

NEXT LIFE V4

A short play by Nick Miller

VARIOUS CHARACTERS:

Brian - the Father
Presenter
Wendy - the Mother
Scott - the Son
Charlotte - the Daughter
Geoff - the Friend
St Peter

First scene is on film. Brian's comments after a period are live.

- Brian: I wanted to take out a funeral plan so that my family don't have to worry about affording the arrangements, alongside the stress and the heartache when it's my time.
- Presenter: Like so many people in Brian's situation, the grief and the worry of funeral planning can be devastating for those who are left behind. And it's not just the cost.
How would they want to be remembered?
- Wendy: It would be very stressful for the family. My parents are still alive so thankfully I've had no experience of arranging a funeral so I really wouldn't know where to start and neither would our children.
- Presenter: What type of funeral and what type of service would they have wanted? What about the type of casket?
Something elaborate and decorative or a more eco-friendly solution? Perhaps something a bit quirky?
- Charlotte: Dad loves football. He's a United fan. He'd probably want a red and white coffin.
- Presenter: We don't normally have the advantage of forward planning because it could all happen when least expected...
- Scott: We would be heartbroken if we lost dad.
- Charlotte: Yes it would all come as a terrible shock. And we would worry that mum would be able to cope.
- Geoff: And he's my best friend. So I'd be devastated to lose my golfing partner.
- Presenter: But what if there was a way that you could plan ahead, both financially and in knowing that the loved one you've lost would have their last wishes respected?
- Brian: That would be great. It would certainly put my mind at rest.
- Presenter: While they put you to rest.
- Brian: Er... well yes.

Presenter: That's where Next Life comes in.
Next Life Funeral Planning can make sure that all your worries are taken away and you can take comfort from the fact that your family can look forward to a stress free future with a period of time to grieve but a happier NextLife ahead.

Wendy: Well obviously we would miss Brian very much but life has to go on.

Brian: *LIVE - looking at film a bit bothered*
OK well try not to sound too upset.

Scott: Yes and what would happen to Dad's business... and his money.

Brian on film is no longer commenting.

Brian's off screen comments are live as if he hasn't seen the film before.

Brian: *LIVE*
Hang on...

Charlotte: Yes we don't want it all going in funeral costs.

Wendy: And the legal fees for probate and inheritance.

Brian: *LIVE*
Well it's not just about the money...

Presenter: But funerals are expensive. Not just the service and the casket but the funeral cars, and the wake...

Geoff: Yes. I'm not only his friend... I'm also the local baker.
It would be great for me because I could make a killing out of the wake.
Realising what he's said
Oops sorry. No pun intended....

They all chuckle at his words

Geoff : I mean from the cakes... nibbles... vol au vents.

Brian: *LIVE*
What?

Scott: Yes we love dad very much but obviously it will be handy to have the money sooner rather than later.
I've seen a car I really like.

Charlotte: And I might need it for my wedding. Or maybe the pitter patter of tiny feet.

Brian: *LIVE*
Oh great. Don't worry about me.

Geoff: Obviously I'll miss him. But I have got my eye on those golf clubs.

Geoff chuckles. Brian looks astounded

Brian: *LIVE*
What?

Wendy: And at least Geoff would be around to comfort me.

Brian: *LIVE*
Comfort you?

Screen pauses and we are now live

Brian: Hang on... where am I?

St Peter: *Sitting on a stool, doing a crossword in the paper.*
Sorry?

Brian: Where are we?

St Peter: Where do you think?

Brian: Well if I knew I wouldn't ask.

St Peter: You're checking in.

Brian: Checking in? Where?

St Peter: Hang on... 6 across. 9 letters. "Not offering support. Seeming disinterested"

Brian: Bloody hell. Could you possibly be more unhelpful?

St Peter: Unhelpful! Brilliant. Thank you.
He fills in the crossword

Brian: What? Look - where the hell am I?

St Peter: Well not there. We're just working that out. Purgatory.

