

# **Exit Interview**

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## EXIT INTERVIEW

### CAST

Wally Langdon -- 30s -- very sharp dresser, charismatic, handsome

Andy Burns -- 60s -- disheveled, sad

Erin Flynn -- 30s -- all business, attractive

### SETTING

Here and now.

## EXIT INTERVIEW

*In the dark, we hear...*

ERIN: Everyone quiet! Transmission begins in 5...4...3....

*Two seconds pass, and then the music begins.*

*Lights up on a couch and an armchair, alluding to a living room. Furniture is worn and screams lower-middle class, circa 2019. A small, futuristic-looking device sits on the coffee table in front of the couch, glowing faintly. There is a framed picture nearby too.*

*On the couch is WALLY LANGDON -- 30s, handsome, dressed impeccably in a suit, a gentle smile on his face. In the armchair is ANDY BURNS -- 60s, disheveled, and looking excitedly nervous.*

WALLY: *(To audience.)* Hello, and welcome to “Exit Interview.” I’m your host, Wally Langdon. Our guest today is Andy Burns. *(Indicating device.)* Say hi to our viewers, Andy.

ANDY: *(Leans towards glowing device on table.)* Um, hello there!

WALLY: That’s ok, Andy, no need to lean into it. That device will capture your every sound and movement from anywhere in this room.

ANDY: No kidding? What will they think of next!

WALLY: I’d love to tell you, but then, of course, I’d have to kill you. *(Beat.)* I’m just kidding! I want to talk about you. Andrew James Burns, husband, father, retired car salesman.

ANDY: Only one of which I was good at.

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WALLY: What if I told you that after this show, you might be able to do something about the other two?

ANDY: How do ya' figure?

WALLY: I'm going to ask you some questions that will give you a whole new lease on life!

ANDY: That's quite the sales pitch, and trust me, I know a good one when I hear it. I wasn't salesman of the month several times for nothing! But to extend your metaphor a bit further, I believe my lease is up, and I've done so much damage that the dealership doesn't want it back.

WALLY: But that's your past. Your future is still undecided.

ANDY: Even if it weren't, there's nothing special about me. Who'd want to listen to an average schlub like yours truly answer questions?

WALLY: It's just *because* you're an average schlub, as you call it, that people will listen. Audiences are tired of hearing about the first-world problems of celebrities, but their next-door neighbor? Someone who they can relate to? Now that's juicy!

ANDY: Hmm. This show of yours -- "Exit Interview" -- I can't say I've heard of it before, and all I do is watch TV these days!

WALLY: That's because we haven't aired any episodes yet! But when we do, we will be the most-watched program in the world!

ANDY: A tad confident, eh?

WALLY: Think about it as your 10 minutes of fame!

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ANDY: I thought it was 15?

WALLY: Used to be. Attention spans have gotten a lot shorter.

ANDY: Ain't that the truth? (*Thinks.*) Well, one time I had this customer--

WALLY: I'm sure that's a wonderful story you're about to tell, but it works better if you let the host ask the questions. Or rather, question. We only have one.

ANDY: Right. Of course. And you said I'll get 250k for answering this question of yours?

WALLY: In cash, no less!

ANDY: Must be quite the question then. Alright. Do your worst.

WALLY: How do you imagine you will die?

ANDY: Excuse me?

WALLY: Haven't you thought about your death before?

ANDY: Well. Yeah. Of course. Who hasn't? It's just kind of bizarre being asked about it outta the blue like that. What kind of show is this?

WALLY: Andy, I feel like we know each other well enough by now for me to be honest with you. The truth is, I'm from the future. How this program works is, I visit people in my past and interview them 24 hours prior to their death. For you, that time is now. And before you ask, I'm not at liberty to discuss how you will die. In fact, my producers don't even tell me, in case I slip up and let it out in a moment of weakness.

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*There is a pause as ANDY takes this all in. Then, he bursts out laughing.*

ANDY: Oh man! You got me good! Where'd you park the DeLorean? Did Richie put you up to this? He's always been good at practical jokes, but this one--

WALLY: I'm afraid--

ANDY: A little dark, but that's Richie for ya. I gotta give him a call...

WALLY: Now, hold the phone, Andy. I see that it's going to take some convincing. In this next segment of our show, we provide you with evidence of your impending demise. Perhaps it will change your mind.

