

**Supernatural**  
**Pitch by Eric Kripke August 30, 2004**

## **I. TONE AND WORLD**

In one sentence, this is X-FILES meets ROUTE 66. Two brothers, cruising the dusty back roads in their trusty 64 Mustang, battling the things that go bump in the night. But much more than that, it's a show about an obsession of mine...

Throughout the U.S., (especially the MIDDLE, where I'm from), we have a folklore, as uniquely American as baseball, as rich and varied as any world mythology, and almost nobody knows it. For instance, Robert Johnson sold his soul to the Devil, at an abandoned Mississippi crossroads, to be the world's greatest guitarist. But he died violently, poisoned at age 26, screaming about Hellhounds as he choked on his own blood. In the shadowy north woods of Minnesota, lives a creature named the Wendigo. Translated from Native American, it means "evil that devours." It feeds on human flesh. And even today, dozens of witnesses say it's very real.

There are literally HUNDREDS of these stories and legends and urban legends. There are dark and dangerous things out there in the corners of our country. So here's a show that travels the diverse highways and byways of supernatural America. Black woods, ghost towns, those tourist trap mystery spots. Really, a show ABOUT our country—the bloody, beating heart of America.

Unlike X-FILES, this show isn't Vancouver rainy. It's brighter, more colorful, more VISCERAL, and more irreverent. The humor here is extremely important to me—but it has to arise from the characters and their attitudes. The characters can be funny, but the weekly stories have to be SCARY AS SHIT—I'm talking THE RING; how what you don't see is much more terrifying than what you do. I'm talking about making this series as scary as I possibly can, until you guys call and yell at me.

But I also want the tone to be GROUNDED. Where BUFFY, for example, felt HEIGHTENED, our show should feel like OUR WORLD, real-life America. With a darkness that bubbles and boils just beneath the surface. And I want to keep the weekly stories CREDIBLE—leave 'em with a question mark, the possibility of a rational explanation. Something early X-Files did very well.

Finally, I want this show to capture a certain SPIRIT. For one, that youthful electricity of dropping out and hitting the open road; the freedom of wide-open American spaces. But also, EVERY road trip story—from FEAR and LOATHING to Kerouac to The Odyssey, are inherently mythic quests, hero's journeys, real Joseph Campbell stuff. The way STAR WARS, LORD OF THE RINGS, and MATRIX are all the same story, with the same beats. So our series, too, is an epic hero's quest-- across the United States. Almost like a modern western, and our heroes are gunslingers. Or, as I like to call it-- it's STAR WARS in TRUCK STOP AMERICA.

## II. CHARACTERS AND FRANCHISE

Now, let's get into establishing our characters, and launching our franchise.

So if this is STAR WARS, meet LUKE SKYWALKER. SAM HARRISON, 21. Think Jake Gyllenhall, or Tobey Maguire. Smart, funny, handsome, maybe a little type-A. He just graduated Stanford with a 4.0, and now he's heading back down to L.A., where he lives with his Aunt and Uncle, he'll spend the summer clerking at a powerful law firm. And in the Fall... Harvard Law, thank you very much. Pedal to the metal, Sam is cruising the track to success. But, like all good Luke Skywalker heroes, Sam is vaguely restless. He tells his girlfriend, maybe he should drop everything this summer and blow off to Europe. But of course, he doesn't. He has too many responsibilities.

Sam's well adjusted, successful life, it's a real triumph, especially considering his background. Fifteen years ago, his dad JACK became increasingly dark and depressed. He drank. A lot. Until Mom and Dad were in a car crash. Dad was driving. He lived. Mom didn't. That triggered a schizophrenic breakdown in Dad. He swore that twisted, dark, horrific things caused that crash and took Mom away. And those same dark things were chasing after him. Dad was institutionalized. But he escaped. And disappeared.

Sam is ashamed of his tragic past. Hates his Dad, blames him for killing Mom, and NEVER, EVER talks about it.

Now, Sam's mythic CALL TO ADVENTURE, the events that will change his life forever, begin simply enough. When his big brother DEAN rolls into town. Meet DEAN HARRISON, 25, think Colin Farrel. If Sam's the good kid, Dean's the troublemaker. If Sam's Luke Skywalker, Dean's Han Solo. Charismatic and dangerous. Cocky confidence masking a troubled soul. Sam hated Dad, but Dean was older and remembered Dad in brighter days, and he worshipped the man. Sam buried his past and ignored it, but Dean was haunted by it, never quite got his shit together. Dean never went to college. Just sort of traveled around. In fact, Sam hasn't heard from Dean in almost 3 years, which Sam clearly resents.

And now... Dean makes Sam a proposition. Let me drive you down to L.A.—it's just one day, we'll get a chance to catch up a little. Reluctant, Sam agrees.

At first, they're enjoying the electric, carefree pleasures of a ROAD TRIP. Top down, radio blaring, singing their lungs out to AC/DC.

But then... at twilight... on an empty stretch of highway... Dean's driving. And he has to make a confession. (Though I'm sure we'll break this up into a few different scenes.) "Sam. There's something I need to tell you," Dean says. "I went looking for Dad. And I found him. Took just about every dime I had, but I found him. And I've been with him, for almost 2 years." Sam is shocked and betrayed: "what?! Why didn't you tell me?!" But Dean continues: "listen. I know this is hard to believe. But Dad WASN'T nuts.

Demons really DID kill Mom. Dark, awful things WERE following Dad. I know. Because I can see them. Because they're following me, too."

