

PLEASE SEND NEWS- SERIES BIBLE

By Patrick Cronen

SERIES OPENER- RICK ROLLED

“What does it mean to be a failure? ...A success?

What is the measure of a man?

Net worth? Public kudos? How much he’s loved by the world or at home?

And in comparison, to what? Himself? His past? To the value he brings to others-?”

This is just one of the bigger thoughts tumbling like a rock in a dryer around the mind of Rick Fallimento. This, and for some reason, the time his fifth-grade teacher put a Twinkie on top of a high shelf one fall morning in order to teach his class about nutrition, only to then just sort of...forget about it for the rest of the year.

His 92’ Ford Fiesta sputters down Soledad Canyon Road, gas light a foregone conclusion.

Rick thinks about that Twinkie a lot. It was a veritable biohazard! Looming above a room full of innocent children! And yet, it fascinated him. He watched it, sequestered all year on that shelf. In its’ last days, it still seemed to be completely edible; magnificent, even. Until, that is, the day the authorities took it (and his teacher) away.

The week the pandemic put a run on canned goods, Rick used his entire EBT on Kirkland Signature whiskey— and Twinkies.

The car whinnies along the barren final stretch from glittering Los Angeles to humble Acton, California, as “*Ooh La La*” by Faces underpins its lonely trek. Rick is tired and the Mojave Desert breeze is no match for today’s heat. A folder of sparse resumes flaps on the seat beside him, passenger window stuck permanently half-open.

There’s a humor in Rick’s world, frequently underscored by music. Music is a key element coloring *Please Send News*, adding brightness or irony to the washed-out corners of a journeyman tale that’s sometimes funny, sometimes bleak, but always, resplendently: American. *Please Send News* chronicles the slow, sideways, and excruciating rise of Rick Fallimento from utter failure to glorious mediocrity.

Fallimento actually *means* failure in Italian; a tidbit that had somehow escaped Rick until a brief dalliance with Rosetta Stone in college. He told no one, skipped the semester abroad, and to this day, a part of him still feels as though somewhere out there, an entire country is on to him.

It should also be said that his full name is Rickard; not Richard, or Dick. It was a misprint on his birth certificate and his dad just sort of...left it.

Rick's life, his world, his mannerisms, all feel like a dad joke gone horribly wrong. To live in Rick's brain is to know that the apocalypse is inevitable, but still somehow a relief, because it also means no longer having to pay for Spectrum.

Rick's Fiesta finally dies, belching smoke. The cassette deck converter feeding into his Discman slows to a stop. It's 2022, by the way.

Try to find a time period in Rick's world and you'll be left scratching your head all week. Rick is not just perennially lost in thought, he's an anomaly. A relic. Of misguided masculinity. Of the way we used to do things. Of very curious parenting. While the events of 2020 and 2021 shook him more awake than he's ever been, Rick still has a long way to go returning-to-life in America *now*.

"No, no, no, no..." He was certain he'd make it to the Arco. Forty-one bucks in gas gets you to LA, but it only gets you *nearly* back. Rick knows this. And yet.

Three quick "na-my-o-ho's" in the rearview mirror, to realign and re-center- and Rick is out of the car; replete in a gorgeous, well-tailored suit. He'd read a book on meditation during the pandemic, loaned by his neighbor Amethyst. She was thrilled he'd read it—less so that he'd highlighted it so thoroughly.

Acton is technically Mojave Desert adjacent, but it's spring, and my God, is it hot. '*Spend the last of your unemployment on an inflatable hot tub*' hot. '*Invite everyone you know to a gender reveal bonfire among the redwoods*' hot. '*Cook a bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich right on the sidewalk*' hot; which Rick very much did the first time his live-work garage lost power.

He Fonzie-fists his trunk, mops his brow with a pocket square, grabs an empty gas can, and makes for the hardware store, doubling back for his Discman.

"Why don't these pockets ever fit a Discman?" Rick mutters, marching for the store. He never takes the 14 because he knows whatever gas he can afford can get him to LA and *nearly* back, but Rick Fallimento would *never* be caught broken down where someone else could see him.

The heat presses on as he passes the RV camp outside of town. Families enjoy the Santa Clara River, getting an early start on barbeques and weekend camping. Sounds of horseplay, the smell of something savory, falling off the bone. Rick wants that kind of happiness; he knows it now. He didn't always, but the last two years have provided him with as much illumination as they have new despair.

His discomfort, his exhaustion, and the American dream he can always taste but never seem to find all swirl together in the 1000-mile stare fixed on Rick's face in moments like these. He slows to a stop, mesmerized by the joyful chaos of the camp.

A little boy bursts around a tent, giggling in the dead heat of a water fight. He spots Rick as he primes his final shot. A kid from the other team checks his gun- empty!

"Tag him! Tag him out-!"

But the boy doesn't respond. Rick stares back. Maybe it's the heat, the long walk, but the pair is suddenly fixed in time— caught in a *"Is this some sort of sign-?"* type moment. The boy intuitively senses whatever it is that needs to break loose in Rick. Rick knows it too- *they even look weirdly similar!*

The kid draws. Rick nods: *Bring it.* The boy zeroes in on Rick's tie, steadies his aim, and: Misses, spectacularly.

A stream of water *whooshes* past Rick's shoulder into the street. The spell evaporates with it. Rick frowns. "Well. That was a waste. You weren't even close-!"

WHAM! The boy is creamed from behind by a rival boy with a water cannon.

"Got you!"

"Whoa! That thing is strong!"

"Who is that guy? Dad? DAD! There's a creep on the road!"

The kid lifts his face from the dirt, looking to Rick for some explanation of what just happened. Rick shrugs. "I'm really not sure what to take from this." He fixes his tie and picks up the pace.

"Probably would've wrinkled my suit, anyway."

The desert heat finally breaks just as Rick reaches the hardware store. He's dripping sweat, but maintains his composure as he opens the screen door; a duct-taped "No Mask, No Entry" sign.

"Hey Dale. Can I please get—"

Dale cuts him off with a grunt, nose-deep in a printed copy of dark web newsletter *4-Chan 500*

as he enjoys his afternoon Ring Pop. *"No mask, no entry."*

"Dale, I—"

"What's the sign say?"

"Yeah, but Dale—" (These men have known each other for years.)

"I don't make the rules, Rick. Besides, we all already know (Rick joins in weary unison) 'it's just a well-coordinated government effort to soft-test iris recognition software for developing AI technologies' —YES—but Daddy says no mask, no entry, and Daddy's rules' my rule, too."

"Dale, come on. They lifted the mask mandate a—"

"RULES IS RULES, NEWSMAN. Don't like it, shop elsewhere." And that, is life in Acton.

Hollywood, it is not. But, by all accounts, Acton, California (*this* Acton, anyway) is a bit like “Everywhere, USA.” Some parts are red, some blue; most are dusty—and it is definitely hotter—and weirder, in the way only towns that catch runoff from the *City of Dreams* can be.

To Rick, Acton is not a one-horse town; it’s a one *everything* town. One hardware store, one market, one saloon—complete with one escort, Elena de Huevos. (Sweet guy, great listener.) And Rick would never have picked Acton, himself, either. But fate has always had other plans.

Rick *is* a newsman, as Dale laid plain, and the cut of his suit may have told you. It’s in his blood, his posture. And no, it may not pay him *yet*...or ever really has. But it *is* what gets him out of bed in the afternoon. Ethical reporting, transparency, and holding the powerful to account—*that* has been Rick Fallimento’s true north from early childhood to this very moment.