*WALLY presses a button on the device, and behind them, on the back wall, an image displays. It is of a funeral, taken at a bit of a distance.*

ANDY: What is this? What am I looking at? Is that...a funeral?

WALLY: It is indeed.

ANDY: Well, that's unfortunate, but what's it got to do with me?

WALLY: Look closely.

ANDY: Am I supposed to know this person or something?

WALLY: I would say so.

ANDY: Whose funeral is it?

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WALLY: Why, yours, of course.

ANDY: Mine? Ha! Wow, you guys sure are committed to this whole ruse! From this distance, it could be anyone's funeral. It could be staged!

WALLY: Let's take a closer look.

*The image zooms in, sharpens, to reveal a woman in her early-thirties.*

WALLY: Do you recognize her, Andy?

ANDY: *(More to himself.)* Gracie. *(Moving closer to the image.)* That's my Grace.

WALLY: *(Like Ed McMahon.)* You are correct, sir!

ANDY: This can't be her mother's funeral because I'm not there. Must be someone on Todd's side, or ...

*The image readjusts to show the handbill she's holding that says "Andrew Burns."*

ANDY: Stuff like that can be done with computers! *(Addressing unseen people off-camera)* You people think making someone believe they're going to die is funny? You're sick.

WALLY: I can imagine this news upsets you--

ANDY: You know, I once saw a TV show where the point of it was to break up marriages by revealing secrets about each person. Can you believe it? I thought that was disgusting, but this takes the cake!

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WALLY: Andy, do you truly feel this show is like that one?

ANDY: (*Thinking, but not able to come up with any ideas.*) I honestly don't know. (*Looking back at image.*) Who's that little boy with Gracie?

WALLY: That's Paul. Your grandson.

ANDY: Good try, pal. You almost had me. Gracie doesn't have a son, so the joke's on you.

WALLY: But, Andy, you haven't spoken to her in five years. Since her mother's funeral.

ANDY: More like she hasn't spoken to me. Not like we had talked all that much even before then, ever since....

WALLY: Ever since you left your family.

ANDY: "Left my family"?! I didn't *leave*! I was still paying the bills on the house, wasn't I? Jesus! It was only for a couple of weeks. I needed a break! I needed some attention, dammit! (*Beat.*) I see what you're doing here.

WALLY: And what's that?

ANDY: You're making me relive my past so that I feel like a shit, and hoping the guilt gets so bad I off myself, meeting your 24 hour prediction. Is that it? Man, I thought I'd heard it all! Not murder, is it, if you talk someone into killing themselves!



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WALLY: Whoa, whoa, whoa! Maybe you're right. Perhaps you aren't who we should be talking to. We're doing *you* a service. Being accused of assisted murder, well....that's a new one, even for me. *(To off-camera.)* Let's pack it up, folks.

*WALLY grabs device and starts to exit, lights change. ANDY thinks a moment.*

ANDY: Wait a minute, what do you mean, you're doing me a service? I don't see any good coming from telling a guy he's gonna kick the bucket in the next 24 hours.

*WALLY stops and turns around.*

WALLY: Andy, how many people are afforded the luxury of knowing the exact hour of their death? I'll tell you. Not many. "Exit Interview" allows a very select group of people, of which you are now a part, to spend their last day on Earth doing something they always wanted to do, thanks to the generous donation by our sponsors.

ANDY: Even if that's true. What could I possibly do in the next day to change my life? I wouldn't even know how to spend that much money so quickly.

WALLY: I hope I'm not being too forward here, but maybe you could patch things up with Grace.

ANDY: She said she never wanted to talk to me again.

WALLY: If there's one thing I've learned about humanity from doing this show, Andy, it's that people have an incredible capacity for forgiveness.

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ANDY: You know what the last thing Gracie said to me was? “You died for me twenty years ago.”

WALLY: Ouch.

ANDY: Yeah. Big time ouch. *(Beat.)* Let me ask you a question now. If you guys know when a person is going to die, why do you wait until the day before? Why not tell me last week? Or even when I’m a kid? You know, so I can do something about it!

WALLY: The short answer? Better ratings. More drama.

ANDY: It all comes down to the almighty dollar, even in your time, huh?

WALLY: Speaking of time, ours is limited, Andy, so let’s return to why I’m here, shall we?

*WALLY sets device back down, lights return to “show mode.”*

WALLY: What are you thinking of now?

ANDY: I’m really a grandfather? And his name is Paul?

