



Kieran King in:

THE HOUSE OF KING II: MY HOUSE, MY CASTLE



PRESENT DAY 
 DETROIT, MICHIGAN

“Hear ye! Hear ye!

Bitches and gentlefucks... cue the cliches from all of you nasty ass peasants: My last name is King: I am THE King; You all think you’re going to play ‘Kingslayer’... yadda yadda yadda.

Suck my crown jewels, assholes.

All the tropes you want to hit me with? They’re mine, just like this damn crown is. So go on, give me your most unoriginal lines. Before we get down to business, I just want to make sure that each of the fifteen other people in this tournament truly understands what’s going to happen here.

XWF... it is my great honour and privilege to announce that by royal decree... *your princess IS in this castle.*

But you’re out of lives.

Time is running out.

And the difficulty level is set to extreme.

Make a note for yourself so you don’t rage quit... I’m the boss fight that the narrative forces you to lose to.

You’re all going to try to *play* king. But I’m not playing.

I am the king.

Now, then, and forever.

And as I stand on the precipice of making history as the first person to ever go back-to-back in this shit... I promise you a sequel even better than the original.

Welcome back to the House of King.”



THE AGE OF KING, YEAR 2 
 THE KING'S CASTLE

Once upon a time, there was a castle.

This was the kind of castle that many a tale had been told about over the years. Mothers once spoke dreams of it into the minds of babes; elders reminisced on wars fought and tankards drained; and the nobility of The Land of X spoke of balls and banquets and the gaiety of court in years gone by.

However, whenever the castle was spoken of nowadays, the prevailing topic was one of vast, empty halls whose torches had not been lit in many moons.

But those stories did not say the castle was vacant...

In the bowels of the castle, footsteps hurried across the same cold stone they swept across every day. They bounded their way down a labyrinth of stairs memorised to precision, and The King of this fabled fortress emerged into the cellar. He wrenched up a small barrel to a shoulder from a rack of other weathered casks of varied sizes, and as soon as he arrived, he left.

Exiting underneath another arch in the stone foundation of the castle, he began his ascent back up into the palace proper. A turn here, a turn there, and soon, treasure in hand, he burst through a large pair of ornately carved doors with dramatic flair. He imagined the gasps and applause he would have received had there been an audience awaiting him in the great hall. Alas, he knew nobody was there to greet him.

It was the same story each day, and each time it started with The King slamming whatever the day's drink of choice was onto a small table next to the throne that sat in the centre of the great hall. A gold goblet whose lustre had been lost to the residue of a prior night's proceedings served as a perfectly adequate vessel, and grog now in hand, he fell into his throne toasting his reign to himself and taking a tremendous swill.



Later, the tap wasn't completely dry but the flow from the barrel had certainly begun to slow. The King's thoughts began to drift to whether he had the energy to head back down to the cellar to replace the barrel. If he waited until it was completely out, he might be too far gone to make the journey.

'One more drink,' he thought, as he banged on the side of the cask to hurry it up.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"What the f--" That banging wasn't from his hand. It came from somewhere else.

He spun to try and find the source, but moved too quickly for his equilibrium to keep up.

"No-no-no-no-no!" The goblet slipped from his hands.

CLANG!

It hit the ground, spilling its treasure across the stone.

The King dropped to the ground and started trying to scoop liquid into his cupped hands to still put it to use. It was to no avail. **“Goddammit!”**

BANG! BANG! BANG!

That harsh thumping of wood intruded into the castle’s silence once more. Letting out a loud sigh, The King shouted into the abyss. **“Will somebody get the fucking door?!!”**

Only the door answered:

BANG! BANG! BANG!

With an even louder sigh and an added grunt for good measure, The King clambered his way to his feet. Swaying, he steadied himself using the arm of the throne as a brace and took a deep breath, before slowly setting out on his mission across the hall.

Eventually reaching the doors just as his head began to spin a bit too fast, he fell against the timber and a thick chain clanked on the handles and drew tight. From the gap in the doors that his bodyweight had shoved ajar, a sliver of sunlight punctured into the great hall interior.

When his eyes adjusted, The King peered through the crack and spied a hunched old man whose mouth, at the sight of The King, fell agape. **“It... it’s true. Yer’... yer’ here. Yer’ the king, ain’t you?”**

The King blinked vacantly. **“Are you the cumstain who was banging on the door?”**

“Uh... I don’t know much ‘bout no stains or nothin’, but yessir I done knocked upon yer’ door.”

“Well cut it out. It’s annoying.”

And just like that, The King pulled the door shut.

He only managed a few stumbled steps back towards his throne when...

BANG! BANG! BANG!