He hails from a long line of distinguished journalists, too. His grandfather read the news on AM Radio Scottsdale’s *Great Scott! in the Morning*. His father, Peter Fallimento, was the most beloved weatherman in Phoenix affiliate history; meteorology being, of course, the ‘journalism of the skies.’

Peter would beguile only-child Rick at the breakfast table with the glorious tales of his chroma key days, as his mother cheerily trimmed succulents, and drank. His family was well off, but with two preoccupied parents, Rick was often left lonely; looking up how to do most things on his own.

Rick finally picked up the family mantle in earnest the day of his first-ever published report, in *The Phoenix Middle School Gazette (Spring Edition.)* A real gold star day in the Fallimento household; complete with celebratory Twinkie.

It *did* lead to the subsequent arrest and dismissal of his 5th grade teacher—but that was never Rick’s intention. The piece was, in fact, a well-thought out treatise in *defense* of Twinkies as a non-perishable foodstuff. But as luck would have it, leaving the *very* perishable snack cake out for an entire year in a classroom full of children? Amounts to an *egregious* public health code violation in a school zone.

Peter rested his hand on young Rick’s shoulder as they sat in the principal’s office in a rare gesture of comfort; reminding his son: “A journalist in pursuit of the truth must not be held liable for the fallout of honest reporting.” Adding, “...Everyone always blames the weatherman for the rain.”

Peter saw his son’s gifts. With help, he could be steady in the face of even the worst news. Much to his chagrin, teenage Rick was therefore encouraged to work out many of his deepest feelings of angst and the very throes of his puberty in front of the family green screen, in lieu of movie nights, or actual therapy.

Yes, it can be said that Rick Fallimento is a newsman for the same reason the sun always rises: It is his *destiny*.

He lopes past the campground. Quads and dirt bikes have replaced the water fight. A few men in undershirts and coveralls crowd around drinking, watching the kids pad up. The little boy sees Rick again. So does his dad.

"That him-?"

The boy nods. Rick turns his power-walk into a jog.

"Why you starin' at my kid, Brokaw-?"

"I wasn't! (Not true.) OK I did- but I didn't mean to-! We had a moment!" (Shit.) Dirt bikes rev.

"Aren't these kids too young for dirt bikes-?!" Rick breaks into a run, for the exercise.

Back at the Fiesta, he grabs a mask through his window without losing stride. He's ten feet down the road when he feels it. He turns back to look at his car. It's...lower. All four tires gone.

He drops to his knees, but recovers an inch before his suit gets dusty, screaming: "THERE AREN'T EVEN ANY OTHER CARS OUT HERE!"

Three angry breaths. Three violent nam-yos. The march continues.

"I'M JUST TRYING TO GET HOME!" He shouts at the campers, running as fast as he can past the site before anyone can respond. A rough-looking woman pulls on a strip of beef jerky:

"Lookin' snazzy, Dick!" "It's Rick!"

"I know."

The door to Acton Hardware bangs open, a masked and sweat-soaked Rick unable to catch his breath, backlit by the setting sun. Dale has a VR headset on now, virtually fishing.

"Can I help you?"

"A gallon. Of gas. Dale. PLEASE. And four tires. And...maybe a wagon or something?"

Dale puts down his imaginary rod and lifts the visor, inconvenienced; reaching for more candy.

"Wagon... Wagon...? Like a handcart? I doubt we got any wagons, Rick. Hey do you see any Blue Raz down there-? Delivery shorted us a box." Rick reaches Dale a blue raspberry Ring Pop.

"I guess if we had a wagon or something, it'd be jammed in the back of four somewhere. Tires is the corner a four and five."

Rick's stomach knots. "Thanks." He grabs a fistful of Paydays bars and heads for aisle four. Several little red wagons are playfully featured in an aisle-wide *"Wagons for Spring!"* display, complete with fake grass and pinwheels. Rick grabs a wagon and starts loading it with tires.

"You have to pay for those candy bars, you know—"

"I KNOW, Dale!"

Rick, soaked and exhausted, heaves the tire-filled wagon to the register, collapsing behind it. "...Gas-?"

Dale *finally* looks up. *"Gas-? What do you mean, gas? This is a hardware store."*

Rick's eye twitches. We slam to Dale hitching Rick's Fiesta to his tow, four fresh tires. He signs the invoice, his grip bending the pen.

"Gas station-?"

"Just bring me home, Dale."

Rick sags into the weight of what amounts to an average day in his life. Then:

"You can ride in the back if you want."

"...Really-?"

He sits in his car's passenger seat, pulled along by Dale's truck—the wagon left for the kid, off catching fireflies. A group of teens roll Rick's old tires around the side of an RV, but he misses it, getting comfy with a fistful of masks as he cools his face with the breeze from the open window.

The Pandemic saw would-be newsman Rick Fallimento lose almost everything. Gone was his apartment, his money, his girlfriend, his show—and all hope of ever landing a job in the news. The world curled up and shut down in barely a week, and also: There were murder hornets. Did you forget about the murder hornets-?

Many people lost much more than Rick—in some cases, their health or even their lives. But this show jumps forward and back in time, never lingering long on 2020 or 2021. No one needs a full-on pandemic show, do they? Just the thought screams "triggered bloggers."

Please Send News aims to ruminate on America *beyond* the pandemic; at what we found out about ourselves in the midst of that scary, miraculous, and often day-drunk void in time; when most of us were forced to *stop* and take stock of our lives and what needed changing.

Rick's story, while as challenging as anyone's, made him thankful to have had his health, in spite of all the chaos. The scariest part of Rick's first few months wasn't losing *things*; his home, his relationship, his show—by May of 2020, he had begun to lose *hope*. What Rick couldn't expect, however, was how the *same* insane year would restore that lost hope, tenfold.

Please Send News plants its wingtip in that “clamor back to life” so many of us are facing now, as we're again being asked to run full-tilt at a world we know is overdue for massive change. *Not* the easiest task for a man like Rick.

Rick is a never-was. A man who loves journalism so much, no lack of a resume will ever stop him. Rick is a tryout tape they play at *KTLA* for a good laugh each Christmas party. And after twelve years of rejections (and a few *very* wooden TBS co-stars), Rick fell in love with a woman who tolerated him back, but who would not tolerate the commute to Los Angeles.

So, Rick and his dream-become-hobby moved north. And with what little savings he had, he bought every spare ounce of Acton Community Access airtime; much to the dismay of the other local flavor.

For almost a year, Maria Mejor was Rick's girlfriend, producer, co-star, editor, and the only name on their lease. They never really argued, but she, like Rick, had switched off somewhere; suddenly in need of a *very* long vacation.

She was last heard to be flourishing in the wake of the pandemic, staffing princess parties in Miami once social distancing measures lifted. Rick still found it curious how she announced she was going home to visit family just two days before quarantine orders fell into place. Or how she accidentally left her work phone behind on its charger.

But, after spending the first two months of 2020 burying his shattered life in crate upon crate of whiskey and Twinkies, Rick could stand it no longer. He pressed his best shirt with the heat of the desert sun, moved into the only space he could still afford, and figured out how to make a credit sequence all by himself. Granted, they *were* shorter now.

In an unanticipated twist, Rick's return to the self-reliance of his youth, plus a number of remote interviews already set up on Maria's work phone, gave him a narrow path back to something he'd lost along the way: A sense of purpose, meaning. Rick saw in this moment a chance to be someone people could *trust* in a sea of fear and misinformation.

