



Kieran King in:

KINGS OF KINGS: A KNIFE IN THE DARK



TODAY

LEICESTER, ENGLAND

“War Games approaches and I—your King—am tasked with making history, AGAIN. You might then wonder why I chose for my first pick our resident Vamp, Kristoffer Arroyo. Well...

Who the fuck else was I supposed to choose?

The ‘best of the rest’ is full of people that I’ve fucking beaten already! SEB? Sarah Wolf? Jennie Nickles? I’ve beaten them all! That’s half of the first rounders right there!

Meanwhile, Vamp has stormed into the XWF going 4 and 0 and claiming such scalps as Wolf, my fellow captain Betsy Granger, and Anarchy’s double-champ XXXVI.

As opposed to Atara Raven, who as a first round pick can’t even fucking beat Centurion.

Roxy Cotton wasted her selection on the human embodiment of choking under pressure. Fighting ‘Psycho’ Solomon is one thing, but it’s not like she overthrew the artist allegedly known as ‘Micheal Graves’ for that Anarchy Title she holds. To now ask her to go toe-to-toe with the man of the fucking hour? With the Universal Championship on the line? In that situation, the result is always the same for Atty:

That alpha pussy becomes a beta cunt.

In sixteen attempts, Atara Raven has NEVER beaten a single soul who has at any time held the Universal Title. That’s why I didn’t call her name when she literally told Solomon Kline that she hoped I would. Because the *idea* of Atty is far removed from day-to-day reality.

Bad luck for Roxy that she hasn’t learned that yet.

There’s a part of me wondering if she drafted poorly on purpose. Eh... more likely she’s just that fucking clueless about the state of the union.

I mean Tatina Jolee? Seriously? A true wrestler through and through, but on the best of days that’s not good enough here. Jolee’s record is a testament to that. On Warfare, she had Reggie Estrada in a pure wrestling rules match and yet he tricked her into failure. Back at Leap of Faith she faced Solomon Kline in a submission match, but it was Jolee who wound up tapping. Even

going all the way back to February in another pure rules match—this time elimination—Tatiana wasn't even in the final two!

When matches are designed to favour Jolee's particular set of skills, she still can't get the job done. So why would anyone believe she can do it here?

She went into battle against Reggie and tried to find honour and unity from a T.H.U.G. Evidently, Tatiana Jolee is a fucking idiot.

And Reggie himself? Well, he may have won this particular battle against his own partner, but the last time they faced he wasn't so lucky. They're two sides of the same coin, and neither are up to the task.

At least Reggie knows it. Damn near every time he speaks it's a woe-is-me diatribe about how shit he is at his own life's work. Well I reckon it's about time someone was honest with the guy. Because he's right: Reggie doesn't belong here. He's not even in the same bush league as the rest of his own fucking team—Jolee perhaps excluded. Let alone being able to carry the fucking jock strap of the same Larry Tact who just put Betsy Granger on her ass; or Big D who took the Television Champion to the limit; or the undefeated Vamp; or YA BOI here... **THE GREATEST WRESTLER ALIVE.**

You'd think it'd be a boon to draft someone who is literally known for being part of a team, but alas, Reggie has a total ZERO team championships to his name. Shit, even his usual running buddies have only ever been tag team champs on Madness. It's not an advantage in War Games to have one third of the most UNSUCCESSFUL team in XWF history on your side.

So just what was Roxy thinking with all of this? She would have obviously been told by the Trillionaire Triumvirate 'do this and you won't have to deal with poor people anymore,' but then she went and chose Reggie Estrada anyway, so like... WTF?

This whole thing is ridiculous. Roxy Cotton doesn't want to do any real work, and yet—with a grand total of one match in the past five years under her belt—we're to believe that she's ready to wrestle twice in one night? And then that she would risk committing to defending any title she could win on a regular basis?

Roxy Cotton is here for a good time, not a long time.

And with no Sarah Lacklan around; no Kenzi Grey or Angelica Vaughn either... Roxy will come, she will go, *and nobody will even miss her.*

I've figured out a better way to deal with lesser beings than taking a handout from Elon Musk...

I crush them.

Every single time.

Because me dominating every single other person in this company is just another day ending in Y.

