

ICE AGE

A man and a woman, both wearing white lab coats, stand beside a tank, which is bathed in a green glow. A cable extends from the tank to an outlet, and there are gauges and switches prominently displayed. Phillip Harkin, a thirty-something man, walks around the tank, his eyes full of amazement. Following him with her gaze is Dr. Helen Martin, an older, dignified, and patient woman.

PHILLIP

(Touches the outside of the "tank.") So, he's in there?

HELEN

(As she efficiently checks the readings on a display) That's right.

PHILLIP

I thought it would feel cold, you know.

HELEN

It's extremely well insulated. Remember the whole idea is to keep the body that's inside cold.

PHILLIP

This is so fantastic. So how many of these have you done?

HELEN

Me? Personally? I've attempted ten.

PHILLIP

And did you thaw them all out okay?

HELEN

We prefer to say resuscitate.

PHILLIP

So did you?

HELEN

We learn more with each revival, of course, so the chances for success keep going up. Of the last five I've done, all are living.

PHILLIP

Fantastic. You know I didn't even know I had a relative in here until your people called me.

HELEN

Most families don't. It's been hundreds of years since these patients were alive and in most families (*indicating the tank*) this usually ends up becoming hearsay and legend.

PHILLIP

There had been rumors, you know? I remember my great-grandmother telling me a story when I was nine or so, but you know how it is when you're nine and someone a hundred years old starts talking about the past. But I do remember her saying something about a relative and freezing, but it never sank in. But when I looked him up in the family databank after your people called sure enough, there he was. My great, great... times eleven, I think, grandfather. Turns out he was quite a guy.

HELEN

(*Still checking the machinery*) What did he do?

PHILLIP

He played baseball.

HELEN

(*Stops what she is doing*) Played what?

PHILLIP

That's all right. I didn't know either. I had to look it up myself. Baseball was a sport that was big during the late industrial and early computer ages.

HELEN

Never heard of it.

PHILLIP

No reason you should. No one's played it professionally for almost 250 years. Sometime around the fourth year of the Middle East War people stopped going to the games. With no oil and no gas and the economy is pieces there were just too many other things on their minds, I guess. Anyway before anyone knew it teams were going bankrupt and around 2012 the league just folded up.

HELEN

Your ancestor would seem to be in line for a shock.

PHILLIP

I don't understand.

HELEN

The sport from which he made his living no longer exists.

PHILLIP

But it does. You see there are people... recreationists... hobbyists, I guess you'd call them, who still play it. They've formed teams and schedule games and pretty much everything the old ballplayers had. Except fans to watch them. And get paid, of course.

HELEN

So it's exactly like it used to be.

PHILLIP

I don't follow.

HELEN

No fans or money.

PHILLIP

Oh. Yeah. Funny. But you'd be surprised how much the latter isn't true.

HELEN

What do you mean?

PHILLIP

(Evasive) Never mind.

HELEN

(Suspicious) So... was he any good?

PHILLIP

Are you kidding? This guy here was one of the best there ever was. He was the last man to bat over .400.

HELEN

Excuse me?

PHILLIP

I had to look that up, too. It was a highly regarded record in the sport. There was a player, see, called a pitcher who stood about 60 feet away from another player on the other team who was called the batter, and this batter had to hit a ball thrown by the pitcher. Which wasn't easy. These pitchers could throw over 90 miles an hour, which meant the batter had less than a second to swing his bats. Which makes it all the more remarkable that one season this man *(bangs on the tank)* –

HELEN

Please don't do that.

PHILLIP

Sorry. One season this man hit the ball more than four times out of every ten tries at bat.

HELEN

And that was good?

PHILLIP

You were considered great if you got three out of ten hit. And most players got less than that.

HELEN

So you can be very proud of him.

PHILLIP

So... how long will it take? You know, to wake him up.

HELEN

Well first of all, let's make sure we're clear on some things. Your ancestor is not asleep. He's dead. Has been for over 300 years. The process by which we restore cognitive functions and mobility are complicated and even though, as I mentioned before, we're getting better at revival, there are still dangers.

PHILLIP

But the prognosis is good.

HELEN

Again, prognosis is a word I would use for a living patient.

PHILLIP

Sounds like a lot of double talk to me. Are you a doctor or a lawyer?

HELEN

I am a professional who has obligations to the living, the dead, and to this institution.