He conducted weekly interviews—the first set up by Maria, of course, but then he moved on to others; chance happenings—his neighbor Amethyst, a Swiss virologist, a Georgia pageant queen, even a federal judge awaiting her confirmation on a packed Virginia bench.

By scraping bottom, Rick found he only had up to go. He realized could use his show to *be* what he'd longed to *find* his whole life—A revelation that shifted him, immensely. (Call it good news, weakly.)

Acton News Tonight was no longer as good (or organized) as it had been with Maria, but it was *his* now. A sense of duty seemed to grab him by the double-Windsor and *beg* him to “Find good news in this world.” After all, what else did he have left-?

For Rick Fallimento, *Acton News Tonight* (the show within our show) is a weekly news program rivaling the pedigree of any network broadcast—if you take away the budget and staff.

The frustration, self-righteousness, and knowledge that the American dream is mostly just fiction—they all still simmer below Rick's polished veneer. But somehow, *impossibly*, the pandemic did manage to restore Rick's hope for our world, and the place he longs to hold in it.

While the ‘American Dream’ Rick was raised to believe in may quite obviously now be a sham, it's the only world in which his dreams make sense—so *that's* the world he lives in.

Rusty gears whine and jerk his garage door skyward, Fiesta in the driveway. The room is small, but sustainable—and a twin-size air mattress is more than enough for one man.

Rick looks over his kingdom, reversing the door and leaving the car out front. His Jack Russell, Walter, runs to greet him, thrilled to have dad home. Rick rolls on the floor with him a minute, then grabs a bottle from his desk and flops into a beanbag across from his wood-paneled set.

Home is what you make it. And Rick was glad to be home.

A bulky TV whirs to life atop a precarious pile of abandoned workout devices, as Rick opens his laptop and flips through his phone, looking for new news. He pulls a last Payday bar from his pocket, splitting it with Walter, as Lester Holt warns:

“And don't get too comfortable with mandates lifting. Scientists tonight from the CDC and beyond are warning as temperatures rise: America has been down this road before, and—”

Rick clicks the TV off again and rubs his eyes. Tired, not beaten.

“What does it mean to be a failure? A success-?”

Rick is slowly learning the answers to these questions, as they assail his mind, like a rock in a dryer.

Man isn't defined by his success or his failures, but by how he greets the world each day. And the world will always need newsmen.

They're an American institution—no matter how long they've been left on the shelf.

Please Send News is the story of Rick Fallimento, host of *Acton News Tonight*, on his renewed and sideways quest to become America's greatest newsman; all while piecing together just who he- and America- are *now*.

INTO THE NEWSIVERSE- THE OTHER CHARACTERS IN RICK'S WORLD

Rick may be our *fool triumphant*, but no leading man— even one as eccentric as he— can report news of the world in a vacuum. And that's just the problem.

The other characters of *Please Send News* find Rick whether he wants them to or not— complicating his already stressful life. So, let's start a little closer to home and take a deeper dive into some of the others who are lamentably caught in Rick's orbit.

(If you are yet to watch the proof of concept videos, please find them here for reference: www.instagram.com/pleasesendnews or www.patrickcronen.com/pleasesendnews)

It won't surprise you to hear that Rick's dad **Peter** is working his way through early retirement.

No longer the beloved meteorologist for *ABC15 Morning News* in Phoenix, Peter now keeps busy as the self-appointed editor-in-chief of the Madison Meadows Senior Community News Bulletin; a rousing monthly circular with built-in (albeit short-term) readership.

It was a collection of coupons and disorganized Zumba bulletins when Peter first began; but naturally, he saw more. Due in thanks to his skilled eye and shrewd taste, plus the indomitable urge to get out of the house every day, *The Monthly Meadows* soon became the newest jewel in the Fallimento family media empire.

It didn't hurt Peter's popularity deputizing the women's jazz-walking class as field reporters, mind you. And though the administrators did initially object to giving Peter his own office in the community center—members *were* making sense of the activity schedule now; and a gaggle of elderly women with a point to make is a veritable army when pointed in the right direction.

To the outside eye, it would seem everything the senior Fallimento put himself to turned to gold. You can imagine how Peter's constant stream of victories feels for Rick in his garage, or why Rick is so reluctant to visit.

(Peter appears in a cut episode: *A Fallimento Family Forecast*, available on request.)

Rick's mother, **Jean**, is a simpler story. She's quiet, understanding, doesn't say much, and is genuinely happier with a morning sherry or three. She was a schoolteacher early in her marriage, but prone to anxiety despite her buoyant persona. She was thrilled to stay home with Rick as Peter's star shone brighter, even if she wasn't much for modern life, or mothering.

Young Rick always seemed wrapped up his own curiosities anyway—so it wasn't long after clipping a notice about low-water lawns that Jean's fondness for gardening took center stage.

To be clear, Jean is a *terrible* gardener, but she loves it all the same. Her passion is in tending to those plants that require little of her, anyway—something Rick might argue is actually in keeping with history.

So, off Peter goes to work each morning, whistling as he does; stopping to blow a kiss to his wife in her gardening hat, as their golden years home blooms like a desert rose in the Arizona sun. Needless to say, going back was *not* an option for Rick during the pandemic. But March of 2020 also had more on offer than just stress from his parents in Phoenix.

Rick's landlord, eighty-year-old Acton native **Darren Silk**, twisted a bouquet of Dahlias in his hands as he stammered his way through the news of Rick's eviction. Without Maria to honor the lease, what could he do? Rick didn't fall under the rent moratorium, no matter how much Darren liked him! And Darren may be one of the very few members of Rick's fan club— but he sees Rick's troubles and still admires his pluck.

Rick and Maria lived on the bottom floor of Darren's family duplex for a year before the Coronavirus hit, and Darren has no kids of his own. His wife had passed, but Maria frequently brought him leftovers and checked in on him, spry as he was at his age.

With Maria back in Miami, Rick was Darren's only downstairs ear. He still regales Rick with long conversations about supply chain theories and the 'good old days', though Rick might not be as keen a listener if he wasn't so acutely aware of how deep in Darren's debt he really is.

When Rick's moving day came with no solution to Maria's absence, Darren couldn't put Rick out completely. He proposed Rick move from the apartment to the garage; as he stared down the barrel of his own lonely year. Darren wouldn't need a lease from Rick so much as an *agreement*, and he was already using the space for his show.

Maria was clearly taking a "technology break" (not texting Rick back), so Rick's studio and garage became the band-aid for his latest emergency. It was either that or sleep in a 92' Ford Fiesta in the driveway—a vehicle not frequently touted for its luxury or leg room. Rick was thankful for the use of the downgrade, but it would still be months before he'd embrace his new home completely.

Darren began renovations on Rick's old unit, in hopes of attracting a paying tenant. But for the unreasonably fair price of just \$200 a month? He remains the octogenarian landlord Rick pretends to be delighted by.

They could both do without the 8am construction, however. And **Cassidy Primero**, the girl Darren has agreed to lease to, is already poking around— and too sunny not to collide with Rick at some point. Then again, Rick could always use a bit more sun.

(For glimpses of Darren, see concept episodes *Ladies Night Tonight* and *Clone Me, Maybe*.

Cassidy Primero features prominently in *Everything Old is News Again*.) So what then of **Maria Mejor**, the spark who lit the powder keg?

