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D E X T E R

Episode 106

“Return to Sender”

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Writer's Draft

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DEXTER

"Return to Sender"

FADE IN:

ON DEXTER. Head bowed. Solemn.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Life is so fleeting. So fragile.
Every breath the potential to be our
last. Those final moments of an
earthbound existence are at times
peaceful. Often violent. Or, like
today, quite sudden.

REVEAL Dexter kneeling beside CODY who holds a dead goldfish
over the toilet bowl. We're...

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING - DAY 1

Dexter extends an arm around the boy.

DEXTER

You ready?

Cody bravely lets go as Dexter flushes, then eagerly looks
up.

CODY

Can I have cereal now?

Off a nod from Dexter, Cody races out the door.

DEXTER (V.O.)

We all grieve in our own way.

He peers into the toilet.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Yet another I've sent to a watery
grave.

(a beat, frowns)

Well, not quite.

Dexter reaches over. Flushing the toilet again.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING - DAY 1

Dexter enters to find RITA and ASTOR flipping through a
recipe book at the breakfast table. Cody is already in his
chair, loading up a bowl with cereal.

RITA

What about this one?

Astor shakes her head. Rita tries another page.

CODY
I want angel cake.

ASTOR
It's angel food, stupid. And you
don't get a vote. It's my birthday.

RITA
Guys...

Rita gets up from the table. While crossing to the stove,
she whispers to Dexter...

RITA
How'd it go?

DEXTER
Bob the goldfish, may he rest in
peace.

RITA
Thanks for taking care of that.
Dead stuff...

DEXTER
(shudders)
I know.

RITA
Well, have a seat. Your reward for
coming over early is on its way.

Dexter spies the recipe book. Inside a photo of a decorated
birthday cake.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I don't get birthdays. The party.
The song. Celebrating another year
just being alive feels... forced.

As Dexter sits at the table, Astor points to a page.

ASTOR
That one! That's what I want, Mom.

Crossing back with an omelette for Dexter, Rita puts the
plate in front of him while glancing at Astor's selection.

RITA
Coconut it is.

CODY
I hate coconut.

RITA
You've never had coconut.

Dexter's phone RINGS. He checks to see who's calling.

DEXTER
It's dispatch. I might have to settle
for toast to go.

He gets up from the table. Flips open his phone.

DEXTER
Morgan.

Listening, Dexter grabs a strip of bacon. Takes a bite.

DEXTER
Sure. What's the location?

PUSH IN on Dexter's face. A look of unsettling dread.

DEXTER
I'll be right there.

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - MORNING - DAY 1

Dexter pulls up and stops. STAY on him. He's anxious like
we've never seen him before.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Some crave control over a random,
chaotic world. Some give up control
to avoid taking responsibility.

REVEAL the reason for his concern...

THE GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER

where he murdered Jorge and Valerie Castillo. It's been
cordoned off, swarming with UNIFORMS and TECHS.

DEXTER (V.O.)
For me, control means survival.
And I just lost control.

Reluctantly, Dexter gets out of his car. In SLO-MO, he watches
as officers comb through the salvage yard in an ever-expanding
search.

DEXTER (V.O.)
The crime scene. My crime scene.

QUICKFLASH. *Dexter has Jorge and Valerie naked and bound to their respective tables facing each other.*

BACK TO SCENE. MASUKA passes in front of Dexter with his kit.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I shouldn't have killed them both. I
didn't have enough time. You take
risks ordering sushi, not when you
murder people.

QUICKFLASH. *Finished dismembering Jorge, Dexter realizes the sun is coming up and Valerie's body is still intact.*

BACK TO SCENE. Dexter looks up to see DOAKES and DEBRA in the doorway of the Air Stream, then they disappear inside.

DEXTER (V.O.)
A footprint. A microscopic drop of
blood. What did I leave behind?

Steeling himself, Dexter slips under the yellow police tape.

INT. GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER - MORNING - DAY 1

Dexter enters to find Debra in the cramped dining area, her body blocking his view. As he comes closer, Dexter can't believe his eyes...

A PAIR OF FEET

stick out from the end of a table.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Impossible.

Then, coming alongside his sister, Dexter sees who the feet belong to...

VALERIE CASTILLO

Her naked body lies atop the Air-Stream's small dinner table, posed eerily similar to the Ice Truck Killer's victims. The carotid arteries on her neck slashed open.

QUICKFLASH. *Dexter tosses a small bag with pieces of Jorge overboard, then all of Valerie in a bag that's much larger.*

BACK TO SCENE. Debra looks to her brother.

DEBRA
Some place-setting, huh? We're
running her prints now.

Dexter's mind races. The implications staggering.

DEXTER (V.O.)
It had to be the Ice Truck Killer.
He's watching me.

DEBRA
Dex?

He snaps out of it.

DEXTER
Good. ID the victim. What else have
you found?

SGT. DOAKES
(re: body)
That ain't enough?

DEXTER
Any eyewitnesses?

SGT. DOAKES
What do you care? Just worry about
the blood.

Doakes' phone RINGS. Debra watches him check to see who's
calling but not pick up.

DEBRA
Gonna answer that?

He turns off the ringer. Annoyed, Doakes takes it out on
Dexter.

SGT. DOAKES
This tin can smells like ass, Morgan.
The sooner you get busy, the sooner we
finger who did this.

As Doakes heads for the door, Debra gives her brother a shrug.

DEBRA
You heard the man.

Debra follows after Doakes. Left on his own, Dexter moves
closer to study Valerie Castillo's miraculous return.

DEXTER (V.O.)
He dove 100 feet to bring up the body.
He's getting back at me for not
killing that security guard.

Dexter is mere inches from Valerie's face.

DEXTER (V.O.)
For not playing his game.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING - DAY 1

Rita waits patiently for Cody and Astor.

RITA
Guys, hurry up, you're gonna be late
for school.

Astor enters. Rita helps with her bookbag.

RITA
I'm headed to the store. Anything you
want for the party? Balloons aren't
much of a list.

ASTOR
It's okay. I don't need that other
stuff. It costs too much.

Rita bends over so she's eye-level with her daughter.

RITA
How 'bout you let me worry about that.
This is your party. And you can have
whatever you want.

Finally ready for school, Cody zooms by as the phone RINGS.
Rita picks up.

RITA
Hello...

Listening, her whole body language changes. Rita covers the
mouthpiece. Offers an unconvincing smile to her children.

RITA
Wait in the car, okay?

She takes the phone with her into the other room.

CODY
What's wrong with Mom?

But Astor knows. Concerned.

ASTOR
She only gets that way when she's
talking to Dad.

DISSOLVE TO:

STEADICAM POV

of white flesh over-saturated under high intensity lights. Then, coming into view, a long red incision. We're...

INT. GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER - DAY 1

REVEAL Dexter with a camcorder. He's using it to document the wounds on Valerie Castillo's neck, and as an excuse to look over Masuka's shoulder.

DEXTER
Got anything?

MASUKA
No bruising. Nothing under her nails. She didn't put up a fight. If she was killed here, which I doubt, whoever did it was a real pro.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Under normal circumstances I'd take that as a compliment.

Dexter lowers the camcorder.

DEXTER
Prints?

MASUKA
She's clean.

He looks around. Recoils.

MASUKA
This trailer, that's another matter. I don't even want to know what some of those stains are.

Noticing something outside the trailer, Dexter peeks through the bent, metal blinds of a cracked window...

CUT TO:

EXT. GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER - SAME TIME

LaGUERTA has arrived on site. She speaks with Doakes.

LAGUERTA
Please tell me this wasn't the Ice Truck Killer. The press is already sniffing around.

SGT. DOAKES
Ain't his M.O.

Debra crosses to them.

DEBRA
We got an ID. Valerie Castillo. And
get this, her husband, Jorge, owns the
salvage yard.

LAGUERTA
Try and track him down.

Doakes' walkie-talkie crackles.

