

Prologue | Able Archer On The Record

Each day, I strive for self-improvement - to become smarter, more tactful, and, whenever possible, kinder than I was before. I reflect on my mistakes and analyze failures to overcome my shortcomings. This pursuit is universal, as repetition fosters competence in any craft, while success and failure serve as tools to refine it further. We fight, we succeed, we fail, and we repeat, hoping to avoid mistakes of the past.

Sometimes that's easier said than done.

As we approach [War Games](#), I am reminded of a significant event that occurred in my early life. An event that was unknown to most of the world when it happened, but had the potential to change everything.

Able Archer '83.

This wargame simulated the onset of World War III between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Despite informing the Soviets of the exercise, it brought the world closer to nuclear annihilation than even the Cuban Missile Crisis. A fact that was unknown to anyone in the West until the conclusion of the game.

*So why does any of that matter to the XWF?
Why is TJ giving everyone a boring history lesson?*

History often has a way of repeating itself in unexpected ways. While there is no direct connection between the Cold War and the XWF, we are on the brink of our own War Game - an event that, much like Able Archer, could alter the federation's trajectory. Just as the events of November 1983 were pivotal to the global struggle between East and West, those of November 2025 may prove to be equally explosive and transformative for everyone in the XWF.

We align ourselves with our respective coalitions as the prospect of war looms ever closer. A conflict that will impact countless nations and their citizens, with only one emerging as the victor. While this is not a confrontation involving nuclear weapons or a charge through the Fulda Gap, its consequences will nonetheless be profound for all involved.

The federation storms onward toward this annual war game with endless possibilities on the table. Like a seven-nation free-for-all, we'll battle our way towards ultimate victory or timeless defeat. Each one of us believes that he or

she will be the ultimate tipping point in the battle ahead. We all envision the stakes being left on our shoulders while we make history and carry our team to ultimate victory.

That notion is misguided, as this challenge demands cooperation and unity. A team is only as strong as its weakest link, and the weakest link in any team will be the individual who believes they can succeed alone. So shed that ego and keep your mind open to all possibilities - you may not like everyone in your team, but to believe you don't need them is folly. This isn't about the individual, it's about the coalition - and everyone within, *from the captain on down*, must be willing to cooperate in the struggle towards that ultimate goal.

| VICTORY |

Are you ready to commit yourself, mind, body, and soul, to the cause of glory? Or will you allow yourself to be swept away by the sin of pride? Can you and yours keep that cohesion when things might seem bleak, or will you break apart and fall to those more willing to check themselves against that sin?

This marks my first War Games in the XWF. My journey in this federation has been a complex one, and to many of my peers, I remain an enigma - perceived as a know-it-all with misguided judgment and an outdated perspective.

Probably rightfully so.

As such, I have much more to prove than most of my peers. I understand that success in War Games could help catapult me into a whole new hemisphere. But that success must be obtained through cooperation and sacrifice. Nothing comes to those unwilling or unable to bleed for their cause.

I'm ready to make that sacrifice...
The question is... Are you?

ACT I : Reminiscences

OFF CAMERA

"There's no place like home."

Tatiana found herself in the familiar settings of her hometown - not the city she's called home for almost 30 years, but the one she was born in and spent the formative years of her childhood. For her, Calgary would always mark the genesis of her whole life - much of her father's side of the family lived in the city or its suburbs, and she was still a *diehard* fan of the Calgary Flames.

That's right, baby... It's HOCKEY NIGHT IN CANADA!

Hockey was deeply important to all Canadians - it wasn't *just* a sport, but rather a way of life. Supporting a team from outside your hometown meant you had to pledge your loyalty to the city or province they represented to avoid being labeled as a bandwagon fan.

And though she loved Vancouver, she could never give her loyalty to the Vancouver Canucks. It would be (*almost*) as bad as being a fan of the Montreal Canadiens.

"Uhhh... We live in Vancouver, though. This isn't *really* home."

The youthful sound of Lexi's voice broke the whimsical daydreams of her youth. The memories of attending Flames matches with her father as a child, and the excitement of receiving her very first jersey as a Christmas present. These things were as much a part of TJ as her DNA... And as an American, Alexis wouldn't truly understand it until she becomes a full Canadian and embraces the greatest nation in North America.

Not that I'm biased in any way...

"Not only that, but we're staying in a hotel... Soooo, definitely not like home."

"That's not the point."