Well, as mentioned, she was on the verge of a mental break herself. You've read the last ten pages. You know our hero. Would *you* live with him? Love him? Spend weekends together in the Antelope Valley Super Bloom with him-? Not even if you were lost.

After the shine had dulled on the petals of their "I-guess-he'll-do" romance, Maria was left *where* she wanted to be—but the *with whom* left a lot to be desired. Some have likened dating Rick Fallimento to falling asleep with the TV on. Others have called that unfair— to television. Under the guise of her niece's "sweet and sassy" third birthday party, Maria knew: It was now or never. She slipped off to Miami, one-way ticket in hand.

She had tried to indulge Rick's passions! She'd joined his stupid show, called around, set up easy interviews—but with talk of a worldwide virus sweeping the globe? Maria knew what the next year of her life would be.

That's not to call Maria a villain in our story, though. *Please Send News* aims to have no primary villain. Good or bad, our cast of characters is all, *always*, just doing what they believe they have to, in order to survive and thrive. It's the little complexities in *how* we achieve our aims, based on *who* we are in those moments, that make real human stories worth watching.

Please Send News is a satiric look at very real people and the insanity we've all been asked to adjust to each day; no matter how big those characters play out. Things may knock Rick off course or even occasionally set him on a streak of *good* luck, but the path his fate takes is still less important than the show's bigger reflection on the hope that drives us in the face of adversity.

Maria and Rick clung to one another for many things; skills, companionship—it just so happened their trade-off had worn thin by the start of 2020. Like so many others, it was not the stuff pandemic dreams were made of.

It should be noted that Miami did not descend as fully into lockdown as Acton. There was fear, certainly, and moments of misinformation in which having a man like Rick might well have steadied some of her choices. But in moving home, Rick's ex found revelry, community, and a zest for life she'd given up for what had seemed like her only shot at real peace.

And Maria loved being an aunt! Hugging her family instead of always sending care packages. Granted, she did catch Covid. Four times. And gave it to her niece, twice. But good people do still make bad choices—and occasionally go dancing in Wynwood all night without their mask.

The fate of *Acton News Tonight* remained a mystery to Maria, but she was enjoying her own pandemic uptick by 2021. She indulged her old on-camera bug dressed for Zoom parties as Moana—and in the rapt silence of her tiny, fickle audiences, she could hear an orchestra of cash registers flying open.

It wasn't long before Maria was the proud business owner of *Princesa de Fiesta*- a traveling van full of (unlicensed) birthday princesses. She was instantly booked solid for the rest of the Miami-Dade calendar year.

Rick and Maria still haven't spoken since the night she slipped out. He spent many of those nights angry, drunk, and in real isolation. But in Maria's absence, Rick acknowledged it was his untapped potential that had led him to where he was. He was a smart man. A good man... How could he have been so blind? *That* may be why Rick now spends more of his time with **Dale**.

(Maria only appears briefly, in *Maria Sayonara*, our pilot.)

Rick and Dale aren't friends. Rick wouldn't say it, and Dale doesn't want any. His family has lived in Acton since the town's inception, not because they're proud homesteaders, but because no one in the family tree has ever had enough desire to leave.

Dale's grand-daddy built Acton Hardware, his daddy ran it, and he is next to sit atop the swiveling throne. The store's not much for foot traffic, but it cleans up when seasonal tourism sweeps through, and the rest of Dale's inventory keeps Acton in flower and animal feed, and occasionally, little red wagons.

Dale doesn't think much about seeing the world. Acton's just fine with him—it's where he keeps all his stuff. But he does have questions *about* the world. The kind of questions that get more and more crazy the less a person actually experiences life beyond their doorstep.

Dale is an avid navigator of the dark web and a boss level troll. He once attempted to make a vision board, but it still came out exactly the same as his conspiracy wall. And diabetes would be *more* than happy to take his feet—if he'd only show interest in using them.

Dale *is* often useful in Rick's world—from his perch at the hardware store, to his surprising handiness with technology. He's also Rick's kind of peanut gallery; someone with a lot of strong beliefs and loose logic. If Dale had a favorite color, it would be "Hillary's e-mails." Rick is also still fully unaware that Dale is the *only* one who's ever called the show.

(For more on Dale, see *Everything Old is News Again*, or almost all of Rick's opening lines.)

It's obvious now, but Rick suffers mightily from inflated self-esteem. Perhaps it's his belief that he's missing out on a bigger life. Maybe it's because he wants to run before he can crawl. But whatever the reason, he attacks everything he does with incredible zeal, even when he doesn't want to do it.

When Maria slipped away? Rick figured out how to make the show alone. When the power went bust? He wept for twenty minutes, then learned to cook with the summer sun. And when he discovered the actual benefits of a plant-based diet? He bought every succulent he ever saw his mom plant.

He was quickly reminded that succulents are nature's most brackish vegetable, and fast abandoned his garden. But, by the end of 2020, some of the vines Rick had started with had overtaken the neighbor's foundation, leading to a property line meet-cute with **Amethyst**, a healer Rick often heard chanting on his playbacks.

Does Amethyst have any actual spiritual gifts? She's got a whole spiritual gift shop. And what she lacks in credibility she makes up for in knittable platitudes. So, after a kind and compassionate conversation with her neighbor on what *is* and *isn't* edible, she agreed to appear on *Acton News Tonight*—gifting Rick with an on-air meditation she *insisted* he try.

It was infuriating for her, but Rick felt *great!* It did nothing to clear the literal weeds, mind you (nor did he), but it *did* set Rick off on a thought-provoking new path to spiritual wellness. Still, Amethyst is certain to this day that the unending line of fire ants in her living room she steps on and apologizes to each morning is the consequence of renting next door to America's second worst gardener.

(You'll find Amethyst in the episode *NamastAmy*.)

It would be wise to back up a minute, before we paint Rick as a total buffoon. Blissfully unaware is more like it. And his born-again pandemic reporting wasn't all bad! He made enemies, sure, as ethical reporters often do; but allies as well. He was, after all, looking for good news in a world gone mad- a valiant endeavor, no matter how you may get there.

The first to see his bravery was ex-Broadway sensation and loudest mixed-belt in Manhattan, **Marjory Blick**. She was Rick's second-ever guest on the show (thanks to Maria's work phone) and she enjoyed Rick so much, she returned on the heels of the 2020 Presidential race in her new career, punting for Fox.

By early May, we were all stuck at home and panicked—debasing ourselves over the last can of foie gras, pacing holes in the solarium floor, wondering *when* we'd see the inside of our favorite Balenciaga again. At least Marjory was. And with Broadway closed, what was she without an audience?

But when she agreed to Rick's show-? The *spark* she saw in him! The resolve! To report on the bright side, at all cost! Marjory knew it would be ages before she might next perform for a packed house, but here was a man still spinning ineptitudes every week, and for an audience of (she assumed) dozens.

If Rick could do it, why not her? Marjory took her only Zoom voice lesson of the year, then started a Broadway-on-the-Balcony series critics on her co-op board called “truly unacceptable for a tenant.”

(See *Marjory Blick: Off-Broadway* and *Make Marjory Great Again*.)

Kara Kinney was another big win for *Acton News Tonight*. A Hollywood icon! A one-time child star from a legacy family, and first-time kid’s book author, raising money for remote learning in the pandemic. Rick met Kara once at a Whole Foods in Calabasas, banging his basket into hers in line to get her attention. Now here she was, Dollar Store Drew Barrymore, live on his show!

