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Dexter in author's blood

Like book and TV character, Jeff Lindsay's life has a certain charade of normalcy

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CAPE CORAL, Fla.—Jeff Lindsay doesn't seem like the kind of guy whose mind could give birth to a serial killer.

The soft-spoken, middle-aged author lives in southwest Florida with his wife and three daughters. He has a backyard pool and a fishing boat tied up to his dock.

But when Lindsay came to the conclusion that "serial murder isn't always a bad thing," he created the character Dexter Morgan, a blood-spatter analyst for the Miami-Dade police department who hunts and kills criminals in his spare time.

His vigilante justice was on display in *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* and *Dearly Devoted Dexter*, and fans of the books can expect a third, *Dexter in the Dark*, due out Sept 18.

And *Dexter*, the Showtime series based on Lindsay's books, is set to start its second season Sept. 30, airing the same night in Canada at 10 p.m. on The Movie Network.

Like his character, Lindsay admits his seemingly normal appearance is just an act. "I don't know if it's possible to be a writer and be normal. It's not a normal occupation," he said. "I know I'm deeply neurotic, and I'm comfortable with that."

Despite his neuroses, Lindsay is still worlds away (or so it certainly appears) from his serial-killing protagonist. Because of a childhood trauma, Dexter is a sociopath with a need to kill. Fortunately for him, his foster father, a police officer, taught him how to dispatch those who deserve it and get away with it.

Dexter preys on killers who manage to escape justice, and Miami is his hunting ground.

With 218,000 copies in print of his first two *Dexter* books, the new book and new TV season on the way, Lindsay is pretty content these days with life.

Though he has no direct role in the series, he's a big fan of the show and especially likes the way Showtime stayed true to the books' graphically violent themes.

The process that brought Dexter to the small screen started about two years ago when executive producer Sara Colleton read a review of *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*. After reading the book, she said she thought it would make a great television show.

Colleton pitched the idea to Bob Greenblatt, who had taken over at Showtime as entertainment president, and he gave it the green light.

Watching his characters being adapted for television has been an interesting experience for Lindsay. While film adaptations normally have to squeeze out much of the original work, a TV series allows the show's writers to expand on the world created in the book, fleshing out relatively minor characters and giving them solid back stories.

The first season of the show followed the plot of Lindsay's first *Dexter* book with relatively minor changes, but Lindsay expects the second season to be a greater departure from the books.

"They're off on their own now," Lindsay said. "They've got the characters and the situations. They're just going to run with it and see where it goes."

Lindsay is looking forward to seeing what the producers come up with.

"I don't have a problem with it at all," Lindsay said. "There are things that make more sense on TV than they do in a book. They're different media. Different things work."

One of Lindsay's initial concerns was the casting of Michael C. Hall as Dexter. When producers told Lindsay they were getting an undertaker from HBO's *Six Feet Under* to play Dexter, Lindsay was content but unenthusiastic, thinking they meant Peter Krause, who played one of the undertaker brothers on the show. But when he learned they were talking about Hall, who played the other brother, who was gay, Lindsay said he just couldn't see it.

"But I visited the set the first day, and the first line I saw him say in character, I went, 'He's it,'" Lindsay said. "He's perfect. He absolutely

nails Dexter. It just amazes me."

Hall was nominated last year for a Golden Globe and a Screen Actors Guild Award for his work on the series. He won a Television Critics Association Award.

Despite not having an official role with the show's production, Lindsay said he always felt welcome when visiting the set last year. He said he hopes to make a trip out to California this fall while they're still shooting the new season.

As for moving out to Hollywood permanently, Lindsay said that while he'd be happy to work on film and television projects, he's not looking to move west.

"I already did 10 years of hard time in Hollywood," Lindsay said. "I like where I am now. I'm a Floridian and I want to be in Florida."

He's already started working on a fourth *Dexter* book, and the vigilante-serial killer will be his main professional focus for now.

"There's an obligation involved," Lindsay said. "You work your whole life to get to a place like this, and if people want to read them I'll write them. As long as they like what I'm doing, I'll keep doing it."