

Not Everyone Can Be Rick Grimes

Written by Ryan Meier

Jason woke to a loud banging that echoed through his small apartment like bursting gunfire. Disoriented and half-asleep, he rolled out of his bed and stumbled past the piles of messy clothes into his living room. An empty pizza box lay across his couch next to his Xbox remote, empty cans of soda scattered around his small living room table. He neared the door just as the person on the other side released another series of fist slams so hard Jason thought the wooden door might buckle.

The final bangs shook him from his sleep and sent waves of anger through his body. *What the hell time was it anyway? Who the fuck had the nerve?* He slid the chain lock loose and yanked the door open ready to yell; only to find Robbie, his heavy-set middle-aged neighbor, stalking away back towards his own apartment.

“Hey!” Jason shouted, catching the man’s attention. “What the hell, man?”

“Jason, Jesus,” Robbie was out of breath, the banging having taken the wind from him. He lumbered back towards him. “I thought you weren’t going to answer. We gotta’ get ‘outta here man. Go, pack your shit. Come on, let’s go!”

Jason blinked in confusion, questioning whether or not he was in some sort of a weird dream.

“What?”

“GET YOUR SHIT, MAN. THE WORLD’S GOIN’ CRAZY!”

And without another word the man turned and hustled back towards his apartment. Jason could hear movement around in the other apartments and a quick look towards the window at the end of the hall told him it was likely still some time in the middle of the night. The only light that leaked through the dirty glass was that of city streetlights.

Jason leapt back into his apartment and flicked on his 80” television – *go big or go home, right?* – and scrolled through the channel guide until he hit the local news. Two news anchors sat at the desk, a look of horror written upon their faces, as they described the events airing on the video feed streaming onto the center of the screen.

“We... We don’t have any idea what might have caused –” screaming ripped through his surround sound speakers as a scene of chaos played through the feed. “People, citizens are simply attacking each other – actually attacking each other for no reason,” the newsman’s voice cracked as he tried to find the right words. The woman next to him didn’t speak at all, only watched on in horror with the rest of the crowd.

Jason found it difficult to focus on anything else they said. The feed looked like a sequence straight out of *The Walking Dead*. With shaking hands and jumpy visuals from recording on the run, the cameraman caught live action footage of aggressive human beings mauling other fleeing citizens. The zombie apocalypse was here.

He jumped from the couch and bounded into his bedroom, dressing quickly and stuffing dirty clothes from the piles on the floor into his old high school backpack. He grabbed what pantry food he had from the kitchen, an open bag of Doritos crunching as he stuffed it in. Before running out into the hall he stopped by the hall closet and removed his Easton baseball bat that had served him very well through his varsity years.

He emerged into the hallway as yelling and screaming echoed up through the stairwell. Refusing to be stuck in the building he dashed right and began descending the stairs.

Jason realized very quickly he was already late to the party. By the time he reached the last set of stairs before the lobby, the screaming and noise from the city street ahead deafened him. Several bodies laid seizing on the floor, two of the people he was pretty sure he recognized.

He dropped his pack and skipped down the last few stairs, leaning over Pete – an elementary school gym teacher – who lived in apartment 2-H. Jason tugged on his shoulder and rolled him over.

Jason jumped back, dropping the aluminum bat to the linoleum floor with a clang. Pete had claw marks all over his face, hands, and arms; all of which seemed to be fresh but not bleeding. The gouges were rough, the rare skin torn open leaving the flesh below exposed. The man’s eyes were rolled back into his head as he frothed from the mouth.

As if the corpse had read Jason’s pleading thoughts, the seizing stopped. Pete’s body lay still as Jason gawked in a shock horror. *What in the hell was goi-*. His thought was interrupted

as Pete, or the thing that had been Pete, rolled its eyes back down, revealing huge black pupils in place of the human eyes he had before.

As the thing shifted and sat up, Jason noticed for the first time the huge bite mark on Pete's opposite shoulder. His shirt was torn open and a large chunk was missing. Again, it wasn't bleeding.

"Pete?" Jason croaked, knowing full well there wouldn't be a response. *And if there was, would he have liked it? He didn't think so.*

The thing rose, groaning as it took large inhalations through its nostrils. Jason stood frozen, eyeing the bat that laid on the floor next to him. He didn't want to move. *Maybe if he didn't move - it wouldn't see him.*

Pete's reanimated corpse turned towards him; black eyes locked in. The beast's lips turned into a tight grin just before lunging into an attack.

Jason dove to the right, landing hard on his shoulder but found himself within reach of the bat. He grabbed it and turned, the thing standing off to the side of the wall near the row of rusted, recessed mailboxes. Jason glanced towards the door outside only to find the other corpses stirring in front of the chaos. It left Jason no other choice than to head back up the stairs.

He dashed past his bookbag, taking the stairs three at a time. He could hear the beast behind him, moving at lumbering pace. Knowing there was only so many floors to climb, Jason hid behind the third-floor wall, waiting as the beast climbed the stairs. It took its last steps and rounded the corner as Jason swung, placing every ounce of power into his swing.

The bat slammed into Pete's head, the power of the blast sending the thing backwards and up against the wall. It rested, back to the wall for a second, a large, messy indent on the left side of its head. The skin caved in, but without missing a beat the thing turned back to him, contorting its face into a snarl, and moved forward at a run.

Jason tripped backwards, landing hard on his tailbone. As the thing closed in, he pulled his legs back and kicked, sending Pete backwards and buying enough time to scramble to his feet with a twisted ankle. He limped towards the other end of the hall, finally turning around as the beast closed in.

He swung the bat again, connecting on the thing's left shoulder. It was thrown against the wall, but the blow did little to slow it. Jason attacked it again, pounding it several times around the head, neck, and shoulders. Each blow - blows that would have disabled a human being - barely slowed it. On his final swing the thing caught the bat in Pete's large fist, tearing it from Jason's grip.

Faced with certain death, Jason's only thoughts floated to *The Walking Dead*, and all of the other zombie survival movies. They were *all* full of shit. In the chaos of the apocalypse, a baseball bat and random supplies just weren't enough.

The thing closed in and grasped Jason with Pete's strong hands, pulling him close and sinking its teeth into the meat at the base of his neck. Pain exploded as the dull teeth sunk in. During his last moments of humanity, he cursed Rick Grimes and the lies that he had fed everyone. The zombie apocalypse was not an adventure – in the zombie apocalypse everyone died. At least he didn't have to suffer through 10 seasons before he did.