Rick’s compassion during a difficult year touched Kara’s heart. She had lived briefly in Acton as a kid, growing up there before the laces on her conservatorship tightened. She had blocked out most of her childhood, but still remembered loving Acton’s Public Access for the escape it provided her from the brown-outs of her youth.

It also meant a lot for Rick to let her read the entirety of her book live on the air. Other chat shows—even those on nationally syndicated networks—had all run out of time before she was even halfway through! Rick not only gave her a real spotlight, he couldn’t even find the words to respond when she’d finished—which Kara found deeply humbling.

(See *Kara Kinney Keeps Kids Home*.)

Rick also inspired more ardent fans as 2020 and 2021 progressed. One who refused to be let down lightly was the patron saint of the 49er Saloon, Elena de Huevos. As Rick was searching for his first pandemic stories, Elena volunteered hers:

An accomplished businesswoman, owner of a very short-lived lip sync karaoke called Deepthroat West Hollywood; Elena fell on hard times as bars and restaurants closed. Government assistance could only do so much, so she eventually packed up her art deco palace on Dick Street and slunk back to Acton, tail *very* much between legs.

She was thrilled to tell her story to Rick—and happier still when telling it helped get her PPP loan pushed through. Rick never took Elena up on her multiple offers for something more “in depth and in person”, but she left an indelible mark on the show—and Rick’s psyche.

(For more of Elena’s lip service, watch *Karaoke Takes Huevos*.)

Inventor and entrepreneur **P. Marvin Vaunn** did *not* fare well in Rick’s hot seat.

Viewing *Acton News Tonight* as a proving ground for bigger news bullpens, Marvin was making all the right moves in 2020. He’d had the president’s favor for years as the inventor of 25-Hour Energy. He’d secured a lab for mass product manufacture. And he was certain, if he believed in himself enough, he could single-handedly cure the Coronavirus.

Enter Marvin's biggest natural enemies: science and journalism. After a grueling interview (one in which Rick had actually done his homework), Marvin was forced to take his miracle cure on air—leveled by the scientific community in mere minutes.

It could have killed him! But then, if he'd had the Coronavirus at the time, Marvin was *certain* it would've killed that, too. His biggest mistake was expecting soft journalism from a man who doesn't understand the meaning of either of those words.

Marvin has since vowed to sue Rick, the city of Acton, and all digital recording devices, so that no visionary will ever have his feelings hurt on local television again.

(For Marvin, see episode *Lungsoclene*.)

And lest we forget to return to **the Aubrey Sisters'** axe to grind?

Remember when we first met Rick? How he'd moved to Acton and bought every second of extra airtime? Some of that belonged in spirit to the Aubrey sisters and their ardent fans. *Morning Mimosas with April and Audrey* took the worst of Rick's blow.

The sisters had long been planning their jump to evening programming on the Acton community calendar. The sisters provide Acton with celebrity news, a release from social pressures, and budget innovations for the stay-at-home mom. Everyone loved *Morning Mimosas*! Their fans were hungry for a *Ladies Night* program, and they were excited to make the jump.

But with every last slot suddenly filled with pre-taped infomercials and yard sale ballet recitals as Rick's personal palate-cleanser, the sisters were in a real bind. Without Rick budging, they'd have to get their hands dirty...and clean again.

One afternoon, after using the last of his relief money on six more months of Gazelle spots, Rick opened his garage door for his 1pm egg, only to find his new home sprayed 'Petty-in-Pink' overnight. But unfortunately for all three, getting pink paint out of a stucco garage is about as easy as getting Rick Fallimento off the air: It's not a job for the impatient.

(For the Aubrey sisters, see *Ladies Night Tonight*, *Clone Me*, *Maybe*, and *Everything Old is News Again*.)

Last, where patience and tenacity are concerned—we'd be remiss not to mention multi-hyphenate Hollywood wunderkind **Xander Christian** (from the Home and Holiday Network.)

Xander is Rick's mentor, of sorts— a hugely successful producer who first cut his teeth as the morning banter coach on *KTLA*. He knows everyone in town. He's worked in fashion, hosted red carpets, written a book, and now enjoys his perch at HHN creating quality programming for American Homes. So why make the time for someone so hapless as Rick-?

Rick landed on Xander's radar when he sent HHN a tape in 2018. A videotape, mind you. It was set to super long play and was an uninterrupted, six-hour, one-take broadcast, in which Rick made lunch between segments, argued with Maria, and at one point, sewed a button back on.

Xander is *fascinated* by Rick and is perhaps Rick's only place for real world sensibility. He's whip-smart, in-on-the-joke, and charmed by Rick's foibles. Xander isn't sure what he can make of Rick, but he does love a challenge—and he's always happy to lend a few minutes or a commissary coffee to hear Rick's latest woes.

Xander finds Rick to be one of the most interesting man he's ever met. And that's saying something, because Xander has a clone. One who *hates* Rick as much as Xander loves him.

The science isn't there yet. Designer clones are all still a bit like the fourth Michael Keaton in *Multiplicity*. But all the Hollywood bigwigs have them, and it *does* make ribbon cuttings easier.

Does Xander see something marketable in Rick? It's unclear. But with solid mentorship and a few more years of effort? He could probably at least land an *Inside Edition*. Maybe even an *Extra*.

(For more on Xander, see *Clone Me, Maybe*.)

THE REALITY OF RICKARD- MY OWN PANDEMIC PANIC

It's at this point, reader, that I'd like to change things up a bit; starting with my addressing you directly. (Sorry to startle. I know shifts in narration can be rattling.)

You've read plenty about by Rick now—more than enough, really. You've learned about his childhood, his quirks, his dreams, his choices, his ex, his cockeyed optimism, and about several of his tenuous acquaintanceships. You even know at this point how he takes his breakfast (sunny side-up, without gravel—if possible.)

What you don't know yet is where Rick comes from in *my* life—or of the pitfalls and triumphs inherent in *being* Rick Fallimento—and Rick does experience a fairly even shake, despite it all.

In fact, Rick's luck is, by all measure, on the up; and has been from the moment stay at home orders fell into place. It may not have looked like it at the time—in fact, it felt like it was the end—but then, Rick's victories and our own should be graded on *very* different curves.

So, let's talk about some of Rick's adventures, by way of reorienting my own experiences while making the proof of concept series I've included with this bible.

Please Send News evolved directly from my own career as an actor, which—among other things—contributed a great collection of suits, props, a zero-dollar idea, and my own wood-paneling. (The global pandemic came standard.)

I moved into my current apartment in Los Angeles less than a year before March of 2020. My landlord knew me as industrious from the jump. There was an empty dirt lot he called a yard and a four-car garage with separate stalls that were all locked since the day the previous owner had aged out of caring about maintenance.

I was finally living alone after a decade of Hollywood roommate horror stories. My new place was charming, affordable, and quiet—once they'd evicted the tenant upstairs who threatened to kill me on my second day.

Out of sheer curiosity, my landlord and I explored the property. He'd only signed on a month before I applied, and he was a dead ringer for Jack Lemmon (and the basis for Darren Silk). We cracked open that garage, he gave me a key, and he told me if I could clear out all the spiders, he'd add it to my lease. (Make no mistake: There's still so many, I may hire them as grips when this show gets made.)

A year later, the yard was blooming thanks to my own green thumb, and I was suddenly defending the privacy of the once-dirt-lot from several neighbors who had decided to come to the picnic as soon as it got pretty. My fellow tenants were also now all clamoring for their own garage space, somehow less dissuaded by my eight-legged pals.

