



Dexter Is Dead: A Novel (Dexter Series)

By Jeff Lindsay

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After seven national bestsellers and eight seasons as one of the most successful shows on television, *New York Times* bestselling author Jeff Lindsay bids a thrilling farewell to his uniquely twisted and beloved serial killer, Dexter Morgan. *Dexter Is Dead* is the definitive conclusion of the character who has become a global icon.

Dexter Morgan has burned the candle at both ends for many years. Blood spatter analyst . . . husband . . . father . . . serial killer. And now, for the first time, his world has truly collapsed. Dexter is arrested on charges of murder. He has lost everything—including his wife, his kids, and the loyalty of his sister. Now completely alone, Dexter faces a murder charge (for a crime . . . ironically . . . he did not actually commit). His only chance for freedom lies with his brother, Brian, who has a dark plan to prove Dexter's innocence. But the stakes are deadly, and the epic showdown that lies in Dexter's path may lead, once and for all, to his demise.

Jeff Lindsay's trademark devilish wit and cutting satire have never been sharper. *Dexter Is Dead* marks the end of a beloved series, but is also Dexter's most satisfying and suspenseful outing yet.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Fans will rush through . . . double-quick in order to savor every moment of Dexter's final hour.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Jeff Lindsay has brought his 'A' game to this farewell, wrapping things up in fine fashion."

—*Bookreporter*

Praise for the Dexter series

“It's like very little else you've read. Imagine if Hannibal Lecter starred in *CSI: Miami* instead of David Caruso, and you're halfway there.”

—*Time*

“Dexter's sardonic voice [is] so snappy and smart, and yet so full of self-loathing that we hate ourselves for laughing.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“One of the most likable vigilante serial killers in recent thriller literature.”

—*The New Yorker*

“Like a breath of fresh air blowing across all of crime-novel conventions, there is Dexter.”

—*The Denver Post*

“Wonderfully fresh and packed with just the right amount of grotesquerie and wry wit.”

—*USA Today*

“An entertaining, funny series that draws us in and makes us root, almost against our will, for a ruthless, yet appealing killer. In his own way, Dexter is trying to make the world a better place.”

—*Sun-Sentinel* (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.)

“May be the first serial killer who unabashedly solicits our love.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Totally captivating. . . . Totally original. The characters are beautifully drawn, particularly Dexter, who is tremendously likable, his hobby notwithstanding.”

—*St. Petersburg Times*

About the Author

Jeff Lindsay is the *New York Times* bestselling author and creator of the Dexter novels, most recently *Dexter's Final Cut*. He lives in south Florida with his wife and three daughters. His novels are the inspiration for the hit Showtime and CBS series *Dexter*.

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One

It wasn't supposed to end this way.

In a flash of steel, yes; a flurry of gunshots, a chorus of strangled moans and anguished sighs, blending with the distant wail of sirens, certainly. A properly dramatic ending with a good body count, a futile struggle against impending doom, even a dash of treachery, absolutely. And then the fatal blow, a few moments of anguish, a last sigh filled with regret for things undone, and fade to black: a fitting end for a life of wicked pleasure.

But not like this.

Not with Dexter in Durance, horribly wronged, slandered, unjustly accused of doing terrible things that he did not even get to do. Not this time, that is. This time, this one catastrophic multihomicidal time, Dexter is as innocent as the driven snow—or perhaps the sand on South Beach would be more apt. Although truth be told, nothing on South Beach is really innocent, any more than Dexter, whose catalog of wicked whimsical works is, to be fair, quite lengthy. It just doesn't include anything from current events, more's the pity. Not this time.

And not like this. Not locked away in the tiny chill ill-smelling cell in Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center—and on the top floor, at that, the special purgatory reserved for the most heinous and unrepentant monsters. Every basic freedom ripped away. Every moment, waking and sleeping, subject to scrutiny. Dexter's entire world reduced to this tiny cell, no more than a thick steel door and even thicker concrete block walls, broken only by a slim slit that lets in light but does not let out sight. A narrow metal shelf with a thin and battered thing on it, laughingly referred to as a "mattress." A sink, a toilet, a shelf. Dexter's World.

And no more than this, no connection at all to the outside, beyond the narrow slot in the door that delivers the Officially Nutritious meals. No Internet, no television, no radio, nothing that might distract me from contemplation of my many uncommitted sins. Of course, I may request reading matter—but I have found through bitter experience that the two most popular titles in the library are "Not Allowed" and "Don't Have It."

Regrettable, lamentable, even pitiable. Poor Sad-Sack Dexter, tossed on the sterile institutional scrap heap.

