

= The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter (Once Upon a Time) =

" The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter " is the seventh episode of the first season of the American fairy tale / drama television series Once Upon a Time , and the seventh overall . The episode was co -@-@ written by series creators Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis , while being directed by David M. Barrett . Horowitz and Kitsis had intended to kill off Graham since the pilot episode was picked up , believing that it would add " stakes " to the series and show viewers that the story is " not in Henry 's head . " The episode is considered significant , as Graham 's death reveals that Regina is aware of her fairytale past .

The series takes place in the fictional seaside town of Storybrooke , Maine , in which the residents are actually characters from various fairy tales that were transported to the " real world " town by a powerful curse . This episode 's story follows Sheriff Graham (Jamie Dornan) as he remembers his fairytale counterpart , leading to significant consequences that parallel his previous life as the Huntsman . It first aired in the United States on ABC on December 11 , 2011 . An estimated 8 @.@ 91 million viewers watched the episode , placing third in its timeslot behind NBC and CBS . The episode received mixed reviews from television critics , as some praised Dornan 's character but were divided on the ending sequence . It was the series ' mid @-@ season finale .

= = Plot = =

= = = Opening Sequence = = =

A wolf is shown in the forest .

= = = In Storybrooke = = =

In Granny 's Cafe , Sheriff Graham (Jamie Dornan) throws darts at a picture of a deer very accurately . Emma Swan (Jennifer Morrison) arrives but leaves immediately because she has not forgiven him for hiding his relationship with Regina (Lana Parrilla) . Emma attempts to avoid conversation , but Graham is insistent on explaining to her he feels nothing for Regina . He kisses Emma and suddenly sees a vision of a wolf , only to have Emma push him away . Frustrated by Emma 's lack of understanding , Graham later sleeps with Regina . During the night , he awakens abruptly from a dream of a deer and a wolf . When Graham tells Regina that the dream felt like a memory , Regina tries to convince him to stay , but Graham leaves . As Graham attempts to get to his car , the wolf from his visions appears next to him , startling him before it leaves . As he tries to find the wolf in the woods , he runs into Mr. Gold (Robert Carlyle) . Graham tells him about the wolf , and Mr. Gold suggests to him that dreams are memories from another life .

The following morning , Emma discovers flowers on the table and throws them out , assuming they are from Graham , but Mary Margaret (Ginnifer Goodwin) says that they were hers from Dr. Whale (David Anders) , with whom she had a one @-@ night stand . Emma is glad to hear that Mary Margaret appears to be getting over David (Josh Dallas) . Mary Margaret tells Emma that it is obvious that she has feelings for Graham , but does not acknowledge them because she is putting up a " wall " to keep herself from getting hurt .

The sheriff finds the wolf in the woods , and when he whistles , the wolf goes to him . As he pets the wolf 's head , he sees himself holding a knife , about to hurt the woman he only knows as Mary Margaret . Graham pays a visit to her classroom , telling her that he believes they know each other from another life , before Storybrooke . Mary Margaret assumes that the sheriff has been talking to Henry , and while this is not the case , this gives Graham the idea to consult Henry about his book . Meanwhile , at the sheriff 's office , Regina shows up and warns Emma to stay away from Graham , apparently jealous of his connection with Emma .

Graham visits Henry (Jared S. Gilmore) and describes his visions to Henry , to which Henry replies that he must be the queen 's Huntsman . The Huntsman was hired by the Evil Queen to

remove Snow White 's heart and bring it back to her , but when he does not do so , she removes his heart . Graham later attempts to explain to Emma that he could not feel anything with Regina because he does not have a heart . Graham and Emma then encounter the wolf from Graham 's visions , and follow it to a graveyard and vault marked with a symbol Graham saw in his visions and in Henry 's book . Looking for his heart , Graham fervently searches the vault , which turns out to be the tomb of Henry Mills . Regina arrives to place flowers on her father 's grave and is furious to find them there .

