

INT. CRYO-LABS WAITING ROOM

The room is white with few flowers and magazines. No one pays them any mind as they are all chattering amongst themselves. JOHNNIE (Black woman, 20) disconnected from everyone else. She stares off into the distance.

Someone across the way sees this and tries to make their presence known.

PERSON
(Whistling and snapping)
Hey. Hello. You there?

Johnnie's head snaps up. She makes eye contact with a man in his 40s/50s. He has a thick country accent and wears a cowboy hat.

JOHNNIE
Hi, sorry. Is everything okay?

PERSON
I should be asking if you're okay. Are you?

JOHNNIE
Yes. Yes. I'm fine. Just thinking.
Cool accent.

PERSON
Thanks. So whatcha thinkin' about...?

JOHNNIE
Johnnie.

CHASE
Chase. So whatcha thinkin' about, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE
Oh, nothing.
(Hesitantly)

Just wondering what was so special about Johnny Cash that made my dad name me after him.

CHASE

He musta had a connection with him. Johnny Cash is a great singer. He made some timeless music. Me and my wife used to dance to his song "Ring of Fire" all of the time. Even passed it on to our kids.

JOHNNIE

I wish I knew. He passed right after I was born.

CHASE

My wife passed away six months ago.

JOHNNIE

I'm sorry.

CHASE

Me too.

Johnnie lets the conversation die down. All of the other excited conversations in the room take over. CHASE is still watching her.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Whatcha thinkin' about, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE

I'm not thinking about anything.

CHASE

No, you're not. And you weren't before. I know that look. You're in that place in your head.

JOHNNIE

Place in my head?

CHASE

Yeah, you know, the one you go to when things get hard. My daughter used to go there a lot. Well, not used to, she's been in there for quite a while.

JOHNNIE

Oh, I'm sorry.

CHASE

Don't be. Maddie's just in a coma. I just hope that when she comes out she likes it better here.

JOHNNIE

What happened to her, if you don't mind me asking?

CHASE

Car accident. Drunk driver. It's unfortunate, but it makes you appreciate life a little more.

JOHNNIE

I guess.

CHASE

Why cryogenic freezing, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE

I figured it would be nice to give my life to science.

CHASE

No. There's more to it than that.

JOHNNIE

Nope. Not really. What about you?
What's your reason?

CHASE

My son triple dog dared me, so I had
to show him that his daddy ain't no
wimp.

Johnnie chuckles at this.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Heard they only had a few spots, so I
got in line. I just pray that they
don't call my name. And I pray that
they don't call yours.

JOHNNIE

Why?

CHASE

You have a whole life ahead of you,
but you're already giving it up to
science. You shouldn't do that. The
future, yeah it's fascinating. But the
present, it's just as good. What
brought you here, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE

My mom died.

Chase stops and grabs her hand.

CHASE

I'm sorry about that, kid.

JOHNNIE

Yeah. I had always wondered how she was going to survive without me. We were always so close. Now that she's gone I have to survive without her. And it hurts. It hurts a lot. I've tried doing that thing where you talk to the grave, but it's not the same. I need to see her. Outside of that special place. This. This is as close to her as I can get.

CHASE

You're gonna be in that capsule a long time.

JOHNNIE

Yeah, I know. Maybe by the time I'm out, I'll like it here better. Maybe, I'll have come to terms with it.

CHASE

That's if you go in.

JOHNNIE

I hope I go in.

A RECEPTIONIST walks out to the waiting room. All of the conversations hush.

RECEPTIONIST

Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for participating in the CryoLabs study on cryogenic freezing. As you all know we only have 5 spots in the freezer, so if I call your name please come with me. If not, go home.

She looks at her clipboard.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Francis Daniels. Imelda Ortega.
Johnnie Washington. Linda Parks. And
Chase...

Chase's ears perk up. His eyes widen.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Rivera. If I called your name, please
come with me.

People from all corners of the room stand up.

CHASE
Thank goodness. It's not me.

Johnnie stands.

JOHNNIE
But it is me. Thanks for talking to
me, Chase.

CHASE
If they allow visitors, I'm gonna come
see you.

JOHNNIE
You don't have to.

CHASE
I want to. You're gonna like it better
when you get outta there, Johnnie.
Things are gonna be okay.

JOHNNIE
I hope you're right.

RECEPTIONIST
Johnnie Washington.

JOHNNIE
I gotta go. Bye.

