

Smoking the pipe©.  
By Jude Ashton

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**Scene 1.**  
**Monday bites.**

Int. 8:00am. Oldmans bedroom at the back of the shop.  
He awakes and urinates in his bedside bucket. Then he lights his pipe. The old man starts to leave the room and then hears the dog drinking from the bucket.

Old man:  
<In an unfazed pipe spoken mumble>  
Stupid dog.

Voice over(While the old man puts tobacco in his pipe and smoke it)  
This is my pipe. It helps me get through this life. I think I am having a mid life crisis at seventy three. Last time this happened I got married at twenty two. That's when I met her.

My tobacco pipe, and we have been together ever since. This is my calm before the storm. I like to embrace the day before the day embraces me. This is my pipe and I am going to smoke it.

<He hears a light tap at the shop door and goes to the door.>

Wob:  
<Old voice comes from the door>  
Let me in! You're late today.

<He unlocks and unbolts all the security fittings.  
The door opens.>

Wob:  
It's raining today, we should get some business.

<The dog runs to Wob to greet her.>  
Old man:  
I don't why I bother.

Wob:  
Ahhh he's licking me! Someone loves me don't you?

Old man:  
I wouldn't let him do that if I were you.

Wob:  
He loves me! Don't you?

<The oldman sighs heavily. Puffing quicker on his pipe>  
Old man:  
Aww bloody hell.

<The bell on the shop door rings and rolls  
On to the floor.>

Old man:  
You haven't fixed that have you! What do I pay you for anyway?

Wob:  
You don't pay me anything.

Old man:  
True.Well serve this lady.

Old lady:  
Good morning Mr.Smith.  
How are you on this fine day?

Old man:  
Well I am still alive.  
<Theres a nervous silence. Then they all smile together. Except  
the Oldman.>

Old lady:  
I have this watch and its not working.

<She hands him a old watch and the oldman has a look at it. Lots  
of smoke coming from his pipe.>

Old man:  
It's only got one hand love. That's the problem.

Old lady:  
Has it, really? Lets see, oh it has.  
<Looking at Wob.> He's right you know.

<The oldman rolls his eyes and is rubbing his forehead.>

Old man:  
Look madam I can show you some other watches we have for sale...

Old lady:  
Oh no I couldn't. My husband bought me this.

Couldn't you fix it?

Old man:  
No love, it's broken beyond repair.

Old lady:  
Yes I understand that, but when will you fix it?

Old man:  
I can't fix it love. It's broken, okay?

Old lady:  
Oh... I will have to get another watch wont I?

<The oldlady sits down on the seat near the counter and fiddles with it. She mutters things to herself. Another customer comes in. Wob fixes the bell back on the front shop door.>

Old man:  
Good morning love, what can I do for you?

Lady:  
Hi, I have this umbrella and I took it to the shop down the road. Can't remember the name of it...it has a wooden duck outside the shop.

Old man:  
Ducks are us?

Lady:  
No that's not it...erm...

Old man:  
Let's have a look at it?

Lady:  
<She keeps talking and talking>  
Hangon, so the man says he can't fix it.  
<Oldman starts rubbing his forehead with both hands and more smoke comes out of his pipe.>

<The phone rings and rings, rings. Wobs head starts wobbling faster and faster.>

Old man:  
Do you want me to fix it love or what?

Lady:  
Yes, so the man says that I should come to your shop. Well I didn't know where your shop was.  
<The phone is still ringing. Then suddenly the old lady with the broken watch stands up and pushes her way in front of the lady being served.>

Old lady:

It moved! I saw the finger move, it moved! Look?  
<This interruption doesn't stop the lady still telling her  
story. The phone is still ringing.>

<Still rubbing his head. The phone is still ringing.>

Old man:

Jesus give me strength. Its broken love, you stupi..its broken..  
just like me.

Lady:

...so then I found the shop and here I am!

<The phone is still ringing and hasn't been answered. The oldman  
leaves the two women standing at the counter talking at the same  
time. He storms over to the unanswered phone.>

Old man:

Yes?

Who?

No this is a shop!

There isn't any Michelle here, it's a shop.

Yes a shop. What? Jim?

<He slams the phone down and the door bell comes crashing down.  
Oldman grabs his pipe & tobacco pouch. He then slowly walks out  
the shop. Stopping first and kicking the door bell across the  
floor>

Lady:

Where's he going?

