

= Vatos =

" Vatos " is the fourth episode of the first season of the post @-@ apocalyptic horror television series , The Walking Dead . It originally aired on AMC in the United States on November 21 , 2010 . The episode was written by Robert Kirkman and directed by Johan Renck . In the episode , Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) , Daryl Dixon (Norman Reedus) , Theodore " T @-@ Dog " Douglas (IronE Singleton) , and Glenn Rhee (Steven Yeun) return to downtown Atlanta in search of Daryl 's brother , Merle . The group are later targeted by a Latino gang , whose leader threatens to kill them if they do not relinquish their weapons . Meanwhile , Lori Grimes (Sarah Wayne Callies) and Shane Walsh (Jon Bernthal) ' s relationship begins to crumble .

Major events in " Vatos " include the deaths of several recurring characters , including Amy (Emma Bell) and Ed Peletier (Adam Minarovich) . This episode was filmed in several locations in Atlanta , Georgia , including the Goat Farm Arts Center . " Vatos " was lauded by television commentators , who praised its storyline progression and character development . Upon initial airing , it attained 4 @.@ 75 million viewers and a 2 @.@ 4 / 6 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , according to Nielsen ratings . The episode became the highest @-@ rated cable program of the day , as well as the ninth most @-@ watched cable program of the week .

= = Plot = =

In the opening segment , sisters Andrea (Laurie Holden) and Amy (Emma Bell) are fishing in a boat . They discuss their childhoods ? the two are twelve years apart ? and express hope that maybe Florida , where their parents live , was not hit as hard by the zombie epidemic . After getting into a heated argument with Daryl (Norman Reedus) , sheriff 's deputy Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) returns to Downtown Atlanta with Daryl , Glenn (Steven Yeun) and T @-@ Dog (IronE Singleton) . They are searching both for the bag of guns Rick dropped , and for Merle Dixon (Michael Rooker) , Daryl 's brother , who was left handcuffed to a pipe on the roof of the department store ; T @-@ Dog and Rick feel guilty for leaving him there . The group ultimately fails to locate Merle , having only found his severed hand , a hacksaw and a blood trail . An enraged Daryl retrieves Merle 's hand and turns his crossbow on T @-@ Dog , but Rick puts his revolver to Daryl 's head and bloodshed is averted . Continuing the search , they follow Merle 's trail of blood through the building ; the group encounter two walkers that Merle had previously dispatched single @-@ handedly and a gas stove where he had cauterized the stump of his hand .

Back at camp , Jim (Andrew Rothenberg) begins digging holes , refusing to explain why or take a break despite the extreme heat . When the survivors confront him about his abrupt obsessive compulsive behavior , he lashes out with his shovel , which forces Shane Walsh (Jon Bernthal) to restrain him . Jim has an emotional breakdown and reveals that his family was attacked and eaten by a horde of walkers . When he comes to his senses again , he can no longer remember why he was digging the holes , only that a dream inspired him to do so . He tells Lori Grimes (Sarah Wayne Callies) to keep her son Carl (Chandler Riggs) safe and never let him out of her sight .

Glenn devises a plan to retrieve the nearby bag of guns , and urges the other men to hide out in alleys so they can wait for him . While Glenn is getting the bag , Daryl is approached by a young Latino . Frightened , the man calls repeatedly for help . Two other Latinos appear and attack Daryl . Rick and T @-@ Dog arrive to help him , whereupon the men kidnap Glenn and flee in a car leaving the first man , Miguel (Anthony Guajardo) behind . The group begins to interrogate their hostage . Daryl retrieves his brother 's severed hand and throws it into the young Latino 's lap , telling him this is what they do to people who cross them . The frightened young man reveals that his companions were after the same bag of guns . The group go to meet the men for a prisoner exchange , but are rebuffed by the supposed gang 's leader , Guillermo (Neil Brown , Jr .) , who tells them to come back either ready to hand over the guns , or locked and loaded for a fight .

As the two groups prepare for a shootout , an elderly woman emerges looking for her grandson , Felipe (Noel Gugliemi) . It is revealed that the group is guarding a hidden nursing home , and Glenn was safe after all . Rick leaves some of the guns and ammunition with the Vatos , and his

group begins to return to camp . Their vehicle , however , is nowhere to be seen ; the group suspects Merle stole it . Worried that he may be planning vengeance , they hurriedly race back to the quarry on foot .

Meanwhile at camp , the survivors ' dinner is interrupted when a horde of walkers invades the campsite . Several of the survivors are bitten and severely wounded , including Ed Peletier (Adam Minarovich) and Amy . Arriving back , Rick and the others finally fend off the remaining walkers . In the aftermath , Amy dies in Andrea 's arms ; Andrea sobs while everybody else watches in terror . Jim suddenly recalls his dream , stating that he now remembers why he dug the holes .

= = Production = =

" Vatos " was directed by Johan Renck and written by Robert Kirkman ; this episode became Kirkman 's first writing credit for the series . " I was pretty happy that the first death in the show was in an episode that I got to write , " he stated . " That was kind of cool . " The episode 's script was heavily modified by Kirkman and series creator Frank Darabont prior to airing . Neil Brown , Jr. initially collaborated with producers on directing the episode but eventually pulled out of the project .