That seemed obvious to TJ, but perhaps somebody from the States wouldn't have the same level of understanding. Hockey in Canada was like football in Europe, it wasn't just a pastime - it was almost divine. Hockey Night in Canada was more important than going to church on Sunday. One might take more offense to their team being bashed than a filthy joke about their mom.

*Also, what other sport in the world has a fan base that throws hats onto the ice...
or even worse, squid?*

"I get that you used to live here when you were young. But you've spent more of your life in Vancouver than here. I mean, you moved away from Calgary before I was even born."

Well, didn't that just hit the 80's child within her like a sledgehammer... The notion that she'd spent less of her life *here* and more *there* was just the cherry on top of the cake.

"I know, but it's still not the point."

A meek response for sure, but the best she could come up with while reeling from that '80s gut punch.

"Then what is? Because you're calling this home, and yet we're in a hotel room."

Alexis wasn't being snarky or abrasive at all - she was just having a bit of fun at her girlfriend's expense. The age gap didn't bother her; if anything, it seemed to be a bit of a turn-on. This was all part of their routine - TJ would make a reference, and Lexi would play dumb to fluster her, forcing Tatiana to elaborate and inevitably babble as she tried to explain.

And for her part, TJ enjoyed playing along. In fact, the schtick went both ways with Alexis playing the diligent explainer of all things Zoomer-related.

"All my formative years were spent in Calgary, where all my happiest childhood memories took place. It was before I became a teenager and realized the world is a mess. Back then, you still believed in Santa, and the toughest part of your day was having a bedtime."

"Wuuut? Santa isn't real!?"

"Not unless you also think the earth is flat and the world only started six thousand years ago."

"So is that what it was like back before the internet existed? Everyone believed the Earth was flat and the moon landing was faked?"

Her eyes snapped to Alexis, sharp enough to feel like lasers were about to erupt. TJ's expression conveyed more than words ever could as she put on an exaggerated act of frustration.

"The internet has been around since the early 1980s!"

"Technically true... but it wasn't really accessible to the public until the mid-90s. Anyway, when did you move to Vancouver?"

There was a pause, long enough to let the silence linger and give TJ a moment to brood before finally responding with clear apprehension. It was a pointed question, aimed at delivering another gut punch.

"1992...."

"Wow, that's ancient. Didn't you guys have to use those giant floppy disks to boot up your computers? Or were you still working with an abacus back then?"

"No... The big floppy disk thing was the 80s. By the 90s, we had smaller disks, and computers already had built-in hard drives."

"I mean... '92 isn't that far removed from the 80's. What game consoles were out at the time?"

"Uhhhh... Obviously, the NES and Atari were around. The Commodore 64 was also available, but it was more like a computer than a console."

Her gaze goes to the ceiling as she taps her chin, trying to think back that far.

"I think the Sega Genesis was out by then. And the Super Nintendo was either brand new or about to be released."

"Retro."

"Well, I'm old. Remember?"

Or at least she was starting to feel that way... Back in '92, Hulk Hogan was still dominating the WWF. Bret Hart was just beginning his rise as the face of the company... Kurt Cobain was still with us, and the grunge era was on the brink of exploding.

Kids in the Hall was still running on TV. Pearl Jam had just dropped their breakout album, and MTV was still all about music videos.

God... that was forever ago.
Didn't they just shut MTV down?

"Nah... You're just experienced. And hot as fuck."

It was no use... TJ was lost in a daydream, reflecting on a time and place that felt so distant it might as well have been a fantasy. Growing up in the 1990s was a blessing. The Cold War had just ended, optimism was high, and social media didn't yet exist.

The news reported actual events instead of propaganda. There was a sense of innocence and the hope that the world might finally enjoy lasting peace after

enduring the most violent century since the Dark Ages. It was a time filled with hope and prosperity in the human experience.

At least, in North America.

Elsewhere, things were likely less ideal - but without social media, most people were blissfully unaware unless they were directly involved. Maybe that was a downside, but as a child, knowledge of these things was unnecessary anyway.

"It's a very different world today..."

Ironically, the Blue Jays were on the verge of winning back-to-back World Series titles, and Canada was dominating the Stanley Cup. It frustrated her beyond reason to realize that no Canadian team has claimed the Cup since 1993.

"Hey, are you still with me?"

Lexi jokingly snapped her fingers to break TJ's daydream, dragging her kicking and screaming back into the present.

"Huh? Oh... Yeah, sorry. I was reminiscing."

"About the Sega Genesis?"

Sega Genesis does what Nintendon't. Or so I've heard.