I could tear through her pissant fucking team single-handedly if I had to. Instead, I get to watch Vamp, D, and Tact do it for me.

It's good to be the king."



THE AGE OF KING, YEAR 2 - A WEEK BEFORE THE ROYAL WEDDING



THE KING'S CASTLE



Once upon a time there was a king and a princess. Theirs was a story full of gaiety, mirth, and fancy. But the stars conspired against their love: the princess's father—Prince Isaiah Adeyemi—had been illegally occupying The *true* King's throne!

The King set forth across the kingdom to prove himself worthy of her hand.

He never faltered!

He never failed!

And in the end... The King's love for Princess Universia *conquered all* and he reclaimed his kingdom and ushered in an age of peace and prosperity across the Land of X.

Now, The King and Princess Universia were set to wed!

The princess was giddy with excitement. **“My love!”** she cried, bounding up the spiral staircase in the heart of the castle's tallest tower.

In the room at the top, The King heard her call. He hurriedly tidied the sprawling mess of parchment on the desk in front of him, before the door to his study swung open.

“My love,” Universia repeated with an affectionate sigh.

The King rose to greet her. **“My dearest princess,”** he said, taking her hands in his. **“The moon grows high overhead. Should you not sleep? Our first guests will begin to arrive as soon as tomorrow!”**

“Pish-posh,” the princess giggled. **“How can I sleep when my husband-to-be is still working hard? Besides, I bring tremendous news! My father has finally sent word that he will attend our wedding! Lord Isaiah and his company shall arrive in three days!”**

The King's smile was warm and genuine. **“Then I shall reserve our most resplendent residence for him, above all others! May I ask who rides with him?”**

“He made mention in his letter of some woman, as well as the famed Lord Cortinovis.”

“The Centurion?” The King was surprised to hear of the once great knight's return to the realm. **“Fascinating. And what of this woman? Has Lord Isaiah taken a new bride?”**

“Nay. She is a survivor of some great crime. The massacre of Steuben Village, methinks?”

The King pursed his lips. The Nickleman who had perpetrated that butchery had vanished during The King's own uprising in the Arena of March earlier this year. He shuddered at the thought of the monster resurfacing and pushed it from his mind. **“We shall tend to them both with the same regard as your father,”** he said, sweetly. **“What of the Empire Trading Company and Master Sebastian? You and I both share concern for his untoward influence over Prince Isaiah.”**

“Not present!” The princess couldn’t help but hide her excitement. **“Oh Your Grace, it is all as I prayed it would be! You and I are to wed with my father watching on free from that wretched man.”**

“You deserve nothing less than everything your heart desires.” The King kissed her gently on the forehead.

Universia smiled back. **“And you? What is it that you desire? What keeps you so busy with the moon as high as you say it is?”**

The princess looked down at the documents The King had neatly stacked. She reached for the topmost page, but The King intercepted her.

She narrowed her eyes. **“What are you hiding? Some dastardly scheme to spring on our guests? A plague of mites for that horrid consort of Archduke Lane, ‘Lady’ Cotton? Or maybe a gory statue to commemorate your slaying of that farmer McGee’s father? Oh, perhaps a cauldron of boiling oil to dunk Master Sebastian in?! Now *that* is something that I could get behind!”**

The King chuckled. **“I think my own sense of humour might be rubbing off on you.”**

Princess Universia clutched her hands over her mouth and gasped. **“I’m sorry, I don’t know where that came from! Were those devilish things to have said?”**

The King brushed the hair from his lover’s face. **“Hell won’t claim you for a trivial joke, my dear. Now...”** he grinned and wrapped his arms around her. **“I have some devilish things of my own that I’d like to say...”**

Universia blushed and beat The King’s hands away. **“We are not married yet!”**

He just laughed some more, backing away to the door. **“That hasn’t stopped us before. But it is very late. Would you at least allow me the honour of escorting you to your chambers?”**

“Oh I suppose so,” the princess said, wryly.

The two linked arms and glided their way back down the tower like two swans across a tranquil lake.

The kiss they shared when they reached the princess’s chambers was long yet delicate. Ever the gentleman, The King opened the door for his future bride.