Regina accuses Emma of stealing the sheriff from her , and Emma responds that Regina has chased everyone away . Graham defends Emma , and the women exchange blows . Later , while Graham cleans Emma 's wounds , Regina pushes aside the stone inside the vault , which turns out not to be a tomb after all ; the stone reveals a staircase . Emma realizes her feelings for Graham and the two kiss just as Regina opens a storage box in the hidden room and clutches Graham 's heart , crushing it to dust , showing that she remembers being the Evil Queen . Before he collapses and dies , Graham 's last words to Emma are " I remember ! Thank you . "

= = = In the Characters ' Past = = =

In the Enchanted Forest , the Evil Queen mourns the death of her husband , Snow White 's father , although she herself is responsible for his death . Snow (Goodwin) and the Queen seemingly comfort each other over the loss . The Queen consults her magic mirror (Esposito) to ask how she can kill Snow , who is beloved by the people but a threat to her bid for the throne . She says that the king 's knights will not kill his daughter , and the mirror tells her that she needs a huntsman . As Graham saw in his flashbacks , the Huntsman (Dornan) and his brother wolf seem to enjoy living a peaceful life in the woods . The Huntsman kills only for himself to live , and has no compassion for humans , who do not understand the wild . As the Huntsman and his wolf enter a tavern , the other patrons begin harassing him , prompting him to successfully defend himself . His performance is viewed in the magic mirror by the Queen , who is greatly impressed . She summons the Huntsman to offer him anything he wants on the condition that he brings her Snow 's heart . He agrees to this deal , in return asking for the protection of all the wolves in the Enchanted Forest .

Snow and the Huntsman walk together in the forest , and she sees through his disguise and correctly guesses that he was sent by the Queen to kill her . Snow flees , but as the Huntsman catches up with her , he finds her writing a letter , which she requests he deliver to the queen after she is killed . The Huntsman takes out his knife , but instead of killing her , he fashions a whistle out of a bamboo stick , telling her that it will summon help and then telling her to run . The Huntsman then returns to the queen with a deer heart , hoping that she will not know the difference . The queen asks him to read her the letter , which is an apology for past wrongs as well as a request from Snow that her stepmother rule the kingdom with compassion . The queen burns the letter and takes the box with the heart in it to store in her vault . When she cannot open one of her storage safes , it proves that the Huntsman lied to her ; the heart is not human . The Queen has her guards drag him down to the vault and she yanks his glowing heart out of his body . She tells the Huntsman that from now on he will be her pet and will do her bidding forever , and if he ever betrays her , all she has to do is squeeze .

= = Production = =

The episode was co @-@ written by co @-@ creators Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz , and was directed by The Mentalist veteran David M. Barrett . Guest actor Giancarlo Esposito made his second appearance in the series as Magic Mirror / Sidney Glass . Meghan Ory returned as Ruby / Red Riding Hood , while Scott Heindl made his only appearance for the series as Bartholomew . Leading up to the episode broadcast , Kitsis and Horowitz noted that " The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter " would feature consequences of events that occurred in the previous episode . Horowitz explained , " Emma is in a raw emotional place , trying to come to terms with her feelings about what she discovered about Graham . Graham is also in a very raw emotional place because he 's clearly

conflicted and it 's this cauldron of emotions that leads to the kiss . " Kitsis added that , " We 're really excited that the kiss that you 've seen is really just the jumping off point of the story we 're telling . It 's not like it ends with the kiss , it starts with that and it takes us somewhere that we 're excited to show you . "

In the episode , the character of Sheriff Graham was killed off , something that actor Jamie Dornan had known would happen since ABC picked up the pilot . It was the first major death of the series . In an interview with E ! reporter Kristin Dos Santos , Dornan hinted that while his counterpart in Storybrooke has died , the huntsman could return at some point , as Dornan is still a regular on the series . As much of the episode involves Graham discovering his fairytale past , the writers designed the episode to mislead viewers by having them invest in the character . Kitsis and Horowitz commented that while the death made them " sad , " the battle between Emma and Regina requires " stakes and unfortunately , sometimes stakes are people 's lives . " They also decided to kill the character relatively early in the series in order to show viewers that " it 's real . It 's not in Henry 's head . " Kitsis continued , " It ? s interesting , but part of the intent was to make you love him and we loved him very much . And the fact that the audience seems to have loved him means a lot to us , in that we feel like we succeeded on that front . If you don ? t feel sad , then it was a failure of the execution of the story . "