Wob:

<Sigh> A meeting, he does that.

## Scene 2

### Look who I bump into (Reg)

On his way to the meeting his friend Reg sees the oldman and  
beckons him over to sit with him while he's fishing.

Reg:

You should always fish when there's trouble at home.

Oldman:

You're here every week aren't you?

Reg:

Hmm. Sometimes not through choice. If I don't have a good day I  
will.

Oldman:  
You mean if the wife nags at you.

Reg:  
No. If I don't have a bite, I come back the next day.

Oldman:  
Oh right.

Oldman:  
Rose tells me all the time to go fishing with you.

Reg:  
Does she?

Oldman:  
Not as such. More like "Why don't you fuck off with that old miserable fart Reg, down that shitty old lake near the sewage works and fish the pissing day away!". So I did.

Reg:  
Oh...

Oldman:  
Yep.

Reg:  
Wow...

Oldman:  
Yep.

Reg;  
I'm not miserable am I?

Oldman:  
<Slight pause>  
Naa.

Oldman:  
So do you like fishing?

Reg:  
Nope.

Oldman:  
So why do you fish then?

Reg:  
Don't know really, just do.

Oldman:

What bait do you use?

Reg:  
Maggots.

Oldman:  
So do you use any other baits?

Reg:  
Nope, just maggots.

Oldman:  
Great...erm...look..I want..

Reg:  
Maggots are over their. Just help yourself not scared off them  
are you?

Oldman:  
I don't want maggots. It isn't working out.

Reg:  
You're not patient are you?

Oldman:  
What? No I mean my marriage, not this crap fishing.

Reg:  
Fishing isn't crap. I love fishing.

Oldman:  
Yeah I didn't mean that. Sorry.

Reg:  
So what's happened? Pass me the some of those maggots.

Oldman:  
<Grabbing some maggots and pulling a face>  
The love is gone I think, I just don't know.

Reg:  
Hold the rod level, you aren't holding the rod right.

Oldman:  
God now you sound like her!

Reg:  
What? Why do you think the love has gone?

Oldman:  
I don't know.  
Anyway I got go, I am going to a meeting with Charles.

Reg:  
You mean the pub?

Oldman:  
Yeah, take care Reg.

**Scene 3**  
**The meeting**

Oldman leaves Reg and finally meets with his close friend Charlie at his local pub. They play their usual game of pool and give each other lots of abuse.

Old man:  
That pocket over there.

<He points to the pocket with his cue. The black ball then goes in the pocket at the opposite end. And not the one he pointed at.>

Charlie:  
Bad luck...old boy. Its game, I win. Wrong pocket.

Old man:  
It went in didn't it?

Charlie:  
Yes but in the wrong pocket.

Old man:  
Oh you noticed, well I give that one then. It's just a game you know.  
<They sit down on some chairs near the table with their drinks.>  
Why do we still come here for meetings? It has the same smells. That pasty you stood on last week is still over near the ladies toilets. Hang on, some of it is still on your shoes.

Charlie:  
Because the ale is cheap and they let us come in without questions. Shall we go to the old casino instead?  
<Oldman lits his pipe and thinks about it for some seconds. He continues to talk with his pipe still in his mouth. Like a baby with a dummy.>

Old man:  
No can't go there, we just can't.

Charlie:  
I like it there, why not?

Old man:

Because they know me.

Charlie:  
You're barred at your age?

Old man:  
Naah I just don't think they like me.

Charlie:  
Barred I thought so. So here we will stay then.

Old man:  
Yeah.

Charlie:  
So what's the real reason for this rush meeting? What's on your old mind?

Old man:  
Well...

Charlie:  
Yes?

Old man:  
I don't care anymore. The customers want more and I can't give it to them. And the bloody bell keeps falling off the shop door. Wob doesn't do anything. The dog is a walking toilet and most of all I need a new pipe.

Charlie:  
Oh I see. Do you want me to look at the bell?

Old man:  
No I don't.

<They both have a quick slurp of beer.>

Old man:  
You won't take the dog will ya?

Charlie:  
No best not.

Old man:  
Well thanks for your time you have been really helpful.

Charlie:  
That's not the real problem is it?

Oldman:  
No its not. I think I should close the shop once and for all.

Charlie:  
And do what exactly?