PHILLIP

(Nervously disingenuous) I'm sorry. I did not mean any offense. I was just curious when you can begin.

HELEN

You seem to be in an awful hurry to see your ancestor revived, Mr. Harkin.

PHILLIP

If you had found a long-lost relative wouldn't you?

HELEN

I think I would want to be sure of that person's health and well-being.

PHILLIP

He'll be well taken care of.

HELEN

I am not talking just about his physical well-being, Mr. Harkin. These are human beings who, from their perspective, are suddenly thrust 300 years in the future. Imagine the implications. Everyone they have known and loved has been gone for three centuries. And in his case the sport he clearly loved is gone as well, for all practical purposes.

PHILLIP

Doctor, this man was a fighter pilot in two wars. He was even shot down once. He's strong. He'll adjust.

HELEN

I am sure that Mr. Williams was very brave, but what we're talking about here is way out of the realm of normal human experience. Trust me, I've witnessed enough of these cases to know.

PHILLIP

Look, doctor, all I want to know is how long it will be until he's normal.

HELEN

Normal? This man is being revived after being dead for 300 years. That's not normal and never will be.

PHILLIP

Fine. I guess what I mean is how long will it be until he's be able to function.

HELEN

I'm not sure I follow.

PHILLIP

How can I put this delicately? When will he be able to work?

HELEN

Work? Mr. Harkin, your ancestor is being revived from the dead. It's not like we've removed his appendix or tonsils. It will take time for his body to gain enough strength for him to be even able to feed himself.

PHILLIP

I'm not talking about a construction job, here. All I need to know is when will he be strong enough to write.

HELEN

I beg your pardon? Write?

PHILLIP

His autograph. How long until he can sign his name?

HELEN

I don't understand...

PHILLIP

(Showing her what is on the hand-held device) These family databases are amazing. Turns out this guy was making money – a lot of it – even after he was old and in a wheelchair.

HELEN

Lots of people are productive members of society well into their advanced years.

PHILLIP

But this guy did it with his pen. When I did my research I discovered that his son – I guess that's my great times ten grandfather – anyway, he built a whole business around his father signing baseball-related items – baseballs, bats, uniforms, things like that – items that he sold to baseball fans all over the world.

HELEN

His son sold his father's autograph? You'll forgive me but that sounds a bit grotesque.

PHILLIP

Lots of players used to sell their autographs. Back then it was a huge business. And it still can be.

HELEN

(Disgusted) Do you mean to tell me that you intend to make money off your ancestor that same way?

PHILLIP

You make it sound as if I don't care about him and that's not true. Think about how great this will all be for him. Out there are thousands of passionate baseball fanatics whose hero – one of the greatest men who ever played the game – is suddenly going to re-appear after three hundred years. Imagine the adulation he'll experience when I announce that Ted Williams is back among the living. *(Gets an idea)* Say, maybe after he's recuperated we could offer hitting lessons? Imagine what that would be worth?

HELEN

(Horried) I can't even begin to speculate.

PHILLIP

So you can see why I'm anxious to get things started.

HELEN

Yes, well, just as I am sure you can understand there are few matters that must be attended to first. And, as I mentioned, it's a very delicate process that –

Phillip rolls his eyes impatiently. Now Helen is getting angry.

HELEN

Mister Harkin, please understand that as a doctor I have a responsibility to my patients.

PHILLIP

You said before that they were all dead. So how can they be your patients?

HELEN

Whatever word you wish to employ they are human beings who deserve some measure of dignity. *(Struck by a thought. Pauses. Then, to herself, as she touches the tank)* Dignity...

PHILLIP

What was that?

HELEN

Nothing. Never mind. Tell you what, Mr. Harkin, this may take a while. Could I ask that you wait in our guest lounge? Or you can go back to work or your home and we'll call you when we have any news.

PHILLIP

No, I think I'll hang out here. *(Caresses the tank with gleeful greed)* I can get some work done on the press release and the brochure while I'm waiting.

HELEN

It really could be while.

PHILLIP

That's all right.

Helen rolls her eyes with disgust as Phillip crosses to the door.

PHILLIP

(With a smarmy smile) Doctor.

Helen watches Phillip exit. She pauses, then reaches behind the tank and pulls a plug out of the wall. The green light turns red and an alarm bell rings. She stares sadly at the tank as the alarm stops.

HELEN

Rest in Peace, Ted Williams. And this time we mean it.

Blackout

END PLAY