Actress Lana Parrilla believed that Graham helped fill a void for her character , commenting that his loss " was not easy for [Regina] . That ? s why , when she crushes his heart , there ? s a tear coming out of her eye . She didn ? t want to do it , but she had no choice ? almost like how she had no choice to kill her father . I ? m not saying I agree with it , but for the character , it ? s what she had to do . " Parrilla also cited " The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter " as the first episode where viewers see " how the two worlds collided , " a reference to Regina 's ability to kill Graham by squeezing the heart of his fairytale counterpart . The revelation of the vault , Kitsis and Horowitz explained , " is a very important thing for us in terms of moving forward in the season in that we wanted to send a very clear message that Regina knows what ? s going on and has some very clear intentions in Storybrooke . " The episode was included in Reawakened : A Once Upon a Time Tale ? a novelization of the first season ? which was published by Hyperion Books in 2013 .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

For the third week in a row , the ratings once again slipped , as it placed 2 @. @ 9 / 7 among adults aged 18 ? 49 and a 5 @. @ 2 / 8 overall , with only 8 @. @ 91 million viewers tuning in . It ranked third in its timeslot , being beaten by Football Night In America on NBC and 60 Minutes on CBS but ahead of The Simpsons on the Fox network . " The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter " served as the series ' mid @- @ season finale , as the next episode aired on January 8 , 2012 . In Canada , the episode finished in twelfth place for the week with an estimated 1 @. @ 6 million viewers , a slight increase from the 1 @. @ 55 million of the previous episode .

= = = Reviews = = =

" The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter " received mixed reviews from television critics .

TV Fanatic writer C. Orlando enjoyed the episode , remarking " I love Once Upon a Time because it 's like a mini @- @ movie every week and I 'm completely enthralled by this intriguing other world filled with characters that feel familiar yet completely new . " He called the ending scene " heartbreaking . " IGN writer Amy Ratcliffe rated the episode 9 / 10 , giving particular praise to Jamie Dornan 's ability to be " magnetic in every scene . " Ratcliffe called his backstory her favorite fairytale of the series up to that point . Television Without Pity 's Cindy McLennan wished they had not killed Graham , but gave credit to the writers for making her care about him . She concluded , " Episodes like this give me strong hope for the second part of this season , one @- @ nighters and all

. Bring on the pain , boys . " She graded the episode with an A.

Blast Magazine columnist Christopher Peck was disappointed that the writers had not yet revealed the reason for the Evil Queen 's grudge , commenting , " If the thing that sticks out most about an episode of television is what I didn 't get out , that 's an ominous sign : a foreshadowing that the show has no goddamn clue where it 's headed . " He did however enjoy seeing Graham 's memories , calling them and the other series flashbacks " the freshest and most thrilling part of the show . " While describing Graham 's death as " heartbreaking , " Peck felt that it " completely nullifies any advancement the episode made . " He graded the episode with a C + .

Entertainment Weekly 's Shaunna Murphy was a little more critical of the episode , though she did call it " game @-@ changing . " Noting that it " felt rushed , " she " would have preferred a slow @-@ burning mystery spread out over several episodes over this dramatic , Nikki and Paulo @-@ style stand @-@ alone sendoff . " Murphy however concluded that Graham 's death was " one of the coolest sequences we 've seen so far on this show . " The A.V. Club columnist Oliver Sava graded " The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter " with a C. He also noted negative similarities to the television series Lost , explaining , " Remember when Jack , Sawyer , and Kate were stuck in the polar @-@ bear cages , and the plot just wandered in an aimless haze ? The time when a bunch of viewers started jumping off because the writers kept adding questions without ever giving answers ? What took Lost 44 episodes , OUAT has done in seven . " Unlike other reviewers , Sava called the ending a " frustrating conclusion , " and believed that " Horowitz and Kitsis [took] one step forward and two steps back with this development . "