But, of course, who could have sympathy for a monster like me? Or as we must all say in these days of conscience fueled by lawsuits, alleged monster. And they do allege it. The cops, the courts, the correctional system itself, and my dear sister, Deborah—even I, if pressed, will allege that I am, in fact, a monster. And I truly did, without allegation of any kind, flee the scene wherein lay the murdered body of Jackie Forrest, famous actress, and coincidentally known to be my paramour. I was then discovered in flagrante sanguine, with the bodies of my wife, Rita, and Robert the famous actor, not to mention the very much alive but scantily clad Astor, my twelve-year-old adoptive daughter. She it was who killed Robert "Famous Actor" Chase, who had dressed her in a negligee and then killed Rita. Poor bumbler that I am, I stumbled in to Set Things Right and instead tumbled it all into deep, dark, endless, and possibly permanent Wrong—and very nearly became Robert's next victim.

My story is simple, straightforward, and unassailable. I learned Robert was a pedophile and had taken Astor. While I looked for him, he killed Jackie. And as one final irony in our King of Fools Crown Derby, Rita—helpless, hapless, hopeless Rita, Queen of the Scatterbrained Monologue Dear Ditz Rita, who could not find her own car keys if they were welded to her fist—Rita found him before I did. Robert thumped her on the head, from which blow she died while Robert was busy thumping me and planning a romantic escape with his True Love, Astor. While I lay bound and helpless, Astor stuck a knife in Robert, set me free, and so

ended this zany, madcap adventure of Doofus Dexter, Bumbler Extraordinaire. If there really is a God, which is, at very best, extremely debatable, he has a terrible sense of humor. Because the detective in charge of deciphering the carnage is Detective Anderson, a man who has lived his life without making a friend of intelligence, wit, or competence. And possibly because I am so very liberally endowed with all three, and additionally because he knew me to be intimate with Miss Forrest, a thing he could only drool and dream of, Detective Anderson absolutely, without compromise, hates me. Loathes, despises, detests, and abhors the very air I breathe. And so my simple story quickly became an Alibi, which is never a good thing. Even quicker, I moved from Person of Interest to Suspect, and then .?.?. Detective Anderson took one quick glance at the crime scenes and formed a simple conclusion, undoubtedly the only kind he can form. Aha, quoth he, Dexter Done It. Justice is served. Or words to that effect, probably a great deal simpler and less elegant, but in any case resulting in my promotion from Suspect to Perpetrator.

And I, still reeling from the death of Jackie, my ticket to a new and better life, plus the death of Rita and her entire book of delightful recipes, and the sight of Astor in a white silk negligee—still reeling, I say, from the utter destruction of All the Order and Certainty that was Dexter's World, past, present, and future—I find myself hauled roughly to my feet, handcuffed with hands behind my back, and chained to the floor of a squad car, which drives me to Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Facility.

Without a kind word or sympathetic glance from anyone, I am led, still draped with cold steel chains, inside the huge concrete, barbed wire—bedecked building, and into a room that looks like the waiting room of the Greyhound station in Hell. The room is full to overflowing with desperate characters—killers and rapists and thugs and gangsters all, my kind of people! But I am given no time at all to sit and consort with my fellow alleged monsters, no chance for a Hail Felon, Well Met. Instead, I am hustled straight through to the next room, where I am photographed, fingerprinted, stripped, and issued a lovely orange jumpsuit. It is fashionably baggy, and the bright colors say spring! The aroma, however, has a less cheery message, blooming somewhere between insecticide and lemon candies made from old Chinese drywall. But I am given no choice of color, nor of odor, and so I proudly wear the orange, which after all is one of the trademark colors of my alma mater, the University of Miami.

And then, still festooned with restraints, I am brought here, to my new home, the ninth floor, and deposited without ceremony in my present tidy nook.

And here I sit in TGK. The joint, the slammer, the Big House. One small cog in the gigantic correctional wheel, which itself is only a little piece of the massive and coldly incompetent machine that is Justice. Dexter is now being Corrected. What is it, I wonder, that they hope to Correct? I am what I am, irredeemably, irretrievably, implacably—as are most of my fellow desperadoes here on nine. We are monsters, stamped from birth with forbidden hungers, and these can no more be Corrected than can the need to breathe. Bird gotta whistle, fish gotta swim, and Dexter gotta find and flense the slippery wicked predators. However InCorrect that may be, it irreversibly Is.

But I am in the Correctional System now, subject to its clockwork whims and institutional hardness. I am no more than an unCorrectable error waiting to be Corrected while the proper forms are filled out and filed and forgotten, however long that may take. Parenthetically, it does seem to be taking quite a while. There is some small tidbit of arcane Constitutional Trivia rattling around in my poor withered brain that mumbles something about a speedy trial—and I have not even been arraigned. Surely this is somewhat irregular? But I am offered no company other than my guards, and they are not terribly chatty, and I have no opportunity to make the acquaintance of anyone else who might answer my polite questions about due process. So I am forced into the ludicrous position of trusting in the system—a system that I know far too well is far from trustworthy.

And in the meantime? I wait.

Life is, at least, simple and regular. I am awakened at four thirty a.m. by a cheerful bell. Shortly after, the slot in my cell's door, sealed over by a steel flap that is held shut by a very strong spring, reluctantly opens and my breakfast tray comes through on the metal tongue of the cart made for that purpose. Ah, delectable viands! Institutional cereal, toast, coffee, juice. Almost edible, and there is nearly enough! What bliss.

