

= Stranger in a Strange Land (Lost) =

" Stranger in a Strange Land " is the ninth episode of the third season of the American drama television series Lost , and the show 's 58th episode overall . The episode was written by Elizabeth Sarnoff and Christina M. Kim , and directed by Paris Barclay . It first aired in the United States on February 21 , 2007 , on ABC .

In the episode , Kate Austen (Evangeline Lilly) , Karl (Blake Bashoff) , and James " Sawyer " Ford (Josh Holloway) continue to journey back to the beach camp , while Jack Shephard (Matthew Fox) and Alex (Tania Raymonde) must save Juliet Burke (Elizabeth Mitchell) from execution . Flashbacks reveal the origin of Jack 's tattoos .

= = Plot = =

In flashbacks , Jack is in Phuket , Thailand , where he meets a local woman named Achara (Bai Ling) ; the two soon enter into a relationship . After finding out that she works in a tattoo parlor and claims to be able to see who people really are , Jack demands that she give him a tattoo . Achara is hesitant to give him a tattoo , but she does so anyway and tells him there will be consequences . The next morning , he is beaten up by her brother and other locals and told to leave .

Sawyer and Kate begin the episode on Alex 's canoe with an unconscious Karl , paddling away from the Hydra island . Kate suggests returning for Jack ; however , Sawyer refuses . Kate and Sawyer land on the main island and question Karl about the Others . Karl reveals that the Others work on the Hydra island , but live on the main island . The next morning , Sawyer finds Karl crying in the jungle . Karl says that he is crying because he misses Alex . Sawyer asks Karl if he is in love , which Karl affirms to be true . Sawyer tells him that love is worth the risks of getting caught by the Others and lets Karl go into the jungle to find Alex .

Jack is put into the bear cage , and notices a handcuffed Juliet being led to his old prison . She visits him later and asks Jack to treat Ben 's back , which has become infected following the surgery , but Jack refuses . She also explains that she is in trouble with the Others for killing Pickett . Later , Isabel (Diana Scarwid) , the Others ' " sheriff , " arrives at the cage and discusses Jack 's tattoo with him , as she can read the Chinese . Isabel brings him to a room where Juliet is being held and asks him whether Juliet told him to kill Ben or not . Jack lies and says she did not and is brought back to his cage . Once back , he is visited by Cindy Chandler (Kimberley Joseph) and the previously kidnapped members of the tail @-@ section . Cindy starts to ask Jack questions , saying they are here to " watch " , but he angrily sends her away . Alex visits Jack later and tells him that the Others are planning to execute Juliet . Alex helps him escape from his cage , and they go to Ben Linus (Michael Emerson) , who writes a note , sparing Juliet , in return for Jack 's continuing to be Ben 's doctor . The two then go to a trial the Others are holding for Juliet , and Alex gives Isabel Ben 's note , which says Juliet is not to be executed , but is to be marked instead (with a branded symbol at the base of her spine) . When Juliet later asks Jack why he helped her , he replies that it is because Ben said he would let both of them off the island and he wants to make that happen by working together . At the end of the episode , Jack and the Others travel back to the main island on a boat . Just before leaving , Isabel translates Jack 's tattoo , " He walks amongst us , but he is not one of us " . Jack replies , " That 's what they say , that 's not what they mean . "

= = Production = =

" Stranger in a Strange Land " was the first episode of the series directed by Paris Barclay . Barclay had previously won two Emmy Awards for directing episodes of NYPD Blue . The episode was written by Elizabeth Sarnoff and Christina M. Kim , the pair had previously worked together on the second season episodes " The Hunting Party " , " The Whole Truth " , and " Two for the Road " .

Although Jack had tattoos on his arm the entire series , their origin had never been explained . Matthew Fox received the tattoos before Lost was even created . The producers considered putting make @-@ up over them , but instead , decided just to keep them and fit it in with the plot .

According to Assistant Professor Xinping Zhu of Northeastern University , the tattoo is made up of four Chinese characters from a poem written by Mao Zedong in 1925 . Fox 's tattoo translates to " Eagles high up , cleaving the space " . (In this episode however , one of " the Others " tells Jack that his tattoo translates as : " He walks among us , but he is not one of us . " Jack replies , " That 's what they say , that 's not what they mean . ") The number 5 can also be seen on Fox 's forearm ; he got that tattoo while working on Party of Five , along with another cast member . In an interview , Fox said that for him , getting a tattoo was a " pretty intense experience " , and something he would not do in the " spur of the moment " . He thought Jack having tattoos was a " really cool idea " . Since Fox used tattoos to represent memories or meaningful events in his life , the writers took a similar approach when dealing with Jack 's tattoos .

" Stranger in a Strange Land " was shot in various places on the island of Oahu . The scenes with Kate , Sawyer , and Karl on the canoe were shot in Kane 'ohe Bay , while the flashback beach scenes were filmed on Waimanalo Beach . The shots of Jack in a cage were done in Oahu 's Paradise Park . The Other 's tank and operating room are located in a film studio on the island . Bai Ling , who played Achara , recalled that when shooting the sex scene between her character and Jack , she was " kind of nervous " because she did not know Fox very well . Ling recalls that " we (she and Fox) both had a mutual understanding to just go for it . Sometimes I 'm on top of him , sometimes he 's on top of me . "

= = Reception = =

" Stranger in a Strange Land " was watched by 12 @. @ 95 million Americans , ranking Lost as the 21st most watched program of the week . This was an increase in viewers from the previous episode , making Lost the number one scripted television series in the adults 18 @-@ 49 category for the third consecutive week . The episode garnered more viewers than other television series ' showing at the same time on other networks , including Criminal Minds and CSI : NY . The ratings , however , were a decrease compared to the same time the previous year , when the episode " One of Them " garnered 18 @. @ 20 million Americans .

" Stranger in a Strange Land " garnered many negative reviews from critics . Chris Carabott , a writer for IGN , wrote that " the episode was " nothing more than a transition episode " . Carabott felt that although it was " a necessary evil in episodic television like Lost " , it did not " excuse the poor execution and uninteresting story " . IGN later chose it as the worst episode of the series , describing it as " pointless and boring " . Cinemablend.com 's Josh Spiegel claimed that the episode " was the first rough patch of an otherwise very good third season . " Spiegel went on to write that although previews for " Stranger in a Strange Land " promised that three questions would be answered , they were not the mysteries he had been worried about . Mac Slocum of Filmfodder.com was upset about the " overblown marketing " which failed to deliver the answers that he wanted .

" Stranger in a Strange Land " is widely considered amongst Lost fans as the worst episode of the series , and was even recognized as such by show runner Damon Lindelof in an interview . It was part of the inspiration to set an end date for the series .