

Last Orders

author: Graham Swift

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Synopsis

author	Graham Swift
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Man Booker Prize, Fiction, 1996

When four men carry out another's final wishes, they are forced to take stock of who they are, who they were, and what lies in between.

"It ain't like your regular sort of day," Ray admits. The Coach and Horses pub in London's East End opened just five minutes ago, and Ray is already having a pint. He's soon joined by Lenny and Vic, who arrives carrying a box. Vic "twists the box round so we can see there's a white card taped to one side. There's a date and a number and name: Jack Arthur Dodds."

The three men, friends since World War II, have gathered to carry out Jack's last orders and deliver his ashes to the sea. A fourth comes, too, and serves as the driver: Jack's adopted son, Vince. As they move together toward the fulfillment of their mission, their errand becomes an extraordinary journey into their collective and individual pasts. Their voices - and Jack's, and that of Jack's widow Amy - combine in a choir of sorrow and resentment, passion and regret. An interwoven series of first-person narratives shifts between times and tenses, memories and revelations.

A testament to a changing England, a stark portrait of its working class, and a morality tale that hides its ambition and expertise under moving naturalism, *Last Orders* is a stunning achievement by one of England's greatest living writers.

Reader's comments

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