

# Last Orders

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# LAST ORDERS

**Characters:**

Geoffrey (early 60s)

Steve (30s)

**Time:**

The present (dates mentioned in the script can be changed as necessary)

**Place:**

The Workshop of a bespoke shoemaker's in London

**Set:**

As realistic as possible, with shelves stuffed with paper files, racks overflowing with lasts, tools, etc. There are two workstations: Geoffrey's tidy, clean, ordered; Steve's the opposite.

Note: The setting and characters in this play are entirely fictitious.

# LAST ORDERS

## Scene 1

*Classical music wafts from an old radio. Geoffrey sits at his workstation, patiently filing, measuring, filing, measuring a last in accordance with measurements handwritten on a piece of paper. He glances at his watch, shakes his head almost imperceptibly, takes a sip of tea, continues working.*

*Steve enters hurriedly, in cycling gear, with headphones connected to his mobile phone. During the following, he changes into work gear, which he keeps in a locker or cupboard.*

**Geoffrey** Good morning, Stephen.

*Without looking, Geoffrey reaches for the radio and switches it off*

**Steve** Sorry I'm late.

**Geoffrey** *(under his breath)* Again.

**Steve** Had to ... take the kids to school ... Jasmine's got a ... I don't know ... bug or something ...

**Geoffrey** *(under his breath)* Again.

**Steve** I told her to stay in bed.

**Geoffrey** Ever the gallant husband.

**Steve** Of course, I had to get back home first ... to the pick up the bike ...

**Geoffrey** Uhuh.

**Steve** And the traffic ... I don't know if you heard ...

**Geoffrey** Mm?

**Steve** Waterloo Bridge shut ... Terrorist alert ...

**Geoffrey** Ah.

**Steve** The tailbacks ... Oh, I forgot, they don't give traffic news on Radio 3, do they?

*An odour of perspiration reaches Geoffrey, who opens a drawer and takes out a can of air-freshener, which he sprays liberally in Steve's direction*

**Geoffrey** Not unless at least six people have died. That seems to be the threshold for some reason. I suppose if they made it any fewer, they'd be reporting RTAs every five minutes

**Steve** RTCs.

**Geoffrey** Mm?

**Steve** They're RTCs now. Collisions, not accidents, cos most of them aren't.

**Geoffrey** Ah, yes. They're caused by people Facebooking friends instead of looking at the road, or lane-hopping to gain precious seconds, only to squander them as soon as they arrive by discussing the latest episode of *Eastenders*. But I forgot: you watch *Eastenders* religiously every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

**Steve** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Jasmine does. Like I said, I prefer the old movies. Bogie and Cagney and those guys. (*as Bogey*) "I came to Casablanca for the waters". (*as Cagney*) "Waddya want, a medal?"

**Geoffrey** Very good.

*Steve goes to look at the order sheet*

**Geoffrey** There's nothing.

**Steve** Had to do a fair bit of lane-hopping myself, actually, to get the kids to school on time. Mind you, I always look out for bikes, which is more than most drivers do.

**Geoffrey** "Think bike", isn't that what the posters say? I feel like putting a comma in it, the way some of them ride: "Think, bike".

**Steve** (*not really understanding*) Ha, yeah.

*Geoff finishes his tea, rather obviously*

**Geoffrey** If you have a minute.

*Steve goes to a table or cupboard where there is a kettle, tea, coffee, mugs, etc.*

**Steve** Sure. I haven't even had my first cup yet ... I mean, Marco didn't have a clean shirt ... Kiera couldn't find her sports kit ... Jasmine said it was my turn ...  
Nightmare.

**Geoffrey** Sounds like a lack of organization to me. Shortage of foresight. People seem to be losing the capacity. There's so much going on in the here and now that there's no room left in the frontal lobes for thinking ahead.

**Steve** Thinking ahead? Are you kidding? Try asking an eight-year-old what day of the week it is.

**Geoffrey** What do they teach them, then, at school?

**Steve** Same old rubbish they've always taught. Fill their heads full of useless facts. I mean who needs to know who was on the throne in 1836? Or even 1936? Who cares? I remember my History teacher, Mister Crayford – 'Crayfish' we used to call him – he asked me once when was the last time Britain got invaded. I said, 'when Poland joined the EU'.

**Geoffrey** I bet you got top marks for that.

**Steve** What's the point, though? Just passing on useless information from one generation to the next? Why can't they make it interesting?

**Geoffrey** Cos it's easier.

**Steve** Eh?

**Geoffrey** You can test people on dates and names. They're either right or wrong. If you ask someone to describe how the common man lived in 1836, how do you mark the answer? Someone's actually got to read what you've written and make a judgement on it. And somehow all those judgements have to be standardised.

Plus, of course, it penalises those who aren't so good at English, which makes it unfair, whereas every kid is supposed to be able to remember facts ...

**Steve** I couldn't.

**Geoffrey** There you are.

**Steve** Huh?

**Geoffrey** That's why schools don't like teaching anything creative. Music and Dance are right at the bottom of the list.

**Steve** So you moved up a bit, then?

**Geoffrey** Ha. Yes.

*Steve hands Geoffrey a mug of tea*

**Steve** One Earl Grey with a dash of milk (*in a poor imitation of Sean Connery*) shaken but not stirred.

**Geoffrey** Jolly decent of you, old chap.

*Steve pours milk into his coffee, as Geoff sips the tea cautiously*

**Geoffrey** You did use the full-cream, didn't you?

**Steve** Oh, f...

**Geoffrey** Not to worry.

**Steve** It's better for you.

**Geoffrey** First semi-skimmed milk, then low-alcohol lager. Soon you'll be suggesting I cycle to work.

**Steve** You could do with keeping fit.

**Geoffrey** Difficult to *keep* fit if you aren't fit to start with.

**Steve** No time like the present. And when you retire, you'll have all the time in the world. How long is it now?

**Geoffrey** Seven months, two weeks and three days.

**Steve** Timed it just right, eh?

**Geoffrey** Hopefully.

**Steve** Orders drying up by the week. You'll walk out the door and the shutters will come down BANG behind you. Morton and Sons, the end. Ha. Just when I should be taking over, I'll be out on the street.

**Geoffrey** I'm sure you'll find something else to do. A man of your wit and wisdom.

**Steve** And one GCSE in Woodwork.

**Geoffrey** Qualifications aren't everything.

**Steve** At least you've got one. Even if you don't use it. I never did understand how you ended up making shoes with a degree in music.

**Geoffrey** It's a long story.