MAN'S VOICE
Sir, we've found something.

INT. GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER - SAME TIME

Worried, Dexter sees LaGuerta, Doakes and Debra take off.

MASUKA'S VOICE
Yo, Dex...

Reluctantly, he turns to see Masuka examining Valerie
Castillo's neck.

MASUKA
...zoom in on this, will ya?

Dexter hesitates, not looking to help this investigation.

DEXTER
Kinda low on batteries here.

MASUKA
Dude, it'll take like two seconds.

Dexter's stuck and he knows it.

MASUKA
What's up with you today? You're
throwing off my chi.

Dexter raises the camera to his eye.

DEXTER
You're not Chinese.

MASUKA
Whatever.
(points)
Right here.

CAMCORDER POV

ZOOMING IN on a tiny, red dot located near the arterial neck wound.

MASUKA'S VOICE

This look like a needle mark to you?

QUICK FLASHCUT. *Dexter jamming his syringe into Valerie Castillo's neck.*

BACK TO SCENE. Dexter has to cover...

DEXTER

More like a bug bite. A blemish maybe.

Masuka stands. Makes a note of it.

MASUKA

Yeah, I guess. I'm gonna let the coroner bag her.

Once Masuka moves off, Dexter rushes back to the window. Helpless, he watches as LaGuerta, Doakes and Debra enter a windowless garage.

INT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - GARAGE - DAY 1

FIND Doakes, Debra and Laguerta inside. The stench in the simmering midday heat is overwhelming.

SGT. DOAKES

This ain't no auto garage.

Debra wanders past rotting food. Soiled clothing. A lone shoe. Swatting away flies, she finds a hole in the ground. Peers inside...

DEBRA

Oh God. I didn't need to see that.

SGT. DOAKES

(unfazed)

What's the matter, Morgan, never seen a shit pit before?

DEBRA

Uh, yeah, just not indoors.

They continue to fan out.

SGT. DOAKES

Army taught me a lot of things.

LAGUERTA

This gonna be one of your Desert Storm stories?

SGT. DOAKES

But diggin' holes for people to take a dump, that was the most important.

DEBRA

Not really following that.

SGT. DOAKES

Don't matter how many bars you got on your collar...

LAGUERTA

...everybody's shit stinks.

She turns to Debra.

LAGUERTA

We were partners for a *long* time.

Doakes kicks at a thin, stained mattress.

SGT. DOAKES

And from the looks of things, Valerie Castillo's better half was knee deep.

LAGUERTA

You like the husband for this?

SGT. DOAKES

It's always the husband.

Debra crouches down. Examines a tiny set of numbers etched into the metal wall.

SGT. DOAKES

What've you got?

DEBRA

(squinting)

Looks like a phone number... and a name... Mariel.

SGT. DOAKES

Call it in to Batista. He can run it down for us.

THROUGH THE LARGE GARAGE DOOR

Doakes sees a UNIFORM (FORBES, 20s) silently waving him over.

SGT. DOAKES

Heads up.

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - OLD CAR - DAY 1

Guns drawn, three UNIFORMS are on point near the remains of a rusting Buick. Forbes whispers to Doakes as he approaches...

FORBES

We heard movement in the trunk.

Drawing their weapons, Doakes, Debra and LaGuerta take lead. Checking to make sure everyone is in position, Doakes steps in front of Debra to protect her, but she's not having any of that. Stepping back around him, Debra gets on the other side of the vehicle.

Now close enough to grab the lip of the trunk with one hand, Doakes nods to his team, then yanks it open. But what they find inside shocks them...

A CUBAN BOY (OSCAR, 7)

is curled up into a ball. Fervently reciting the Lord's Prayer in Spanish.

OSCAR

(the faintest whisper)

*Padre nuestro que estas en los cielos.
Santificado sea tu nombre. Venga tu
reino. Hagase tu voluntad. En la
tierra como en el cielo...*

SGT. DOAKES

Kid, you alright?

Doakes grabs for the boy, but the child recoils. Terrified.

DEBRA

Subtle. Maybe you should cuff him.

LAGUERTA

*Hijito, todo esta bien. Te vamos a
ayudar. <<Sweetie, it's okay. We're
here to help.>>*

LaGuerta steps forward. A smile. Slowly extending her hand.

LAGUERTA

*Nadie te va a lastimar. <<No one is
going to hurt you.>>*

Without warning, the boy throws his arms around LaGuerta.
Holding on for dear life. OFF LaGuerta's surprise...

CUT TO:

INT. GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER - SAME TIME

Still watching from the window, Dexter has seen it all.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I can't breathe.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - GUTTED AIR-STREAM - DAY 1

Outside the trailer, FIND Dexter packing up his gear.

DEXTER (V.O.)
The noose is tightening.

He peeks around the Air-Stream. There's LaGuerta awkwardly tending to Oscar on the bumper of a car.

DEXTER (V.O.)
This is how it ends, in the hands of a
seven-year-old?
(beat)
And I usually like kids.

As Debra comes around the corner, Dexter pulls her aside.

DEXTER
Who's the boy?

DEBRA
All we got so far is he's Cuban and
seems to like LaGuerta. Spend enough
time in a hot trunk and I guess she'd
look good to anyone.

DEXTER
Did he, you know... see anything?

DEBRA
Not sure. He's pretty out of it.
Social Services is on their way.

Debra looks over her brother.

DEBRA
You okay? You got a whole brow thing
goin' on.

LAGUERTA

Morgan -- bring some water!

DEBRA

(deadpan)

I love her.

Debra grabs a bottle of water from a cooler and crosses away.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Masuka. Deb. Doakes. They can already sense it. My neat little world of lies is crumbling all around me.

FLASHBACK:

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - HARRY'S DEN - DAY

TEENAGE DEBRA (13, glasses) watches as HARRY takes a shotgun from his gun cabinet and hands it to TEENAGE DEXTER (15).

TEENAGE DEBRA

Why can't I go with you?

HARRY

Deb, we've been through this.

TEENAGE DEBRA

I can stay in the car. I have my books. Or I could just walk with you guys. I promise I'll be quiet. You won't even know I'm there.

HARRY

The pheasants will.

Harry sets aside a shotgun for himself then locks the cabinet's glass door.

TEENAGE DEBRA

But Dexter was my age when --

HARRY

That's enough. The Logans are waiting. Did you pack your swimsuit?

TEENAGE DEBRA

Yes.

HARRY

Good. I want to see that back flip of yours when we get back.

Dejected, she turns and goes.

HARRY

We'll be out in the car in a sec.

TEENAGE DEXTER

Deb does kinda have a point.

HARRY

What we do on these weekends... your sister can never know about.

Dexter slides his shotgun into a leather carrying case.

TEENAGE DEXTER

I hate always lying to her like this.

HARRY

Keeping the truth from the people closest to you is how you'll survive. And how you'll protect them if something ever goes wrong.

OFF Dexter...

END FLASHBACK:

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - DAY 1

Doakes and Debra arrive to find BATISTA waiting for them.

BATISTA

I was able to track down that name, Mariel, with the number you called in. She's a Cuban refugee staying with cousins. I had a car bring her in.

They cross the bullpen.

SGT. DOAKES

Why carve the number in the wall?

BATISTA

Next of kin in case something happened to her. She says Jorge Castillo was holding her and six others captive at his salvage yard.

DEBRA

Explains that garage.

BATISTA

If the family doesn't pay a "release" fee, then the coyote dumps their ass overboard. Cocksuckers make me sick.

Back at Batista's desk, MARIEL, 30s, stands as they approach. She's skittish. Uneasy.

BATISTA

*Estos son mis amigos que te dije.
Este es Sargento Doakes y el Oficial
Morgan. <<These are the friends I was
telling you about. This is Sergeant
Doakes and Officer Morgan.>>*

Batista TRANSLATES back and forth.

SGT. DOAKES

Mariel, can you tell us when was the last time you saw Jorge Castillo?

