

Fear the Walking Dead Q&A — Rubén Blades (Daniel)



*Rubén Blades, who plays **Daniel Salazar** on AMC's *Fear the Walking Dead*, talks about his character returning from the dead, how Daniel's moral compass is evolving, and what it was like spending an entire episode with him.*

Q: Daniel is alive! When did you find out he had **survived the fire?**

A: Everything here is very secretive, so I was told that the character might return... I really found out just a couple of months ago. It wasn't something I knew from the beginning. This is a complicated series... I figured they would try to figure out how to make it right for Salazar to return and what the arc of the other stories would be. I wasn't sure, but I was told not to talk about it with anybody during the time I wasn't around.

Q: What was it like spending an **entire episode with your character? How**

have you enjoyed revealing his many layers?

A: It was very interesting for me because that was also a secret as well, so you do learn things about your character as [it's revealed]. The episode is a very active one, so I was working constantly. I had to work on every page. It brought up different aspects of Salazar's character and in this episode, you get the most information about him. There's an aspect of him now that is becoming more present, which is the spiritual side of him. He was never really someone who would be praying or acknowledging the existence of something that he could not see or touch, but in this episode, there are several instances where he's subjected to those situations. For instance, he was saved from death by that lightning. I think that's one of the most incredible things that has happened in the saga – that one of the characters is spared because of lightning. [*Laughs*]

There are two moments. There's the moment where he's walking by himself and he talks to God and asks why this is happening to him. And then, at the end, he decides he's not going to take anymore and he's going to die, but he's spared. After having reverted to being ruthless – as proven when he beat up Éfrain – he then ends up redeeming himself by taking out the bad guys. A lot of stuff happens for him. It was physically demanding. I had to run a lot, go under cars... there was a lot of physical action involved. It was a tough episode to film for everyone, but I think the fans will love it.

Q: A huge theme of Episode 4 is Daniel begging for forgiveness. What does he feel guilty for?

A: I think he feels he has not been as grateful to others or helpful to others as he could have been. He has not been a trusting person. He's always expected the worst of people, but I think with Éfrain's and Lola's help, he begins to consider the possibility that things are different and that he needs to atone. He needs to consider another possibility besides violence. In a way, he begins to feel like he's been spared for a reason. He's not sure what, but he's closer

now to accepting the possibility of something spiritual and something different than what he's been accustomed to. This is the second apocalypse for him. The first was him being in El Salvador.

Q: If Daniel is trying to escape his violent past, then what does meeting Dante represent and stir up in him?

A: Dante understood and immediately realized Salazar's background, so he knew he had the perfect person there to fill his needs. For Salazar, this is just another form of survival. He sees an opportunity to survive in this situation and to keep going towards his goal, which is to find **Ofelia**. He knows the difference between Dante and Éfrain, but at this moment, his main concern is survival. So, later on, when the choice is presented to him, he becomes the lightning that strikes the bad guy. It's a way in which he becomes an instrument of God, if you will, and he assumes a form of righteous indignation against what is wrong and he saves everybody. He chooses to save people as opposed to just saving himself. That's a huge step for him.

Q: Were you surprised to see him turn on Éfrain after Éfrain saved his life?

A: He had to do it to survive. There's also something else about Salazar that is worth considering. He always warns people about the consequences. He told Éfrain that he would be found. Most of the time, when he gives advice, people don't listen. Beating him is not something he would have voluntarily chosen to do, but he warned him and Lola of what would happen. Neither of them paid attention, so at this time, Salazar is thinking, "You made your own bed. Now you sleep in it. I am not going to die with you. The one thing I can do for you now is kill you quickly."

Q: Can you say more on how the violent interrogation scene landed on you? Since Éfrain was going to be killed either way, was it important to

Daniel to be the one to do it?

A: Salazar is being used by Dante as a man that can extract information because of his training and experience. After the first two blows, Salazar knows that this guy is not going to talk. He's going to continue to be foolish until the end. Then, Dante forces Salazar's hand and he has to choose between Éfrain and himself, so he chooses himself. When he's choosing the weapon, he looks at several things there and chose the instrument that would cause the most immediate death. However reluctant, Salazar is going to continue to do what he needs to do to get out alive.

Q: Ultimately, Daniel chooses to kill Dante instead of Lola. What shifted in that moment for him?

A: At that moment, the sense of gratitude and the sense of redemption and doing what is right prevails over the sense of security that would have been provided to him for obeying this man who orders him to kill other people. There are some people Salazar respects and there are others he doesn't respect. He doesn't respect Dante because he sees him as a bully and an insecure man who needs to be surrounded by other people who do things for him. There's this sense of majesty and control that Dante feels he has, but Salazar knows he doesn't. Salazar doesn't respect this guy and sooner or later, he would have gotten rid of him so that moment is as good as any. Why would Salazar help maintain such a weak person in power?

Q: Does Daniel have hope that Ofelia is still out there? Is that what keeps him going?

A: He's pretty much resigned to the idea that she's dead... He wants to believe she's alive for his own sake. She's the reason why he wants to continue living, looking for her. He's really considering that she's dead, but there's a part of him that he hopes she inherited to address situations of danger with a cool head. In the back of his mind, there might be a shot that

she can translate all the things he has taught her into survival. He's certainly not sure, but he hopes so.