

THE INTERVIEW

A Play by Richard Ehrlich

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Structure

THE INTERVIEW unfolds in five continuous sections, moving from procedural formality to systematic constraint. Each section represents a stage in the interview process—and in Michael's growing understanding of what's actually happening.

SECTION I: Orientation

Michael arrives for what seems like a routine wellness review. Sara and David explain the process with warmth and reassurance. Everything is voluntary. Everything is helpful. The questions begin—gentle, reasonable, designed to put him at ease. Michael answers honestly, not yet understanding that honesty is being catalogued as evidence.

SECTION II: Clarification

Specific incidents are examined: the email to Barbara that went unanswered, the medical appointments that were missed, the withdrawal from the Heritage Society. Michael offers explanations—each one reasonable, each one true. But Sara and David aren't looking for explanations; they're looking for patterns. And the pattern is already forming: isolation, disengagement, decline. Each justification Michael provides becomes another data point supporting a conclusion he doesn't yet see.

SECTION III: Constraint

Michael learns how much they already know. His payment histories. His medical records. The surveillance that's been happening invisibly, systematically, legally. Financial monitoring. Health data cross-referencing. Concerned reports from friends and acquaintances. The scope of the system's reach becomes clear, and the room begins to feel smaller. Michael realizes this isn't an interview—it's an assessment that's already been completed. He's here to confirm what they've decided, not to contest it.

SECTION IV: Resistance

Michael tries every form of refusal available to him. Logical argument: his choices are his own. Principle: privacy matters. Anger: this is intrusive and wrong. Silence: refusing to participate. None of it works. Sara and David remain calm, procedurally kind, inexorable. They acknowledge his feelings. They validate his frustration. They continue the process. The recommendation is already forming, and Michael's resistance only confirms their concern. Opposition becomes evidence of impaired judgment.

SECTION V: Reclassification

Supported Autonomy is implemented. Weekly check-ins with a community advocate. Financial monitoring to ensure bills are paid responsibly. Regular wellness calls to confirm he's managing. Michael retains his home, his routines, his choices—he just has to prove he's managing them responsibly. It's presented as support, not supervision. As care, not control. Michael is told he's lucky: many people don't qualify for Supported Autonomy and require more intensive intervention.

The interview concludes. Sara and David are warm, encouraging. They'll see him next Tuesday at two. Someone will be in touch about the account monitoring setup. Michael leaves with everything intact—his apartment, his independence, his daily life—except now he has to justify it. Indefinitely. To people who've decided he needs their help.

The play ends where it began: in an institutional room, with Michael across a table from people who care about him whether he wants them to or not.

Technical Notes

The play is designed to be performed in real time or near-real time, with minimal scene breaks. The single set—an institutional interview room—should feel both ordinary and claustrophobic. Lighting should be fluorescent, institutional, unchanging. The effect should be naturalistic, not heightened. This is a routine procedure, happening in rooms like this every day.

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