Oldman:  
Absolutely nothing.

Charlie:  
You talked to Rose about this?

Oldman:  
No just Shirley. I haven't seen Rose for a week or so.

Charlie:  
Shirley? You know its all going to catch up with you know.

Oldman:  
It has already Charles.

<Mobile phone rings to the tune of 'Rule Britannia'>

Oldman:  
Oh hello honey.  
No babe, I'm having a meeting. sugar cube.  
Yes, I'm in the pub playing pool.  
Next week?  
Yeah we could do that, my little kitten.  
Love you too.  
I do, you know I do.  
See you babe.  
I can't say that right now.....because..yeah there's someone  
here.  
Bye babe.

Charles:  
The wife?

Oldman:  
Oh god no!  
<Confused face>  
Dance partner.

Charles:  
You dance?

Oldman:  
Yeah I dance and we entering a competition next week.

Charles:  
Well aren't you full of secrets? I never knew you danced.

Oldman:  
I might look old, but I can still dance. You want to come and  
watch us?

Charles:  
This I have to see. Rose will be there wont she?

Oldman:  
No, she doesn't know about the dancing.

Charles:  
Oh okay, I can't wait.

Oldman:  
Anyway it's your shot.

**Scene 4**  
**Visiting Rose**

The old man sneaks his key into the door and stumbles on his wife having a conversation on the phone.

Wife's best friend:  
So did you go on Sunday?

Rose:  
Mary's wedding.

Wife's best friend:  
You didn't...

Rose:  
I did.

Wife's best friend:  
So did Jean go?

Rose:  
She did.

Wife's best friend:  
What about...

Rose:  
Yeah Alison and the other guy.

Wife's best friend:  
What's his name?

Rose:  
Oh dear, I always forget...

Wife's best friend:  
Alan! The one with the wig.

Rose:

Wiggy Al, that's right.

Wife's best friend:  
What about you know Marks fancy bit...

Rose:  
Oh her! No, the snotty bitch didn't go. Never liked her.

Wife's best friend:  
Oh I know! She went to a private school you know?

Rose:  
Really?

Wife's best friend:  
Catholic too.

Rose:  
Oh dear.

Wife's best friend:  
That's her problem isn't it?

Rose:  
Well where do you start?

Wife's best friend:  
So tell me, did...

Rose:  
She was sick with the twins.

Wife's best friend:  
Oh god no, was she? You mean Shelley?

Rose:  
No Trudy. The red head twins, you know?

Wife's best friend:  
That's right. But tell me, did 'SHE' turn up?

Rose:  
Who Clare??? She wouldn't dare.

Wife's best friend:  
No not that cow, the other one. With the lisp and the plastic bits.

Rose:  
Jenny! Bloody hell, she did you know!

Wife's best friend:  
Don't miss her out.

Rose:  
How could you? She can block eclipses.

Wife's best friend:  
So was she with him then?

Rose:  
What Terry?

Wife's best friend:  
Yeah.

Rose:  
No, some other fella!

Wife's best friend:  
No!

Rose:  
Yeah.

Wife's best friend:  
So was poor Anne there, did she make it?

Rose:  
Yeah the poor thing, just with the six little ones.

Wife's best friend:  
Awww, poor thing.

Rose:  
T-shirt & jeans you know?

Wife's best friend:  
Awww. So you had a good time then?

Rose:  
Nahhh, waste of my time.

Wife's best friend:  
Was it?

Rose:  
Yeah...

Wife's best friend:  
Shame.

Rose:  
They had a good turn out though. Some surprises.

Wife's best friend:  
So what about the happy couple?

Rose:  
Give them twelve months.

Wife's best friend:  
That much.

Rose:  
Yeah. They looked happy for half the ceremony. Anyway ...you wont guess what the cat just brought in?

Wife's best friend:  
No!

Rose:  
Yes I am afraid so.

Wife's best friend:  
See ya tomorrow then.

Rose:  
Bye love.  
<Puts the phone down slowly, giving a nasty stare at her husband. He just stands in the doorway, puffing away at his pipe.>

Rose:  
You eaten?

Oldman:  
No.

<She heads to the kitchen. Oldman sits down in the lounge. Starts lighting his pipe. The tv is on but he isn't watching it. Rose is still in the kitchen warming his meal up.>

Rose  
I hope your not smoking with that bloody pipe in there. I have just cleaned up there.