Enter March.

The day the lockdown took effect, I was double-masked and double-gloved on set for a JCPenney commercial. The producers huddled, we held our breath, then they sent us all home. Nothing sets the tone of 2020 like losing fifteen grand mere hours before an apocalypse.

A long-distance relationship I was excited about also fell immediately apart. I had proposed the idea of a weekly news show with a hapless anchor to a girl I was seeing in Miami as an idea we might make together. She flew to me and we shot a minute teaser in February (the first part of *Maria Sayonara*) and...you can fill in the rest.

I soon found myself alone again, sitting in a spider-filled kingdom, unsure of my fate, and unable to unplug from the stories of plague, riots, corruption, inflation, bad policing, and a new disaster every day. Do I dare again mention the murder hornets? I still feel as a country we sort of just ignored that thread.

Suddenly, my performer fears were doubled. "*Acting-? In a pandemic?! What does that even look like?! Would I be able to pay my rent? Would I ever create again? Would the EDD website actually load this week-?*" These were the rocks careening around all day and night in *my* dryer.

Add to that how *glued* I became to any news story that confirmed the fears keeping me up at night, and *Please Send News* was delivered kicking and screaming into my crumbling garage.

I am a steadily working actor, by the way. I'm consistent and very lucky. But I'm also sometimes cast as a "never was" in my own mind. Now, here I was, like everyone else, stuck in a void of time. Equal.

I didn't have two disaster relief nickels to rub together, but I also had nothing to buy. There was a moratorium on evictions. Auditions were moving to Zoom. I was well fed thanks to the marriage of EBT and InstaCart...but creatively? I needed to do *something*.

In a blink, it was eight weeks later. I'd gained five pounds of fugue-weight I couldn't remember packing on, and while I don't even know where I went in that time—I do recall reading *The Count of Monte Cristo* in its entirety and longing to be as composed as Edmond Dantes.

May rolled around and I finally got off the couch and gave myself a challenge. Make something. Anything. If it was bad, I'd lock it away. If it was good, I'd keep doing it, and best case- maybe people would watch.

The hapless newsman in my head had now evolved to incorporate my own darkest timeline:

A man who *did* lose it all, living in the garage he works out of, doing everything he can to cling to the good so he doesn't crack up, while dimly aware that even a few better choices might lead to a happier life.

It was a great idea, but I was intimidated. Hell, I'd never even edited before.

Rick's story, the running jokes and callbacks, the missteps and miracles, all flowed from my life making the show. When I write and direct, I try to keep things simple and use the world around me. I was trying to learn iMovie as it constantly quit. Filming in front of a teleprompter for hours only to find out my phone wasn't recording. Working remotely with actors through a litany of technology problems, all while trying to make something polished and poignant.

More than any of that though, I couldn't ignore my own growing desire. It was the same as the desire in my audition life—to make something that matters—but it was leaned on by this wild year.

I wanted people to *laugh*. I wanted to distract them, while still informing. My hope with *Please Send News* was to somehow embrace the worldwide chaos we were all experiencing, while reminding people to look for the good in our world *together*. After all, that was *my* glue, and it somehow seemed to steady me when it felt like all hope was lost.

Would you believe that by the end of 2020, I hadn't died? In fact, I'd become a whiz kid; at self-tapes, teleprompter, lav mics and a litany of skills I still now use every day. People were paying me to edit *their* pet projects now—and the 23-episode show I'd made got solid reviews from people *way* above my industry pay grade.

Even though the doomsday I thought for sure would come never did and my bills all somehow got paid, I had become obsessed with the world of Rick Fallimento. Everything else felt grating—even auditions! I wanted to get back to finishing Rick’s underdog tale, which is to say: My own.

I grew a garden of veggies to eat at home. Rick grew a garden of succulents and attempted the same. I became an amateur newshound, writing penetrating, critical scripts. Rick learned about election integrity from a Russian sleeper agent. I fought some days to stay optimistic, sure—but Rick’s switch was already flipped! So, when I was *really* struggling, my pie-eyed optimism was actually just me emulating Rick’s ‘new normal.’

It can be said, cliché intact, that Rick shielded me from my own darkest hour. There wasn’t anything special about my circumstance. My fears were all pretty normal. But at every turn, when I thought “*this* is it”, something would swoop in last minute. To this day, I think that *something* was that same quality I built into Rick; the belief that someday, somehow, the mayhem would end, and all would be revealed as part of a greater schlepp to success.

In order to anchor a half-hour, single cam comedy around the life of Rick Fallimento, we can talk about Rick and the world-building I see, but I must first pay tribute to the bedrock at the heart of the show. In feeling like I might really never accomplish my own dreams at the start of 2020, Rick and I both clung to hope without a better plan because we *had* to—and because of it, we were carried into the best year of our lives.

Saying I loved the pandemic? Saying I kind of miss it? Is not something I can share in all circles.

The year took a devastating toll on many families, uprooted some, neglected others. It exposed glaring flaws and inequities in our American life, and it caused real schisms of trust between lovers, friends, or just social media pals you never realized were dumb enough to believe masks can really hurt you. The 2020 Pandemic was crazy, but it was *also* a pretty magic moment most of us stuck in this American rat race could go 100 years without running into.

Slowing down in a late-stage capitalism is the opposite of what our faceless overlords want. We all got a minute to go outside, stretch, and pause the habits we’d fallen into in order to survive. In that hurricane’s eye, *many* of us stopped to ask:

“Why am I working so hard? What do I really want from my life? What do I need to change-?”
Anyone who learns to stop and aim for more is a wonderfully dangerous thing.

It may have come on the coattails of a crippling depression, but 2020 was the year Rick (and I) learned the value in trying something with faith, and surrendering everything else.

That is why I’m certain *Please Send News* will resonate with audiences. We’ve all been Rick at some point.

Now it's 2022. Funny how time either crawls or sprints. And our nation is clamoring to "get back out there" with that same indomitable spirit embodied by Rick's big year. The world is bleak, but it's not done *yet*. And neither are we.

That's also the hook that got so many incredible actors on my line for *Please Send News*. I reached out to every performer pal I've wanted to work with. I'd lost so much of my life waiting for paid projects to align me with my tribe, but here we all were—stuck at home and clinging to whatever actor joys we could find.

The show came primarily out of improv. I've made over 100 commercials, so I consider my own pedigree as strong as any troop's. I also came to Hollywood circuitously through a life in musical theatre, and I've had to save a show gone off its tracks nearly as many times as a cast and I sailed through.

To my mind, good improvisation is understanding character to such depth that no circumstance can shake you. With each new actor, my goal was to find where their zany character connected with their *personal* truth, to keep it grounded and honest, no matter where our improv went.

The arc of each episode was always broken before we went to tape. But the majority of my time was spent working one on one with my actor; proposing something in the news to base an episode off, or a lampoon of that week's most prominent pandemic figure; drilling down on what resonated with my guest star du jour.

Once my actor and I had our arms around who they were and why they were sitting down with *Acton News Tonight*, Rick's personality filled in the cracks. He wasn't dumb; he was woefully misinformed—and in a way I think *many* of us began to resonate with as 2020 ground onward.

I also devised a clever remote-filming technique to create the show, which outpaced even the national news I was watching. In vetting my scripts, I spent hours studying well-paid newscasters, backed by billion-dollar networks, all of whom were reduced to their first-day jitters as Zoom calls crashed left and right, live on-air.