BATISTA

Mariel, diganos cuando fue la ultima vez que usted vio a Jorge Castillo?

Mariel speaks directly to Batista...

MARIEL

Cuando el nos encerro despues que de nosotros nos bajamos del barco.

BATISTA

When he locked her up with the other refugees after pulling them off the boat.

Choked with emotion, Mariel continues...

MARIEL

Nosotros no teniamos comida ni agua. Un hombre trato de escapar, pero Jorge lo agarro y lo golpeo.

BATISTA

They went without food. Water. One man tried to escape and was beaten by Jorge.

DEBRA

How'd she get free?

BATISTA

Como escapo?

MARIEL

Alguien desatranco la puerta del garaje y nosotros escapamos.

BATISTA

Someone just unlocked the door to the garage.

Mariel's anguish slowly turns... to anger.

MARIEL

Cuando los agarraren, aganos sufrir especialmente a ese concha.

BATISTA

She wants us to make them pay for what they did, especially that concha who treated them like dogs.

DEBRA

Concha?

Mariel emphatically points to Debra's crotch.

DEBRA

Ah. Gotcha.

SGT. DOAKES

Fuck me. The wife was in on it.

DEBRA

Ask if she knows the little boy Social Services picked up.

BATISTA

Quien era el chico pequeno con usted?

Mariel is confused by the question...

MARIEL

Que chico? Yo nunca vi a un chico.

BATISTA

She never saw any boy.

INT. POLICE STATION - DEXTER'S INNER LAB - DAY 1

Reading an autopsy report, Dexter's eyes nervously dart back and forth.

DEXTER (V.O.)

No hair. No fibers. C-O-D
exsanguination. So far, so...

Annoyed, he stops.

DEXTER

You're hovering.

REVEAL Masuka pacing behind him. Excited.

MASUKA

Keep reading.

DEXTER

What am I even looking for?

MASUKA

Wait for it.

DEXTER

This is the prelim, I don't have time
for...

Masuka turns the page for him. Points.

MASUKA
M-fucking-99.

DEXTER
...games.

Stunned, Dexter has to feign ignorance.

DEXTER
"Etorphine Hydrochloride?"

MASUKA
An animal tranquilizer more powerful than morphine. Causes total paralysis. That mark on her neck kept bugging me so I ordered up a tox screen.

Dexter looks down at the autopsy report again.

DEXTER (V.O.)
That's it. No more donuts for Masuka.

MASUKA
Stuff's strictly controlled. Only way to get it is with a DEA license. I put in a request for their list. I'll have it for Doakes in the morning.

Dexter hands back the report. Forces a smile.

DEXTER
Good work.

As Masuka exits, the cold reality sets in for Dexter...

DEXTER (V.O.)
I'm on that list. And eventually, the alias I used will lead them back to me. Tick-tock.

Dexter's phone RINGS. He looks to see who it is and puts on a happy face as he answers.

DEXTER
Hey you...

INTERCUT:

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 1

With the phone to her ear, Rita paces in the kitchen.

RITA

I'm glad you picked up. I really need to talk with someone.

Through the glass window, Dexter sees Doakes, Debra and Batista huddling in the bullpen.

DEXTER

Everything okay?

RITA

Paul called after you left.

Distracted, Dexter takes his phone with him. Crossing to his door to keep an eye on his colleagues.

DEXTER

Paul? Who's Paul?

RITA

My soon to be ex? He's already out of jail. Overcrowding. Can you believe it? Every time things start to go just a little bit right, something like this happens.

(sighs)

He wants to come to Astor's party.

DEXTER

What did you tell him?

RITA

I'd have to think about it. But even if I say no, he won't listen. He never does.

(beat)

Can you come over tonight?

LaGuerta urgently joins the others in the bullpen. Dexter's trying to focus on Rita, but he's dying to hear what they're talking about.

DEXTER

I don't know... I'm kinda under the gun here. Big case.

RITA

I shouldn't be dumping all this stuff on you. I'm sorry.

DEXTER

No, no, don't be. Tell you what, I'll drop by if I can. Promise.

RITA
'kay. I'll keep a plate warm just in case.

DEXTER
Thanks. Bye.

Dexter quickly grabs some files and heads out into the bullpen...

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

...but he's too late. Everyone is breaking off.

LAGUERTA
...I'm headed over there now to see if we can bring the little boy in for a sketch.

SGT. DOAKES
(to Batista)
Check the marinas. Find Jorge Castillo's boat.
(to Debra)
We'll search the house. Let's roll.

As LaGuerta, Doakes and Debra move away, Dexter is left in the dust. Only Batista remains behind.

DEXTER
Sketch?

Batista grabs his hat then heads for the front door. Dexter follows.

BATISTA
The kid told Social Services some guy saved him from the "bad lady."

The news hits Dexter like a ton of bricks.

DEXTER
Valerie Castillo.

BATISTA
Sounds like she got exactly what she had coming to her. Personally, I'd shake this guy's hand.

Dexter watches him go.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Oh, you say that now.

INT. CASTILLO HOME - MASTER BEDROOM/OFFICE - DAY 1

TECHS filter in and out of the room. From a hamper, clothes are being separated into brown evidence bags. PAN OVER. FIND Doakes combing through Jorge Castillo's desk while Debra searches a file cabinet nearby.

DEBRA

Found his passport.

She opens it, glancing at the photo.

DEBRA

God, I feel like I need a shower just looking at this douchebag.

SGT. DOAKES

Keep searchin'. Phone records. Bank accounts. Credit cards. Maybe the wife got greedy and that's why he killed her.

DEBRA

(unconvinced)

Maybe.

They continue to search. A long beat.

DEBRA

This morning, at the salvage yard, what was that thing at the car?

SGT. DOAKES

What thing?

DEBRA

Right before you opened the trunk. You like tried to cock block me or something.

SGT. DOAKES

Just looking out for my team.

DEBRA

I didn't see you looking out for LaGuerta.

SGT. DOAKES

I would if she asked.

DEBRA

I didn't ask.

SGT. DOAKES

Fine. Next time, get your ass shot.

Frustrated, Doakes slams a drawer shut.

SGT. DOAKES

Our guy may have skipped town.

DEBRA

If he even did it.

(off Doakes' reaction)

What if we have a copycat killer on our hands?

SGT. DOAKES

Bit of a stretch, don't you think?

DEBRA

Just hear me out. What if the person who killed Valerie Castillo was trying to bleed her out like the Ice Truck Killer, but didn't know how?

Amused by Debra's enthusiasm, Doakes sits in the office chair.

SGT. DOAKES

She wasn't a hooker.

DEBRA

But she was killed someplace else, dumped, and laid out in a ritualistic manner. Just like all the others.

SGT. DOAKES

'Cept she wasn't in pieces.

DEBRA

What about the cuts on her neck? Those weren't done by some amateur. And we have yet to find a murder weapon.

SGT. DOAKES

It's always the husband.

DEBRA

All I'm saying is that with all the media coverage about the ice truck murders, it's possible.

SGT. DOAKES

So what do you suggest?

DEBRA

Let me work up a profile. Just in case Jorge's a deadend.

Doakes considers it. Sighs.

SGT. DOAKES

What the hell.

Doakes' phone RINGS. He checks the caller, then turns off the ringer again.

DEBRA

That's the second time today you've made that face. Who're you avoiding?

SGT. DOAKES

We've got one more stop to make.

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - OLD CAR - DUSK - DAY 1

With the crime scene deserted, Dexter walks among the endless rows of rusting steel carcasses.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Nothing lasts forever. Just ask a Ford Pinto.

He stops. REVEAL the dilapidated car Dexter saw LaGuerta, Doakes and Debra pull the Cuban boy out of.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Eventually, most serial killers get caught. There's really not much of a retirement plan.

Dexter passes under crime scene tape.

DEXTER (V.O.)

But it can't end like this. It's too soon. I'm not ready.

