

= What Is and What Should Never Be ( Supernatural ) =

" What Is and What Should Never Be " is the twentieth episode of the paranormal drama television series Supernatural 's second season . It was first broadcast on May 3 , 2007 on The CW . The narrative follows series protagonist Dean Winchester ( Jensen Ackles ) who finds himself in an alternate reality after a confrontation with a djinn [ sic ] . The creature appears to have fulfilled Dean 's greatest wish : that his mother had not been killed when he was a child . Dean is happy in the new world until it becomes apparent that his previous work as a hunter of supernatural creatures has been undone . At this point , he rejects the alternate reality , and attempts to find a method to bring himself back .

The episode was written by Raelle Tucker , and marked the directorial debut of series creator Eric Kripke . It featured the return of deceased characters Mary Winchester ( Samantha Smith ) and Jessica Moore ( Adrienne Palicki ) . Kripke enjoyed expanding upon the character of Mary , who was only briefly depicted in earlier episodes . The production schedule had to be altered to accommodate Palicki , who was simultaneously working on the TV series Friday Night Lights .

Despite obtaining low ratings , the episode acquired positive critical reviews that both praised Ackles ' performance and welcomed the return of Smith and Palicki to the series . Tucker also received a Constellation Award for her work on the episode .

= = Plot = =

The episode begins in an abandoned warehouse , where Dean ( Ackles ) is attacked by the djinn that he is hunting . He suddenly finds himself in a world in which his mother ( Smith ) was not killed by the demon Azazel . He and his brother Sam ( Jared Padalecki ) were not raised to be hunters of supernatural creatures , but are no longer close , as Dean is irresponsible , disloyal , and drinks too much in this alternate reality ; when a confused Dean calls him for help , Sam thinks that he is drunk . In the new reality , Dean is dating the beautiful Carmen ( Michelle Borth ) , and Sam is at law school and engaged to Jessica ( Palicki ) ? another victim of Azazel . Although Dean enjoys his new life , a ghostly young woman seems to be haunting him and he is confronted by an image of corpses in his closet . He realizes that all the people that he and Sam had saved as hunters are now dead , that he and Sam have a distant and somewhat adversarial relationship . After visiting the grave of his father John , who died the previous year of a stroke , Dean decides that he must give up his new @-@ found happiness to save them .

In need of something silver ? a weakness of the djinn ? Dean breaks into his mother 's house to steal a sterling silver knife . However , he is caught by Sam , who thinks he 's stealing from their mother . While Dean at first pretends that he needs the knife to repay a gambling debt , he eventually reveals the truth . Although Sam does not believe him , he accompanies his brother to the djinn 's warehouse lair . There Dean discovers that the young woman he has been having visions of is a victim of the djinn . It 's clear that she is alive but in an hallucinatory state ? a way for the djinn to keep its victims unresisting while it feeds ? Dean realizes that he , too , is within an illusory world . Knowing that a person wakes up if he or she dies in a dream , he decides to kill himself . Carmen , Jessica , and his mother appear and try to talk him out of it . Dean resists the urge to stay , and awakens in the real world after stabbing himself . Sam , who is already in the warehouse trying to rescue him , is attacked by the djinn , but Dean kills the creature .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

Series creator Eric Kripke 's first experience as director was slated for the twentieth episode of the season , and Raelle Tucker was scheduled to pen it . Kripke wanted a script that was as " director @-@ proof as possible " , but that would " play with structure and really do something different " . He

shot down every idea the writers pitched to him until Tucker suggested an alternate reality episode . Drawing inspiration from the Buffy the Vampire Slayer episode " Normal Again " , Kripke was excited by the concept . He felt Dean 's definitive moment was the death of his mother Mary , so the " diversion path " of the new reality would be based on the question , " What if mom never died ? " This change allows Sam and Dean to live normal lives , though at the cost of their relationship . The point of the false reality , in Kripke 's opinion , was to show that the brothers would not be close if they had not become hunters . The staff tried to persuade him to remove this aspect , but he thought it would be " lame " for Sam and Dean to have a " 7th Heaven relationship " . Once the story was fully developed , Tucker was given free rein over the script ; this surprised her because she expected Kripke to " be more of a backseat driver than he was " .