“DUDE!” The King screamed as he once again thrust the door open as far as the chain would allow it. **“KNOCK THAT SHIT OFF!”**

The old man snatched the straw hat from his head and clutched it tight to his body for bravery.

“I do beg yer’ apology, m’lord, but I’m terribly afraid I can’t be leavin’ just yet. Not without pleadin’ my case. Y’see I’ve come all this way t’knock on yer’ door ‘cause I need yer’ help. I know I’m not no fancy nobleperson - I’m just a lowly *dirt farmer* and it ain’t pretty but it’s good hard work. Point is, I know I’m not in the sorta position to be asking a favour of yer’ majesty, but I just don’t know where else to turn to.”

With the sun beating down and the alcohol burning its way through The King’s system, he would be lucky to help himself to the privy, let alone whatever this old farmer wanted.

“Come back tomorrow morning; it’s getting pretty late.” He thought maybe that would buy some time to boobytrap the door and solve this problem with a barrage of arrows or a hidden pit of spikes.

“But m’lord... it’s only ten in the mornin’...”

“What?! Well then what time did I start drinking?”

“I...” the farmer kept that hat gripped tight. **“I have no idea, yer’ grace.”**

“Well what fucking use are you then?! Ugh!”

And The King slammed the doors agai–

BANG! BANG! BANG!

“MOTHERFUCKER!!!”

In a rage, The King unlatched the door completely and charged outward into the bailey towards the farmer.

But... mere inches away from the old man's face, The King stopped in his tracks. His head drooped forwards and he asked the man, **"If I help you with whatever your problem is, you'll stop all this banging nonsense?"**

"Yessir!" The farmer nodded, eagerly. **"I promise, or my name ain't Terrence McGee!"**

"...Is that your name?" The King asked.

"'Tis yer' majesty!"

The King belched and Terrance tried not to react.

"Alright then, Terrence McGee" said The King, **"what do you want?"**



PRESENT DAY ██████████
██████████ DETROIT, MICHIGAN

"My dad used to talk about you, Scoops. In the vacuous world of social media, I think I even told you that once. It wasn't just a line to hype your debut either (the good little company boy that I am); it's actually true! Dad would come back from business trips to the States, pour himself a tea, plop down in front of the fireplace, and tell me all about the shit that he saw while he was away. Most of it bored me, but I was just thrilled to have him back, you know? Life gets strange when you see the nanny more than you do your actual family.

But... when he started talking about the wrestling shows he had seen? Little old me was *captivated*.

Thumbtacks; barbed wire ropes; exploding rings - the 90s were wild, right? With my nose buried in X-Men comics like they were, I hadn't heard anything like it before! 'Who are these superheroes?' I'd ask, and he'd remind me that not all of them were heroes.

But *you* were.

Goofy name aside, there was something about you that really resonated with my dear old dad. You weren't a megastar by any means - *still aren't*. Nonetheless, he would sing your praises, man, and through that? You became a myth to me; a freaking legend. I hadn't even seen you myself, but the bloody and violent tales of Scoops McGee...? That shit was like David vs. Goliath, or Jason and the Argonauts!

There wasn't much of a tape trading culture in New Zealand at the time, especially outside of the bigger cities. But dawg, trust me when I say I hustled hard to track down the evidence of these titanic struggles of good versus evil. And even though DVDs were becoming a thing, I didn't let the VCR get thrown in the trash. I had to be ready!

For all my dad's faults - and over the past year or so since he passed, I've had to come to grips with just how numerous those faults were - it was through these stories about you and your contemporaries that my passion for this business was inspired.

And it was through finally getting my hands on one of those tapes, that I understood where the limits of that passion should be.

I was positively giddy when I jammed that tape into the machine. And then I saw you, Scoops; this demigod-like being that my dad had built up for years!

I saw you looking up at the lights.

That's the real 'Big Scoop', isn't it? The reason it took you so long to get to the big leagues wasn't because of the time you had to spend on the farm. Nor was it because you just never got a lucky break. *You weren't good enough*, Scoops. You weren't good enough as half of SCW's Magnificent Two back in the 80s, so you switched up your style in the 90s but even then, as violent as you became... you weren't good enough for the XWF to come knocking. You toiled away for decades while this company kept looking anywhere but at you.

Until now.

Now, they've finally let you in the back door. But as the only thing you're good for... a goddamn gimmick.

'Hey everyone, come and check this old geezer out! He might die in the ring! LOL!'

