

= George O 'Malley =

George O 'Malley is a fictional character from the medical drama television series Grey 's Anatomy , which airs on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in the United States . The character was created by series producer Shonda Rhimes , and was portrayed by actor T. R. Knight from 2005 to 2009 . Introduced as a surgical intern at the fictional Seattle Grace Hospital , O 'Malley worked his way up to resident level , while his relationships with his colleagues Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) , Cristina Yang (Sandra Oh) , Izzie Stevens (Katherine Heigl) and Alex Karev (Justin Chambers) formed a focal point of the series . O 'Malley married and divorced Callie Torres (Sara Ramirez) , and also entertained romantic correlations with Meredith , Izzie Stevens , and Olivia Harper (Sarah Utterback) .

Knight auditioned for the show , expecting a one @-@ season run . In 2007 , Knight 's co @-@ star Isaiah Washington (Preston Burke) insulted him with a homophobic slur , which resulted in the termination of Washington 's Grey 's Anatomy contract . In 2009 , after the conclusion of the fifth season , it was confirmed that Knight would not be returning for the show 's sixth season . The actor stated the reason for his departure was due to a " breakdown in communication " with Rhimes , his character 's lack of screen time , as well as his decision to come out as openly gay . Knight received generally positive reviews for his performance as O 'Malley , and garnered a nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series at the 59th Primetime Emmy Awards . Despite this , his death received mixed feedback .

= = Storylines = =

George O 'Malley is introduced as a fellow surgical intern to Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) , Cristina Yang (Sandra Oh) , Izzie Stevens (Katherine Heigl) and Alex Karev (Justin Chambers) ; the five of them working under Miranda Bailey (Chandra Wilson) . O 'Malley and Stevens move in with Meredith , for whom he has romantic feelings . On the first day of internship , O 'Malley is selected by chief of cardiothoracic surgery Preston Burke (Isaiah Washington) as the first intern to perform surgery . He freezes in the operating room , and is mocked by his peers , and earns the nickname " 007 " because of almost killing a patient in such a simple operation (referring to James Bond 's " licence to kill ") . O 'Malley dates nurse Olivia Harper (Sarah Utterback) , breaking up with her when he contracts syphilis from her , which she in turn contracted from Karev . His friendship with Karev is further strained when the two become trapped in an elevator with a patient who begins to bleed out . Karev freezes , and O 'Malley is able to save the patient single @-@ handedly . He goes on to admit his feelings to Meredith , and the two have a one @-@ night stand . When Meredith tells him that sleeping together was a mistake , O 'Malley begins avoiding her and starts dating orthopedic surgeon Callie Torres (Sara Ramirez) .

During a camping trip , O 'Malley learns that Torres has slept with chief of plastic surgery Mark Sloan (Eric Dane) , and also discovers that Burke is experiencing tremors in his hand . When O 'Malley 's father is diagnosed with esophageal cancer and a leaking aortic valve , he refuses to allow Burke to operate on him , instead contacting Erica Hahn (Brooke Smith) , Burke 's medical school rival . His relationship with Torres is strained when he confronts her about sleeping with Sloan , but he allows her to support him through his father 's deteriorating health . Complications from his father 's surgery leave him in multi @-@ system organ failure , and his life support is turned off . In an attempt to overcome his grief , O 'Malley elopes with Callie to Las Vegas . He later begins to feel that he was mistaken to marry her , and sleeps with Stevens while intoxicated . Stevens confesses that she is in love with him , so O 'Malley considers transferring to a different hospital so he can be faithful to his wife . However , he is ineligible to transfer after failing the intern exams . O 'Malley decides to repeat his intern year , and confesses to Torres that he slept with Stevens , leading the two to divorce . O 'Malley and Stevens embark on a short @-@ lived relationship , only to discover there is no real chemistry between them .

O 'Malley moves in with new intern Lexie Grey (Chyler Leigh) , Meredith 's half @-@ sister . Lexie and O 'Malley discover that he only failed his exam by a single point , leading him to confront

Richard Webber (James Pickens , Jr .) , the chief of surgery , to ask for a chance to retake the exam . He passes the second attempt , and begins to distance himself from Lexie , who has fallen in love with him . O 'Malley supports Stevens when she discovers she has melanoma , and walks her down the aisle as she marries Karev . O 'Malley begins to display a talent for trauma surgery , and is told by the chief of trauma surgery Owen Hunt (Kevin McKidd) that it is definitely his specialty . He then abruptly and inexplicably decides to join the United States army . While his friends at the hospital prepare an intervention to convince O 'Malley to stay , they all work on a severely disfigured John Doe , brought in after a horrible bus accident , in which he pushed a woman out of the way and saved her life . When Meredith goes to check on John Doe , he seems to recognize her and will not let go of her hand . After several attempts at trying , he succeeds in tracing " 007 " on Meredith 's hand . Shocked , she realizes " John Doe " is in fact O 'Malley . She informs the other surgeons and they rush him to surgery . However , he flatlines and is ultimately declared braindead . His organs are donated after Stevens confirms that is what O 'Malley would have wanted , and he is buried a week later .

