

NEW LIFE

A comedy about Reincarnation

by Alex Acuff

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NEW LIFE

Cast of Characters

Tim: Male, laid back.

Sue: Female, hard working
business type.

Scene

An office at "New Life" Industries.

Time

Past, Present, and Future.

ACT ISCENE 1
"Choices"

(SUE is at her desk typing. Behind her, there is a large corporate sign reading "New Life Industries", showing some type of circular artwork featuring the gas clouds from space, humans, and a tree. TIM enters. He goes directly to the chair and sits.)

SUE.

Hello.

TIM.

Hi.

SUE.

Welcome to the new life program. My name is..
(adjusts name tag.)
Sorry about that.

TIM.

We meet again, Sue. What do we have this time?

SUE.

Have you been through before?

TIM.

You don't remember me?

SUE.

I want to say Tim?

TIM.

That's right.

SUE.

I'm sorry. It's been a long day. Well then, you should know all about this.

TIM.

Sure do.

SUE.

I'm sure you won't mind if I skip some of the logistics.

TIM.

The quicker the better.

SUE.

You know what's happening, right? Right. So, let's start out with the basics and then we'll get you going where you're going.

TIM.

Sounds good.

SUE.

So what name would you like to use next time?

TIM.

Uh...

SUE.

You can keep your current name, or for a small fee, we can give you a new one.

TIM.

I'll keep the one I got.

SUE.

Okay.

(typing.)

One moment.

TIM.

Can I be a girl this time?

SUE.

Sex change is a small fee.

TIM.

Eh, never mind.

SUE.

Okay, so let me see here. What's next? Ah-huh, that doesn't apply to you.

TIM.

What's that?

SUE.
Red-tape, you know? You know how it is.

TIM.
As long as my credits are good.

SUE.
You're fine...

TIM.
Good.

SUE.
Any specific country you'd like?

TIM.
Put me anywhere.

SUE.
Anywhere?

TIM.
I don't care where.

SUE.
Okay.

TIM.
Somewhere I've never been. China. Africa. I'm an open book.
Write whatever.

SUE.
Will do.

TIM.
I just want to get through this mess.

SUE.
I understand.

TIM.
I am curious how that would work with my name...

SUE.
Automatically translates usually.

Oh, that's neat. TIM.
Yeah... SUE.
Very nice. TIM.
Okay... SUE.
I like that. So, uh...is that it? TIM.
Couple more things for me to fill out. SUE.
They ever thought about putting windows in here? TIM.
I keep asking them. SUE.
Stuffy... TIM.
Yeah... SUE.
Not trying to complain so much. You must get that a lot. Do you get that a lot? TIM.
You're okay. SUE.
Just ready to get back in action. TIM.
I understand. SUE.
This time is going to be different than the rest. TIM.

SUE.
Oh, here we are.
(types.)
About your renewal policy...

TIM.
What about it?

SUE.
You're still on board for five more lives? Correct?

TIM.
Yeah, that's fine.

SUE.
Wanted to double check.

TIM.
Sure.

SUE.
So that should be everything.

TIM.
Awesome.

SUE.
Yup, that's everything.

TIM.
All done?

SUE.
Yes, just have to get your payment. So whenever you're ready, insert your card. Wait three seconds for the light to flash, sign with the pen, then pull out the card. If you'd like a refund, you can call the number on the back of your card. Our hours are—

TIM.
Wait, uh...just curious. What if I did want to change my subscription? My, uh, renewal whatever.

SUE.
Okay, uh, sure. It's simple. What would you like to change your policy to?

TIM.
What if I just wanted to get rid of it?

SUE.
Cancel?

TIM.
Hypothetically speaking.

SUE.
Well, there would be a significant reduction in your credits.

TIM.
Oh, uh...

SUE.
You would finish out your last term, then we would terminate your policy at the completion of your last life. If you have any more questions, there are some lovely brochures in the main lobby.

TIM.
No, no, I'm good.

SUE.
I can go get you one.

TIM.
I'll stick with what I got.

SUE.
Are you sure?

TIM.
Yeah.

SUE.
It's no problem.

TIM.
I was just curious. Exploring my options.

SUE.
I understand, sir.

TIM.
There's always next time, right?

SUE.
That's absolutely correct. You can change your policy any time during a transition between lives. Swipe your card if you're ready.

(TIM swipes his card. A loud buzzing noise.)

TIM.
Never heard that sound before...

SUE.
That's odd...

TIM.
What? What's odd? Did it not take my card?

SUE.
Do it again.

TIM.
Okay...

SUE.
These things can be wonky sometimes.

TIM.
There we go.

SUE.
Huh.

TIM.
What? What's *huh*?

SUE.
It's saying the same thing again. Your card declined due to lack of credits.

