

= Return to Sender (Dexter) =

" Return to Sender " is the sixth episode of the first season of the American television drama series Dexter , which first aired on November 5 , 2006 on Showtime in the United States . The episode was written by Timothy Schlattmann and was directed by Tony Goldwyn . In the episode , Dexter Morgan (Michael C. Hall) investigates a murder scene where one of his own victims has returned after he disposed of the body . Meanwhile , his girlfriend Rita Bennett (Julie Benz) tries to prevent her husband Paul from attending their daughter 's birthday party , and Lt. María LaGuerta (Lauren Vélez) considers adopting a young witness of the murder whom she finds at the crime scene .

Though set in Miami , Florida , the episode was filmed at various locations in and around Los Angeles , California including a salvage yard , a field by Tujunga Wash and a waterfront house on Hibiscus Island . Goldwyn , who Erik King said was " a joy to work with " , allowed actor C.S. Lee to improvise and David Zayas to memorize his Spanish lines in English and translate them mentally during each take . " Return to Sender " received generally positive reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

While eating breakfast at Rita 's house , Dexter is called to a crime scene , only to discover that it is the same salvage yard where he committed a double murder the previous night . He finds Valerie Castillo 's (Valerie Dillman) body lying in the Airstream trailer where he killed her and her husband Jorge (José Zúñiga) , despite having thrown the corpses into the ocean . He deduces that the " Ice Truck Killer " ? a serial killer with whom Dexter has a personal connection ? dived underwater to retrieve the woman 's body and plant it in the trailer . In the yard , LaGuerta , Sgt. James Doakes (Erik King) and Dexter 's sister Debra (Jennifer Carpenter) discover a young Cuban boy , Oscar (Cesar Flores) , hiding in the trunk of a car who claims to have seen somebody take Valerie into the trailer . He begins to fear discovery , and experiences his first nightmare : Debra is a serial killer with an identical modus operandi to Dexter . As the investigation proceeds , he attempts to shoot down each of his colleagues ' leads on the case . When Debra asks him to read through her report on the killer , profiling a man sharing many of Dexter 's characteristics , he second @-@ guesses her theory and she is hurt . Worried about coming under suspicion , he throws all of his knives overboard from his boat , but while looking at the blood drops from his victims , he notices that Valerie 's slide has a happy face etched into the blood . He realizes that this is a hint from the Ice Truck Killer , and plants Jorge 's fingerprints and a dry drop of Valerie 's blood onto a knife , which he hides in a car at the salvage yard . He convinces Doakes to organize another search of the yard , where an officer (Denver Dowridge) finds the knife . After successfully framing Jorge for Valerie 's murder , Dexter discovers that Oscar 's description of the man who " saved " him from Valerie is in fact Jesus Christ .

Meanwhile , Rita dissuades her abusive husband Paul from attending their daughter Astor 's (Christina Robinson) birthday party after he is released early from prison . Doakes takes Debra to dinner with his mother (Vernee Watson @-@ Johnson) and sisters , while LaGuerta bonds with Oscar and considers adopting him until his uncle (Gabriel Salvador) arrives to take him home .

In flashbacks , a teenage Debra (Haley King) pleads with her father Harry (James Remar) to bring her on his and Dexter 's (Devon Graye) hunting trips . When Harry forbids her from joining them , she steals his gun and practices shooting cans by herself . Later , Debra lashes out at Dexter in jealousy of the time that he spends alone with their father .

= = Production = =

The day of filming in the salvage yard , which took place at LA Japanese Auto Parts in Sun Valley , California , was abnormally hot according to Lauren Vélez . The Airstream trailer in which Dexter 's victim is found was brought into the salvage yard for filming externally , but was assembled on a studio sound stage for shooting scenes inside the trailer . Erik King remarked that the trailer was dirty , odorous and humid ? " all the things we needed it to be " . Other filming locations included a

waterfront house on Hibiscus Island in Biscayne Bay , Florida as the Castillos ' home , an empty field next to Sun Valley 's Tujunga Wash where a young Debra practices shooting with Harry 's pistol , and a house in a residential neighborhood of Long Beach , California which stands in for Dexter 's childhood home .

King said that Tony Goldwyn was " a joy to work with " , while Vélez called him " an absolute actors ' director " . Shooting a scene in which Det . Angel Batista converses with a witness entirely in Spanish , David Zayas did not feel confident to memorize all of his Spanish lines . Instead , he learned his lines in English and translated the dialogue mentally during each take . In a scene between Dexter and Vince Masuka (C.S. Lee) , Masuka pauses after examining a corpse and says , " I 'm hungry . " Michael C. Hall said that " C.S. [Lee 's] ad libs are different every time . When he said , ' I 'm hungry , ' that was the only take that I didn 't laugh . " When asked about improvising on the show , Lee said that the writers " come up with some good lines themselves . [...] So I pretty much leave it up to them . "

= = Reception = =

" Return to Sender " was generally praised by critics . Eric Goldman of IGN wrote that the episode 's " most interesting facet " was its flashbacks to Dexter 's youth from Debra 's perspective , though he felt that the young Debra 's hasty apology to Dexter after insulting him was " a slightly cheesy moment " . He thought that LaGuerta 's bonding with Oscar " was okay , but [the storyline] fell a little flat " . TV Guide 's Paula Paige " love [d] " the episode , saying that " It just keeps getting better and better " , but was unsure " what Deb having dinner with the Doakes ' family has to do with anything " . Writing for TV Squad , Jonathan Toomey opened his review of " Return to Sender " by saying , " Dexter did it again . Wowed me . Amazed me . Edge of my seat for the whole hour . " He was amused that Debra 's profile of Valerie 's murderer matched Dexter , but was uninterested in Rita 's storyline with her husband .

Both Malene Arpe of the Toronto Star and Daniel Fienberg of Zap2it were disappointed with the episode 's audio commentary featuring Jennifer Carpenter , Erik King , Lauren Vélez and David Zayas on the first season DVD .