= = Development = =

= = = Casting and creation = = =

T. R. Knight signed on for the pilot as O 'Malley , expecting that the role might be short @-@ lived , because he liked that the character was multi @-@ faceted . In October 2006 , news reports surfaced that Washington had insulted Knight with a homophobic slur , during an argument with Patrick Dempsey (Derek Shepherd) . Shortly after , the details of the argument became public , and Knight later disclosed that the slur made him come out as gay . " I was under no delusions , " Knight said at the time . " My friends on the set knew . We talked about it . Publicly it 's not my thing to call up People magazine and be like , ' Hey , you want to know something about me ? ' ... I could 've just let it slide and not said anything , but it became important . It became important to make the statement . " The situation seemed somewhat resolved when Washington issued a statement , apologizing for his " unfortunate use of words during the recent incident on @-@ set " .

At the 64th Golden Globe Awards , while being interviewed on the red carpet , Washington joked , " I love gay . I wanted to be gay . Please let me be gay . " Later , Washington claimed he never used the slur , labeling it " vile " . In June 2007 , it was reported that the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and Shonda Rhimes had chosen not to renew Washington 's contract with the show , not immediately specifying a reason . In a subsequent interview , Washington claimed that " they fired the wrong guy " (referring to Knight) , and said he was considering filing a lawsuit as a result . He accused Knight of using the controversy to bolster his own career and increase his salary on Grey 's Anatomy .

On July 2 , 2007 , Washington appeared on Larry King Live , to present his side of the controversy . According to Washington , he never used the " F Word " in reference to Knight , but rather blurted it out in an unrelated context in the course of an argument " provoked " by Dempsey , who he felt was treating him like a " B @-@ word " , a " P @-@ word " , and the " F @-@ word " , which Washington said conveyed " somebody who is being weak and afraid to fight back " . In 2009 , Rhimes told Entertainment Weekly that she may not have handled the incident correctly , stating : " I wasn 't interested in what anybody thought publicly . I was interested in what was going on right here on the ground ... with the people I work with every day . Did I do it perfectly ? Of course not . This is my first television show . It was a learning experience . " Knight said that Rhimes was among those for discouraging him to come out , however Rhimes said : " I remember saying [to fellow executive producer] , ' This is our proudest day here . T.R. got to come out and I got to say to him that it wouldn 't affect his character ' because he was concerned he was going to come out and George would suddenly be gay . [...] The idea that a gay actor can 't play a straight man is insulting . "

In December 2008 , reports speculated that Knight requested to be released from his contract and that " they were working out the details " at that time . In June 2009 , after the conclusion of the fifth

season of Grey 's Anatomy , it was confirmed that Knight would not be returning for the show 's sixth season . The actor stated the reason for his departure was due to a " breakdown in communication " with Rhimes , O 'Malley 's lack of screen time , as well as his decision to be openly gay . Prior to the official announcement of his departure , there was speculation that the role of O 'Malley would be recast , but Rhimes labeled it as a " hilarious , ridiculous rumor " . After the confirmation of his exit , Knight told TV Guide : " Leaving Grey 's Anatomy was not an easy decision for me to make . I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to play this character and will miss my fellow cast and crew very much . I continue to wish them the very best , and wholeheartedly thank all of the fans who have supported me and the show with such passion and enthusiasm . " In a statement confirming Knight 's departure , Rhimes said : " I think I speak for the entire Grey 's Anatomy family when I say we wish T.R. Knight the best in his future endeavors . He is an incredibly talented actor and a person whose strength of character is admired by all of us . "

In an interview with Entertainment Weekly , Rhimes said she tried to talk him out of quitting , explaining : " I looked in his face and he was really sure . It felt like the right thing for him . " However , in another interview , Knight said of his exit : " My five @-@ year experience proved to me that I could not trust any answer that was given [about O 'Malley] . " Knight was " at peace " with his departure , saying : " There just comes a time when it 's so clear that moving on is the best decision . " However , Heigl tried to talk Knight out of leaving , saying : " I didn 't think it was the right decision . I felt like some of the problems could be worked through . But by the time it came to fruition , I was [glad] for him because he was ready to go . " On the topic of losing a US \$ 14 million contract , Knight commented : " From an outsider 's perspective , I get the [impression that] ' He 's just a spoiled actor , he doesn 't know how good he has it . ' There are a lot of people who would like to be in my position . But in the end , I need to be fulfilled in my work . "

