

I AM NORMAL

Written by

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Inspired by the Rosenhan experiment in 1973

1

BLACK SCREEN

1

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BEGIN OPENING CREDITS

NURSE FERGUSON (O.S.)
Medication time!

BLACK SCREEN READS: I AM NORMAL (R is upside down)

2

INT. PSYCH WARD. NURSES' STATION - DAY

2

All we SEE is a small fish barely moving in a tank which is locked in a cage. It sits on the little desk in the nurses' station in an all-women's psych ward. Five FEMALE PATIENTS are gathered together in front of the window where NURSE FERGUSON (Female, 40) distributes the meds. KEIRA (Female, 28) stands last in line. She is dressed in beige sweat pants and dark green T-shirt. The Nurse calls out patients' names.

NURSE FERGUSON

Cara!

Nobody moves from the line.

NURSE FERGUSON (CONT'D)
CARA LANE! Don't make me come and get you.

Keira realizes that it's her "fake name" and gives an apologetic look. She comes closer to the window. She reluctantly takes 2 small white cups from Nurse Ferguson: one with the pills, another one with water. Nurse Ferguson watches her swallow the pills. Keira opens her mouth showing there's nothing there. The Nurse gives the gesture as "you're done - move along". Keira doesn't budge.

KEIRA

Can I talk to Dr. Larsen? It's very important.

Nurse Ferguson looks annoyed by the question.

NURSE FERGUSON

What's so important that you can't discuss it with me?

KEIRA

I really need to talk about my condition. With HIM.

Nurse Ferguson rolls her eyes at Keira.

3 INT. PSYCH WARD. BATHROOM - DAY

3

Keira stands behind the closed door of the restroom stall. She spits out the pills and flushes them down the toilet. She walks out of the stall towards the sink, turns on the water, washes her mouth and face, and looks at herself in the mirror for a couple of seconds. Then she washes her hands and as she washes her left wrist - it reveals a tattoo that says: NINA. She slightly scratches it.

4 INT. PSYCH WARD. DR LARSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

4

Keira sits in front of DR LARSEN (Male, 40, good-looking, wears glasses), who looks at her file. In the file it states: SCHIZOPHRENIA. Inside the folder there are a few papers and one picture: Keira's portrait. Next to the file, there is a book on the table: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

KEIRA

Like I said, I think it was a misunderstanding and a mistake on my part. I overacted. I haven't experienced any episodes anymore and I feel really well. I must've been overworked or something...

Keira smiles slightly. Dr Larsen nods along, keeps looking at Keira's file. Then takes off his glasses.

DR. LARSEN

I understand what you're saying. But the truth is, all patients feel a little better sometimes. It doesn't mean they are cured.

Nurse Ferguson enters the room without knocking. She holds a couple folders which she puts on the shelf where other folders are. She starts looking for a file. Keira is a little disturbed by her presence and continues speaking with The Doctor in a softer voice.

KEIRA

Of course. But I am very sure it was a one time thing and I should've never gone to the hospital.

DR. LARSEN

Cara, you have to accept the fact that you have a very serious disease. It's very unfortunate and sad, but it's true. As much as I'd love to, I can't discharge you. You have to stay in the facility and continue treatment until we are certain you actually ARE better.

KEIRA

No, no, no. You just don't get it! I'm not insane. I AM normal.

Nurse Ferguson scoffs after hearing this. She looks at Dr Larsen who slightly nods his head and points his thumb at the door. The Nurse comes up to Keira and grabs her under the elbow. Keira tries to resist.

KEIRA (CONT'D)

This is ridiculous! You want to call my family? Friends? Anyone? They will assure you I am perfectly fine..

Nurse Ferguson drags Keira out of Doctor's office and closes the door.

5

INT. PSYCH WARD. COMMON AREA - DAY

5

A typical hall of a mental institution in 1970. White bare walls, an old couch, and a few armchairs in the main area. An old TV with the news on. A couple of half dead plants on the windowsill. Two Female Patients - SARAH (50) and MORGAN (40) watch the TV. Sarah screams unintelligible remarks at the TV, Morgan looks spaced out and smokes a cigarette. There are two other patients nearby: LUCY (55) sits on a wheelchair and watches ROSE (45), who sits on the floor playing with the leaves. Keira sits on the armchair in front of another female patient, MARY (35) and she writes in her Notebook.

KEIRA

Thank you for sharing this, Mary.
It's terrifying.

Mary doesn't react, just puts her feet on the chair, her head on the knees and starts rocking. Nurse Ferguson enters the area, walks up to Mary and carefully places her hand on her shoulder.

NURSE FERGUSON

Are you alright, dear? You seem upset.

Keira keeps writing in the Notebook.

NOTEBOOK PAGE SAYS: Patients constantly experience:
NEGLIGENCE. DEHUMANIZATION. INVASION OF PRIVACY

As Keira finishes writing the word, "PRIVACY", Nurse Ferguson grabs her notebook.