<Already puffing away by now. With him brushing away a lot the tobacco off the seat. And looking behind him>

Oldman:  
Nope.

Rose:

I expected you on Sunday you know? I had your favourite meal ready.

<No reply. Then Rose drops a pan. BANG. It startles oldman. He slowly gets up and heads for the front door. But then realises that Rose isn't coming in throwing pans. He leans back and puffs more pipe.>

Rose:

You haven't been home for a while. I thought you were dead in an alley or something. But then I saw the shop open.

Oldman:

What are you cooking? I hope it's not salad again.

<Rose sticks her head into the lounge. Forcing oldman to eventually take his pipe out of his mouth.>

Rose:

Do you want to cook it?

Oldman:

No honey, no rush.

<Rose precedes back the kitchen and bangs some cupboards (while preparing the food). Oldman looks over twice to the kitchen worried Rose might come back.>

Oldman:

I am thinking of closing the shop.

<The noise stops and it goes silent. Rose comes back into the lounge shocked. Still holding a pan and pointing with it .>

Rose:

What about the money? Are you serious? I can't live on a pension. What's the matter with you? I can't survive, you're not closing the shop.

Oldman:

It's not about money anymore it's about me! I can't take the bullshit anymore....

<Rose interrupts.>

Rose:

Don't curse in my house. I won't have it.

Oldman:

It's our house honey and I am closing the shop.

Rose:

It's our house when you want your food, or she's kicked you out!  
You can't switch on this marriage when it's convenient for you!  
This was a beautiful house and then you...YOU shamed it. I am  
shamed too, I can't walk down the street. I can't look at people  
down at the shops. You know they are talking about us, yet  
you...YOU! You just carry on in your wonderful world! What about  
me? Do you think about me? I am your wife and as long as that  
bitch knows that she isn't getting that money.

<He frantically puffs harder on his pipe searching for a reply.  
He replies without looking at her>

Oldman:

What money?

Rose:

The shop of course, I just know you aren't giving her any of it.  
No hang on, wait a minute. It's her idea isn't it?

Oldman:

No Rose it's my idea and that bitch has a name its Shirley.

Rose:

I don't want to know and don't say her name in my house. I have  
throbbing headache now. Heres your food have it and bugger off.  
Antiques road show is on in a minute and I want to watch it in  
peace. And put that bloody pipe out.

<Oldman rolls his eyes. Puts the pipe out and proceeds to eat  
his now cold meal. Scene fades on Rose's emotional face.>

### Scene 5

#### Are those neighbours still giving you any trouble?

Next day back at the shop. A regular customer comes in,  
Mr.Jones.

Oldman:

Morning Mr.Jones and how are you? Are those neighbours still  
giving you any trouble?

Mr.Jones:

Robbing buggers they are! The other day I caught a two  
Nigerians, aged 16. They crossed the road (I was watching them)  
and went right into my front garden. Straight to my pears and  
were taking them. I said "Hey what do think you are doing?"  
They said "We are taking some pears." And I said "No your not,  
now fuck off!"

Oldman:

Your pears?

Mr.Jones:

Yeah my bloody pears, cheeky buggers. But if they had just knocked on my door and asked me "Please sir can we have some pears?" I would have said yes of course you fucking can!

Mr.Jones:

Then guess what?

Oldman:

What?

Mr.Jones:

They get their dad and he comes over, big Nigerian he was scary black guy. He says there's no need to be nasty to my kids. I told him if you set one foot on my fucking property I will stick this fucking pitch fork in your fucking eye! So he turned round and didn't mess with me.

Mr.Jones:

There's more, my neighbour told me that some git was robbing my plums at four in the morning. So I got up and I caught him with big carry bag helping himself. I said "Hey what the bloody hell do you think you are doing?" He said "I am taking your plums."

I said " No your not, now fuck off out of my plum tree!" So he did and with the carry bag full of plums. I said "Oy ya bugger you can leave the bag too."

Oldman:

The cheeky git.

Mr.Jones:

And you know what?

Oldman:

What?

Mr.Jones:

If he had just knocked on my door at four in the morning and asked me "Please can I have some plums?" I would have said yes of course you fucking can!