I watched polished journalists blanking as children or naked spouses walked through the background of a story on quid pro quos, or as a phone interview buckled under the weight of belligerent wi-fi. It was insane how such polished men were suddenly so ill-equipped with so much industry brass behind them!

But, by asking my actors to record on one device while simultaneously using ear pieces on another, I set up a clean two-line system that had actors working one hour a week, sending me *their* side of a beautifully shot bit, all while we bantered remotely in real-time. It was a play, acted and recorded in two locations—and I think the end result embodies that theatrical spark.

If you enjoyed the proof of concept videos included with this package, I imagine it's because of that polished-but-raw quality. While not shot remotely, I've learned Larry David and Tina Fey both employ similar techniques on their sets- write it in full, then let lightning strike.

Some moments were choreographed to the comma, others (arguably the show's best) exploded out of that live improv, driven also by performers who were unsure of if we'd ever work again, or if anything we were doing really mattered.

Flash forward and- spoiler alert- the pandemic (or at least America's interest in it) has ended— And so, we return to the essential question of this bible:

Where does Rick go from *here*?

OLD NEWS IS GOOD NEWS- STEALING FROM THE CONCEPT SERIES

Imbued with the optimism of a man baptized by fire, Rick is returning to life in 2022 the way most of us are: broke, tired, stressed, but bent on improving his own second act.

For that reason, Rick owes his place in the optimist's pantheon to shows I grew up watching like *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (or *Mary Tyler Moore*), or to update my references, *The Last Man on Earth*, *Ted Lasso*, *The Good Place*, *Brooklyn 99*, and several other 'well-intentioned-fool-makes-good' stories still considered classic today.

By tone and color palate, Rick's surroundings in Acton do feel akin to the arid wasteland of *Last Man on Earth*, and that's on purpose. I loved Will Forte's use of loneliness and silence, long desert walks to short, hysterical payoffs—though Rick himself feels more in line with *Review's* Forrest McNeil than *Last Man's* Phil Miller/Tandy.

Our show within the show, *Acton News Tonight* feels a bit more like if *The Kids in the Hall* had a news segment; madcap deadpan, without the wink. But as big as the characters around Rick may get, he grounds the reality of each episode simply by being an average American shtick-in-the-mud. My hope is that the end result plays more like a Tiny Fey-adjacent universe (*30 Rock*, *Kimmy Schmidt*, and *Mr. Mayor* all strike the balance between satire and sit-com beautifully.)

The goal though, is to drop the audience into Rick's life in Acton in present day, flashing back on the pandemic moments that pulled his optimists' slingshot back so far. As we skate the line between Rick's goals and his mania, the man he found in his darkest moments is the one we're ultimately rooting for—allowing space for both his failings and hope for his success.

As we progress through Season 1, Rick begins commuting back to Los Angeles in the hope of securing an evening news tryout, all while maintaining his public access home life. His real-world ambitions are often thwarted by the characters he gins up on his own show, and they help carry Acton's hometown flavor into the greater *Please Send Newsiverse*; which also aims to scale and lampoon LA news outlets, YouTube, Fox News, and beyond.

Stealing from the source material I wrote in my own garage, that leaves plenty of thread to pull on which may have been *borne* of the pandemic, but can also easily transcend it. Marjory Blick is a great example of that for Rick. A wealthy New Yorker, battling career fears similar to his own, who's equally out of touch—but who has the clout to help Rick climb higher.

Rick could also easily spark international incident by inviting the wrong world leader on *Acton News Tonight*, or inviting one who gets too cozy; thinking no one watches public access. Even Rick's own missteps can grow exponentially, as he still records on VHS and has no idea he is frequently uploaded to YouTube. (He's known as the "California News Idiot" to his EU fans.)

Kara Kinney is another great character with plot lines that spell trouble for Rick. A Hollywood celebrity who reveals way too much without her PR team around, a "get" interview that puts Rick on the front of every gossip tabloid instead.

Rick's only day of actual reporting led to exposing fraudster P. Marvin Vaunn on his show. It created an enemy for Rick, and one with real world complications beyond Acton.

And Rick can no longer go to the 49er Saloon or anywhere near the Audrey sisters' part of town, lest he wind up with another hundred late night phone calls from Elena de Huevos or his Fiesta painted pink in the sisters' merciless prank war.

There is even room for mythological or more iconic characters to drop into Rick's world for a moment, without making them a main event. In *The Ricky Horror Christmas Show*, Santa calls *Acton News Tonight* to let Rick's audience know he's giving Christmas to Jeff Bezos, the only man who can still deliver next-day packages in a pandemic.

Real-world send ups aren't therefore out of the question, but shouldn't hinge an episode. Jeff Bezos is funny for a joke, but laborious for a plot. Most shows that stand the test of time are timeless because they're not wholly tethered to references that age as the show does.

Further, I love when a good alt-world series takes a real-world celebrity and lets them play a darker comic version of themselves. Matt LeBlanc's career-best work showcases him playing a very blue self-portrait in Showtime's pitch-perfect Hollywood send-up, *Episodes*.

Please Send News is a great forum for a recurring guest star like, say, Lance Bass and his husband Michael Turchin. I use these two as pop culture references, but they're also friends, and Lance has been in the public light for decades, playing a fictitious version of himself in *Tropic Thunder* to very funny effect already.

Appearing as a dark, salacious version of themselves that runs *counter* to their sweet-but-cheeky public personas the moment the public isn't looking could also lend hilarious credence to the idea that nothing Rick pictures about fame is as it seems.

The last two plot threads that I think deserve mention are Xander Christian and Cassidy Primero. While the story structure will be episodic, the arc of each season should see Rick nose slightly closer to his dream each time; giving him just a *taste*, before it's ripped away again by something as inexplicable as, say, a surprise global pandemic.

I see Rick's first post-pandemic break as a chance meeting with Xander, who remembers Rick from those Christmas party gag reels gone by. I like the idea of Xander taking Rick under his wing as a mentor, giving Rick a run at his first taste of showbiz, as his clone works covertly to ruin Rick's career forever. (The Grawlix' show *Those Who Can't* on TruTV used Randy and Jason Sklar perfectly this way; a valentine to drawing room comedies of mistaken identity.)

Perhaps Rick's first season takes a run at what ends up as a disastrous KTLA morning news tryout, bumps a prominent anchor out of the running, and Rick "gets the gig". As Xander's clone seems beat, a country-wide locust migration drives everyone back indoors and Rick back to Acton. (Let's still call this a spitball, but you get the idea.)

Through it all, though, I like Cassidy Primero as a series-long female friend to Rick; choosing Acton for its quaint, quiet life, while contrasting Rick's desire to return to LA at all cost.

As Cassidy settles in to the apartment Rick and Maria once called theirs and Rick swelters without air conditioning in his new home out back, it makes him wonder if what he's chasing in his future might really be robbing him of an even more wonderful present.

Other plot lines touched on but easily redirected from the concept series might further include:

- Rick tries acting.
- Rick exposes a celebrity's deeply troubling childhood.
- Rick gets spiritual.
- Rick gets drunk (losing that unshakeable composure for just a minute). -Rick offends an entire nation.
- Rick goes viral while in the crosshairs of an awful YouTube star.
- Rick gets caught in a prank war.
- Rick saves Christmas (and then screws it up again).
- Rick is heralded by Fox News (but doesn't want the press).

As well as a whole host of easy cameos from real news anchors as Rick tries to climb higher.