"Never had one, actually. We had an NES, but I wasn't super interested in video games at that age. My real passion was music, and my dream was to become a musician. So while others were speed running Mario 3, I was more focused on learning the guitar."

"Wait, wait, wait, wait..."

Lexi thrust both arms forward, palms up, halting the conversation.

"You know how to play guitar?"

"I do, yes... And piano."

"....."

This time, Alexis paused, biting her lower lip with mischievous intent.

"You just got even hotter..."

"I'll take it."

"I'll take you."

She responded by grabbing TJ's hand and pulling her onto the bed. The movement was abrupt and slightly rough, a surprising contrast to Alexis's usual passive demeanor. Though typically the more traditional 'bottom,' she occasionally showed flashes of unexpected loving dominance.

It seemed the afternoon was about to take a passionate turn...

Interlude: Tenacity On Camera promo

It's amusing how often history seems to repeat itself. As hinted in her promo, the *ouroboros* of time endlessly consumes and revives, entwining the fates of those caught in its grasp. Every old battle feels like a new fight, every former opponent a fresh challenge. And in the XWF, few have faced *Tatiana* as often as the distinguished *Reggie Estrada*.

"I wonder, is it as thrilling for you as it is for me? Are you ready to face another challenge against the woman who has triumphed over you multiple times? Moreover, are you prepared to step into my realm and compete in the domain of pure wrestling?"

Maybe it wasn't a fair question. Of course, Reggie was ready, willing, and eager for another showdown with the *Canadian Icon*. He was, after all, a man of action and daring - a man who never backed down from a fight. Known and admired for his grit and savvy, he was no stranger to a challenge. And though she had bested him before, this was the lead-up to WAR GAMES - a legendary event known to awaken the beast within everyone who steps into its chaos.

"Think you're ready to take on player one? Can you handle a showdown with the protagonist on her own turf? I really hope so... Because if you're not prepared, if you're not ready to push through, this boss battle will be over before it even starts. Your journey ends here, and you'll have to grind for a while before getting another shot."

Could he succeed where he had only known failure? Would he conquer his toughest opponent in her chosen arena, or was this destined to be another chapter of defeat?

"Don't get it mixed up, I'm not so vain as to think a few wins over a man like Estrada guarantees victory. I know how resilient and driven he is. I've felt the wrath of his offense and have the scars to remind me of his relentless drive. Every time we face each other on the battlefield, we grow more familiar with the other - a lesson in each other's strategy, an experience in quirks and techniques. He knows my tendencies and how I approach a match with a brawler of his caliber."

The same could be said in reverse...

While I recognize the possibility of him making a surprising impact, I am confident that he will have to overcome all I bring without relying on the fundamentals that have elevated him in the XWF. There will be no outside-the-ring antics or flashy, superficial maneuvers. Instead, he must prove his ability to execute a true, technical wrestling match. In turn, I have to demonstrate my capacity to adapt and strike a balance between the styles of a brawler and a technician."

Despite her apparent disdain for those she views as lazy in their technique, she *genuinely* respects Reggie Estrada. He doesn't fit her image of what a 'real' wrestler should be - his style is blunt and aggressive, often lacking finesse and adaptability when confronted with a traditional approach.

What he lacks in fundamentals, he makes up for with tenacity.

Reggie isn't the only one who struggles against her archetype, even though TJ openly criticizes any style that doesn't align with the classic fundamentals of the business. She also recognizes that her style makes her unique and unpredictable to those who lack the same level of expertise.

"Both of us know what this season is all about. Wargames isn't just one of the most difficult trials in this sport; it's also one of the most rewarding for those who can cooperate with others in their respective coalition. You must abandon all preconceptions and adopt new perspectives. It's impossible to stick to what you're comfortable with as you're faced with challenges that don't just affect you, but also the others in your team."

Shed your ego.
Check your pride.
Prepare to coexist.

For that reason, I am grateful for the opportunity to compete against someone of your caliber. You challenge my pride and compel me to adapt in real time—your

style is as daring as it is unpredictable. Despite the numerous battles we've had before, I know no one will push me to confront these challenges quite like you will. This is not just a match or a rivalry; it marks the beginning of a journey that could transform our lives and redefine our careers. I trust you'll be prepared, and you can be certain I will bring everything I have to this fight."

"So let's go out there and tear the roof off the place, just like we always do."

ACT II : Saying Goodbye

OFF CAMERA

beep.....beep.....beep

The heart monitor echoed like the steady ticking of a clock, as though Father Time himself marked each moment in the stillness of the hospice care unit. The scent of pine cleaner lingered, while the nurses, likely overworked and underpaid, made their rounds with a blend of energy and empathy.

beep.....beep.....beep

"Hey kiddo" -*cough*- "I didn't think you'd come to see your old mentor off."