Lunch is similarly delivered, at ten thirty. It is an even greater flight of gourmet abandon—a sandwich containing a cheeselike substance, carefully hidden under a piece of soft and fluffy green stuff that is clearly synthetic recycled iceberg lettuce. Beside it on the tray, some lemonade, an apple, and a cookie.

In the afternoon, under the watchful eyes of my shepherd, Lazlo, I am permitted an hour of solitary exercise in the Yard. It is not really a yard at all; there are no trees, no grass, no lawn chairs or toys. It is in fact a wedge-shaped concrete floor whose only virtues are that it is open to the sky and contains a netless basketball hoop. Of course, this time of year it is usually raining in the afternoon, and so even this small virtue is somewhat double-edged. I also discover that once I am In The Yard, I must stay there for the full hour, or go back to my cell. I learn to enjoy the rain. And soaking wet, I return to my cell. Dinner at five. Lights-out at ten. A simple life of modest comforts. So far the great rewards one reaps from solitude and simplicity, as promised by Thoreau, have not been forthcoming, but perhaps they will emerge in time. And Time is the one thing I have plenty of.

Ten days in jail. I wait. To a lesser man, the endless spell of oppressive nothingness might seem stifling, even soul-destroying. But, of course, Dexter has no soul, if such things even exist. And so I find a great deal to do. I count the concrete blocks in my wall. I arrange my toothbrush. I attempt mental games of chess, and when I can't remember where the pieces are, I switch to checkers and then, when that fails, to Go Fish. I always win.

I pace my cell. It's large enough to permit me almost two full steps. When I tire of this, I do push-ups. I do a little tai chi, bumping my fists on the walls with nearly every move.

And I wait. From my wide reading, I know that the greatest danger of solitary incarceration is the temptation to succumb to the dreadful weight of tedium, sink into the stress-free bliss of insanity. I know that if I do, I will never get out, never resume my safe and sane normal life of happy wage slave by day, even happier Knight of the Knife by night. I must hold on, keep a tight grip on what passes for sanity in this veil of tears, hold on white-knuckled to the absurd and baseless belief that innocence still counts for something and I Am Truly Innocent .??. relatively speaking. In this case, at least.

I have certain knowledge, based on vast experience with That Old Whore Justice, that Actual Innocence has nearly as much influence on my fate as the starting lineup for the Marlins. But I cling to hope anyway, because anything else is unthinkable. How can I face even one more hour of this if I don't believe that eventually it will end—with me on the outside? Even the thought of endless cheeselike sandwiches is no comfort. I must believe, blindly, unreasonably, even stupidly, that someday Truth will out, Justice will prevail, and Dexter will be free to run laughing into the sunlight. And, of course, smirking into the moonlight, sliding softly through the velvet dark with a knife and a need—

I shiver. Mustn't get ahead of myself. Must avoid such thoughts, fantasies of freedom that steal focus from right now and what to do about it. I must remain here mentally, as well as physically, right here in my snug little cell, and concentrate on getting out.

Once more I flip through my mental ledger and add up the blurred and uncertain figures. On the plus side, I really and truly am innocent. I didn't do it. Not even some of it. Not me.

On the minus side, it sure looks like I did.

And worse, the entire Miami police force would like to see someone like me convicted for these crimes. They very publicly promised to protect our two Famous Actors, and more publicly failed to do so. And if the killer was some plausible insider—me again—they are off the hook. So if the officer in charge is willing to bend things a little bit, he almost certainly will.

Even more minus: Detective Anderson is in charge. He will not merely bend things; he will mangle them, hammer them into the shape he wants, and serve them up in sworn testimony. He has, in fact, already done so, and it must be said that the legion of Wonderful Haircuts that constitutes the media has been eating it up, for the very simple reason that it is simple, as simple as they are, which is possibly even simpler than Anderson, a shudder-inducing thought. They have lunged to grab my guilt with both greedy fists, and the photo of Dexter Arrested, according to Lazlo, has festooned the front pages and adorned the evening news for over a week now. The picture shows me draped in chains, head bowed, face set in a mask of stunned indifference, and I must say I look extremely guilty, even to me. And I do not need to point out that, moral clichés to the contrary, Appearances do not Deceive, not in our age of Instant Summarized Sound-Bite Certainty. I am guilty because I look guilty. And I look guilty because Detective Anderson wishes it.

Anderson wants me dead, enough so that he will cheerfully perjure himself to get me halfway there. Even if he didn't loathe me, he would do it because he has a professional hatred for my sister, Sergeant Deborah, who he quite rightly sees as a rival, and one who must eventually surpass him by a considerable margin. But if her brother—c'est moi!—is a convicted murderer, this would almost certainly derail the mighty choo-choo of Deb's career track, and consequently advance his.

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