NURSE FERGUSON (CONT'D)
(to Keira)
What are you writing in there?

KEIRA
Personal stuff. Why?

NURSE FERGUSON
Is there something that's bothering
you that we haven't discussed in
our meetings?

Keira seems disturbed and pulls her notebook from The Nurse.

KEIRA
No, nothing. I SAID - it's
personal. I believe we are allowed
to write a diary?

Nurse Ferguson releases her grip.

NURSE FERGUSON
Of course you are. However, if you
have something on your mind... We
are here to help.

Keira can't hold a grimace any longer and starts raising her voice as she talks.

KEIRA
Oh really? Ok then. How about the
fact that you are holding a
completely normal person inside
this nuthouse? I am not a schizo
and we both know it.

Female patients sitting on the couch become silent and listen to the conversation. The Nurse doesn't seem to like it.

NURSE FERGUSON
Denial is a part of the process.
It's ok that you disagree. But it
doesn't change the diagnosis.

KEIRA
Oh, is that so?

Keira suddenly jumps from the armchair - now she stands face to face to Nurse Ferguson. The Nurse naturally steps back, but Keira follows her. There`s almost no distance between them.

KEIRA (CONT'D)
What if I, all of a sudden, start
attacking people? Would you
diagnose me with Psychosis?

Keira grabs Nurse Ferguson by the back of her head.

KEIRA (CONT'D)
What does your little book say?

Nurse Ferguson looks very uncomfortable and tries to get out of Keira`s grip. She can`t.

NURSE FERGUSON
Drop it! Don`t make it worse.

Male Nurse, TAYLOR (40) appears in the common area.

TAYLOR
Is everything alright over there?

Nurse Ferguson gets out from Keira`s grip.

NURSE FERGUSON
(to Taylor)
Everything is fine.

Nurse Ferguson walks away from Keira. Keira looks like she won this little battle. As soon as the Nurse leaves the hall area, one of the female patients, Morgan, comes up to Keira.

MORGAN
Cara, right?

Keira nods.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
You`re not crazy.

KEIRA
What?

Morgan starts chuckling.

MORGAN
Oh please. What are you, a
journalist? We all figured, you`re
not insane.

Sarah starts nodding along. Keira can't believe what she hears.

KEIRA

Are you serious? How..how did you know?

MORGAN

Ah well... There are things.

Keira smiles as if she likes what she hears. Morgan looks at Keira with the obvious interest.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

So, why are you here?

CUT TO:

6

INT. ROSENHAN'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

6

Psychologist's office of 1970s. There is a framed family picture on the desk, a typewriter, a bunch of business cards that say: David Rosenhan, Psychology, PhD. On the wall - a black and white poster of John Lennon saying: "The more real you get, the more unreal the world gets." Keira sits on a couch, clearly waiting for someone. She nervously tries to dissolve the sugar cube in her cup of tea, poking it with a tea spoon. The door opens, ROSENHAN (Male, 50) walks in carrying a briefcase. He barely holds a smile.

ROSENHAN

Good news!

He slams the door behind him, drops the briefcase on the couch in front of Keira and sits down. Keira looks intrigued.

ROSENHAN (CONT'D)

You have no history of mental illness, no health issues. And after all the research, I must say, Keira, you'll be perfect for my experiment. You are very normal.

KEIRA

Well that is GREAT news!

Keira and Rosenhan chuckle on the "normal" comment.

ROSENHAN

And you still do Social Work for Hospice, right?

KEIRA

Yes, but don't worry, I told them I need to take some time off.

Rosenhan grabs a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, offers one to Keira. She refuses. Rosenhan then lights up a cigarette and starts smoking.

ROSENHAN

Great! So we have people from different backgrounds. All going to psych wards throughout the country. Now let's repeat what you're going to say when you get to yours.

KEIRA

I'll tell them that I've been hearing voices that are often unclear but seem to pronounce words: thud, empty, hollow. Apart from falsifying symptoms, my name and employment, no other pretenses should be made. But... Aren't they going to immediately figure out that I'm sane?

ROSENHAN

That's what the experiment's for. If anything, you know what number to call. But worst case I'm expecting all of you out in couple days.

CUT TO:

7 INT. PSYCH WARD. COMMON AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS 7

Dead silence. All patients were very involved into the story.

MORGAN

And now you're stuck here with us!

Sarah and Morgan giggle loudly. Keira chuckles a little. Then she notices that Rose is playing with a bunch of old orange-yellow leaves on the floor. The composition vaguely reminds the shape of a coat.

8 EXT. PSYCH WARD. ENTRANCE - DAY 8

Keira and her fiancé DAVID (Male, 33, Handsome) walk outside the hospital towards the garden on the territory, holding hands.

Please, fill out the Contact Form to read the full script.