Her eyes lifted from the tile floor and fell upon the old man lying in the bed. He was hooked up to all manner of machinery and monitors, too weak to walk, and yet as mentally vibrant and vigorous as the man she once looked up to as a teenager breaking into the wrestling business.

"I would have come sooner, but I only just found out you were sick..."

He was in the final stages of a losing fight with cancer, his body almost unrecognizable in this final form... To the nursing staff, he was a feeble old man clinging to the thread of life left in him - but to her, he was always going to be a towering, muscle-bound mountain of a man.

From the late '70s to the '90s, he embodied both superhero and feared villain, towering at 6-foot-5 and weighing over 270 pounds - he was intimidating and downright terrifying to a young TJ inside the ring. Yet in the normal world, he was one of the kindest and most generous people she ever knew.

This man, whom she nearly ran away from in terror when she first met him backstage as a child, would end up taking her under his wing and teaching her the craft of wrestling. Not *just* how to wrestle, but how to handle yourself on the microphone and how to work the crowd. She owed him more than she could ever repay... And seeing him in this way, as a feeble dying man, was disheartening.

"It's okay, kid. You're out there touring the world. I know just how easy it is to fall into yourself" **cough** "And lose sight of the world outside the ring."

"I know... But still. I wish I could have been here sooner to help you in whatever way I could. You're like a father to me... I owe you everything."

"Rubbish... You don't owe me anything. You've already paid me back twice over by sticking to your convictions and carr-" *cough-cough* "Carrying the mantle of traditionalism with distinction."

Even with time slipping away, he gave his all to inspire her to reach greater heights. Ever the optimist, he pushed her relentlessly and refused to give up on her, even when she was on the verge of giving up on herself. Despite TJ's efforts to hold back her tears, he kept that warm smile and soothing tone.

"My time is up, I'm an old man on the cusp of meeting his maker. But you're still young and vibrant - and few can represent the fundamentals of this business as you do."

Young was something she might argue against - 42 wasn't exactly a spring chicken in this era of wrestling. But to him, she would always be that shy and nervous kid trying to become something she never thought she could. For that, she was beyond grateful - and she wouldn't argue with him due to her reverence for the man.

"God, you should hear me out there... I've become that old veteran railing against these 'kids' with real get off my lawn energy."

A little chuckle fell from her lips as she tried to brush away the tears as they began to form at the corners of her eyes. She used to tease him about this very thing when her generation was the youth of the business... Those days were long past, and most from her generation were retired (or worse). Tatiana was one of the few from that time still holding on in an effort to show these kids what "*real*" wrestling was about.

"That's the circle of life, eh?" **cough** "When I was a kid breaking into the sport, the old timers were more carny than professional. They'd sooner break your arm or haze you out of the business than do anything to help you along."

“ ”

There was a pang of guilt in her guts at that comment... Was she that person now? Was her relentless holier-than-thou attitude a hindrance to prospective youngsters trying to break into this sport? Did the ideology she adhered to turn her into a callous old prick?

It was a question with countless perspectives. On one hand, she felt a deep obligation to the industry and her predecessors to preserve the essence of professional wrestling. Almost as if traditional wrestling would vanish without her tirelessly championing it like some stubborn, old crone. To think of it this way was to admit her own character faults and bring her whole approach into question.

“Eh... Don’t overthink it, kiddo. I know you’re on a crusade to keep wrestling in wrestling.”

He coughed again, his voice seeming to grow weaker the longer they conversed.

“It’s a noble purpose... And besides, somebody has to dish out the tough love.”

“Tough love... Or stubborn resistance to change?”

It was more of a question to herself... And it seemed he was taking in less and less of what she was saying as his nightly sedative was beginning to kick in. He wasn’t dying at this moment, but for TJ, it sure felt that way... This could be the last time she would see him alive, and there was so much she still needed to tell him.

“Love is love...” He muttered quietly, fading towards sleep. “Love of the sport is love of the future and past...”

She reached out and gripped his hand, squeezing gently as he drifted away to sleep...

“I love you, Larry... You’ll always be in my heart...”

Her tears flowed freely now as she released his hand and stood from the chair next to his hospital bed. It was nearly closing time, and she would be asked to leave soon.

Maybe it was for the best... His battle was nearing an end, and hers, despite her notion of being an old timer, was still very much alive and well...

