

= Azazel ( Supernatural ) =

Azazel is a fictional character on The CW Television Network 's drama and horror television series Supernatural . He serves as the primary antagonist during the first two seasons . A demon , he feeds his blood to infants so that they will grow up to develop demonic abilities . His goal of using one such child to release Lucifer is not revealed until much later in the series . Azazel is referred to by nicknames such as " The Demon " , " The Yellow @-@ Eyed Demon " , or " Yellow Eyes " throughout the first two seasons , his true name not being revealed until the third season . Due to the character 's demonic nature of taking different hosts , Azazel has been portrayed by numerous actors , but all have maintained his sadistic sense of humor and Jack Nicholson @-@ like mannerisms . Critics and fans alike have met him with nearly universal praise .

= = Plot = =

The tyrannical leader of an army of demons , Azazel first appears in the pilot episode of the series , but plot devices such as flashbacks and time travel detail his background in later seasons . His earliest chronological depiction occurs in the fourth season finale , " Lucifer Rising " . Having spent years searching , Azazel ( Rob LaBelle ) finally located the doorway to Lucifer 's prison in 1972 . The fallen angel tasked him with freeing the demon Lilith from Hell ? she is needed to break the 66 seals holding Lucifer captive ? and to find him a " special child " . By the following year , Azazel began making demonic pacts with young individuals ; in exchange for a wish , he would be allowed to enter their homes ten years later . Azazel ( Christopher B. MacCabe ) eventually comes across Mary Campbell , the future mother of series protagonists Sam and Dean Winchester . After taking possession of her father ( Mitch Pileggi ) , he kills her mother and stabs himself to kill his host . Mary 's fiance , John Winchester , is the demon 's next victim . Azazel makes his usual offer , giving her the chance to resurrect John , and she reluctantly agrees .

In 1983 , Mary discovers Azazel standing over baby Sam 's crib ; he had been feeding his blood to the infant . Upon being interrupted , the demon pins her to the ceiling , slashes her stomach and causes her to burst into flames . Mary 's death inspires John to dedicate his life to hunting down Azazel , at the same time training Sam and Dean to hunt supernatural creatures . As revealed in the fifth season finale , " Swan Song " , Azazel sent demons to possess important people in Sam 's life , secretly manipulating him as he grew up . However , Sam eventually leaves the life of hunting to attend college . Azazel orders the assassination of Sam 's girlfriend Jessica Moore , whose death prompts Sam to return to hunting .

Because demons cannot be killed by conventional means , the Winchesters track down the Colt ? a mystic gun capable of killing anything ? in " Dead Man 's Blood " . In the following episode , " Salvation " , they trace the omens caused by the demon 's presence to Salvation , Iowa . Like he has done with Sam and countless others , Azazel plans to visit a six @-@ month @-@ old and feed her his blood so she will later develop demonic abilities . Although Sam interrupts the demon 's plans and saves the family , Azazel escapes . Meanwhile , the demonic Meg Masters and her " brother " Tom kidnap John , and then set their sights on Sam and Dean . The brothers exorcise Meg in the season finale " Devil 's Trap " , and her host discloses John 's location . Sam and Dean rescue him and kill Tom . After being taken to a secluded location , however , John is revealed to be possessed . An angry Azazel ( Jeffrey Dean Morgan ) chastises them for killing Meg and Tom ? he deems them his " children " ? and begins to torture the brothers . John temporarily retakes control , giving Sam the opportunity to grab the Colt . Unable to kill his father , Sam shoots John in the leg , and the demon flees from his host . As the Winchesters make their escape , a demonically @-@ possessed truck driver crashes into their car . Dean is left dying in a coma , forcing John to sell his soul and the Colt to Azazel ( Fredric Lehne ) to save him . The demon possesses a reaper ( Lindsey McKeon ) to save Dean from death and fulfill his part of the deal .

Azazel 's last appearance chronologically is in the second season finale " All Hell Breaks Loose " , where he kidnaps Sam and the other young adults that he had infected . He visits Sam in a dream , and reveals that his " special children " must fight to the death to determine who will lead his army .

Although Sam is the demon 's favorite , the super @-@ strong Jake Talley becomes the winner . As Dean sells his soul to another demon in exchange for Sam 's resurrection , Azazel gives Jake the Colt and coerces him to travel to a cemetery in the middle of a giant devil 's trap . Though Sam and Dean , along with other hunters , attempt to stop him , Jake uses the Colt as a key to unlock a mausoleum there . This action briefly opens a gateway to Hell , releasing Lilith and hundreds of other demons . With the devil 's trap around the cemetery now broken , Azazel confronts the Winchesters and easily overpowers them . However , John 's soul also escapes through the Gate , and distracts Azazel long enough for Dean to shoot him dead with the Colt .

= = Characterization = =

Deeming Azazel to be " an angry soul " , actor Fredric Lehne believed that the character having been " denied Heaven and everything else that 's good in the universe " has " [ translated ] into anger and vengeance " . A demon with a sense of humor , Azazel takes pleasure in seeing people suffer . " The more pain ? mostly psychological pain ? he causes , the happier he is , " Lehne explained . " He gets off on the power of turning people to his will . " This quality suggests to the actor why the demon favored Sam as the potential leader of his army . Being the " most ripe for picking " because he had the " sweetest " heart , Sam was " most desirable for corrupting " of all the children ; Lehne described Azazel 's thought process as , " If I could turn him , then I had truly won . " The character 's ultimate motivation , however , is to free Lucifer from his imprisonment in Hell . On this , Supernatural co @-@ executive producer Ben Edlund mentioned his view of Azazel as one of " a little cult of demonic true believers " that encompasses many of the important demon characters in the series .