Dexter climbs into the trunk. Pulling down the lid, he's immersed in DARKNESS. A beam of fading sunlight passes through the missing keyhole. Slowly, he puts his eye up to the light.

DEXTER'S POV

Like a telescope, the field of view is exactly where Dexter abducted Valerie Castillo.

QUICKFLASH. *Dexter plunging his syringe into Valerie's neck. As she goes limp, he throws her body over his shoulder, carrying her inside the Air Stream.*

BACK TO SCENE. Dexter in the trunk, a sliver of light on his face.

DEXTER (V.O.)

He saw me.

Pulling himself out of the car, the consequences wash over Dexter. Simmering, he suddenly lashes out, kicking a hubcap and launching it into the air in a cloud of dust. OFF Dexter, collecting himself...

INT. DOAKES' CAR - DUSK - DAY 1

Doakes pulls up and stops in front of a nice house in what was probably once a nice part of Miami.

DEBRA

What's this?

SGT. DOAKES

You wanted to know who's been calling.
My mom lives here.

DEBRA

Forget your laundry?

SGT. DOAKES

She's been on me to stop by for
dinner, so... I'm stopping by. Here's
the plan: we go in. Eat. Get out
before the cheesecake.

DEBRA

(realizing)

Oh my God... I'm what, your exit
strategy?

SGT. DOAKES

Look, you can stay out here, which
gives me an even better excuse to
leave early, or you can come inside
and get some free food. Your call.

He opens his car door.

SGT. DOAKES

Oh, and my sisters are probably here
too.

Doakes exits, leaving Debra to stew. A long beat. Screw this. She gets out, following her partner up the sidewalk.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT 1

As Astor and Cody work on "Happy Birthday" banners on the floor of the living room. FIND Dexter holding a plate, watching them playfully snatch markers from one another.

DEXTER (V.O.)

I wonder in time if they'll even remember me. Other than the man who broke their mother's heart.

(beat)

I'll be breaking their hearts too.

Entering from the kitchen, Rita continues to clear the table, picking up on a conversation Dexter isn't a part of.

RITA

...he is their father, they need to know he's been released, right?

A beat. Dexter realizes that wasn't rhetorical, but all he can offer is...

DEXTER

Yeah. Sure.

RITA

Even if I tell Paul not to come, he'll show up here eventually. I know him.

Dexter grabs some silverware and follows Rita...

IN THE KITCHEN

Rita sets plates down on the counter.

RITA

Everything's been going so good at work. With you.

(beat)

I don't know what to do.

DEXTER

He's really got a hold on you, doesn't he?

Where does she even begin?

RITA

Paul always had a temper, but when he was using... he said if I ever left he'd find us and hurt the kids. Somehow I convinced myself that by staying I was protecting them.

She starts rinsing off dishes. Self-conscious. Ashamed.

RITA

Cody's too young to remember the worst of it. But Astor... she's the one who called the police the last time. She was protecting me.

Dexter takes a plate from her. Lifts her chin with his hand.

DEXTER

You're not that woman anymore. You're stronger now, and when their dad shows up, we'll deal with it together.

CODY'S VOICE

Dad's coming home?!

REVEAL Cody and Astor in the doorway. Unable to contain himself, Cody starts pulling on Rita.

CODY

When will he be here?

Astor remains frozen. Then, without a word, she heads back into the living room. Rita follows after her with Cody in tow, wanting to know more...

CODY

Can he sleep in my room?

Alone, Dexter leans back, both hands against the counter.

DEXTER (V.O.)

I shouldn't even be here. Rita will be devastated if I'm arrested. Her husband was a crackhead and her boyfriend's a serial killer. It's kind of hard not to take that personally.

INT. DOAKES' MOTHER'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 1

FIND Debra, Doakes, his mother GINNY (60s), and sisters JESS and RONI (30s) seated around the dinner table. Debra is entertaining them with tales from Vice.

DEBRA

...so this john comes out of nowhere, he's got me by the throat, and I can't reach around for my gun. Then, I see his nipple ring.

The women react. They see where this is going.

DEBRA

I yanked that fucker out like it was a
grenade pin.

(beat)

Um, sorry. Cop mouth.

RONI

We're used to it. When James
graces his family with his
presence.

SGT. DOAKES

Some of us don't work in a bank.

JESS

Girl, the first words out of my baby
brother's mouth were, 'Got milk,
motherfucker?'

The sisters break into giggles. Doakes is the odd man, and
lone man, out. And Debra is loving it. She fits right in.

GINNY

That's enough, you two.

RONI

That security guard on the news
gonna be alright?

JESS

Someone did a hatchet job on me like
that, I'd cash it all in.

DEBRA

Tony's doin' okay. The hospital is
fitting him with prosthetics. And
he's just got this spirit about him.
I mean, the guy's missing body parts
because of this ice truck asshole, and
he's still hitting on me.

GINNY

That's because men only think with one
body part. And that one wasn't cut
off.

SGT. DOAKES

Mom...

GINNY

Well it's the damn truth.

Doakes puts his napkin on his plate. Then, to Debra...

SGT. DOAKES
C'mon, we got a case to solve.

GINNY
You sure? I've got cheesecake in the
fridge.

RONI
(to Debra)
And none of that store bought shit.

SGT. DOAKES
Yeah, we're sure.

But Debra is having a good time.

DEBRA
Y'know, I'd love some cheesecake.
(then, to Doakes)
You can wait in the car. Your
call.

OFF Doakes, realizing this was a bad idea...

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - DAY

In jeans and a t-shirt, Dexter is back at the yard underneath the blazing sun. RACK FOCUS to the Air-Stream. Suddenly, the door swings open and there's... Harry. He's dressed in loud vacation garb, waving to his son.

HARRY
Dex, hurry up. Storm's on its way.

Dexter looks up...

PITCH BLACK CLOUDS

now billow overhead. Then, he feels a drop hit his shoulder. And another. He touches his white shirt, then examines his fingers. They're moist with... BLOOD.

Suddenly, Dexter finds himself in a downpour. Running for the Air Stream, he pulls open the door as a torrent of crimson beads cascade down its tarnished silver skin.

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. GUTTED AIR-STREAM TRAILER - DAY

Inside the Air Stream, Dexter begins to shiver. Cautiously moving forward, he finds Harry standing over Valerie Castillo (her throat still cut) lying on the dinner table.

HARRY
Sorry 'bout the A/C. She likes it cold.

DEXTER
Dad, what're you doing here?

Harry shakes his head.

HARRY
You let me down, Dexter.

Harry takes Valerie's hand and she comes to life. Helping her up, Harry escorts her past Dexter and toward the door.

DEXTER
But it's not my fault... someone else is out there... he's like me... but he's not like me.

Harry exits with Valerie. As the door shuts behind them, Dexter tries the handle, it won't budge. He's locked inside.

DEXTER
He did this! Dad... DAD!

TIGHT ON Dexter's ear. Ruby red lips moving INTO FRAME.

DEBRA'S VOICE
He's dead. Dumbass.

ROTATE CAMERA. Dexter is now flat on his back on the Air Stream's table. Like one of his victims, he's strapped down. Debra, in her Vice sex suit, is by his side.

DEBRA
Why didn't you tell me what you are, Dex?

She slowly slices his cheek with a scalpel.

DEBRA
I'm your sister. Okay, not by blood, but they know what I mean.

Desperate, Dexter looks to his RIGHT -- there's Rita, looking beautiful and glamorous in black. She pulls Cody and Astor close, shielding their faces.

Dexter looks LEFT -- Doakes and Batista are in full-dress uniforms while LaGuerta holds hands with Oscar who bites into a big tuft of pink cotton candy.

As Dexter peers down at his FEET, he notices -- A MAN bathed in shadow. Slowly, the man opens his hand. Dangling from it...

THE DOLL HEAD

DEBRA
Any last words?