= = = Characterization = = =

O 'Malley was characterized a " hapless naif " . On the topic of O 'Malley 's longtime crush on Meredith in the second season , Knight said : " What 's going to be very interesting to see is what he 's going to do with Meredith . It 's getting close to time . Whatever he chooses to do will inform who he is the rest of his life . " After their sexual encounter occurred onscreen , Knight said in an interview with Maureen Ryan of the Chicago Tribune : " George wasn 't really paying full attention . He was letting his own feelings override his respect for Meredith . A person really clued in would get that there wasn 't anything coming back , but he was so in his head about it and caught up in his own feelings that he wasn 't listening . It 's not just that he loves her ... it 's a kind of selfish love he had for her . " He also added that , " I think George has a lot of growing up to do . Part of that is making horrible , stupid mistakes . He 's been pretty sheltered . "

Series writer Stacy McKee said of the sexual encounter : " There 's no turning back . There 's nothing George and Meredith can do . The damage is done ? things will never be the same . They 've just changed something important in their lives forever . " When asked if O 'Malley was becoming more assertive , Knight said :

Knight also commented that the character does not appreciate himself and his positive traits . On the topic of O 'Malley performing open heart surgery in an elevator , Knight said : " It 's a slow change but he 's starting to realize , ' The way I have been doing things is not working . ' The big thing about the open @-@ heart surgery in the elevator was he was forced into it . He needs to be kind of kicked in the (butt) to do these things . "

Knight felt a parallel to George in that his " confidence isn 't always at its absolute highest " , but overall he sees more differences than similarities . However , when the actor starts to think he is so different from O 'Malley , an awkward move can suggest otherwise . " I was walking , doing a scene with Katherine Heigl . I finished my line with her , and then I walked straight into the light stand . " Critical of her affair with O 'Malley , Knight 's co @-@ star Heigl explained : " They really hurt somebody , and they didn 't seem to be taking a lot of responsibility for it . I have a really hard time with that kind of thing . I 'm maybe a little too black and white about it . " Speaking of O 'Malley 's relationship with Lexie , Rhimes offered her insight : " I love them as friends . They make good

friends . We all have that friend we met in school or the gym or somewhere ? we just hit it off right away . And right away there was no pretense or airs . Just pure honesty . That 's Lexie and George . They 're really good friends and I can see the friendship evolving into something even greater . " When asked what his " favorite George moment " was , Knight said his relationships with Stevens and Bailey .

= = Reception = =

Fans were " widely against " O 'Malley 's affair with Meredith in the second season , however certain fans who supported their relationship were critical when Torres was introduced as a love interest for him . Fans and critics were also against O 'Malley 's relationship with Stevens in the fourth season ; Maclean 's said : " George must die . He 's slept with virtually everyone except the male cast and has been in love with virtually everyone except the male cast . And he 's not that great of a doctor . Evolve or die . " Christopher Monfette of IGN said O 'Malley and Stevens were a " mismatch " , adding : " Unfortunately , while it 's refreshing to see a plotline driven by activity versus apathy , the idea of these two ever @-@ affable , best @-@ friend characters suddenly discovering their potential , out @-@ of @-@ nowhere love for each other quickly feels both force @-@ fed and emotionally @-@ incorrect . " Similarly , DVD Verdict stated that George and Izzie were " one of the strongest ' best friend ' vibes on television " for the first three seasons , explaining " they were perfect as friends [while] George and Callie made a good couple . " UGO.com put the two on their list of " Character Couples Who Should Have Never Happened " .

Jennifer Armstrong of Entertainment Weekly said that when O 'Malley told Torres about his affair with Stevens , the scene was too " melodramatic " . Laura Burrows , also of IGN , said that the fourth season premiere " introduced a new side of George " . Armstrong said of O 'Malley and Stevens ' reconciliation : " George and Izzie are finally on the old Grey 's Anatomy road to ruin . And I admit this is a good lesson in Grey 's viewing as well as life : Sit tight if you hate something , as nothing is permanent . " Armstrong also commented that the " sparkling " friendship development between Lexie and O 'Malley " won her over " . The following year , Monfette observed of O 'Malley 's lack of screen time : " His growing interest in trauma surgery at the side of Owen leads to an interesting development in the finale , but the character is virtually side @-@ lined this season . " Carina MacKenzie of the Los Angeles Times said of the character 's death : " The time @-@ lapse episode was an interesting choice , and though we sped through six weeks of mourning in two hours , it didn 't feel rushed to me . I 'm not sure the show could have held my attention for another season of crippling sadness . "

The Huffington Post 's Michael Pascua commented that O 'Malley 's funeral did not live up to his expectations , writing that it " wasn 't as sad as [he] thought it would be " . In 2006 , Knight and the other cast of Grey 's Anatomy were nominated for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series , at the 12th Screen Actors Guild Awards . Also in 2006 , the cast won the award for Best Cast ? Television Series at the 11th Satellite Awards . The cast won the award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series at the 13th Screen Actors Guild Awards , and were nominated again the following year . Knight 's performance in season three earned him a nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series at the 59th Primetime Emmy Awards .