On Sunday bloody Sunday I tell ya! I caught a Muslim up a ladder, the bugger bought his own ladder in my apple tree. I said "What are doing in my apple tree?" He said "I am taking your apples." I said "No your not! Take your ladder and fuck off!"

Mr.Jones:

And you know what?

Oldman:

If he had just knocked on your door and asked you "Please can I have some apples?" You would have said yes of course you fucking can!

Mr.Jones:

No I wouldn't, I can't stand Muslims.  
Fair enough mate it's your fruit isn't it?

Oldman:

Riiiiight then, he's your watch that's twenty pounds.

**Scene 6**  
**Dancing to Tom.**

Oldman is working at the back of the store. The shop is open and Wob is at the front of the store serving customers.

The room suddenly goes dark and out from behind a curtain appears Tom Jones.

Oldman:

Tom? How long you been there?

Tom:

I am always here.

Oldman:

Always? What? Even when I am...

Tom:

Yes even then.

Oldman:

Oh...so you can you fix watches?

Tom:

No.

Oldman:

Not umbrellas?

Tom:

No I can't. I can sing though.

Oldman:

Well sing then.

Tom starts singing 'Delia' and a spot light comes on. And a 21 year old blonde bombshell comes out the curtains. And she proceeds to dance with the oldman.

After the song, Wob pops her head in the back room.

Wob:  
Where you been? I have been calling you, we have customers waiting.

Oldman:  
I was just dancing with Tom..I mean a young girl. And Tom was singing oh nevermind.

Wob:  
Tom? Tom who?

**Scene 7**  
**Charles visits Rose**

Charlie goes to visit Rose at oldmans house. He knocks at the door.

Charlie:  
Rose! Is he here?

Rose:  
Charles! You are joking aren't you?

Charlie:  
Good. May I? I brought your favourites.

<He hands Rose a bunch of flowers.>

Rose:  
Oh Charles, you shouldn't of! That's nice, thank you.

<The go in the house together. And sit close together in the lounge. >

Charlie:  
How you keeping Rose? Has he been round?

Rose:  
Battling on Charles, you know me. He crawled in here the other day. Did you know about the shop?

Charlie:  
Yes Rose. I think its best for you too.

Rose:  
Did he send you here to say that?

Charlie:  
No Rose! He doesn't know I am here. I just wanted to see you.

Rose:

Sorry Charles, I didn't mean that. I just don't understand anymore.

Charlie:

I know Rose, I know. If I can do anything you know I will.

Rose:

Thanks Charles, you're a saint. Cup of tea?

Charlie:

Yes please, one sugar thanks.

<Charles sits down. Rose goes in the kitchen.>

### **Scene 8**

#### **Renew the shop or not?**

Wob walks into the shop office backroom and the light is off. She sees a shadowy figure sitting at the office desk.

Wob:

Ahhhh you gave me a fright! What are you doing sitting in the dark? You nearly gave me a heart attack!

Oldman:

Nothing, just thinking.

Wob:

In the dark? What's the matter? I am switching the light on.

Oldman:

NO don't! I don't want you to see me like this. I am thinking about closing the shop

<She sits next to him>

Wob:

What do you mean? I didn't even know you were even thinking about it. You didn't mention this before.

Oldman:

Well I am not closing it, at least not yet. It's stupid... but I am scared, for the first time in my life. I'm not sure about where I am going.

Wob:

Why? You should be happy, the shop is doing well.

Oldman:

I am alone, if I stop doing this there's nothing else left.

Wob:

Don't be silly, you have your wife. She loves you.

Oldman:  
No I don't think she does anymore

Wob:  
What do you mean?

Oldman:  
She's too angry with me and I don't deserve her

Wob:  
Then leave the shop open. If it's such a problem, leave it open.  
It's not the shop is it?

Oldman:  
No.

Wob:  
Then what is it?

Oldman:  
I don't want to be alone.

Wob:  
You're not making any sense, you have people around you. You're  
not alone.

I know, I know that. But if the shop closes and I retire what  
will happen then? I can't stop being who I am. I have always  
worked my whole life, my father worked till he died. I'm sorry I  
can't believe I am telling you all this.

Wob:  
Its okay I don't mind. Look I think you should go home and rest.  
And maybe we can talk about this in the morning over a cup of  
tea?

<He stands up and gives Wob a hug. Then he puts his hat on.>

Oldman:  
Thanks.

<He calls for the dog and they both leave the shop together.>