

Life Sentence

‘Over the course of these proceedings, I showed that Matt Suckerberg actively promoted the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence during his short time on Earth. As such, not only is he guilty of inflicting considerable and irreversible damage to the planet’s oceans and water sources, but his culpable actions exacerbated Earth’s climate crisis and contributed towards the demise of marine ecosystems and sea life,’ the prosecutor said. She paced in front of the jury before turning to Supreme Justice Poseidon. ‘For these reasons, I believe he must return to Earth and live another life. A life in which he must learn to respect the Galaxy’s most precious resource.’

Matt squirmed in his seat.

Another life on Earth?

He’d been guaranteed a place in Heaven. The Evangelical pastor he’d turned to following his aggressive testicular cancer diagnosis had promised him Eternity in God’s Kingdom.

‘You re-connected the world,’ the pastor had said. ‘Your online platform brought extended family, past lovers, and childhood friends and acquaintances together. You single-handedly delivered joy and love to the masses. Heaven awaits you, my Son.’

Only, Heaven didn’t exist. No Pearly Gates swung open when Matt, without fear or doubt in his heart, took his last breath and moved towards the light. Instead, he faced an assembly of ethereal beings in a rather lacklustre auditorium, who promptly put him on trial for his crimes against Earth’s oceans.

The counselor assigned to Matt had briefed him the instant he’d regained consciousness. ‘It was never about how *good* or *bad* you were in life, Matt, but about how you treated your planet. Earth is one of two habitable planets in our galaxy supplied with life-sustaining water, and your fate depends on whether you lived to protect the seas or destroy them. Unfortunately, you imposed more harm than good.’

‘My fate? What does that mean?’

‘Life, like everything in this universe, is a cycle. All souls are reborn, again and again. Those who protected the seas advance to Kanaloa in the Eridani System—what your kind call a utopian paradise. A blue planet without corruption, wars, illness, or famine. And those who didn’t... Well, back to the hellscape of Earth you go.’

‘The Counsel agrees. Matt must be condemned to another life on Earth,’ Justice Poseidon said. ‘Considering his crimes, we advise he is sent as far from the sea as possible.’

‘May I suggest he is born into poverty in Nebraska?’ the prosecutor suggested. ‘It’s far from the sea and extremely backward. Most residents never even leave the state.’

Matt sighed. *Nebraska? Talk about a hellscape.*

On the plus side, he'd be back in America. So, not all bad.

His counselor cleared her throat. 'America? Isn't that extreme? My client's negative actions raised global awareness and opposition, after all. Surely, that should count for something?'

Poseidon nodded. 'Yes. I see your point. The U.S. is too cruel, even for Matt.' He thumped his trident. 'I hereby sentence Matt Suckerberg's soul to the landlocked nation of Kyrgyzstan, effective immediately.'