Mate, the risk of you suffering a fucking heart attack or stroke is selling more tickets than your name, your words, or your ability in that ring. And let's not leave that last point on the table there: with more losses than wins, in the XWF the legend of Scoops McGee is continuing! *Lying on his back and staring up at the ceiling.*

Take a good, hard look at me right now, 'champ'. Judge me by whatever value set matters to you, and answer me this... am I the kind of wrestler you respect? Do I embody those values that are important to you?

I'm going to guess the answer is 'no'.

Cool. You can't do a damn thing to criticise me about that, because a part of the reason I am the way I am today is because of you and your excessive failings in life - not just as a fighter, but as a fucking man! You're a decrepit piece of shit who thinks that as long as you keep getting up, the blood gushing from your head will be worth it.

Did you ever stop to think that maybe you could avoid getting knocked down in the first place?

Did you ever stop to think about moving out of the way of chair shots, instead of letting them rattle off your head and kill what few brain cells you have left?

See, that's the approach that I take. In fact, damn near everything I do could be held up as your exact opposite:

I didn't bounce around the Midwest to get my experience; I was trained directly by one of the XWF's all-time greats.

I didn't take forty years to get to the XWF; my first ever professional match was in this ring.

And when I started here, I didn't lose my first few matches like you did. I won, and I won, and I won, and I won, and then I fucking won some more! I KEPT winning until the Universal

Championship was around my waist! And I didn't look up at the lights once before then; NOT FUCKING ONCE!

It wasn't nepotism or privilege that brought me here long before you, Scoops. Everything that I earned was a direct result of choices that I made so that I didn't end up a frail shell of a man like you and your ilk.

Let's face it, bro, there are a million hacks like you travelling up and down the road just waiting for their shot. That X-Treme Championship you now hold has been held in turn by a long list of names of men and women who accomplished nothing else of note. They'll tell their kids and grandkids - or in your case, some random employee of the company since your kids don't want to see you - about that time that they were a 'somebody'. But they're all the same. You, Scoops, are a dime a fucking dozen.

There's only one of me, though.

You have yourself to blame for the kind of man that you've got to deal with now. But I should be saying 'thank you'. Because I'm not passing the buck here; I'm fucking *proud* of who I am. And this chance to put an exclamation mark on the difference between me and the abject fucking losers of this business like you, is the exact reason I got excited when you were finally able to put ink to your contract.

And in the mix of all this, I get to take the X-Treme Championship from you too? Dope! Expect me to breeze through the tournament with the belt still around my waist, and then never defend it again just so I can ruin everybody's fucking day.

Because I can.

Because this is MY kingdom.

I am the greatest tournament performer in XWF history. I can come and go as I please; I demand whatever fee I want; and I know that when push comes to shove... when a match comes down to its fine margins... I don't need to pick myself up off the ground to carry on. I'm not the one getting knocked down in the first place.

I am the one who knocks.

Long live The King."



THE AGE OF KING, YEAR 2 
 THE COUNTRYSIDE OF X

"How **much further?**" The King splashed water across his face straight from a stream while Terrence stood next to a vomit patch on a small footbridge.

“It’s just up ahead past that line of trees there.” He pointed across the bridge. **“About two hun’ed yards or so.”**

The King rose, flicking his hands dry. He reckoned they had been walking for close to two hours, and between the fresh air, the chunder on the bridge, and a dash of spring water slipping down his gullet, he was able to set the pace for himself a bit better than at the outset of the journey. He walked right past the mess he made and in the direction of the treeline.

The farmer hastened a bit until he fell into rhythm a half-step behind. Despite his improved physical state, The King still didn’t have much interest in conversation, and so they proceeded on in the exact kind of silence he had been seeking back in the castle.

Emerging through the trees, the two found themselves overlooking a valley that stretched for as far the eye could see. The stream trickled its way down the hill in front of them and then cut through the landscape. On either bank, dusty paths wound their way along the natural curves in the water, and sprouting off from them were a series of buildings and homes surrounded by overgrown vegetation and worn-down fences.

Terrence stepped past The King and began chambering down the hill into the valley. **“This is where I live,”** he said, before disappearing into the thick brush. His voice called back, **“Come on!”**

For a moment, The King considered turning around and heading back to the castle. Fearing that Terrence would just follow after him, he grumbled to himself and followed suit. He did his darndest to shadow the path that Terrence cut and aside from a bit of dirt and mud that splotched onto his tunic, it was a relatively successful effort. At the base of the hill, Terrence made a beeline for a flimsy timber shack.

Entering the house gave The King a feeling of security akin to a little pig hiding from a wolf; all it would take was a meandering puff of air and the whole thing would fall apart. **“Dude, you better not be about to ask for help rebuilding this shit. If you had told me what was going on, I could have brought some of my people along to do the dirty work for us while we just drank and were merry.”**

“What ‘people?’” Something about Terrence’s tone struck The King as aggressive, and he spun to face the farmer.