Principal photography for the episode transpired at the Goat Farm Arts Center in the West Midtown neighborhood of Atlanta , Georgia . " Vatos " features a sequence near the conclusion of the episode , in which a horde of walkers invades and attacks the campgrounds . The scene was written by Robert Kirkman , who based it closely on a similar sequence in the comics . Kirkman stated that he was very excited to develop the sequence and added that it was a familiar task for him :

It was very exciting . I got to write the attack at the end of the episode ? which was very much something that happened in the comic book series ? so I knew I would be revisiting something I had already written . But as we were in the writers ' room , when things started shifting which led to all this new stuff that wasn 't in the comic book series , I thought that was great because it wasn 't me writing the same @-@ old same @-@ old or rewriting something I had already done and trying to make it interesting for myself . It was really an entirely new story : getting the gang members in there and getting to write Daryl [...] which is one of my favorite characters on the show , despite the fact that he ? s not in the comic book . It was a blast .

This episode marked the last regular appearance of Emma Bell (Amy) , whose character was killed off in the conclusion of the installment . Greg Nicotero , the show 's production designer , enacted the walker who bites Amy . Bell stated that Nicotero placed a skin @-@ colored prosthetic around her neck , which consisted of a layer of red viscous liquid and a hose . Once it was bitten into , the prosthetic exploded and resembled a severe flesh wound . Kirkman expressed that it was difficult for him to remove Bell from the cast but was thankful that she understood she would only be limited to a certain number of episodes ; he stated :

It 's something that 's very difficult for me . Because it is lines on paper when I do it in the comic book series . It 's like , ' Oh , okay , Charlie Adlard [...] doesn 't have to draw that arrangement of lines anymore , that person is dead . ' But it 's very uncomfortable for me to be on set , because I see these actors that are there and , in the source material , I have killed all but two of them . I walk through the set and I 'm like , ' Yep , killed that one , killed that one , killed that one . ' And it is firing those people . I feel really bad for Emma Bell , just because she was great and I would have liked to have had her in the show . But , you know , this is The Walking Dead , characters have got to die . Thankfully , Emma was brought onto the show with the understanding that she was only going to be in a certain number of episodes and she knew that she was going to die from the very beginning . But it doesn 't really make it any easier . When they were shooting those scenes , I had to fly to Comic @-@ Con and so I wasn 't actually there for when she died . But it was very emotional on set and I know that she was very upset about having to leave the crew and the actors . You kind of become a family when you 're doing a TV show and it ? s a little upsetting to have to get rid of somebody .

= = Reception = =

=== Ratings ===

" Vatos " originally aired on November 21 , 2010 in the United States on AMC . The episode attained 4 @. @ 75 million viewers upon airing , and garnered a 2 @. @ 7 / 4 HH rating . Additionally , it received a 2 @. @ 4 / 6 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic , according to Nielsen ratings . " Vatos " became the highest @-@ rated cable program of the night , and the ninth most @-@ watched cable program of the week . Ratings and total viewership for the episode moderately declined from the preceding installment , " Tell It to the Frogs " , which was watched by 5 @. @ 07 million viewers and a 2 @. @ 5 / 7 rating in the 18 ? 49 demographic . In the United Kingdom , the episode received 467 @, @ 000 viewers and became the highest @-@ rated cable program on FX of the week dated November 28 .

=== Critical response ===

" Vatos " attained general acclaim from television critics . James Poniewozik of TIME asserted that the episode successfully made the viewers experience the daily life of the show 's characters , and HitFix 's Alan Sepinwall felt that " Vatos " was the strongest episode since the series ' pilot episode . In his 7 @. @ 9 out of 10 star review , Josh Jackson of Paste wrote : " The whole spectrum of human nature is on view when civilization is stripped away ? the bigger the immediate threat , the more varied the response . And it ? s this balance between action / horror and personal drama that makes The Walking Dead so compelling . " Los Angeles Times writer Gina McIntyre felt that Kirkman " seemed right at home adapting his characters for the screen . "

John Griffiths , writing for Us Weekly , felt the installment was haunting enough to " make viewers leave their lights on afterward " , and opined that the character development and the progression of the storylines served as the episode 's highlights . John Serba of The Grand Rapids Press stated that " Vatos " was the most emotionally poignant episode of The Walking Dead so far . Expressing similar sentiments , IGN 's Eric Goldman evaluated the episode as " strong " , ultimately giving it a nine out of ten , signifying an " amazing " rating . Leonard Pierce of The A.V. Club , who issued the episode a B grade , was less enthusiastic than the general consensus . Pierce felt that the bulk of the episode was " mushy " and concluded that it " didn 't solve anything involving the ongoing plot and introduced a bunch of arbitrary , needless complications that had no payoff , [and] bogged it down quite a bit . "

Critics praised the interactions between Amy and Andrea . Serba asserted that Kirkman effectively set up Amy 's death at the beginning of the episode , and added that it established a sisterly bond . Serba also acclaimed Laurie Holden 's performance ; he stated that she " powerfully conveys her grief and despair . " Pierce avouched that the opening sequence was likable , while Michelle Kung of The Wall Street Journal summated that the concluding scene was " an emotional release after a tense build @-@ up . "

Critics were divided about Rick Grimes ' return to Atlanta , as well as his stand off with Guillermo and his gang . Scott Meslow of The Atlantic compared Grimes to Mad Men 's Don Draper , and questioned his character development : " So far , every decision Rick has made has been both within his code and consequence @-@ free , " he said . Pierce opined : " Dramatically , this whole sequence plays out pretty hokily . Guillermo 's dialogue is ridiculous , and the entire storyline plays like something out of an episodic social @-@ lesson @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week show . Since nothing ends up coming of it from a plot standpoint [...] , it 's hard not to think of it as one of those comics where two superheros [sic] have a big fight scene that turns out to be mistaken identity . "