Obviously, Sam is BEYOND freaked and well aware that schizophrenia is hereditary. Dean goes on, getting worked up—"so Dad figured out how to kill these things, and he showed me how. Until they caught up to us in Baker. They got Dad. Before I got them." "What do you mean, you GOT them?" asks Sam. "I killed a demon. In human form," says Dean. "You killed somebody?!" "No, I killed a DEMON, it only LOOKED human." (Which could be a scary, visceral teaser, by the way.) Anyway, DEAN continues: "Listen to me, Sam... it was Dad's wish, his DYING WISH, that I find you, that I teach you the way he taught me." At this point, Sam goes into placating, survival mode. "Okay. Sure. Just calm down." But Sam's terrified—of his own brother.

Meanwhile, as this conversation's going on, Dean isn't going to L.A. He takes a detour--for all intents and purposes, kidnapping Sam. They pull into a small, faded, all-American town in Central California. It's 1950's American optimism gone to seed. Basically, they pull right into the pilot's SELF ENCLOSED B-STORY. Whatever it is, the story should be simple, giving us room to focus on the brothers. It should be based in Folklore. And it should be personal—the job their father never completed.

Now, here's an example of exactly the kind of story I'm talking about. The real life ghost story of the "Weeping Woman," a sobbing wraith in a bloody white nightgown. She murdered her children by the river side, as revenge against her unfaithful husband. And today, it's said she lures unfaithful men to the river and drowns them. And sure enough, several MEN in this town have turned up dead by the river's edge. Anyway, something like this. And Dean, despite his smart ass jokes and references to the movie Poltergeist, seems to be taking this SERIOUSLY.

But Sam doesn't believe a WORD of it. First moment he's alone, he calls his Aunt and Uncle. "I'm with Dean, I think he's sick." They tell him—"cops in Baker found your Dad's body. And a truck driver's body, too. Dean's the suspect. You have to get away! Where are you?!" But before Sam can answer—he pivots, right into Dean. Who grabs the phone, SMASHING it, furious: "Dammit, Sam, I'm not insane," Dean says, "Caspar the unfriendly fucker is really out there!"

Then, as Dean delves deeper and deeper into the ghost story, dragging a reluctant Sam along with him... INEXPLICABLE SUPERNATURAL phenomenon begin to occur, which SERIOUSLY RATTLES Sam. We'll have several good, scary set pieces. And soon, Sam doesn't know WHAT to think. And in the B-STORY'S climax, he'll even save Dean at some crucial point. (Though we'll be careful to leave things open ended, with just the possibility of a logical explanation.)

Afterwards, a beat in which Dean, vulnerable, says to his brother—"I've been thinking. And you're going home, Sam. You're smart, and you've got everything going for you. I don't care what Dad said, I can't let you live like this... Still," says Dean, "it was nice having you around. When you're with somebody... you just don't feel as crazy as

often.” Sam’s very conflicted, and he feels awful, but he can’t just abandon his old life. So the brothers part ways. Sam hitchhikes up the road. Meanwhile, thanks to his Aunt and Uncle, the cops have been searching for Sam, and now they find him.

At the station, Sam tells the cops, Dean’s in Colorado by now. But a patrol car has spotted Dean’s parked Mustang at a nearby motel. The police grab SHOTGUNS, they’re going to take Dean with force. And in the face of ONE PASSING COP, Sam sees—a glimpse. A shimmer. Something DEMONIC and INHUMAN flashes across the cop’s face—and then it’s gone, just as quick. Did Sam imagine it? Is he going insane, too? Or is Dean really in danger? Are dark, awful things really after him, like he said?

This is Sam’s crossroads moment. And he makes a decision—he takes off. Steals a car. Beats the cops back to Dean. Warns him at the last minute. It’s very TIGHT and very HECTIC, but Sam and Dean get away. Escaping by the skin of their teeth.

As we leave Sam... he doesn’t know if he’s losing his mind. He doesn’t know if Dean’s a hero or a homicidal schizophrenic. All he knows is—Dean’s his brother, and he needs help. And for now, that’s enough.

### **III. THE SERIES ITSELF**

I think the overall GOAL here, is building an engine that gives us SELF ENCLOSED STORIES. I am gonna pitch some very simple mythology, but STAND ALONES are a format I really believe in, they’re the shows I loved and grew up on. Like the best EARLY episodes of X-FILES.

So basically, our two heroes, avenging their parents’ death, cruise the golden backroads of America—picture chrome diners and bucolic farms and dusty Route 66 towns. Places that are mythic and American, but also haunting, in a way. Places where horror can strike in broad daylight. Sam and Dean are kind of like classic gunslingers, or dragon slayers, finding—and KILLING—the monsters of American folklore.

So first question—how do they find the damn things? Dean tracks these creatures in a low-tech way. He scans obituaries for strange deaths. Dean also has a loose network of contacts— defrocked ministers and trailer park psychics, who impart information to our heroes whenever necessary.

Second question—how do they KILL the damn things? The answer—they have no fucking idea. They’re outgunned and desperate and in completely over their heads. They don’t have a WATCHER, like in BUFFY. They don’t have an OBI WAN. They’re on their own. Each week, they gotta figure out what the hell they’re dealing with, and how the hell to kill it. And a lot of the time, they’re wrong, and they have to improvise. Whether it’s finding a ghost’s remains—and burning them into dust; or loading a shotgun with silver buckshot, our guys will do whatever it takes to get the job done.