

RELATIVE STRANGERS

PILOT EXCERPT

Written by

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EXT. ESTAB. HAMILTON COUNTY MENTAL HOSPITAL - LATE AFTERNOON

The hospital has a large sign out front bearing its name. The word "asylum" is painted over but still visible under it. The Garfields' minivan is parked outside.

INT. HAMILTON COUNTY MENTAL HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

The whole Garfield clan stands with Erik in the lobby. A clueless RECEPTIONIST sits at a desk in front of them. Scarlet is very slowly chewing gum and staring intently at herself in a mirror on the wall. It's kind of creepy.

ERIK

Please tell these people that Erik Garfield is still a patient here.

The receptionist looks over some papers.

RECEPTIONIST

Hmm... we don't have any Eriks here.

ERIK

(panicking)
Wait, what?

MA

Did you spell it right?

RECEPTIONIST

E-R-I-K?

ERIK

Yeah.

MA

No

Erik gives Ma a weird look.

MA

A-R-I-C.

ERIK

See?! I spell my name E-R-I... it doesn't matter.

The receptionist has been looking through the papers again.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, yeah, we got an Aric-with-an-A.

ERIK

Thank god.

RECEPTIONIST

But it says here he's been missing
since early this morning.

DOUG

(to Erik)

Told you, dick.

A wave of dread comes over Erik.

ERIK

This doesn't make any sense.

Everyone stares at Erik. Scarlet looks away from the mirror
and blows a bubble with her gum. Erik sighs in disbelief.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Maybe I am crazy.

MA

Honey, don't say that.

Everyone looks at her.

MA (CONT'D)

Well, of course he's crazy. I was
just trying to comfort the boy.

(to receptionist)

Do you have the admission
paperwork?

Driver steps forward.

DRIVER

Everybody wait.

Everyone waits. But it wasn't like they were really doing
much before.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

You know you're crazy?

ERIK

Um...

DRIVER

If you're crazy... and you know
you're crazy... then you ain't
really crazy, right?

Erik thinks about this.

ERIK

I'm not sure that *is* right.

Lizzie puts her arm around her husband.

LIZZIE
 (matter of fact)
 Driver is a scientist, Erik. Trust
 him.

ERIK
 (doubtfully)
 You're a scientist?

DOUG
 He's a chemistry-ist.

DRIVER
 (proudly)
 And a damn good one, too.
 Somebody's gotta check the milk pH
 at Roberts Dairy.

PA
 [Incredulous Korean]

MA
 What's he sayin' honey?

Scarlet saunters over.

SCARLET
 Pa says Daddy's gonna win the Nobel
 Prize for milk and take us on
 vacation to Uruguay with the money.

MA
 Aww.

Pa is clearly frustrated.

ERIK
 Okay. You all clearly know me, but
 I have no memory of ever being in
 this town before.

DRIVER
 But you know it's *weird* you ain't
 remember, so you ain't crazy!

MA
 And if you're not crazy, you can
 come back and live at the house!

They all turn to the receptionist. He shrugs.

RECEPTIONIST
Makes sense to me.

MA
So you'll let him come with us?

RECEPTIONIST
I mean, I just work here, but sure.

Erik looks back and forth between the receptionist and the Garfields. He can't believe it's going to be this easy.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Oh, uh, I need to check you out of the system or whatever. What's your name?

Erik gives him a look that says, "you know this."

ERIK
Erik...
(he pauses, then)
Garfield.

RECEPTIONIST
A or E?

Erik thinks about this for a moment. The family stares at him expectantly.

ERIK
A.

Ma smiles at Erik, relieved.

MA
Let's go home, Erik.

Ma takes him by the arm and they walk out to the van.