*WALLY nods.*

ANDY: She named him after her mother. Paula. That’s nice. *(Beat.)* Maybe she’ll name her next one after me.

WALLY: You could ask her yourself.

ANDY: Well...*(Thinks for a moment.)* I think I have her phone number here somewhere.

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WALLY: No need to call her. She has been listening to this whole interview.

ANDY: Wh-what? Can I see her?

WALLY: That's her decision. You see, in our final segment of the show, we give you one minute to talk directly to her. If she likes what she hears, she'll walk through that front door.

ANDY: Ok. Well. What do I say?

WALLY: Whatever is the truth. Speak from the heart. Viewers love schmaltz.

ANDY: Let's see. *(Gathers himself.)* Gracie, it's your father. Right, you know that already.

*Looks at WALLY, not sure what to say.*

WALLY: Tell a story. Audiences love stories.

ANDY: *(Resuming his direct address.)* When you were born, I was in the delivery room. You were a difficult birth, but then, there you were. And right away, you and I locked eyes. I fell in love with those big, brown eyes the moment I first saw them. It felt like you could see into my soul. You had my number from day one. It was a little scary, honestly, but I told myself I would be the best father ever. Well, we all know how that went.

*WALLY gives a wrap-up gesture.*

ANDY: A friend recently told me that people are generally forgiving. And if I'm going to...die...well, maybe you can look into my eyes again like you did so many times before, and see how sorry I am, and forgive me. I never

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meant to hurt you. I love you, that's never changed. (To WALLY.) That's all, I guess.

WALLY: Terrific. I've been doing this for a long time, but that was one of the best confessional moments I've seen yet. And now, we see if Grace, who has been watching this whole interview, will come through that door!

*They both look at the front door, expectantly. Nothing happens.*

WALLY: I'm sorry, Andy.

ANDY: That's alright. I assumed as much.

WALLY: But hopefully the money will at least cushion the blow a little.

ANDY: (*Getting an idea.*) What if I let you keep your money? Maybe it can be avoided? My dying, I mean. Is that what this is? A psychological test of some sort?

WALLY: Bargaining is a normal response, Andy, but I'm afraid that death doesn't work like that. I've learned that, too.

ANDY: And you're sure you know it's me? I mean, there must be other Andrew James Burns'. It's not that uncommon a name.

*WALLY places his hand on ANDY'S shoulder.*

ANDY: So, what happens now?

WALLY: Well, we go back to our time, research our next guest, and you...Go out to the nicest restaurant in town! Hire a woman of the night, for Chrissake's! Enjoy this!

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*ERIN runs on with briefcase.*

WALLY: Thank you for your time, Andy. And good luck.

*WALLY shakes his hand, and exits.*

*Lights change. WALLY is now outside with his producer, ERIN. ANDY is still seen in semi-darkness, going back to his chair, opening briefcase, thinking.*

ERIN: Bravo! I think that was your best show yet. Nice save with that murder thing there, by the way. Man oh man-o-schevitz, that poor son of a bitch, finding out he's got a grandkid and buying the farm the next day. *(Beat.)* So, you wanna settle the bet?

WALLY: Sure. Falls down the stairs, breaks his neck.

ERIN: *(Removing envelope from pocket.)* Survey says...*(she opens it)* Heart attack. Damn. That's not very exciting. *(Gets an idea.)* In the tag, we can say that he "died of a broken heart." I'm brilliant! *(Notices WALLY isn't his usual gregarious self.)* What's the matter with you?

WALLY: Huh? Oh, nothing. Time travel just tuckers you out, I guess.

ERIN: Pfft. Right. Let me buy you a drink. To our continued success!

*WALLY looks back at the house, then exits with ERIN.*

*Back in the house, lights come back up to reveal ANDY. He is writing a note.*

ANDY: Dear Gracie. This is the money I received from that show I was on. I'd like you to have it. For Paul.

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*ANDY places the letter inside the briefcase, then goes back to his chair and sits. He picks up the remote control and we hear the sounds of the television.*

*After a few moments, there is a knocking at the front door. ANDY is somewhat startled out of his reverie, and rises. He says the following as he makes his way to the door.*

ANDY: *(calling out)* Is this where you say it was all a practical joke? I knew it. You guys are good but not that good. Predicting my death! Ha!

*ANDY opens the door and is frozen in place.*

ANDY: Gracie.

*Lights fade to black.*

*The End*