CHASE
Bye.

INT. CRYO-LAB LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

Johnnie walks to the back with the other four people. They're all excitedly talking about what the future could be like. Johnnie is in that far away place again.

The receptionist stops in front of 5 tubes.

RECEPTIONIST
These will be your homes for the next 50 to 100 years. We thank you for your contributions to science. Please discard your clothing.

They all strip down. Scientists walk around with clipboards, instructing people to get into the tubes.

SCIENTIST
Please step in, ma'am.

Johnnie stands in front of the tube for a long moment.

SCIENTIST
Ma'am. Please step into the freezer.

JOHNNIE
Right. Sorry.

She steps into the freezer and watches as the door closes. She closes her eyes and prepares for the cold.

INT. CRYO-LAB - LATER

Johnnie's eyes are closed, but she can still be heard.

JOHNNIE (V.O.)

Hello. Hello. Can anyone hear me?

(Beat)

No. No. God, please, no. Why? Why is it like this? I don't wanna- Ughh.

The scientists are monitoring her, unaware of her mental consciousness.

SCIENTIST

Her heart rate is rising.

SCIENTIST TWO

Likely, due to the temperatures, she should be fine.

JOHNNIE (V.O.)

This is not fine. God, get me outta here.

A loud buzzer blares.

SCIENTIST

Leave her. Someone's flatlining.

The scientists run away and leave Johnnie.

INT. CRYO-LAB - 75 YEARS LATER

Johnnie has spent a lot of time in that special place in her head. It's not so special anymore. She's come to terms with a lot of things. Overall, she just wants a bath.

The scientists are melting the cryogenic ice. Johnnie's eyes flutter open. She groans.

SCIENTIST

Success! Welcome to the future, Miss...

The scientist looks down at his clipboard.

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)
Johnnie Washington.

JOHNNIE
What year is it?

SCIENTIST
2099. We will need to check your
vitals and your mental stability
before you leave. Is that alright?

JOHNNIE
Do what you have to. I just wanna go
home.

SCIENTIST
I, um, have one question. What's it
like in there?

JOHNNIE
Loud. Very loud. Then quiet. So quiet
you can hear a pin drop.

SCIENTIST
You can hear things.

JOHNNIE
No, but you can think. You spend a lot
of time thinking.

Johnnie takes in her surroundings. It's painfully white, with
much less people.

JOHNNIE (CONT'D)
What happened to everyone?

SCIENTIST
Tragedy after tragedy. Be glad you
missed it.

JOHNNIE (V.O.)
Might've missed it, but I heard about
it.

The scientist grabs a few towels and pieces of clothing and
leaves them next to the freezer.

JOHNNIE (CONT'D)
So the world's a futuristic wasteland?

SCIENTIST
Not exactly. It's different from when
you went in, but it's not terrible.

JOHNNIE
Yeah, we'll see.

INT. CRYO-LABS CELEBRATION CEREMONY - NIGHT

There are hundreds of people stacked in a room. All wearing
futuristic clothing of sorts. They watch the four test subjects
on the stage. The LEAD SCIENTIST steps to the podium.

LEAD SCIENTIST
It's been 75 years since we
cryogenically froze people, and
although we lost one, we and our
subjects have made contributions to
science. We thank them and we thank
you for your support.

The public cheers. Johnnie looks in the crowd, so many people
are there yet she feels so alone.

LEAD SCIENTIST (CONT'D)
Please take the time to talk to our
subjects.

All of the subjects begin conversing with the crowd. Johnnie
stays to herself.

An elderly woman walks up to Johnnie.

WOMAN

Hi.

JOHNNIE

Hi.

MADDIE

I'm Maddie.

She holds out her hand.

JOHNNIE

Nice to meet you. Johnnie.

MADDIE

Like Cash. My dad loved "Ring of Fire".

JOHNNIE

I guess my dad did too.

MADDIE

I think I know you---or my dad knew you. For a very brief time. He always talked about wanting to see this one girl who was in the freezer, but they wouldn't allow visitors. He always talked about wanting her to have someone to go home to.

JOHNNIE

Chase, right?

MADDIE

Yeah. So, um, if you need a place to stay, my home is open.

JOHNNIE

Thanks.

MADDIE

Hey, quick question: what're your thoughts on the future?

JOHNNIE

Way better than in there.

MADDIE

My daughter has always wondered what it's like.

JOHNNIE

The things I have to tell your daughter.

END.