The opportunity to bring back the character of Mary Winchester excited Kripke . Though she is a driving force behind the brothers ' quest to kill the demon Azazel and is referenced numerous times throughout the first two seasons , her two appearances in the series were very brief . The episode allowed the character to be expanded upon , depicting her as a " really perfect and idyllic mother " . However , Kripke felt that Dean would realize something was amiss if he was granted a " perfect dream world " , so John Winchester , who died in the second season premiere , remained dead .

The final version of the episode differed from the original concept . It was initially intended for Dean to be a " huge loser " in his new life ; being a hunter is what gives him structure and purpose . Without hunting , he would be a jobless barfly . Kripke compared the new reality to a Charles Bukowski novel , but noted that the selfless Dean still preferred the new universe , with Sam happy and living a good life . However , executive producer Robert Singer and others convinced him to change this , because they did not think Dean would be happy suddenly waking up in such a reality . Another variation stemmed from Dean 's lack of someone to confide in ? normally Sam is his confidant . Because the writers found it difficult to communicate Dean 's feelings , early drafts of the script included a number of internal monologues . These were ultimately replaced by a scene in which he discusses the djinn with a professor . The studio wanted the scene of Dean and his girlfriend Carmen kissing on the sofa to include sex . However , Kripke could not work it into the script , because he found it unrealistic that she would deliberately be late for her job as a hospital nurse .

= = = Djinn = = =

The writers wanted to use a wish to create the new reality , and chose a genie to facilitate it . The Islamic djinn ? the origins of genie folklore ? became the episode 's monster , but featured the " bastardized western conception " of wish @-@ granting to fit the episode . To avoid the typical portrayal of genies in popular culture ? such as those from Aladdin and I Dream of Jeannie ? they chose to create a " logical twist on the lore " by making the creature vampiric . Tucker originally intended for the creature 's feeding method to be mystical ? it would inhale its victim 's life essence from his or her mouth . However , Kripke preferred to style it more like a horror movie , and had the djinn feed from a shunt in its victim 's neck .

The creature 's appearance was inspired by an image of a woman with a henna @-@ tattooed back that Kripke found on the internet . He thought it would be intriguing to have the villain 's entire body tattooed . The actor who portrayed the djinn ? Mackenzie Gray ? had a shaved head , so special effects makeup artist Toby Lindala only used a minor prosthetic to cover Gray 's eyebrows . Lindala found the tattoos to be a " particular challenge " because they were " intricate designs " . The production schedule could not accommodate the six hours needed to apply the makeup each day , so the actor was booked with the condition that the make @-@ up not be removed for four days . Gray 's personal life was affected by this , as people on the street were scared by his appearance . Lindala was surprised that Gray was able to keep the tattoos undamaged outside of filming .

= = = Filming = = =

Principal photography for the episode took place in Vancouver , British Columbia . Kripke wanted

Adrienne Palicki to reprise her role of Jessica Moore ? Sam 's deceased girlfriend ? but she was busy filming for the Texas @-@ based television series Friday Night Lights . Because Jessica was an integral aspect of the storyline , the production schedule was adjusted to accommodate the actress . The first five days of filming commenced for " What Is and What Should Never Be " , and production then shifted to " All Hell Breaks Loose , Part One " until Palicki became available for the final three days of filming . However , she was not present for filming of the episode 's climax . Instead , the actress filmed her part in front of a blue screen , and was later digitally added into the scene .