Dexter tries frantically to tell Debra there's the Ice Truck Killer she's been looking for, but no words come out. With a shrug, Debra raises a butcher's cleaver.

DEBRA
Figures...

OFF Debra, a killer swing...

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT 1

Dexter gasps awake. Throwing back the sheets, he's covered in sweat. He lies there. Motionless.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I don't have bad dreams. When I sleep, all of me sleeps. Nothing ever goes bump in Dexter's night.

Getting up, Dexter crosses to the window.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I've never felt a moment of remorse.
Doubt. Regret.

He sees his haggard, distorted features in the window.

DEXTER (V.O.)
What's happening to me?

As Dexter pulls back, his reflection simply... disappears.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING - DAY 2

FIND Oscar in back of a car as a Social Worker, (TELMA, Black, 50s), unbuckles his seatbelt while LaGuerta looks on.

LAGUERTA
Thanks for bringing him by.

Free of the seatbelt, Oscar scooches out of the car.

TELMA
Normally, I wouldn't approve of
something like this...

The boy sidles up next to LaGuerta.

TELMA
...but you've made quite an
impression. You have kids?

Uncomfortable with Oscar's closeness, LaGuerta doesn't know what to do. She opts for a clumsy pat on his head.

LAGUERTA
No. But I was like him once. A
stranger in a strange place. Left to
grow up in the hands of strangers.
All for a better life.

TELMA
Police Lieutenant. I'd say you've
done okay.

Startled, LaGuerta sees that Oscar, without looking at her, has slipped his hand inside her's.

LAGUERTA
Any luck with family here?

TELMA
He talks about an Uncle Roberto. But
with just a first name...

LAGUERTA
Maybe someone will come through on our
end.

TELMA
I hope so. I'd hate to send another
one of these kids into foster care.

OFF LaGuerta, considering Oscar...

DISSOLVE TO:

A COMPUTER MONITOR SCREEN. A list of names quickly scroll by. We're...

INT. POLICE STATION - FORENSICS LAB - MORNING - DAY 2

PULL BACK. FIND Dexter, unkempt, sitting at a computer. He takes a big gulp of coffee as he continues his search.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 If my back wasn't against the wall,
 and I wasn't working on no sleep, I'd
 almost feel guilty for hacking into
 Masuka's email. Once I got past all
 the porn, it was easy to --

ON SCREEN

the name DR. JEFF LINDSAY with a Ft. Lauderdale address and
 DEA license number underneath is highlighted. A beat.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 And there I am. Dr. Jeff Lindsay. So
 wholesome. So inconspicuous.

He hits delete. The name and its information disappears.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 Harry would frown upon destroying
 evidence, but he never wanted me to
 get caught either. If I can give
 myself more time, maybe I can figure
 out a way to --

DEBRA'S VOICE
 What're you doing in here?

REVEAL Debra in the doorway. Dexter clicks on the "Keep As
 New" tab, closes the window, then quickly logs off.

DEXTER
 My computer froze. Needed to check
 some email.

DEBRA
 Can you take a look at this for me?

Crossing, she hands him a folder. Dexter notices the title...

DEXTER
 Copycat killer?

DEBRA
 I worked on this profile all night.
 I'd like to give it to LaGuerta. But
 I want to make sure it's good enough
 first.

Dexter hesitates.

DEXTER
 I'm... honored.

Then, begrudgingly, he opens the folder. Reading outloud...

DEXTER

"The similar manner in which the victim's body was displayed suggests this killer feels a connection to the Ice Truck Killer, excited by what he's doing."

He looks up but Debra urges him to keep going.

DEXTER

"The cut on the victim's cheek, while not fatal, appears to be a signature of sorts. Because of the lack of forensic evidence collected from the crime scene, the suspect may be familiar with law enforcement procedure."

Dexter stares at the document. He has to nip this in the bud.

DEBRA

Why'd you stop? You were just getting to the good stuff.

DEXTER

Let me guess, single white male. Mid-30s. Disconnected from his emotions. Lives alone. It's a little textbook, don't you think?

Dexter hands back the file and Debra is thrown. He's always been there for her.

DEBRA

But it totally fits this case.

DEXTER

Or, you're trying to make it fit. My advice? Keep this to yourself.

DEBRA

Really?

DEXTER

Deb, you're new in Homicide. If this blows up in your face, you've given LaGuerta the excuse she's been looking for to send you back to Vice.

His sister mulls it over. Then, defiantly...

DEBRA

No... I'm on to something. I can feel it, like one of your hunches.

She turns to go. A little hurt.

DEBRA

But way to have my back.

OFF Dexter, feeling truly horrible...

FLASHBACK:

INT. MORGAN HOUSE - DEXTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Reading a comic book on his bed, Dexter looks up to see Harry standing in the doorway. Pained. Urgent.

HARRY

Where's your sister?

CUT TO:

A soup can and soda bottle resting on a tree stump. Suddenly, the can rockets into the air with the simultaneous sound of a GUNSHOT. We're...

EXT. FIELD - DAY

REVEAL Debra holding a small .22 caliber hand gun. But just as she takes careful aim at the bottle...

HARRY'S VOICE

What the hell do you think you're doing?

Startled, Debra turns to see her father striding toward her.

TEENAGE DEBRA

Dad, I --

HARRY

Not. Another. Word.

He snatches the gun away, emptying its ammunition.

HARRY

How'd you open my cabinet?

TEENAGE DEBRA

(softly)

You hide the key in the pantry... top shelf.

With the gun secure, Harry paces. Trying to maintain his composure.

HARRY

You and your brother know never to touch my guns unless it's under my direct supervision.

TEENAGE DEBRA

But I was careful... I was only shooting at cans and bottles. And I'm good. Like Dexter. Now we can all go hunting.

Harry puts both hands on Debra's shoulder. Locks eyes with her.

HARRY

I am so disappointed in you.

The words blister.

HARRY

Get your jacket.

Fighting back tears, FOLLOW Debra past Harry... to Dexter. He's been here the whole time and led his father right to her. As she brushes by her brother...

TEENAGE DEBRA

Thanks a lot.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - DAY 2

TIGHT ON Dexter. Nervously looking around.

SGT. DOAKES (O.C.)

...starting this morning, we've got cadets from the Academy going over every inch of the salvage yard.

PULL BACK. See that Dexter stands next to Masuka among a small group of UNIFORM COPS and DETECTIVES, including Debra and Batista. Everyone's being brought up to speed on the Castillo case by Doakes.

BATISTA

(to Debra)

Those days, I don't miss.

SGT. DOAKES

The kid we found yesterday saw someone abduct Valerie Castillo from that yard. Because he didn't recognize a photo of Jorge Castillo, Lt. LaGuerta is bringing him in to attempt a sketch.

Desperate, Dexter strains his neck, looking around. Hoping the kid doesn't walk in this very second.

SGT. DOAKES

In the meantime, we follow up on the DEA list of M-99 buyers. Vets. Doctors. Animal Control. Even circuses.

A Uniform hands out copies of the list.

SGT. DOAKES

Be thorough. Check everyone.

He turns to Masuka.

SGT. DOAKES

Where are we on the home and the boat?

MASUKA

Still processing.

SGT. DOAKES

If it turns out the husband's a dead end, we're looking at a new suspect. Officer Morgan, any thoughts?

DEXTER (V.O.)

Don't do it, Deb. The last thing I need right now is to be profiled for all of Miami-Metro.

She shoots Dexter a defiant look.

DEBRA

We could be looking at someone who is inspired by the Ice Truck Killer. A copycat. If so, the suspect is most likely...

DEXTER

(to Masuka)

I'll be in my lab.

But as Dexter pulls away, walking into the station...

THE CUBAN BOY

clutching LaGuerta's hand. Dexter's caught. There's nowhere to turn. All he can do is lower his gaze.

LAGUERTA
Morning, Dex.

DEXTER
Lieutenant.