TIM.
That doesn't make sense...

SUE.
You can try again if you'd like.

TIM.
No, it's not me. It's gotta be you. Your system. I know I have the credits.

SUE.
Let me see here.
(*types like a machine.*)
Anything on your record?

TIM.
No, I'm spotless.

SUE.
Nothing?

TIM.
Not a scratch.

SUE.
Misdemeanors?

TIM.
Nope.

SUE.
Any murders?

TIM.
What? No!

SUE.
I have to ask...

TIM.
No, I have never murdered anybody. I've thought about it a few times. Does that count?

SUE.
That's no biggie.

TIM.
I'm telling you that I have the credits.

SUE.
Hold on...

TIM.
This must be a mistake.

SUE.
(smacking the side of her computer.)
Come on...

TIM.
Please tell me there's been a mistake.

SUE.
I'm not seeing anything.

TIM.
There has to have been...

SUE.
How many times have you been through? Total? Like more than fifty you think?

TIM.
Maybe, I don't know. I can't remember that far back.

SUE.
Let me pull up your history.

TIM.
Please do.

SUE.
I do apologize, sir. Whatever the problem, we'll get you sorted out in no time.

TIM.
There shouldn't be a problem. I have the credits.

SUE.
Here we go.

TIM.
What?

SUE.
That's what it is.

TIM.
What's what it is?

SUE.

They should have sent me an email about that.

TIM.

About what?

SUE.

You're a centennial. No biggie. That makes sense. This will be your hundredth life.

TIM.

So then...

SUE.

Hooray for you!

TIM.

What does that mean? Is this one free?

SUE.

No, uh, not quite.

TIM.

It doesn't cost more, does it?

SUE.

No, no, no. Basically, it means that you're going into another phase. But you should know all about that since you signed the papers agreeing to your policy, and all sub-requirements of that policy.

TIM.

The papers? That was ages ago.

SUE.

Did you read them?

TIM.

I skimmed...

SUE.

You're not familiar with the next phase agreement?

TIM.

Next phase? New life? What's with all the names?

SUE.

I'm not supposed to tell you this, but it's really just for branding. But anyway, the next phase is no big deal. It will require a transfer fee of up to ten credits, depending on the new Universe we send you to.

TIM.

Woah, uh...slow down. New Universe?

SUE.

Yes, the powers that be, for reasons unknown, determined long ago that a soul can only be reincarnated a hundred times in any given Universe.

TIM.

Sounds like bullshit.

SUE.

Yes, well...

TIM.

Who came up with that rule?

SUE.

The people above us.

TIM.

Then what's the purpose of going back? Why would...I'm not following...

SUE.

Would you like some time to think over your options?

TIM.

What other options are there?

SUE.

Well, there's the next phase or the void.

TIM.

What's the void?

SUE.

A dark abyss of absence, loneliness, and nothingness.

TIM.

I'm good on that.

SUE.

Then you'll go to the next phase.

TIM.

You said, uh, you said something about a credit fee. You're taking more of my credits? You just said that it wasn't going to cost more.

SUE.

It's a small processing fee.

TIM.

This is outrageous.

SUE.

I'm sorry that you feel that way, sir.

TIM.

I never agreed to this.

SUE.

You signed the papers.

TIM.

I didn't know about this!

SUE.

I can give you some time to look over your options.

TIM.

No, go ahead.

SUE.

Are you sure?

TIM.

Do whatever you have to do. Take more of my credits. Doesn't matter anyway. I'm not going to the void. Any where's better than here or there.

SUE.

Swipe your card whenever you're ready.

TIM.

You're sure this time?

Go ahead. SUE.

Unbelievable. TIM.

Wait three seconds for the light, then you can remove. SUE.

I know this isn't you, Sue, but come on. TIM.

If you have feedback, there are surveys you can fill out. Would you like one? SUE.

No thanks. TIM.

It was a pleasure doing business with you, Tim. SUE.

Hold on... TIM.
(*looks around.*)
You're not sending me to Hell, are you?

There's no such thing. SUE.

Yeah... TIM.

Just a myth. SUE.

(*leaving.*) TIM.
Sure. They make you tell me that, don't they? There's no hell. Please. Then where did Hitler go?

South America. SUE.

I'll see you next time, Sue. TIM.

SUE.

Wait, one more thing!

TIM.

Too good to be true. Is this your first day?

SUE.

Sorry, my heads on backwards right now.

TIM.

One more...

SUE.

Right. Um, you have to pick your new home. Unless you'd like me to pick it randomly.

TIM.

A new Universe you said?

SUE.

Yes sir.

TIM.

Same basic concept thought, right?

SUE.

More or less.

TIM.

