

Ethel 7
Hodgson
Cecily

HODGSON. Perhaps you're right, mum, but I'm only going because the master's sending me, and you can't look a gift horse in the mouth.

CECILY. Take things easy - don't work too hard.

HODGSON. It's a pleasure working for anyone as fond of flowers as you are, mum - and I was thinking you might like a buttonhole for your dress this evening.

(He produces the rose from behind his back.)

It's the last one left on the prize standard in the corner.

CECILY. Oh, it's divine - "The Last Rose of Summer."

(She takes it. HODGSON roars with laughter.)

HODGSON. Vicar's wife sang that song at the concert at Christmas, "The Last Rose of Summer" - it sent me out for the last drink of the evening.

(He laughs again. ETHEL enters, puffing excitedly.)

→ **ETHEL.** Oo! The gentleman gave me ten shillin'.

CECILY. That was very kind of him.

ETHEL. That makes a 'ole pound with the ten shillin' the master gave me.

HODGSON. See you save that up, my girl.

CECILY. The master gave you?

ETHEL. Yes, on top of me wages - ten shillin'. He give me to go to the fair tonight.

CECILY. I'd no idea there was any fair.

ETHEL. Yes'm, it always comes late in the year 'ereabouts and master said I could go 'ome early and it didn't matter how late I stayed at the fair as I wouldn't be wanted in the morning.

CECILY. Well, this is the first I've heard of all this.

ETHEL. *(Crestfallen.)* Oh, then - please, mum, shan't I?

HODGSON. Of course you won't, you'll stay as long as you're wanted.

CECILY. *(Smiling.)* That's all right, Ethel, the master's right, there's no real need - yes, you can go.

ETHEL. Oh, thank you, mum, thank you.

HODGSON. You're spoiling her, mum.

CECILY. Oh, am I? Well, I'll spoil you too; you may as well finish this whisky. You go with Ethel, she'll give you a glass in the kitchen.

HODGSON. No need for a glass. Thank you kindly, mum.

CECILY. I shan't be seeing you again, Ethel.

ETHEL. Oh, Lord, mum, that fair had put it clean out of my head. Well, goodbye, mum, I hope you have a nice time.

CECILY. Thank you, Ethel. You'll look after things, won't you, while I'm away?

ETHEL. That I will, mum - an' I'll have a rare old spring cleanin' for when you comes back.

CECILY. We'll give you good warning about that.

ETHEL. Everythin's ready for supper, I think, mum. I've put all the things on the tray. Will there be anythin' else, mum?

CECILY. No, thank you, Ethel.

(She points to the glasses left from drinks.)

Take these glasses, will you?

(ETHEL picks them up.)

Enjoy yourself at the fair, who are you going with? That nice postman?

ETHEL. *(Contemptuously.)* Oh, him! No, mum, I'm goin' with Ted Saunders, who brings the milk.

(She exits into the kitchen.)

CECILY. Oh, I see. Well, goodbye, Hodgson. Oh, here's Don's lead.

(She takes it from the dining table and gives it to him.)

I'd forgotten. Take good care of him, won't you?

HODGSON. Don't you worry, mum. I'll look after him.

CECILY. Goodbye, Hodgson. Take care of that rheumatism.

HODGSON. I will. Goodbye - good luck, mum.