Dexter and the boy pass in SLO-MO. Dexter can't help himself. He sneaks a peek and is deeply relieved to see that the boy is looking at the ground. OFF Dexter, hightailing it to his lab...

DISSOLVE TO:

A BLANK SKETCH PAD. We're...

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY 2

Batista, LaGuerta and a MALE SKETCH ARTIST (30s) sit with Oscar. The boy is distant, fidgeting with a crucifix that hangs from his neck.

BATISTA
Oscar, el hombre que viste era como yo o mas chico? <<Oscar, the man you saw, was he big like me, or smaller?>>

Oscar remains silent. His gaze directed at his feet.

LAGUERTA
Hijo, esta bien cuentanos lo que viste esa noche. <<Honey, it's okay. You can tell us whatever you want from that night.>>

And still not a peep. Batista and LaGuerta share a look. This is going nowhere. Then...

LAGUERTA
I'll be right back.

But as she tries to go, Oscar clings to her, scared of the men. LaGuerta motions to Batista, whispering in his ear.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY 2

Oscar's face is covered in white powder as he digs into a bag of pastries.

BATISTA

I forgot how much I loved *pastelitos* growing up.

LAGUERTA

He just needed a little reminder of home.

BATISTA

I was barely his age when I came over with my family. Threw up the whole damn way.

LAGUERTA

How's your Dad doing?

BATISTA

Not so good. I was thinking about trying to take him to Havana... but he's so stubborn. Says he won't go back until Castro's taking it up the ass from Hitler in hell.

LaGuerta looks at Batista. Then, Oscar.

BATISTA

What? He doesn't speak English.

LAGUERTA

I don't care.

She brushes the hair from Oscar's eyes.

LAGUERTA

This kid's been around enough ugliness for a lifetime.

Oscar looks up at her, finished.

LAGUERTA

Go get the artist. I think someone's ready.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 2

Rita stands on a chair, hanging the birthday banners the kids were working on. Then Cody bursts in, home from school. He heads straight for his Playstation, but Astor lingers behind.

RITA

Did you thank Mrs. Carroll for picking you up from school for me?

ASTOR

Yes.

RITA

(re: banner)

So, what do you think?

Astor plops down on the sofa, sulking.

RITA

Everything okay?

Astor doesn't say a word. Rita comes down off the chair, kneeling in front of her daughter.

RITA

Wanna talk about it?

ASTOR

Holly and Blake and Ashley said they can't come to my party.

RITA

Honey, that's not true. I spoke with their mothers last week.

ASTOR

It's all Cody's fault. He couldn't keep his mouth shut about Dad coming home. He told everyone.

CODY

Did not.

ASTOR

You told EVERYONE!

Astor runs from the room. Slamming her bedroom door shut behind her. OFF Rita, troubled...

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY 2

Dexter lingers just outside the doorway. He's surprised to find the room empty and the lights turned off. Are they done already? Then, he sees it...

THE SKETCH PAD

face down on the table. Summoning his courage...

DEXTER (V.O.)

I have to know.

But the moment Dexter sets foot in the room...

LAGUERTA'S VOICE
 (an urgent whisper)
 Dexter?

Startled, he turns to see LaGuerta on a couch with Oscar draped across her lap, sound asleep. She can't move.

LAGUERTA
 Thank God. My arm's asleep.

DEXTER
 How long have the two of you been like this?

LAGUERTA
 Half an hour. I was afraid to move or I'd wake him.

DEXTER
 At that age, when they're out, they're out. You could brush his teeth and he wouldn't wake up.

Dexter picks up LaGuerta's jacket off the back of a chair.

DEXTER
 Here, lift his head. I'll slide this underneath.

As LaGuerta gently lifts, Dexter slides the rolled up jacket underneath Oscar's head, allowing her to free her arm.

LAGUERTA
 Thanks.

Oscar stirs a little and Dexter freezes. If this kid does wake up and sees him, it could all be over.

LAGUERTA
 What're you doing up here?

DEXTER
 (covering)
 Waiting for some lab results. Had some time to kill.

LaGuerta sees him eyeing the sketch pad.

LAGUERTA
 Go ahead. We didn't get far. He's so tired. We'll start up again tomorrow.

She looks down at Oscar. Her hand lightly rubbing his back.

LAGUERTA

It's just a matter of time before we
know who this little guy saw.

With great trepidation, Dexter reaches for the pad. Turning
it over to find...

A PAIR OF EYES

staring back at him. They're *his* eyes.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Windows to the soul...

PUSH in on Dexter, his world collapsing...

CUT TO:

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY 2

QUICK CUTS of Dexter efficiently moving through his place.
A TRUNK hides a false bottom that contains syringes, small
bottles of medicine and latex gloves.

DEXTER (V.O.)
...that boy saw my eyes...

Behind COUNTLESS BOOKS on a shelf, Dexter collects
handcuffs, boxcutters, a scalpel.

DEXTER (V.O.)
...and he knows I have no soul.

Sliding the MATTRESS off his bed, we see that the BOX SPRING
has been hollowed out. Inside, layers of plastic sheeting,
rope, and two, small surgical saws.

DEXTER (V.O.)
When he gets around to the rest of my
face...

Buried underneath his colorful print shirts in a DRESSER
DRAWER is a sea of black killing clothes.

DEXTER (V.O.)
...I've got nowhere left to hide.

Finally, Dexter removes the front of the AIR CONDITIONING
UNIT, retrieving his precious box of blood slides. Into a
large duffel bag it goes, landing on top of the other items.
Dexter takes one last look around his place. Satisfied he
got everything, he zips up the duffel and heads for the door.

INT. POLICE STATION - WOMEN'S RESTROOM - DAY 2

Debra exits a stall to find LaGuerta with her face pressed up to the mirror. Frustrated, she curses while prodding underneath her bottom eyelid...

LAGUERTA

Lente de mierda.

There are only two sinks and Debra needs to use one of them. Shit. Sucking it up, she crosses. Washing her hands next to the LaGuerta. A beat. Debra can't help herself...

DEBRA

If you...

Grabbing some paper towels, she dries her hands.

DEBRA

...here.

Debra takes a step toward LaGuerta who stiffens slightly.

DEBRA

You want some help or not?

She tries to relax, allowing Debra to come close.

LAGUERTA

Damn thing rolled up on me.

DEBRA

Luckily, you're in good hands. I ditched my glasses for contacts back in high school.

The two women are now mere inches away from one another.

LAGUERTA

Boys?

DEBRA

Yep. But what I really needed was tits. All my bras had Winnie the Pooh on them until I was 16. As you can see, not a lot has changed since then.

(then)

Try not to blink.

She holds LaGuerta's head steady. A beat.

LAGUERTA

Your brother's adopted, right?

DEBRA

Yeah, Dad found him at a crime scene.

LAGUERTA

How'd the department feel about Harry getting so personally involved in a case?

DEBRA

Didn't seem to be a problem. My folks never talked about it much.

LAGUERTA

Still, raising a boy, must've been a lot of work.

DEBRA

Dex? God, no. I got into more trouble than he ever did. He was the perfect one...

(then)

...there's the little bastard.

She begins gently pushing underneath LaGuerta's eyelid.

DEBRA

Can I ask you something?

(off LaGuerta's nod)

Why do you have it in for me?

Without hesitation, or malice, the Lieutenant tells her.

LAGUERTA

You're loud. Impulsive. And you constantly question authority.

Debra delicately fishes out the lens. Hands it to LaGuerta.

DEBRA

Fair enough.

LaGuerta turns to squirt some solution into her palm.

LAGUERTA

So I hear you have an interesting theory about who --

But looking in the mirror, she sees Debra is already gone.

EXT. DEXTER'S BOAT - NIGHT 2

Anchored out on the water, FIND Dexter in back of 'The Slice of Life.' The duffel bag open at his feet. Depressed, he begins tossing overboard the weighted down items one by one.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 For all the police know, this is only
 one murder.