You got big giant hot things, and smaller hard things, and then stuff grows on the hard things, and then I come around and have a family and drink beer. Right?

SUE.

Most Universes operate under the same basic principles. Yes, I think that's a fair statement.

TIM.

Tell you what: you do me the honors.

SUE.

Are you sure?

TIM.

Yeah, I'm ready to get going. I can't sit still for long. Just put me somewhere.

SUE.

Will do, sir.

TIM.

Alright now. See you later, Sue.

(TIM leaves. SUE types.)

(BLACKOUT)

Scene 2
"Multiverse"

(SUE sits at her desk, typing. TIM enters and sits.)

SUE.
One second...

TIM.
You again, huh?

SUE.
Oh, hello there. Tim right?

TIM.
I have a bone to pick with you.

SUE.
Yes?

TIM.
Explain yourself.

SUE.
I'm sorry?

TIM.
You're the one who did this. You sent me to the "next phase".

SUE.
Yes, that's correct.

TIM.
Next phase, alright. I sat in waiting for hours; called to speak to someone; was put on hold; waited more; then I meet with another person who says that I'll have to wait even longer, but while I wait, I can watch this nice little video about my next Universe.

SUE.
Ah-huh. And what was your problem?

TIM.
It's...it's...

SUE.
Yes?

TIM.
Not what I had in mind.

SUE.
What about it didn't meet your criteria?

TIM.
Look, I just don't want to go. Okay! And I don't want to wait any longer! I'm not going to that one! So do something! Pick another one!

SUE.
Are you sure you want to change?

TIM.
Yes!

SUE.
It'll cost more credits.

TIM.
How much more?

SUE.
Let's see...

TIM.
Why am I not surprised?

SUE.
Tell you what: this time, we'll go through the catalog together, just to make sure we find the right fit for you. How does that sound, sir?

TIM.
Great. That's great. Let's take a look.

SUE.
(typing ridiculously.)
Let's see...

TIM.
I worked my way up from an ant for this.

SUE.
Not there...

TIM.
I don't deserve this, okay?

SUE.
We'll get you straightened out.

TIM.
I went from an ant, to a worm, to a bird, to a big cat, to an elephant, and then finally I got my shot. Then I worked even harder so I get my credits, and you just take them from me like it's nothing.

SUE.
Here we are.

TIM.
What do you have?

SUE.
First option: "Clown Town."

TIM.
No.

SUE.
Okay...

TIM.
No clowns. None of your employees, please.

SUE.
Sir, I'm trying to help.

TIM.
No, you're not.

SUE.
If you'll work with me, then—

TIM.
You're making things more complicated. I just want to stay in my original Universe! Find me something so that...I'm sorry. Find me something that is similar to my original home, please.

I'm looking. SUE.

Nothing out of the ordinary. TIM.

What about "Golf Paradise?" SUE.

What's that one? TIM.

Self-explanatory. It's more for our retired clients. SUE.

Do I look old to you? TIM.

That's a relative question, sir. SUE.

Not the right answer. TIM.

Moving on. We have "Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil." SUE.

What in Gods' name... TIM.

Give it a chance. SUE.

What is it? TIM.

No one has ears, eyes, or mouths. SUE.

What would...I'm sorry...I'm at a loss... TIM.

Hard pass? SUE.

TIM.

What would make you think I would want that one? Huh Sue?
Why would I want that?

SUE.

Some people like to try new things.

TIM.

Not me.

SUE.

Okay.

TIM.

I like routine.

SUE.

Understood.

TIM.

I keep the same name. I might go to a new place, but I do
it the same way. It's got me this far. I want to have all
of my body parts.

SUE.

I wonder if that means that everyone just has noses.

TIM.

I don't care...

SUE.

Just a thought.

TIM.

Next one.

SUE.

What do we have? What do we have?

TIM.

Please...

SUE.

You know what? I'm going to apply some filters and that
might help us narrow our options.

TIM.
Great idea. Almost like you know what you're doing.

SUE.
Okay...

TIM.
Sorry.

SUE.
No, you're fine.

TIM.
I feel like I've been here forever.

SUE.
I understand.

TIM.
So, um, filters?

SUE.
Yeah, just going to ask you some basic questions.

TIM.
Sounds good.

SUE.
Any hobbies?

TIM.
Oh tons. Hiking. Playing Basketball. Video Games.

SUE.
Great.
(slamming the keyboard.)
Sorry, this thing loves acting up on me.

TIM.
Sure...

SUE.
Beliefs and values?

TIM.
Well, like I said, I believe in routines. I'm not very religious.

SUE.

"Not religious."

TIM.

Nothing I've seen so far has made me believe in a higher power. This place certainly doesn't. I don't know. I'm a simple guy.

SUE.

"Doesn't believe in higher power."