= = Development = =

For Azazel 's first full appearance on the series in " Devil 's Trap " , the writers initially could not decide which Winchester ? Sam , Dean , or John ? to have the demon possess . However , actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan 's busy schedule made them realize that having John kidnapped and possessed , and therefore absent from much of the episode , would be the only practical choice . Noting that the first season focuses on Sam and Dean trying to find both their father and Azazel , series creator Eric Kripke noted that from a storytelling perspective " it had to be " that " they 'd find both of them at the same time ... in the same body " . Though the writers modeled Azazel 's personality after Al Pacino 's demonic sense of humor in the film *The Devil 's Advocate* , they gave Morgan free rein over the character 's mannerisms . Only directed to " be different from John " , Morgan changed his voice and mimicked Jack Nicholson 's " freaky " speech pattern from *The Shining* .

Morgan 's " Nicholson @-@ esque quality " continues with actor Fredric Lehne . Though uncertain of why he was specifically sought out ? Lehne chalks it up to his previous working experience with executive producers Kim Manners and Robert Singer ? the role was offered to him without an audition . The actor avoided copying Morgan 's portrayal , but noted that the writing " lends itself to doing it in a certain way " . Since Azazel changes human hosts periodically , Lehne 's initial appearance in the second season premiere , " In My Time of Dying " , was intended to be a one @-@ time deal . Thoroughly impressed , however , the show runners kept him for the season finale . Despite the character 's death , Lehne returned to the role in the sixth season premiere as a hallucination .

A dream sequence in " All Hell Breaks Loose " hints at Mary Winchester 's connection to Azazel . Although the writers intended to address this in the third season , it was pushed back to the fourth season episode " In the Beginning " due to the 2007 ? 2008 Writers Guild of America strike . Kripke asked Mitch Pileggi to enact this revelation ? the two had previously worked together on the series *Tarzan* ? and the actor accepted because Kim Manners and much of the *Supernatural* crew had also worked on *The X @-@ Files* . While Pileggi emulated Lehne 's performance , he also tried to " put his own spin on it " .

Morgan , Lehne , and actress Lindsey McKeon wore hard , colored contact lenses during their portrayals of Azazel . The lenses eventually became painful , and would greatly obscure their vision . The production crew placed sandbags on the floor to help Morgan and Lehne locate their marks , and a grip held Lehne 's hand as he walked around a campfire in " All Hell Breaks Loose " . McKeon 's brief scene in " In My Time of Dying " ? she touches actor Jensen Ackles ' forehead ? took nine takes to film because she kept missing . Although Pileggi was fitted for the lenses , production ultimately added the effect digitally at " appropriate moments " .

= = Reception = =

Azazel has been met with universal praise from critics and fans alike , with the latter voting him as the best villain of the series in a poll conducted by BuddyTV . " [ You ] have to realize that without [ Azazel ] there would be no reason for the boys to hunt in the first place , " viewers wrote , also calling him the " oldest arch nemesis " and a " classic supernatural badass " . The results of the poll revealed that Azazel had won with 75 % of the votes , with the second @-@ highest percentage of votes for another character ( Alastair ) being only 9 % .

Both Karla Peterson of The San Diego Union @-@ Tribune and Maureen Ryan of the Chicago Tribune felt that Morgan gave " his best and most believable performance of the season " in " Devil 's Trap " , with the latter adding , " He was really on fire in that scene , and it brought a whole new intensity to his performance . " Diana Steenbergen of IGN found him " menacing , with his low voice and the cruel words ... trying to tear them apart emotionally before tearing Dean apart literally " , and enjoyed the sadistic and " vicious humor " that makes the character " more sinister " . However , she believed that Azazel having a family was an unnecessary parallel with the Winchesters that " doesn 't quite make sense " . After viewing the episode , Brian Tallerico of UGO gave his opinion that the series should follow Buffy the Vampire Slayer 's format of having a different recurring villain each season . " If the firestarting demon is the Big Bad for the first two seasons , that 's fine , " he commented , " but don 't drag it out longer than that . Fans will get bored . And there 's nothing scarier than that .

Tina Charles of TV Guide was happy to see the " appropriately creepy " Lehne return to the role in " All Hell Breaks Loose " . " The second he popped in at ghost town central , " she wrote , " the scare factor went up . " Likewise , Tom Burns of UGO deemed all of Lehne 's scenes " damn near riveting " , while Brett Love of TV Squad described him as " a perfect evil menace " . Diana Steenbergen of IGN deemed Lehne 's performance " charismatic and quietly sadistic without being overdone " . Despite this praise , she was happy to see the character die because " it frees the show from bogging down by having the Winchesters chasing after the same villain endlessly " and " opens up the opportunity to explore new plots " .

Pileggi 's casting in " In the Beginning " was " a cool move " for Charles , who found his performance " scary " . Similarly , Steenbergen called Pileggi " a force to be reckoned " who " has a chance to be both funny and disturbing " . According to publicists of Warner Bros. , the fans " were very happy with what [ they ] did " in the episode .