As we continue to work with real-life characters and news stories plucked from today's headlines, there are endless directions Rick's quest for success can take. Each season sees him rise a little farther, but at the end of each, disaster strikes and Rick must make due with an alternative he never saw coming (G. Charles Rogers did this brilliantly with *Search Party*.)

In the end, I do see Rick getting his hard-won wish for national clout, which then leaves him longing for the simpler days of public access interviews in his garage.

Naturally, these are just ideas with a few universal themes baked in. But when *Please Send News*' unique characters jump into Rick's roller coaster life? An out-of-time newsman with fumes in his gas tank and nothing to lose stands in for *all* of us, as he charges headlong at a dream many of us share— of becoming something more.

Rick doesn't really want fame, of course; that's likely obvious by now. He wants the things he thinks will *make* him happy; which are harder to find when you can't that see you already *are*.

PLEASE SEND NOTES

There's not much left to say about Rick Fallimento or *Please Send News*, I'm afraid. I may have left a bit out I'm just forgetting, or maybe there's something you'd like to see more of or something that feels like *way* too much detail. But the purpose of a series bible, I've found, is to leave the reader feeling like they could easily write (or at least visualize) a full episode of our show based on the insight it contains—and I hope I've done that here.

I've left a few things out on purpose until this point; most notably character's ages and ethnicities, as well as talks on casting. Some casting choices are dead giveaways, like Maria Mejor and Cassidy Primero, clearly Latinx actors, both. But my hope is that when you read this— whoever *you* are—you feel like you know these people, have met these people, or spent time with these folks in your own life.

I own that there's room in *Please Send News* for interpretation beyond mine, and the best interpretation of a character should always book the role. I hope in reading this, you saw and understood *your* mind's version of these people, and in casting it, we can remain open to inspiration and surprise.

In that sense, I'd like the cast to reflect the real diversity of America itself. Not America: The Brand, mind you; the real one, behind the curtain. (One contextual note if you haven't watched the concept videos: Elena de Huevos is a drag queen, not transgender; though I'd happily cast a trans actor in *any* role they can make their own.)

The same with anyone else of any heritage, gender identity, or ethnic or religious background. This show is, at its core, about hope. And in hope, all humans are equal.

I would also like the writer's room to match that energy. Writers with journalism backgrounds, improv backgrounds, monologists, and men and women of real diversity; who can contribute as much to Rick's America as they can to his journey of self-understanding. It's important to remember that Rick is not an idiot; he's turned around and in need of a nudge in the right direction. But in 2022, aren't we all, a little-?

In casting, I strongly believe we should avoid well-known actors, except in payoffs or when playing against their type in guest spots. While Rick himself may be off the table, there are so

many awesome acting opportunities on offer in this show. Roles that require hairpin turns from broad comedy to real truth. (A tightrope that writers like Michael Shur walk *expertly*.)

I'll admit it: When I watch a show that's stocked fuller than a Bel-Air coy pond, I get bored really quickly—and I think America does now, too. Look no further than the “loaded cast” complex that sinks so many promising movies just by coasting along on pre-sold track. Challenging an audience to something vital, but less market-tested almost always pays off more.

Just look at the success of shows like *Ghosts* on CBS- the biggest player on network television right now. It's a silver platter of actors we've largely only ever seen as guest stars- and so well-received. I know studios run on money, but I'd put mine on the bet that the American attention span is slowly returning to quality over familiarity now that the pandemic is (finger-crossed) behind us.

A last note, but certainly not the least: I touched on the importance of music to *Please Send News* at the start of our Journey to the Center of Rick. There's not much additional to say here except that the shows I've always loved most and come back to time and again all know how to underscore a scene's subtext with music. Much like other audiophile auteurs like James Gunn and Edgar Wright, I love *all* music, though I am partial to Motown, soul, 80's, and classic rock.

Included here, please find my own constantly evolving playlist, equal parts show inspiration and the state of *my* mind at any given time. I pulled a lot of music from the show from this list and it's a place I go when trying to really land a scene or character. I hope you listen and enjoy:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5ce42gAnXRxeqNlLsTgFZb?si=89b24786bd4842e5>

EPILOGUE- FAME IS A STICKY BUSINESS

Rick cranes his neck, attempting to navigate around the endless tourist traffic on Hollywood Boulevard. A tap on his shoulder catches him off guard. *Great*. Human interaction.

It's bad enough the “lucrative journalism opportunity” he'd responded to in the Sentinel classifieds was just the TMZ steno-pool all over again. Now, a skinny man with a million-watt smile is standing in dead front of him, somehow successfully blocking his path in both directions.

“Hey man! I like your suit!”

Rick stops, cornered between the fan and the Ripley's Believe it or Not Museum. It was bad enough the lot he picked didn't validate, but was he parked behind the kink shop or the celebrity-fronted brainwashing center-?

“Thanks. Kind of you to say.”

He lurches into motion again, but the man puts out a hand. Rick's eyes flare.

"I like the cut! I saw you walking and I was like: "Wowww. Now there goes a man of influence, you know-? Where'd you get it?"

We hear the pitch before Rick does.

"I...have a friend at the Ross Outlets in West Covina who gets me a pretty solid discount. Sorry, I have to run. Do you know where the Scientology Center is?"

"A discount! So you're a hustler! Is that what Scientology does?!"

"Oh, it's a hustle, all right." The man's is unflappable. What was Rick doing again-?

"Well game recognize game, my man-!"

It was so smooth, Rick almost didn't notice the demo CD already in his hand. His face falls: "No, thank you. I can't today. I'm trying to get home."

"Mannn-! I'm a hustler, you're a hustler! I'll tell you what. I normally sell these for \$15 bucks, but since you like discounts, I'll let you have it for ten."

Rick's face is flush with circumstance. "Sorry. I normally *am* a patron of the arts, but honestly, that's about five dollars more than I've got right now."

"Five bucks, then! Just five. You do like music, don't you?"

"Of course, I like music! Bachman Turner Overdrive is a timeless sensation!" (*Damnit!*) He's shown his hand. But Rick *does* enjoy music. This guy is *good*.

"Look, I admire your tenacity, but I'm sorry."

"...I get you."

The men stare at each other a moment, but before Rick can move again, the hustler rips off his suit in one quick motion, a dingy Spider-Man costume underneath. He slides on the mask:

"...Got five dollars for Spider-Man-?"

Rick sighs "...Fine." He gives Spidey his last \$5 and pulls a bulky digital camera from his pocket, waiting for the triple flash. Spidey takes a step back and stretches-

“Thanks player-! And remember—with great hustle comes great responsibility!”

With that, the Hollywood Boulevard Spider-Man *THWAPS* an actual web from his wrist, and

flies up to perch on a nearby lamppost. No one in the Believe it Or Not line even notices.

Rick stands bewildered in the crowd. What just happened-? He looks down at his new CD. It's actually a blank disc, still in its plastic.

“Oh, come on!”

Spider-Man calls down from above him: *“The Scientology center’s that way, suit player!!”*

Rick looks up, shielding his eyes with his resumes- “This CD is blank-! I thought you asked if I like music!”

“I did! Record whatever you want on there!”

A long exhale. Three silent “nam-yo-ho’s”. Then Rick stops fighting the current around him and rejoins the sweaty masses. He fixes his tie and strides toward the Scientology Center as *“Taking Care of Business”* by Backman Turner Overdrive begins to swell. Now, to get back to Acton.

Assuming he has enough gas.