Brian: What? Purgatory? But I'm not...

St Peter: Well... hello! Obviously you are.

Brian: What? But how?

St Peter: What do you mean 'how'? You died.

Brian: I died ? I think if I'd died I'd be the first to know about it.

St Peter: Ah, well that's the funny thing...

Brian: Well I can think of funnier things.

St Peter: You signed up for Next Life Funeral Planning didn't you?

Brian: Well, yes. But that was just in case I died... unexpectedly. But I didn't...

St Peter: I'm afraid you did. I'm afraid you had a heart attack.

Brian: What? I don't remember that!

St Peter: Yes it happened on Friday afternoon just after you played golf with your friend.

Brian: With Geoff?

St Peter: Yes I believe you lost. Got a bit stressed and collapsed.

Brian: What? Bloody hell. I only just arranged that policy last week.

St Peter: Yes - efficient aren't they. No quibbling with NextLife.

Brian: What? What have they got to do with it?

St Peter: You signed up for NextLife to make all the arrangements.

Brian: Yes. The funeral arrangements. Not the bloody death.

St Peter: I know. They're good aren't they? That was all inclusive?

Brian: What? But when was the funeral? If I only died on Friday.

St Peter: Oh they don't bother with all that.
And your family didn't want all your money going to waste.
They're very thoughtful.

Brian: What? Thoughtful? So... so how did I get... buried or whatever?

St Peter: Well they chose the budget plan.

Brian: The budget plan? What does that involve?

St Peter: Well none of that expensive fancy church ceremony business.

Brian: So how do they... isn't there a burial or cremation.

St Peter: Not as such.

Brian: Not as such?

St Peter: Yes they just dig a hole and slide you down it on a chute.
Very simple.. Cost effective. Eco friendly.

Brian: What the f...

St Peter: Would you like to see how your family are getting on?

Brian: What? I suppose so...

They look at a computer monitor

St Peter: This is your family. You must be pleased that they seem happy.

Brian: What? Is that my son? In that sports car?

St Peter: Yes. It's nice isn't it?

Brian: Nice? It's a bloody death trap. He'll go crazy in that thing. How did he afford that... oh hang on... surely not...

St Peter: And there's your wife.

Brian: Wendy? She's with fucking Geoff! In fact she's fucking Geoff. Is she fucking joking?

St Peter: No she's fucking Geoff.

Brian: But I don't understand. NextLife actually killed me!

St Peter: No no no no. Of course not. Don't be silly. They just arranged for you to have a heart attack.

Brian: They did what?

St Peter: The criteria is that NextLife get 75% of the family's approval for early cremation they can bring forward the procedure ahead of time?

Brian: The procedure? Ahead of time? I've got 20/30 years left in me.

St Peter: Well you did sign the contract.

Brian: I don't remember that bit.

St Peter: It's quite small print. Anyway... look on the bright side.

Brian: The bright side? What bright side?

St Peter: Your family seem happy.
Oh here we go... you're in.

Brian: In where?

St Peter: Heaven. Congratulations.

Brian: Well I suppose it won't be too bad if heaven's all it's cracked up to be. Wine women and song. If I'm sharing a room with Marilyn Monroe or someone.

St Peter: Well, yes it's someone.

Brian: What do you mean? Who am I sharing with?

Brian is ushered away by two assistants

St Peter: *Looking it up on screen. Raising his voice as Brian leaves.*
Bit cramped at the moment. Soz. We're getting an extension.
There's only 12 of you but you'll have to top and tail.

Brian: What? I thought this was supposed to be paradise?

St Peter: Depends what you call paradise.
Ooh... hang on... 'Paradise'...
He picks up the newspaper and pen again
4 down. 8 letters. "Ideal or idyllic place or state."
Brilliant - cheers Brian.
Oh and don't worry... you can switch rooms after
the first 40 years.

Brian is taken away complaining loudly

St Peter: *Looks back at laptop screen*
Ooh blimey. That Geoff's a big boy.