

A hotel room exterior with French doors opening up to a decorative patio overlooking the sea. At rise, VICTORIA enters through the French doors, walks downstage to the edge of the balcony and takes a large inhalation of breath.

VICTORIA

Ahh...

(Beat.)

Oh, Darling, I can hardly believe that we're here. It seems like only yesterday we were moping about under yet another "overcast, but likely to improve," High Wycombe sky.

MAX

(Emerging from the French doors.)

Probably because we were. Unless it's slipped your mind, we only arrived last night.

VICTORIA

Oh, Max, how can you be so literal-minded in a place like this? Just look...

(Gesturing at the sights before her.)

Look at all of that.

MAX

(Grudgingly.)

Mmm...very nice.

VICTORIA

It's...it's like another world. It's...transcendental, or...metaphysical, or...something. Oh damn, I wish I were more poetic at times like this.

MAX

Frankly, it's a relief you're not.

VICTORIA

(Lost in thought.)

How can it be so different? Just a short hop on a plane and it's as if one were on another planet. Everything seems so new – re-fashioned and turned upside down. I think it's the most wonderful sensation a person can have: to know it's all so much bigger and stranger than what you thought it was.

MAX

Did you pack the nail clippers?

VICTORIA

What?

MAX

The nail clippers. These sandals expose my toes and...well, in a pair of Oxfords I can skip a few weeks, but in these it's all...well, it's public. Wouldn't want to give off the wrong signals.

VICTORIA

To whom?

MAX

Well...the local populace, I suppose. Don't want them to get the wrong impression.

VICTORIA

I'd be surprised if your toenails held much interest for them, but there's a pair in my vanity case.

MAX

Which is?

VICTORIA

The forest green and burnt umber chequered Louis Vuitton personal accessory you gave me on our last anniversary which is situated on the dresser next to my harmony pills.

MAX

Oh no, Victoria, not your bloody harmony pills again. Why did you have to bring those wretched things with you? I told you to leave them behind. This is meant to be a break from all that. What good is it if you're going to drag all your baggage along with you?

VICTORIA

It's not baggage, it's vital medication.

MAX

The whole *point* of a holiday is to provide one with a harmonious experience. Why bother if you're going to be drugged and popping pills every second of it.

VICTORIA

Oh stop being such an old crank and cut your nails.

MAX

(As he exits back through the French doors.)
I've half a mind to flush them down the toilet.

VICTORIA

(Calling after him.)

Don't you dare!

(Returning her gaze to the sights before her and sighing contentedly.)

Oh honestly, Max, it's like a dream...a mirage. It's all so hypnotic and mysterious and unfamiliar...and just a teeny bit dangerous.

(Beat.)

I wonder if the local inhabitants realise just how fortunate they are? Probably not. I expect they're too busy bartering their olives and trinkets and whatnot to think about how beautiful their life is. It's a shame really.

(Ruefully.)

I'm sure they'd soon change their tune if they spent a few cold, grey, wet Saturday afternoons in High Wycombe...on their own...while their husband worked overtime...once again.

MAX

(Off.)

Darling, did you call room service and order the cosmopolitans as I asked you?

VICTORIA

Yes, I did.

MAX

(Off.)

Then why aren't they here?

VICTORIA

(Dreamily, to herself.)

Were I were room service I would be more than happy to give you a definitive answer to that question. As it is, I'm afraid all I can do is...gaze in wonder at this blazing azure sky and ponder upon the inexplicable nature of my existence.

MAX

(Off.)

Call them again then, would you?

VICTORIA

In a minute.

MAX

(Off.)

It's intolerably hot. A man has to have something to – ow!

VICTORIA

(Looking back at the room.)

Are you all right?

MAX

(Off.)

Yes, yes, just...cut a bit close to the quick. Ooh...ahh...

VICTORIA

(Looking out before her again.)

Yes...I know the feeling.

MAX

(Off.)

What?

VICTORIA

Does it need a bandage or something?

MAX

(Off.)

No, no, no, there's no blood. It just hurts to high bloody heaven.

VICTORIA

Yes.

(MAX re-enters the balcony, limping slightly.)

MAX

A fine impression this is giving the natives. I'd have been better off letting them think I had claws.

VICTORIA

Are you sure it doesn't require some sort of medical attention?

MAX

It didn't even cut the flesh, Victoria. It's not an emergency, it's just bloody painful. If they'd only hurry up with those wretched drinks I'm sure I'd feel a damned sight better.

VICTORIA

I can call them again if you like but they were very rude.

MAX

Rude?

VICTORIA

Yes, very. I think he swore at me – but I couldn't swear on it.

MAX

God, that infuriates me! These people learn some archaic foreign language and then assume they have full license to get one up on you!

VICTORIA

Now don't get all in a tizz. Perhaps he didn't. Perhaps it was some sort of ethnic blessing and I misunderstood.

MAX

I don't trust any of them.

VICTORIA

It was just the tone of his voice.

MAX

If they don't want our business or our currency then they should damned well come out and say it. I'm not going to be holed up in here with you for an entire week if all the thanks I get is to be spat on.

VICTORIA

Oh, I...I thought you...

MAX

What?

VICTORIA

I don't know, I...I thought the reason we came here *was* for you to spend some time with me.

MAX

Well...it was – *is*. But that's not the point.

VICTORIA

Then what is?

MAX

The point, Victoria, is that by choosing to spend a holiday here we are actively contributing to the betterment of these people's lives. Our disposable income, in its own modest way, is helping to rebuild their shattered economy and alleviate their hand-to-mouth existence. I had hoped that a reciprocal gesture might've been in order, but apparently it's all a one-way street.

VICTORIA

(Looking down over the balcony.)

Is it really? How terribly confusing.

MAX

I was speaking metaphorically.

VICTORIA

Yes, I can see that.

(Beat.)

Oh! Oh, look!

(Pointing toward the ground.)

Darling, look, look! Quick!

MAX

(Dispassionately.)

What is it?

VICTORIA

It's a...oh, darling look, it's a...a small one.

MAX

A what?

VICTORIA

A small...a little one...of them. Quick!

MAX

(Leaning over the balcony.)

That?

VICTORIA

Yes.

MAX

It's a child.