SPLASH. There go the folded plastic sheets.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 With the right defense lawyer, I
 probably beat this. Who convicts a
 coyote killer in Miami?

SPLASH. The surgical saws.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 But how could I put Deb or Rita
 through the circus of a trial?

SPLASH. A bundle of dark clothing.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 This will be hard enough on them
 without the world wondering why they
 never suspected that dear, darling,
 Dexter had... issues.

SPLASH. The bottles of M-99 and a handful of syringes taped
 together. A beat. Then, Dexter picks up the bag, dumping
 what's left over the side of the boat. He stares longingly
 as the last remaining items disappear below the surface.
 But he's not done just yet...

THE BOX OF SLIDES

rests on a deck chair. He opens the box. Begins to
 contemplate individual slides.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 Alex Timmons, sniper.

QUICKFLASH. *ALEX TIMMONS (20s) defiant to the end.*

ALEX TIMMONS
You think I'm scared? Do it, man...

BACK TO SCENE. Another slide.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 Gene Marshall, arsonist.

QUICKFLASH. *GENE MARSHALL (50s) pleading for mercy.*

GENE MARSHALL
Please... make it quick.

BACK TO SCENE. Another slide.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Cindy Landon, black widow.

QUICKFLASH. *CINDY LANDON (30s) choking back tears.*

CINDY LANDON
I'll fuck you if you let me go...

BACK TO SCENE. Dexter sighs.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Such fond memories of them all.

He leans back against the boat's rail.

DEXTER (V.O.)
They all accepted their fate in their
own way. Now it's time for me to do
the same.

Finally, Dexter pulls a slide from the back of the box.

DEXTER (V.O.)
Valerie Castillo. My last victim...

Then, Dexter notices something. Startled, he searches for a
his maglight which he proceeds to put underneath the slide.

There, etched in the blood, is a tiny...

SMILEY FACE

Slowly, Dexter begins to realize...

DEXTER (V.O.)
He's not angry. That's not what this
is about...
(beat)
...he's testing me.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 2

Alone on the couch, Rita watches the late news. Looking up,
she sees Astor enter the room, half asleep.

RITA
Honey, what is it?

Ashamed, Astor can't form the words. Instead, she takes
Rita by the hand.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - KIDS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Astor leads her mother into her bedroom. Cody is sound asleep, but there in the middle of Astor's sheets is an oval wet spot.

ASTOR
I'm sorry... I...

And the tears come.

ASTOR
...I didn't mean to.

Rita pulls her close.

RITA
Oh, sweetie... it's alright.
(a hug)
These things happen. Now, c'mon,
let's get you changed.

As Rita opens a dresser drawer to pull out new night clothes, Astor stops her.

ASTOR
Mommy... would it be okay if I didn't
have my party?

OFF Rita, considering this heartbreaking request...

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 2

At his desk, wearing latex gloves, Dexter removes Valerie Castillo's slide from the tray.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I was wrong the whole time...

With a steel-point, he gently breaks the dried blood drop in half, eliminating the smiley face in the process.

DEXTER (V.O.)
...my playmate saw an opportunity to
paint me into a corner to see if I'd
find my way out...

Using a piece of clear adhesive tape, Dexter applies it to one half of the slide. Running his gloved finger over the tape, he presses down, smoothing it out.

DEXTER (V.O.)
...if I'd fight to survive.

TIGHT ON the tape as Dexter delicately lifts off one half of blood drop from the slide as if it were a fingerprint. He rolls his chair to the other side of the desk.

A LARGE BONING KNIFE

rests atop clear plastic.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Transferring a dried drop of blood is relatively easy, if you have a well-preserved sample.

Ever so carefully, he transfers half of the drop of blood from the tape onto the knife's razor sharp blade.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DEXTER'S INNER LAB - MORNING - DAY 3

Dexter withdraws a man's black sock from an evidence bag. Placing it on his desk, he reaches into a pocket, withdrawing Valerie Castillo's slide in a small baggie. Carefully, he begins scraping off the remaining dried flecks onto the sock.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Now for the hard part.

Glancing out his window into the bullpen, Dexter sees...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - SAME TIME

Doakes at his desk as Debra crosses with a stack of mug shots.

DEBRA

Just got off the phone with the FBI. Wanted to see what their computers would spit out. I cross-referenced my profile with the Ice Truck Killer list...

Proudly, she tosses the photos on Doakes' desk.

DEBRA

...eleven new hits.

SGT. DOAKES

How 'bout we hold off until there's a sketch. Take it from there.

DEBRA

I know, I know. I just wanna get a head start on this.

(beat)

We could look these over at lunch. My treat.

SGT. DOAKES

You never give up, do --

Doakes' phone RINGS. He checks to see who's calling, then turns off the ringer. Debra knows exactly who that was.

DEBRA

Thank Ginny again for the other night. I can't even remember the last time I met a guy's family and they liked me.

SGT. DOAKES

You held your own. Most don't get a dirty word in edge-wise with my sisters around the dinner table.

DEBRA

In our house for dinner, every Thursday night was pancake night. Morgan tradition.

She sees Dexter on fast approach.

DEBRA

I miss that kind of stuff, y'know?

DEXTER

I found something.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON a black sock. PULL BACK. We're...

INT. POLICE STATION - DEXTER'S LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Doakes and Debra stand beside Dexter looking at the sock laid out on an evidence tray.

SGT. DOAKES

The wife's blood, you're sure?

DEXTER

Without a doubt. This was found in the Castillo's bedroom hamper. We check all clothing items brought in. Because of sheer volume, sometimes that takes awhile.

DEBRA

Still doesn't prove anything.

DEXTER

Not by itself, but I re-examined the footage I took that morning...

He picks up a remote control. Pushes Play.

ON A NEARBY TV MONITOR

footage rolls of Valerie Castillo's neck wounds.

DEXTER

Notice the cuts along the carotid arteries. Long. Deep. Valerie Castillo bled to death in minutes.

SGT. DOAKES

No shit.

DEXTER

The person who did this wasn't trying to emulate the Ice Truck Killer -- he was in a hurry. Probably afraid of getting caught.

DEBRA

(scoffs)

Most killers are.

DEXTER

Except if this was a copycat, he wouldn't be in a rush. He would savor his first kill. Control the precise moment when Valerie Castillo died instead of simply letting her bleed out.

Dexter hits Pause.

DEXTER

This is all too... passive.

(beat)

Have you completely ruled out the husband?

DEBRA

Why're you doing this? The kid didn't recognize Jorge Castillo in any of the photos.

DEXTER

He was a dehydrated and traumatized seven-year-old left to fend for himself for days in a salvage yard.

He crosses to turn off the monitor.

DEXTER (V.O.)

I hate this. But my only way out is to turn against the one person who's always believed in me...

SGT. DOAKES

You really think it's the husband?

DEXTER

He was a deep sea fisherman, most know how to use a knife. And he's still missing. Have you finished your search of the salvage yard?

Doakes hesitates for a beat. Neither Dexter nor Debra sure what side of the fence he'll land. Then, Doakes pulls out his cellphone. On the move.

SGT. DOAKES

I'm gonna have 'em send out the cadets again.

Once he's gone, brother and sister are left alone.

DEXTER

I'm sorry.

He can see the hurt in Debra's eyes.

DEXTER

I know how hard you worked on that profile.

DEBRA

No, I really don't think you do.

As she goes...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. MORGAN HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Dexter finds Debra out in the driveway bouncing a tennis ball against the closed garage door.

TEENAGE DEXTER

How long you grounded for?

Debra can't even bring herself to look at her brother.

TEENAGE DEBRA

Two months.

TEENAGE DEXTER

I had to tell him.

TEENAGE DEBRA

No, Dex, you didn't.

She bounces the ball.

TEENAGE DEBRA

You could've kept your fucking mouth shut.

TEENAGE DEXTER

Dad was really worried. So was I.

TEENAGE DEBRA

Well, now you can spend more time together. I'm not stupid, Dexter. That's what you've always wanted.

