

= John Winchester (Supernatural) =

John Eric Winchester is a fictional character on The CW Television Network 's drama / horror television series Supernatural , and the protagonist of the comic book spin @-@ off series Supernatural : Origins . Developed by series creator Eric Kripke , the character is mainly portrayed by Jeffrey Dean Morgan . John is the father of Sam and Dean Winchester , the show 's protagonists .

Seeking revenge after his wife Mary was killed by the demon Azazel , John Winchester became a hunter and raised his two sons to fight the supernatural . John disappears early in Supernatural , and the first season revolves primarily around Sam and Dean trying to find him . Morgan was also filming episodes of Grey 's Anatomy while the first season of Supernatural was under production , and future appearances of the character were hindered by his busy schedule . While Morgan 's portrayal has been praised , fans and critics were generally frustrated at the character for keeping so many secrets .

= = Plot = =

The father of series protagonists Sam and Dean Winchester , John Winchester first appears in the pilot episode of the series , but plot devices such as flashbacks and time travel detail his background in later seasons . Apparently abandoned by his father at a young age ? his father actually died while serving a secret order known as the Men of Letters ? John Winchester grew up hating the man . John left high school to join the Marine Corps , eventually attaining the rank of corporal and receiving many medals for his service in Vietnam . After leaving the service , he found a job as a mechanic , and fell in love with Mary Campbell .

In the fourth season episode " In the Beginning " , Dean is sent back through time by the angel Castiel . Dean meets his parents ' former selves , and ends up convincing John to buy the 67 Chevy Impala that he eventually inherits . Dean later watches John being killed by Azazel , though the demon then resurrects him in exchange for Mary 's permission to enter her house in ten years . When the angel Anna Milton travels back in time in the fifth season episode " The Song Remains the Same " to prevent the births of Sam and Dean , John agrees to serve as a temporary vessel for the archangel Michael to stop her . Michael subsequently kills Anna and erases John and Mary 's memories of the incident .

Azazel later uses his pact with Mary to enter their home in the pilot episode , and ultimately kills her . The second season episode " All Hell Breaks Loose , Part One " reveals that she had witnessed the demon secretly feeding his blood to Sam . John investigated the incident and learned of the existence of the supernatural . His desire to find and kill Azazel led him to become a hunter of supernatural creatures . He took his sons with him during his travels , but often left them alone in motels for long periods of time during his hunts , leaving Dean with instructions to " shoot first and ask questions later " while watching over Sam .

As revealed in the fourth season episode " Jump the Shark " , John slept with a woman he met while away on a hunt . Learning over a decade later that he had fathered her son Adam , John made occasional visits over the years to partake in father @-@ son activities with him . He hid the truth from Adam to protect him , and never revealed to him the existence of Sam and Dean , nor vice versa . Meanwhile , John trained Sam and Dean to become hunters . However , Sam later left this life to start anew in college , leading to a fallout between John and his son .

Twenty @-@ two years after Mary 's death , John disappears while on a hunt , forcing Sam and Dean to reunite in an unsuccessful attempt to find him . Sam returns to the life of a hunter after Azazel kills his girlfriend . John reluctantly chooses to avoid his sons throughout most of the season while he investigates something , eventually reuniting with them in the episode " Shadow " . However , the demonic Meg Masters attacks them and reveals that Azazel is after John . After escaping from Meg , the brothers split up from their father to keep him from the demons . When vampires murder his old mentor and steal the Colt ? a mystical gun capable of killing anything ? John teams up with Sam and Dean in " Dead Man 's Blood " to retrieve it . Because demons cannot

be killed by conventional means , they hope that the Colt will be effective against Azazel . In response , Meg begins killing the Winchesters ' friends in " Salvation " , and threatens to kill more unless they deliver the Colt . John is captured after trying to give her a fake gun , and reveals himself to be possessed by Azazel when the brothers come to his rescue in the first season finale " Devil 's Trap " . However , he manages to resist the demon 's control . Despite John 's pleas for Sam to shoot him with the Colt , Sam cannot bring himself to do so and allows Azazel to escape . As the Winchesters flee in Dean 's Impala , a demonically @-@ possessed trucker crashes into them .

In the second season premiere , " In My Time of Dying " , Sam and John awake in the hospital with only minor injuries , but a dying Dean is comatose . John secretly summons Azazel , and seems to know what the demon 's plans are . He then makes a deal to save Dean , giving up his life , soul , and the Colt . Before dying , John instructs Dean to kill Sam should he become evil . The fourth season episode " On the Head of a Pin " reveals that the demon Alastair tortured John in Hell for over a century , with John refusing the demon 's offer to stop if he himself would torture someone else . His soul escapes from Hell in the second season finale " All Hell Breaks Loose , Part 2 " when a gateway to Hell is opened . He saves Dean from Azazel , and distracts the demon long enough for Dean to kill him with the Colt . John then gives Sam and Dean a loving smile before becoming engulfed in a white light . However , the fifth season episode " Dark Side of the Moon " suggests that he might not be in Heaven .

= = Characterization = =

Actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan deemed John a " tormented soul " , motivated by an " equal combination of revenge and protecting his sons " . Following the death of their mother , Sam and Dean became secondary to John 's quest of killing the demon responsible , although Morgan believed that this aspect changed once John began spending more time with them again . Though he thought that John was not the world 's best dad and " definitely made a lot of mistakes " , the actor noted that " he did things , even when they were wrong , for the good of his sons " . John Kubicek of BuddyTV felt that this reasoning extended to John 's decision to hide the truth from Adam to protect him . Kubicek also suggested that John became involved in Adam 's life to achieve " some level of normalcy " as a father , an opportunity he had previously lost following the death of Sam and Dean 's mother . Overall , Morgan felt that John " loved those kids more than he loved his own life " , with the character 's demonic pact with Azazel serving as " his way of finding redemption " .