Because the series usually has a dark atmosphere , often consisting of " sets with grime and a sense of danger " , Kripke wanted there to be a contrast between the two worlds . Therefore , he requested that production designer Jerry Wanek build the " most beautiful , warm , affectionate sets you ? ve ever seen " . Cinematographer Serge Ladouceur also made the usual shadows and " moody lighting " more colorful and warm . Though it rained almost constantly through filming , perfect weather arose for filming of one of the main contrasting scenes ? Dean mowing the lawn . Kripke wanted it to appear " too perfect to be real " , and was able to film the " sunny , beautiful scene " . The " creepy " warehouse used as a lair by the djinn was a redesigned warehouse set from the television series Kyle XY .

One of the first directors Kripke had become acquainted with and learned from was David Nutter . Kripke thus wanted to include homages to Nutter 's work on the pilot ; some scenes of the new reality were meant to be recreations from the first episode . The crew attempted to match the camera angles , lighting , and music as much as possible . While Sam and Jessica sleeping together in bed was supposed to be an exact replica of a similar scene , the fight between the brothers differed . Because the new Sam is " pretty much a wussy " , Dean is able to take him down instantly . Tucker noted that it was also a " sneaky way " of hinting that the new reality was merely an illusion , as he is " re @-@ experiencing that moment from the pilot because his fantasy world is being generated by what he already knows and has lived " .

Many of the photos present throughout the Winchester home were photoshopped by graphic artist Mary @-@ Ann Liu . Each one was discussed and refined , as Kripke felt they were important to show the new Winchester family history . Some pictures , such as Dean at the prom and Sam at graduation , were edited versions of photos from Ackles ' and Padalecki 's childhood .

= = = Music = = =

The episode 's synthesized orchestral score was written by Christopher Lennertz . As of production of the fourth season , the episode has been his favorite one to score . Lennertz used a solo bassoon for the emotional scenes in the alternate reality rather than the cello he normally uses for Sam and Dean 's relationship . He noted that it " set a very interesting lead tone for the episode " . Following the series ' tradition , the episode also featured rock songs .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " What Is and What Should Never Be " was viewed by an estimated 3 @.@ 11 million viewers , one of the lowest ratings for the season . Conversely , writer Raelle Tucker won the Constellation Award for " Best Overall 2007 Science Fiction Film or Television Script " for her work on the episode , and the episode garnered positive reviews from critics . Tina Charles of TV Guide " adored " the episode , and considered it to be Jensen Ackles ' best performance of the series . She experienced an " emotional roller coaster the entire hour " , finding Dean 's monologue at his father 's grave to be " crushing " but the lawnmower scene to be " hilarious " . Likewise , Diana Steenbergen of IGN gave the episode a rating of 9 @.@ 2 out of 10 , praising the quick pace , " heavy " character development , and " ton and a half of angst " . She , too , felt that Ackles " hits the ball out of the park " , and noted that the episode 's humor stemmed from Ackles ' willingness to be a " big goofball " . Actresses Samantha Smith and Adrienne Palicki were " a treat " , although Steenbergen would have liked Jeffrey Dean Morgan to return .

Tom Burns of UGO deemed the episode as " one of the strongest hours of Supernatural all season " , feeling that " the actors really stepped up their game ... and sold every moment " . He also noted the " unapologetically emotional " Ackles , who " [ wore ] his joy , sadness , and anxiety all over this face , but always [ kept ] things real and in character " . Though Burns believed that " wish @-@ world " stories have been overused in fiction , he felt that Ackles ' " hardcore acting chops " allowed the episode to " escape from mediocrity " . The " outstanding " and " well crafted " episode was given a 7 out of 7 by TV Squad 's Brett Love . He considered the djinn as " one of the better representations " of genies in popular culture , and noted that the creature had the " perfect creepy look to it " . He was pleased to see Smith and Palicki return , and found the character of Carmen to be " a nice addition to the family " . Don Williams of BuddyTV agreed , and ranked the episode third in his list of the best episodes of the first three seasons . Deeming it the best standalone episode , he noted that it " can be embraced by anyone who enjoys clever writing , great acting , or a shirtless Jensen Ackles " .