TEENAGE DEXTER

That's not true. Deb, you're my sister.

TEENAGE DEBRA

No, I'm not. And he's my father. I swear, there are so many times I wish he never brought you home.

A beat. Debra hates herself for saying it out loud.

TEENAGE DEBRA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

Stung, Dexter digs in a baggy pants pocket.

TEENAGE DEXTER

Here. Thought you might want this.

He sets a bullet-riddled soup can down in front of her.

TEENAGE DEXTER

You're a better shot than me.

Dexter heads back inside the house. Left alone, Debra picks up the can, running a finger over the small holes...

END FLASHBACK:

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 3

TIGHT ON an undecorated cake fresh from the oven. PAN AROUND. There's Rita with a bowl of frosting in one hand and a spreading knife in the other. But she's not looking at the cake -- she's staring at the phone on the counter nearby.

A beat. With a deep breath, she puts everything down and picks up the phone. Methodically, she punches in the numbers as if she might change her mind at any moment. She waits. And waits. But just as she's about to hang up...

RITA

Hey, Paul it's me... um, look, we need to talk... I know you want to see Astor... but the kids are doing so well now.

Pacing nervously, she chooses her words carefully.

RITA

It might be better if you don't show up for the party... I just don't want...

Rita hesitates. Staring at the unfinished cake and something inside of her... snaps.

RITA

I'm sorry, but I have full custody now and you can't just drop in on us like this anymore. I checked and the restraining order is still in effect, so if you step one foot on this property, the first call I make is to the police. The second is to your parole officer. If you want to see the kids, we can discuss it another time.

She exhales. A long beat.

RITA

Call me when you get this, okay?

Rita hangs up, heart pounding. The weight of what she's done washes over her. That felt... good. Even if it was only a message on an answering machine.

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - DAY 3

TRACK through the maze of rusted vehicles. PUSH INSIDE a wrecked pickup. There in the dented glove compartment is...

THE BONING KNIFE

wrapped in plastic. TILT UP. A fresh-faced CADET is calling it in on his walkie-talkie.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY 3

Dexter is putting the box of blood slides back behind the air conditioning unit. His phone RINGS. Crossing to pick up, Dexter checks to see who it is.

DEXTER

Morgan...
(listening, a smile)
I'll be right there.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY 3

The Sketch Artist faces CAMERA, adding the final touches on his pad. 180 AROUND. Oscar is on the floor with LaGuerta, the contents of her purse spread before them. Clowning around, the boy holds up a pair of her handcuffs to his eyes as if they were glasses.

MAN'S VOICE

Oscarito?

The boy and LaGuerta look up to see the Social Worker and Batista standing in the doorway with ROBERTO (30s). Oscar gets up off the floor, racing into his uncle's waiting arms.

OSCAR

Tio Roberto!

As Batista helps LaGuerta up, the Social Worker crosses to her.

TELMA

The uncle called our office this morning. Lives in Tampa.

LaGuerta masks the disappointment well.

LAGUERTA

That's wonderful... he should be with family.

ROBERTO

Can I take him home?

LaGuerta looks to the Sketch Artist.

SKETCH ARTIST

We're good.

Batista crosses to take a look at the just completed sketch.

ROBERTO
(to LaGuerta)
Thank you for finding him.

LAGUERTA
He's a very special boy.

Roberto carries Oscar away. A beat. The boy whispers into his uncle's ear. The man stops. Looking back, Oscar gives LaGuerta a tiny wave and a smile. As they go...

BATISTA
L.T., you need to see this.

LaGuerta swallows hard. Collecting herself, she turns, crossing to Batista.

BATISTA
You okay?

She wipes the corner of her eye.

LAGUERTA
Contacts.

Batista hands her the finished sketch. A stunned beat.

LAGUERTA
Dios Mio.

OFF her shock...

EXT. AUTO SALVAGE YARD - OLD TRUCK - DAY 3

TIGHT ON the boning knife. PULL BACK. There's Dexter swabbing the blade while Doakes and Debra and look on.

SGT. DOAKES
Wrecks like this are usually sold for scrap. The husband stashes the knife inside and lets a demo crew shred the truck before we find it. No more murder weapon.

The swab Dexter holds is turning purple. He calls out...

DEXTER
There's blood.

SGT. DOAKES
Wanna bet it's the wife's?

DEBRA
 (shaking her head)
 It's always the husband. You were
 right all along.

SGT. DOAKES
 Shake it off. Homicide takes time.
 You don't have to swing for the fence
 when a basehit will do. We ID'd our
 killer. Now we just gotta find him.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 It's not Doakes' fault. I fed him one
 right over the plate.

Masuka carefully takes the knife from Dexter and bags it while
 Doakes and Debra move off...

DEXTER (V.O.)
 As for Deb, she'll forgive me...
 eventually. That's who she is.
 Big-hearted. Kind. Nothing like me.

Then, Dexter looks over to see...

BATISTA

bounding toward his colleagues. The police sketch in hand.

DEXTER (V.O.)
 (braces himself)
 Okay. I gave them Jorge's sock and a
 knife. Let's see if forensics
 evidence trumps a child's drawing.

BATISTA
 LaGuerta thought you should see this.

He shows the drawing to Doakes.

BATISTA
 Oscar swears this is who he saw.

SGT. DOAKES
 Sonofabitch.

He hands it to Debra. She's speechless.

DEBRA
 Dex...?

Debra turns the sketch around, revealing a drawing of...

JESUS CHRIST

Like his colleagues, Dexter is taken aback as well.

MASUKA
Dude, he has your eyes.

DEXTER
(joking)
Reminds me, I need a shave.

Debra shakes her head, moving off.

DEBRA
Too fuckin' weird.

SGT. DOAKES
Jesus Christ saved this kid?

BATISTA
On his own for as long as Oscar was,
who's to say he didn't.

OFF Dexter, relieved...

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DUSK - DAY 3

As Astor plays with friends, FIND Dexter and Rita lighting birthday candles in tandem on a picnic table.

RITA
When did lighting candles become more
fun than blowing them out?

DEXTER
Nice turn-out.

RITA
I called all the moms to assure them
that Paul would not be making an
appearance.

DEXTER
Do Astor and Cody know you told their
dad not to come?

She considers her children. A beat.

RITA
After presents.
(then)
Ready?

Rita and Dexter carry the lit birthday cake over to a waiting table of children to the strains of "Happy Birthday." Then, as Astor is about to blow out her candles, Rita whispers into her ear.

RITA
Make a wish, baby. Just don't tell anyone or it won't come true.

ASTOR
But it already did come true. Daddy's not here.

With a big huff, she blows out the candles. As everyone claps, FIND Dexter. He's pulled back away from the crowd. Watching the celebration from afar.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I was wrong about birthdays. Maybe the reason to celebrate them is what they offer -- the hope of living to see another one.

Dexter gives a little wave to Debra who's helping hand out cake, but she's not in the forgiving mood.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I barely escaped getting caught this time.

Dexter positions himself so that he now hides behind a tree. He crouches. Lying in wait.

DEXTER (V.O.)
I realize now my days are numbered.
So...

Suddenly, Dexter swoops in. Picking up Cody who was bringing out his crudely wrapped present for Astor from the house. The boy squeals in delight.

DEXTER (V.O.)
...I'd better make the most of them.

OFF Dexter, carrying Cody over to Rita and his sister...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DUSK - DAY 3

Dexter installs new locks on his front door.

DEXTER (V.O.)

All along I thought this was a game my
alter ego and I were playing. But
relationships change. Evolve. And
this one is turning deadly.

(beat)

I wouldn't have it any other way.

Dexter grabs the door handle. Checks the locks. Makes sure
they're secure.

DEXTER (V.O.)

Like Harry said in my dream...

He looks to the horizon.

DEXTER (V.O.)

...a storm's on its way.

OFF Dexter, shutting the door behind him...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE