



THE DEVIL YOU KNEW

The Fallen Angel on TV

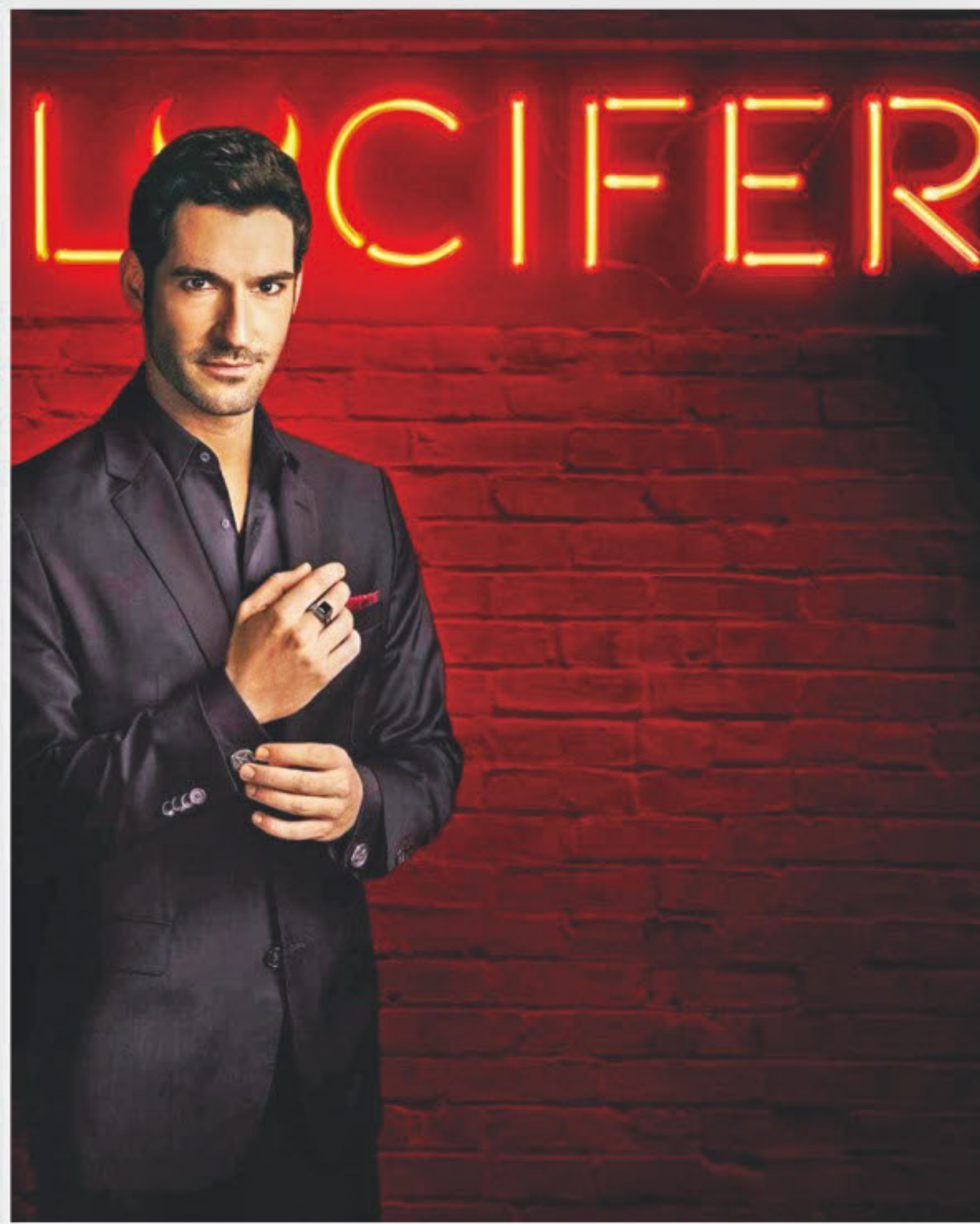
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Conflict is an integral part of any TV show. Whether it is a Romantic Comedy, Drama or Thriller, there is always conflict of some sort in order to drive the plot forward. Without conflict, there is rarely any reason to watch and the story may seem stagnant. One of the most common and oldest forms of conflict is, of course, the struggle between good and evil. Every major religious text deals with this conflict in one way or another. Most have a primary antagonist – the embodiment and source of evil, the Devil himself. The Devil has often been depicted with the ability to shape shift, most prominently as the snake that tempted Eve with the Fruit of Knowledge, yet his latest transformation is one that has turned the tale on its head. The Devil on TV has somehow managed to go from monster and trickster to a charming antihero, in a dramatic twist of fate.

The old school version of the devil as a demonic presence is most prevalent in horror movies, such as in the *Conjuring* and the *Conjuring 2*. In both films, the grotesque and monstrous image of the demons is representative of how the Devil himself may be much in the way that biblical texts reference man as being created in God's image. Lucifer is a terrifying presence, with gnarly teeth and claws that are the stuff of nightmares. He preys on our fears and manipulates us into forfeiting our souls as we are no longer able to endure the suffering he heaps upon his victims. The literary basis of this image comes from the Renaissance writings of Dante, wherein Satan stands in the centre circle of hell, with legendary traitors Cassius, Brutus and Judas each in a mouth of his three heads.

This somewhat simplistic view of the Devil as a purely evil monster has fallen by the wayside these days, with

the focus faced more squarely on his manipulative nature. An example is his depiction in Nicholas Cage's *Ghost Rider* movies. In this instance, Mephistopheles is not a monster by outward appearance, but rather a businessman in a dark suit. He does not prey on our fears, but rather uses the greed of mortals to trick them into accomplishing his goals with the illusion of reward. This more manipulative character is developed even farther in



the TV show *Supernatural*. In the monster-hunting thriller series, the traditional character traits of Lucifer and the angels are reversed. The angels, while on the side of good, are depicted as disciplined soldiers of God, lacking in emotion and Spartan in lifestyle. Lucifer, conversely, is a more amiable character, using his charms to enforce his will. Furthermore, it makes clear a forgotten fact that Lucifer is, or rather was in fact an angel himself, albeit one that had his wings clipped.

This transformation of Lucifer's image finally came to a head in the TV show *Lucifer*, which recently began airing its second season. While so far, despite differing appearances, the Devil had always been portrayed as an antagonist and inherently evil, *Lucifer* finally flipped the switch completely and made him the hero. Key to this complete change in image was the biblical interpretation that *Supernatural* began. Rather than showing him to be this evil corruptor, Lucifer is depicted as a rebel. Having had a falling out with the Divinity, he is cast out and condemned to a job he does not like; head torturer of hell. Once he had grown disillusioned with negative image people had of him, Lucifer takes a vacation to Los Angeles to show his true image, which is someone who punishes the wicked.

Too often, people use the Devil as an excuse to justify terrible actions, when the truth is that we are each responsible for what we do. The Devil is just the warden of a prison, making sure the bad souls don't get out. That is, unless he's on vacation in the City of Angels.

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