

CARDOZA

by
Ronnie Larsen

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Characters

Ronnie - 46

Melqui - 27

Cardoza - 66

SCENE: A BEDROOM

We are in a bedroom in a middle class home in Stockton, Calif.

The room is really dark. Surprisingly dark. Too dark to see what is really going on. The audience should have a hard time hearing and a hard time seeing. Some light shines in from the hallway.

A 66 year old man named, John Cardoza, lies in a bed. He is wearing blue pajamas, a gold ring and his watch. There is a table with two bouquets of flowers in vases.

Cardoza is barely moving. The room is very dark but not pitch black. Cardoza is dying of stage 4 terminal liver cancer. He is in hospice.

He is propped up on pillows and covered in a blanket. He barely moves but when he does it is slow and subtle. He is not in obvious pain but he is very weak. He fades in and out of consciousness and his eyes are never fully open.

When he speaks we aren't quite sure if he knows who he's talking to and we can't always decipher what he's saying yet he should not seem crazy or suffering from dementia. He seems comfortable and at peace but very tired and sleepy.

The actor playing Cardoza should not "perform" in anyway. He should be as simple as possible. There should be no awareness of the audience and it should not feel like a "play".

We should not be aware of actor choices or objectives. He should not act sick or in pain. Mostly he is still and quiet.

For one full minute nothing happens except for us watching Cardoza fade in and out of consciousness or sleep or...both? We are never quite sure. We can hear him breathing.

We hear a quiet knock on the door from far offstage. We hear a muffled conversation.

Two men, Ronnie and Melqui, slowly enter. Ronnie is 46 and Melqui is 27. The ages of the actors are very important so that we have three generations on stage. They enter super quietly. Ronnie approaches the bed. The younger man stays back and observes.

Ronnie slowly leans in and whispers.

RONNIE

Cardoza?

Cardoza barely reacts.

Ronnie leans in closer.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Cardoza.

Ronnie is unsure if Cardoza has heard him.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

(slightly louder)

I love you.

Longer silence. No response.

Ronnie, unsure what to do, sits on the edge of the bed next to him and gently touches Cardoza's hand. He thinks Cardoza is aware of him but he is unsure.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Thank you for seeing me.

CARDOZA
(awake, slow and
steady)
How could I not?

Ronnie smiles though he isn't sure if Cardoza knows it's him or if he has just been saying that to all of his visitors.

RONNIE
Your sister said you've had a
lot of visitors.

He nods "yes" ever so slightly...or maybe he doesn't.

There is a very long pause. Maybe 30 seconds.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
Cardoza, I love you so much.

More time passes. 30 more seconds.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
You impacted so many lives.
You know that right?

Cardoza mumbles something barely audible.

More time passes. More silence. Finally, Cardoza, speaks clearly.

CARDOZA
Come lay with me.

Ronnie slowly does. It's as if Cardoza has given him a gift by inviting him in so close one last time. Ronnie stretches one arm above Cardoza's head on the pillow while his other hand caresses Cardoza's hands which are folded on his chest.

Silence for two minutes as they lie next to each other. Ronnie thinks. Ronnie gently kisses his head and slowly runs his hands over Cardoza's hands. Ronnie wants to talk but doesn't know what to say and clearly Cardoza is in no condition to have a conversation so they just lay there together.

Finally, Ronnie whispers.

RONNIE
(quietly)
I love you, Cardoza.

Kisses his head. 30 more seconds pass.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
Thank you for everything.

Silence for two minutes as Cardoza fades in and out.

Ronnie's husband, Melqui, lingers in the background. Just watching in the darkness by the table with the flowers. Melqui picks up the card from the flowers and strains to read the message to himself in the darkness. Ronnie watches Melqui read the card then shifts his focus back to Cardoza.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
Did you tell Ron Johnson?

CARDOZA
No.

More caressing. 30 seconds passes.

A phone rings off stage. We hear a woman answer it but it is very muffled. We can not hear the conversation.

RONNIE
The phone has been ringing non
stop I bet.

Cardoza tries to make a joke but it is inaudible.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
You're a celebrity, John.

John does not react. He might be asleep. We aren't sure.

30 seconds pass.

John starts to snore ever so slightly. Stops snoring. Moves his head closer to Ronnie's body.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
(almost whispering)
Your sister said you've had a
lot of visitors.

5 seconds pass.

CARDOZA
Oh, yes.

20 seconds pass.

Ronnie doesn't know what to do. Stay? Talk? Leave?
Finally...whispering...the audience should strain to
hear.

RONNIE
John. Thank you for
everything. I love you so
much.

Cardoza does not respond or maybe he does. We aren't
sure.

More time passes. Ronnie looks at Melqui then back
at Cardoza.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
I guess I should let you
sleep.

No response.

Melqui slowly approaches the bed super quietly. Out
of curiosity he leans in close to try and see
Cardoza's face but it is so dark. Cardoza is now
asleep.

Melqui caresses the shoulder of Ronnie as Ronnie
caresses the head of Cardoza.

Cardoza quietly chokes a few times very quietly...or
is he just clearing his throat? We don't know.

Finally, half asleep and half wake and louder and
clearer than anything else Cardoza says very clearly
so we hear every word.

CARDOZA

I'm gonna draw a bath
tomorrow.

Ronnie doesn't know what to say.

And Cardoza is asleep. He snores quietly.

Ronnie motions for Melqui to help him get off the bed
without making any noise or disturbing Cardoza.

Ronnie stands. Quietly. Pointing to the flowers.

RONNIE

Those are the flowers we sent.

MELQUI

(not impressed)
Mucho small.

RONNIE

(pointing)
That's 100 dollars.

Ronnie rolls his eyes and makes a face indicating
that the flowers are really not impressive.

They both look back at Cardoza.

Ronnie, confused, points to his own wrist and says to
Melqui,

RONNIE (CONT'D)

(super quietly, almost
miming it)
He's wearing his watch.

Ronnie and Melqui linger in limbo, not really sure
how to just leave the room but finally they look at
each other and decide to leave without saying a final
goodbye.

The phone rings again. A woman answers it but we can
not hear the conversation.

They slowly tiptoe out of the room.

Cardoza lies alone in the darkness.

The only sound in the room now is the breathing and slight snoring of Cardoza.

He is still alive.

There is another knock at the door and the lights fade to black.