TIM.

Right.

SUE.

"Simple guy..."

TIM.

Not that simple. Not bland. But I like simple things.

SUE.

"Not bland..."

TIM.

I mean, sometimes. Depends on the day.

SUE.

"Depends on the day..."

TIM.

Alright. Are you seeing anything yet?

SUE.

Yeah, so everything that's coming up is currently wait listed.

TIM.

Figures.

SUE.

We have a high demand for Universes without religion. People get tired of the dogma, you know? Really high demand for those.

TIM.

Screw it: give me the one without my face! I'll be a nose for my last five lives!

SUE.

I'm sorry that you're frustrated, sir.

TIM.

No, you're not sorry. You're not sorry. If you were sorry, you'd do something.

SUE.

I'm trying my best.

TIM.

Try harder.

SUE.

Sir...

TIM.

Get me out of here, please!

SUE.

You need to lower your voice. Okay? I'm trying my best. Not everything is made for your convenience.

TIM.

Obviously.

SUE.

I don't appreciate the attitude.

TIM.

Whatever, just...pick another random one...I don't care...I don't care anymore...

SUE.

I just thought of something.

(looks through her desk.)

Somewhere...

TIM.

What now?

SUE.

This will be perfect for you.

TIM.

I'm sure.

SUE.

(pulls out a large file.)

Yes, here we are. So...these are leftovers. Basically, when a Universe has glitches, it's sent through a series of maintenance channels, yada yada yada...these are currently not in our catalog because they're waiting to be fixed. Usually, the problems are cosmetic.

TIM.

So then...

SUE.

Wormholes popping up in random places, stuff like that.

TIM.

Holes for worms?

SUE.

Portals through space and time. It's not that big of a deal. So basically, there might be an earlier version of the Universe you used to live in.

TIM.

A version with more bugs?

SUE.

Glitches, yes. Not like bugs bugs, but yes.

TIM.

Bugs bugs?

SUE.

It doesn't have more cockroaches or anything like that.

TIM.

You got something against cockroaches?

SUE.

No, of course not.

TIM.

I used to be a cockroach...

SUE.

And that is a very honorable lifestyle and I would never judge you in any way for that.

TIM.
It got me where I am today.

SUE.
Of course, sir.

TIM.
Are you insulting me, Sue?

SUE.
No...

TIM.
Tell me, why would I want to go to a crappier version of my old Universe? I could be sitting at the breakfast table, eating my cereal, when suddenly I'm sucked into a wormhole, then spit out in another galaxy.

SUE.
They're very rare.

TIM.
And there's no wait-list for these places?

SUE.
None.

TIM.
Hm.

SUE.
It's a risk, but it would get you out of here.

TIM.
I don't know...

SUE.
Would you like time to think about it?

TIM.
No.

SUE.
So that's a "yes?"

TIM.
No.

SUE.
You tell me what you want to do.

TIM.
I get the feeling you're just trying to get rid of me. I don't like that. It makes me wonder if this place is really what you're saying it is.

SUE.
Like I said, minor cosmetic issues.

TIM.
Let me see that folder there.

SUE.
I can't do that, sir.

TIM.
I just want to see...

SUE.
(holding it up quickly.)
See?

TIM.
Let me hold it.

SUE.
It's for employee eyes only. I don't want to lose my job. Only minor glitches.

TIM.
(taking the folder.)
No-go list?

SUE.
You didn't see that. You didn't see that.

TIM.
I saw what it said!

SUE.
You didn't see that.

TIM.
No-go?

SUE.
It's glitches.

TIM.
It's all the crappy ones where no one wants to go! That's where you're sending me?

SUE.
Where else should I send you, sir?

TIM.
Not there!

SUE.
Where else? You don't want to go anywhere!

TIM.
I want to go somewhere worth going!

SUE.
You say you do, but you don't. Well, I'm sorry, but I'm running out of options.

TIM.
No hair?

SUE.
Yes, a Universe where no one has hair.

TIM.
Starting to see a pattern here.

SUE.
How does that sound?

TIM.
Who makes these?

SUE.
Programmers.

TIM.
They're kind of lazy with their ideas. Oh, we'll just make one where they don't have this, or they don't have that. What's the point?

SUE.
Give that back, please.

TIM.
No sex?

SUE.
Yes, a Universe without sex.

TIM.
Then how do they...

SUE.
Growths.

TIM.
That's disgusting!

SUE.
I know!

TIM.
You were going to send me / there!

SUE.
Well, you shouldn't be so picky.

TIM.
No pollen?

SUE.
Yes, a Universe without pollen.

TIM.
That's...perfect actually. Can I go to that one? I'll do that one.

SUE.
You don't want that one.

TIM.
Why?

SUE.
The bees are giant.