Suddenly, he yanked her backwards. **“Stand back!”**

Universia barely had time to yelp before a flying blade narrowly missed her head.

“Guards!” The King cried.

A second blade emerged from the room, but this one was wielded rather than thrown.

The King engaged the masked assailant. He narrowly dodged each stab and slice, but the assault was relentless.

A swipe from the dagger caught The King’s tunic, restricted his step, and toppled him. Down the corridor, The King could hear the shouts of the castle steward, Thomas Gunn, martialing the troops but he didn’t have time to wait—the next strike was being readied.

Princess Universia let out a wail.

The assassin looked up at her and that afforded The King an opening that he readily took. He muscled the assassin over, and plunged their own blade into their heart!

He fell from the body as blood began to pool around it.

Scrambling towards his princess, The King asked, **“Are you all right?”**

Between sobs, she nodded.

Thomas Gunn and the Kingsguard arrived just in time to pull both royals to their feet.

The King moved straight towards the fallen body and wrested the mask from the assassin's face. A sharp chin and nose were revealed on the face of an otherwise *unmemorable* woman.

"Thomas," he said. **"You've spent time amongst the *desperate* and *hapless*—do you know who this *failed* assassin could be?"**

After studying her face carefully, even wise Thomas Gunn could not identify her. **"Perhaps she has a clue on her,"** he suggested.

Nodding, The King began to rummage through the assassin's clothes in search of any hint as to their identity or motive.

He found it in the form of a letter.

Tearing it open, he quickly read it over. **"Her name is Jolee,"** he said. But the rest of the text was read silently in his head.

Once finished, he gravely rose from the ground and ordered his men to remove the body.

"What is it?" Thomas asked, reading the look on The King's face.

But His Majesty only had eyes for his fianceé. **"There is a plot afoot,"** he said, barely above a whisper. He handed her the assassin's note to verify his next words. **"But it is not my life that is at stake..."** A fierce nightmare of a world without her flashed through his mind. **"Universia... they are coming for you..."**



The next morning, The King stood bleary eyed on the steps leading up from the bailey to the castle's main keep.

The wedding was still many days away but the first guests had begun to arrive.

Amongst the gentry that buzzed about the courtyard, three unfamiliar faces caught The King's eye. They each introduced themselves.

"Sir D."

"Sir Kristoffer."

"Duke Tact."

The King immediately knew that he would need to keep an eye on each of them.



"Now... as for the rest of you, I know this all feels like an incredible opportunity. You could leave War Games as the next Universal Champion!

Rest assured... it is exactly as it sounds: *too good to be true*.

You'd all do well to remember that I've been out here slaying champions and captains all year long! Really one name has escaped that fate: Dickie Watson.

But let's call a spade a spade, when people judge the worth of Dickie Watson, it's a fucking celebration for him to beat my men Big D and Larry Tact in the same month. But neither D nor Tact took the Universal Championship from Dolly Waters—the person who Dickie *couldn't* beat.

I did.

I'm cut from a different cloth.

Shit, I just went 3 and 0 EXCLUSIVELY against captains and nobody batted an eye; and back in August I wrecked Isaiah and SEB in the same month and it didn't stand out at all!

Because it's just what I do.

If Dickie gets through to the finals, then in his words... that ring will keep telling the truth. In it, I'm *untouchable*.

Whoever survives that lovers tiff between SEB and Isaiah already knows it. Who are we kidding, it's going to be SEB right? The fall off of Isaiah should be fucking studied. Did you guys catch the excuse he gave for losing to me before Relentless? He said he 'didn't know who he was dealing with'—as if I wasn't sitting there as the back-to-back King of the XWF who laid his better half to waste on literally the previous show. He said he 'hadn't been watching Anarchy'—as if I didn't take my first Anarchy match until AFTER I whooped his ass.

That motherfucker won the last War Games and yet he *still* doesn't know who he's dealing with.

I'd say the rest of you probably do though.

Because if any of you dare cast your eyes to the finals, you're going to be expecting to see me there.

And you'd be right.

I'm the main fucking character of this shit.

So go ahead and talk that ish, fam.

Because the Trillionaires might think they've stacked the deck in the finals, but there's still the small matter of any of you actually being good enough to do the fucking job against me."