Regarding his portrayal of the character , Morgan commented , " I played him with extra angst . I think what was on the page , what I foresaw ? not knowing where it was going , because no one would ever tell me anything ? there was always a lot more going on in his head than he was going to show anybody , including his sons . Because , indeed , there was a lot more going on . " Kripke later confirmed this , stating , " It 's our view that John knew everything the producers of the show know . John knew stuff we 're not even ready to reveal , that won 't come out for a couple of seasons . He was an awesome hunter , and by the time he showed up in ' Dead Man 's Blood ' , he knew it all . "

= = Development = =

In writing the pilot episode , series creator Eric Kripke made several dramatic revisions to John 's storyline . The first draft of the script had Sam and Dean being raised by their aunt and uncle , though this was changed when Kripke realized that the backstory became much less complicated by having John raise them on the road . Another revision had John dying at the end of the episode instead of Sam 's girlfriend Jessica . Though he survives in the final version of the pilot , the writers decided halfway through production of the first season that John did have to die , as they believed his separation from his sons " split the show " by having him away " doing more interesting things than the boys are doing " . Kripke also felt that John kept Sam and Dean away from the " front lines " , his death being required to allow the brothers to " explore , investigate and confront the yellow @-@ eyed demon directly " . The writers initially intended for John to die in the car accident in " Devil 's Trap " , but they ultimately postponed his death to prevent the finale from becoming too dark

. Following the character 's eventual escape from Hell , executive producer Ben Edlund stated that even the writers are unsure of where John 's soul ended up .

Evil Dead @-@ actor Bruce Campbell was Kripke 's first choice to portray the character . However , Campbell was unavailable , and Jeffrey Dean Morgan eventually received the role . Due to the fact that Morgan 's scene in the pilot episode takes place 22 years before the series , Morgan expected to be replaced by an older actor for subsequent episodes . Being only 12 years older than Jensen Ackles , who portrays the eldest son Dean , Morgan was surprised when he was asked to reprise the role . Ackles and Jared Padalecki often teased him about the age difference during filming . Throughout the season , Morgan became frustrated at times due to his character 's avoidance of his sons , stating , " It pissed off everybody , it pissed off us as actors , it pissed off the audience watching , because none of us really knew where we were gonna go . " However , he reasoned that John 's motivation for his actions was due to having knowledge that nobody else had .

During production of Supernatural 's first season , Morgan was also working on the shows Weeds and Grey 's Anatomy , so he was often traveling back and forth between Los Angeles and Vancouver . This interfered at times with Morgan 's acting , as he had trouble getting " Winchester @-@ y enough " after portraying the nice character of Denny Duquette on Grey 's Anatomy . Morgan commented , " I was stuck in Denny @-@ land , where I was being too nice . Winchester 's harder to find . Denny 's more me . He 's an intense guy , John is . And Denny , for a guy who 's having trouble living , he 's just a charming dude . " Morgan was at first reluctant to return for Supernatural 's second season due to his role on Grey 's Anatomy . Although he lent his voice for the third season episode " Long @-@ Distance Call " , future appearances of Morgan as the character after the second season have been hindered due to the actor 's busy schedule . Nevertheless , both Kripke and writer Sera Gamble have stated that they " would love to have him back . " The scheduling conflict has continued into the sixth season of Supernatural , with executive producer Robert Singer revealing that the writers had considered bringing the character back in the alternate reality episode " My Heart Will Go On " instead of Ellen Harvelle , but due to concerns that they would not be able to secure Morgan 's return , they ultimately chose Ellen for the deceased character they would have (temporarily) return in the episode . During the production of the fifth season , Morgan had an interview with MovieWeb in which he stated that no one from the show had contacted him about making another appearance , and expressed the desire to return for at least one more episode in what was then @-@ believed to be the show 's final season , as he had enjoying working with on @-@ screen sons Jensen Ackles and Jared Padalecki and he felt that John 's storyline had ended too soon .

= = Reception = =

While critics praised Morgan for his performance in the role , their reaction to the character has generally been mixed . Don Williams of BuddyTV felt that John is a " rather divisive character " , with some fans not understanding John 's motivation for keeping his sons in the dark . However , Williams himself found the character to be " completely fascinating " . He chose " In My Time of Dying " as the second best episode of the series , mainly because of John 's contributions , stating , " Even if you 're not a huge fan of Poppa Winchester , I think it 's impossible not to be moved by the final ten minutes of this episode ... John 's final speech to Dean , where he finally tells his son that he 's proud of him , is one hell of a tear @-@ jerker , and both Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Jensen Ackles knock that scene out of the park . " Williams praised Matt Cohen 's performance of a younger version of the character in the time @-@ travel episode " In the Beginning " , believing that he " did an excellent job at portraying a more innocent John Winchester than we 've ever seen before " .

Diana Steenbergen of IGN also criticized John for his lack of explanation , feeling that " it is not exactly easy to watch John treat Dean and Sam so dismissively , especially after they have been nearly killing themselves all season to find him " . However , Steenbergen praised Morgan for his acting , writing , " Even though he is used sparingly throughout the series , Jeffrey Dean Morgan is always effective as John . " She also felt that he brought " emotional weight " to the character , allowing the audience to " feel John 's weariness , and his resignation that things will most likely not

go well " . While Brian Tallerico of UGO enjoyed Morgan 's performance , he was happy that the character was killed off because John 's presence made Sam and Dean into " followers " that were " merely existing in the wake of their father " . With their father gone , the brothers are no longer prevented from " heading up the battle with the other side " .