Terrence was blocking the door with a rusty rake in hand.

The King narrowed his eyes. **“What do you think you’re doing, Terry?”**

The rake slapped down into Terrence’s cupped hands a few times. **“I’m right, ain’t I? I reckon a right regal fella like you could’a brought a whole army along if you had one, but it really wasn’t that hard gettin’ all the way to yer’ front door. I didn’t see a single soul in that whole castle o’ yer’s!”**

“The castle is running perfectly fine, thank you very mu—”

“BULLSHIT!” Terrence spat at The King’s feet. **“Do you know what this place is? It’s where most of yer’ food came from! And look at it now! All that’s left is dirt! Everybody’s gone and yer’ so detached from everythin’ that you didn’t even notice! What, you think I’m actually a ‘dirt farmer’? Who in the flamin’ heck farms dirt?!”**

The King sheepishly drew a line on the ground with his toe. **“I just figured it was something that poor people were into these days.”**

“Exactly my point, you rich bastard! The rake in Terrence’s hand raised slightly. The King spotted the farmer’s knuckles whitening from his tightening grip. **“Once upon a time, this was my home. I grew all yer’ beets, and carrots, and turnips, and other vegetables. And now the ground won’t**

grow nothin'. Now, everybody has gone except me - yer' last farmer standin'. It was a good life. Until you became king."

The King started edging around the edge of the room. **"I can still help you..."** he offered - one last attempt at a peaceful resolution.

It fell on deaf ears.

The rake thrust in his direction.

He saw it coming and dodged to the side.

The remains of a window crashed outwards, and a few shards flicked back into the room as the rake was drawn back for another strike.

The King rolled across the dirt to avoid the second stab. Terrence was able to stop mid-thrust and transition the attack to a half-swing. It caught The King in the side and punctured through his clothing, tearing away chunks of his flesh in the process.

Groaning in pain, The King tried to crawl away. Terrence closed the gap with a punt to the same side that he just ripped open.

The kick flipped The King to his back. Red splatterings painted the brown ground as Terrence raised the rake above The King's head. **"This is yer' legacy, 'yer' highness'. You get to die in the dirt that you created."**

In spite of the pain in his side, The King lashed out with his leg, catching Terrence in the kneecap.

The old man's leg bent the way it shouldn't, and he instantly collapsed.

The rake fell free.

The King saw his opening.

Pushing to all fours first, he threw himself across the room and onto the rake's handle.

Terrence was having a tough time trying to stand.

The King drove the head of the rake down into his already injured leg.

The farmer howled in pain.

The other knee got the same treatment, exploding with an excruciating pop.

"Do what you want with me, you bastard!" Terrence screamed. **"It still won't stop what's comin' for you!"**

The King whirled the rake around and jabbed the end of the handle right under Terrence's ribs. **"Oh yeah? What's coming?"**

Insolent until the end, Terrence threw a handful of dust at The King's face. Had his knees not been disintegrated, it might have been enough of a distraction to get away.

The King managed to just blink through it.

The rake spun again. The rusty tines hovered right in front of Terrence's face.

The farmer laughed as he spat again. **"You think I'm the only one mad at you? You've been holed up in that there castle so too long, you don't even know what's goin' on in yer' own kingdom! The people? They're sick of a neglectful king. Yer' public enemy number one now, and there are more of us comin', hoss, I promise you that. So you can kill me if you want to—"**

He didn't get to finish his sentence.

The rake ripped into his neck and almost removed his head completely from his body.

A strange feeling swept over The King. A part of his brain began to come alive again - one he had almost drowned in liquor over the past year. This was his first kill in a while. He had forgotten how *easy* it was.

He left the rake wedged in the ravine now gouged into the side of Terrence's head, and made his way to the door. With adrenaline slowing, the pain in his side kicked in and he fell to his knees. He ripped off a sleeve and shoved it into the wound to try to stop some of the bleeding, and tried to press on.

The castle. He had to get back to the castle.

The hill was difficult to climb. Every otherwise-insignificant twig seemed to catch his open wound. He pushed on as best he could; the trip seemed to take twice as long as the initial journey. By the time he made it anywhere near the castle, it was already dark and The King was already running on fumes.

The air began to grow thick and hazy.

Rounding a corner, the castle finally emerged into view once more.

Gigantic orange flames waved back at him.

Terrence's warning rang through The King's mind - others weren't just coming for him: they were *here*.

Bleeding and watching his castle burn, his body gave way.

The King fell to the ground.

And his eyes closed.

...

What was that about 'long live The King'?

