon him, pushing him to the ground. Jack yelps when his head hits the hard dirt. Alexander grins wickedly and prepares to punch Jack in the face. But then the young emperor is gone and Keith is helping Jack to his feet.

“Thanks.” says Jack, startled by Keith. “No problem.” says Keith with a smile. “I’ve chosen to switch sides. I realize you were right earlier.” Keith explains. Jack grins and turns around to see Alexander on the ground, glaring up at them.

“At least I still have Buck Creek,” says Alex. He gets up and it takes Jack a second to realize that Alexander is admitting defeat. Alexander leads the Buck Creek boys back to their beloved creek and away from Crimson Meadows.

“What happened?” asks Sam. “Buck Creek surrendered!” cries Jack happily.

Later that day, when the members of Timber Rock are back at their rock, Phillip cries out, “To the best king of Timber Rock, King Jack!” and all the kids cheer Jack’s name into the evening sky.