

Enchanted

Storybrooke, Maine, is home to "all the classic characters we know.
Or think we know."



Forest

Our state stars in the TV series *Once Upon a Time*.

INTERVIEW BY COLIN W. SARGENT

Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz, creators of the hit [ABC, Sundays at 8 p.m.], give their take on what's so mythic about where we live and why we've been chosen for this metafictional honor. The duo first won acclaim as writers of *Lost* [2004-2010]. They met as students at U-Wisconsin-Madison.

Has either of you been to Maine before?

ADAM HOROWITZ: Yes, but I was so young I don't really remember it. I grew up in New York, and my visit had to do with coming up during the summer, driving up the East Coast with my family. All these years later, working on this series, we found Maine an easy choice. We thought, it's such a cool place to drop these characters into. It's kind of isolated. Stephen King has made it mythic.

Whose creative inspiration was it to set Storybrooke in Maine?

EDWARD KITSIS: It was a decision both of us made.

There must have been a second-place finisher for 'most horrible place in the world.'

EK: I think we would have gone with Oregon or Washington, but we loved the feeling of Maine. We wanted that



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kind of Stephen King vibe—my favorite book of his is actually his nonfiction book, *On Writing*. Because of him, there's the sense that storytelling kind of wells up in Maine.

Were you ever approached by anyone from Maine who recommended us as a shooting site?

EK: Not that we're aware of. We wrote the script before we chose Vancouver. We had to find a place within the realities of our budget. Maine is where we set it, and Vancouver is the best place for it to come to life. Obviously, Vancouver is only two hours away from Los Angeles and in the same time zone. Also, Adam and I had spent time there, shooting *TRON: Legacy*.

There is something "off-world" about Maine, something beyond the pale. We do keep many lost childhoods and lost summers up here.

AH: Childhood memories are when you first start to hear stories. Like when I first went to Maine. I'm barely able to remember it because I was so young, but something



Rumpelstiltskin's alter ego, Mr. Gold

like that gets imbued in your subconscious. It really stayed with me.

I don't know how the Maine Bureau of Tourism will react to this: I mean, "Maine, the Suspended State." What do you think it is about us that makes us the land that time forgot? I admit we're a place where some people disappear after, say, they retire from New York. Then, Rumpelstiltskin-like, they spend the rest of their lives telling us how great New York used to be. All you can do is pray they don't open up an advertising agency or build a McMansion that blocks our view.

EK: Maine feels like it's a destination where people 'go.' Mark Mylod, the director of the pilot, spends every summer up there with his family. Maine is a place that's just in everybody's imagination.

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They say Maine is a little like Brigadoon. Time stops here, especially when you're in love. Is that why we're such a great dumping ground for exiled fairy-tale characters?
MARK MYLOD: I love the *Brigadoon* comparison. That pretty much sums up why Amy and I love it so much.

We first came up to Maine six years ago, when we were first dating. We've been back at least once a year since. We haven't yet stayed in the same place twice, and we've hardly ventured inland at all yet. There's so much to explore.

We first stayed in Bar Harbor, where I had my first lobster at the age of 39 (I'm a Brit and they're really expensive in London). I was just bewitched by Acadia National Park and the fantastic hiking and lake swimming. The ocean isn't *that* cold, as long as it's at least late August (hardy Brit). Not sure if mermaids count as fairy tale characters, but if I were one I'd live around Acadia and eat lobster. We've also stayed in New Harbor, Bass Harbor, Portland, Camden, and got married last September on the ocean at South Thomaston, a weekend that's become legend with all our friends for the lobster bake and smell of the

ocean. It's true that the remains of a passing hurricane almost blew the marquee away, but apart from that things went very smoothly.

Actually, the real reason that weekend is so celebrated is more difficult to quantify. Our friends and family got the chance, mostly for the first time, to experience the time capsule that is much of Maine, to experience that sense of peace that many visitors keep coming back for.

I do think the state is in some ways suspended in time, but in the best way. People do not seem materialistic; they have time for each other and are attuned to the elements in a way most of us have forgotten. I don't wish to overly romanticize Maine, and my impressions on vacation are obviously through the prism of a carefree time, but the locals we've met have shown us nothing but kindness and warmth.

Maybe there is a maelstrom of intrigue and conflict going on under the surface, but if so, they hide it really, really well.

—Off-season, Mylod lives in a \$2M Cobble Hill brownstone in Brooklyn, NY, near novelist Martin Amis.



I like how Emma Swan, Snow White's lost daughter who comes up from Boston, is so rooted in reality she's a bail bondsperson who ironically has to be bailed out herself in Storybrooke. Her backstory pierces the past to create a mythic present she's unaware of. She doesn't know who she really is, and her mother doesn't know who *she* really is. That puts a little stardust under all of our feet.

EK: That was the design, the reason we wanted to go back and forth [between flashes of characters' fairy-tale and 'real' existences]. If this is a show about what made them the way they are, you need to see what they're missing. A scene with Emma [Snow White and Prince Charming's missing daughter] talking with Mary Margaret [Snow White] is infused with that, even if they don't know who they are in relation to one another.

What is a flash sideways? When I first saw it in the show, I wondered, are they flashing back to the present, or are they flashing forward to the past? It's interesting to see multiple realities trying to occupy the same space.

EK: We were first in this kind of storytelling with six years in *Lost*. Flashback, flash forward, flash present. This works for us through individual characters in the sense that the fairy tale is fantastical, so we have to root it in reality, and reality is everyday, so we sometimes show the magic beneath it. The yin and the yang.

Is your sense of Maine going to be developed as the story moves forward? Will there be... neighboring towns?

EK: I think Storybrooke lives in its own world inside of Maine, and we're just happy to have it housed there. We do reference that Bangor is somewhat nearby, but we've kept the geography nonspecific because Storybrooke is out of time and out of place.

Assuming both of you are living in the Real World now, who are your counterparts on the mythic level? Who would we flash sideways to in the land of fairy tales if you were really part of your own story?

EK: I think we would be 'The Narrator.' ■

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