

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

By
Bob Cooner

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

© 2023 by Robert Cooner

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **A ROOM WITH A VIEW** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **A ROOM WITH A VIEW** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to genekato@nextstagepress.com

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **A ROOM WITH A VIEW** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lucy Honeychurch:	Female; late teens-early 20s; British; middle/upper class; naïve; headstrong; searching
Charlotte Bartlett:	Female; middle-aged; British; middle/upper class; stuffy; strict; obsequious
Mr. Emerson:	Male; middle-aged; British; middle class; progressive; outspoken; loving
George Emerson:	Male; early 20s; British; middle class; quiet; intense; searching
The Rev. Mr. Beebe:	Male; younger middle-aged; British; middle/upper class; worldly; friendly; witty
Miss Eleanor Lavish:	Female; middle-aged; British; middle/upper class; outspoken; progressive; self-serving
Miss Catharine Alan:	Female; 60s-70s; British; middle/upper class; traditional; polite; gossipy
Miss Teresa Alan:	Female; 60s-70s; British; middle/upper class; traditional; polite; genteel
The Rev. Mr. Eager:	Male; middle-aged; British; middle/upper class; priggish; self-important
Mrs. Honeychurch:	Female; middle-aged; British; middle/upper class; traditional; loving; firm
Freddy Honeychurch:	Male; late teens; British; middle/upper class; well-meaning; spirited; comical
Cecil Vyse:	Male; 20s-early 30s; British; middle/upper class; priggish; self-important; intelligent

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

Minnie Beebe:	Female; tweens-early teens; British; middle/upper class; polite; spirited
Signora:	Female; middle-aged; Italian; middle class; bossy; busy
Anne:	Female; late teens-early 20s; British; lower/middle class; servant in Honeychurch household
Photograph Vendor:	Male; middle-aged or older; Italian

Also various Pensione Servants, Tourists, Italian Locals, Young Man 1, Young Man 2, Young Driver, Young Woman, Older Driver, English Servants, Rectory Maid

Suggested Doubling

Eleanor Lavish	doubles as Mrs. Honeychurch
The Rev. Mr. Eager	doubles as English Servant
Freddy Honeychurch	doubles as Pensione Servant, Tourist, Young Man 2, Attendant
Cecil Vyse	doubles as Pensione Servant, Young Man 1, Young Driver
Minnie Beebe	doubles as Pensione Servant, Tourist
Signora	doubles as Tourist, English Servant, Rectory Maid
Anne	doubles as Italian Local, Tourist, Young Woman
Photograph Vendor	doubles as Italian Local, Older Driver, English Servant

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

Acts/Scenes

Act I: Italy

- Scene 1. The Bertolini Pensione
- Scene 2. Santa Croce, the next day
- Scene 3. The Bertolini Pensione, that afternoon
- Scene 4. Piazza Signoria, later that afternoon
- Scene 5. Piazza Signoria, the next day
- Scene 6. The countryside, two days later
- Scene 7. The Bertolini Pensione, that night

Act II: England

- Scene 1. Windy Corner (The Honeychurch Estate)
- Scene 2. The countryside, several days later
- Scene 3. Windy Corner, several days later
- Scene 4. Charlotte's home; Windy Corner; a few days later
- Scene 5. Outside the Emerson's cottage; the next day
- Scene 6. Sacred Lake, the same day
- Scene 7. Windy Corner, later the same day
- Scene 8. Windy Corner, the following Sunday
- Scene 9. Windy Corner, immediately following
- Scene 10. Windy Corner, later that night
- Scene 11. The Miss Alans' home; Windy Corner, the next day
- Scene 12. The Miss Alans' hotel in Bloomsbury; Windy Corner; the Rectory parlor, the following Friday
- Epilogue: The Bertolini Pensione

Author's Note: Though the action of the play occurs in a variety of locations, the play is served best by using only the most minimal and necessary of furnishings (furniture, props, door units, etc.) to allow for swift and seamless transitions from scene to scene.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

ACT I

February, 1907. Italy. In and around Florence. A unit set that, along with furniture pieces and variations in lighting, is capable of depicting various locations. Music might establish the mood of early 20th century Italy.

SCENE 1

Lights come up isolating CHARLOTTE BARTLETT, a middle-aged chaperone, and LUCY HONEYCHURCH, her young cousin, peering out of the window of a room in the Bertolini Pensione, a lodging for English travelers in Florence. The music continues, underscoring their dialogue.

CHARLOTTE. *(Upset.)* Signora Bertolini had no business to do it.

LUCY. *(Disappointed referring to the view.)* We might as well not be in Florence at all.

CHARLOTTE. She promised us south rooms in the pension with a view, close together—

LUCY. *(Interjecting.)* —overlooking the Arno—

CHARLOTTE. *(Continuing.)* —instead of which here we have north rooms, looking into a courtyard, and a long way apart. Oh, Lucy!

LUCY. *(Sarcastically.)* It might be London, don't you think, Charlotte? *(As the dialogue and music continue, Charlotte and Lucy move to where various others are seated around a dining table. The lights transition indicating a short passage of time has occurred.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Moving to the table.)* Of course, any nook will do for me, but it does seem that you should have a view.

LUCY. *(Also moving to the table.)* No, you must look over the Arno, too. I meant that. The first vacant room in the front— *(Once seated, we assume they have been there for a few moments and that the meal is in progress. Other travelers seated at the table are MR. EMERSON, a middle-aged,*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

middle-class British man; his son, GEORGE EMERSON, a quietly studious young man in his early twenties; MISS CATHARINE ALAN and MISS TERESA ALAN, two elderly British spinster sisters; and MISS ELEANOR LAVISH, a brash British middle-aged woman. The conversation between Charlotte and Lucy now takes on a lower tone. They are aiming for privacy, even though they are now seated at a table with the others. The music fades under the first few lines of dialogue.)

CHARLOTTE. *(Interrupting, now seated at the table.)* You must have it.

LUCY. *(Also seated.)* No, no. You must have it.

CHARLOTTE. I insist on it. Your mother would never forgive me, Lucy.

LUCY. She would never forgive *me*.

MR. EMERSON. *(Interjecting, attempting to be helpful.)* I have a view.

CHARLOTTE. *(Startled.)* A view? *(Politely dismissive.)* Oh, how delightful a view is.

MR. EMERSON. This is my son. His name's George. He has a view, too.

CHARLOTTE. *(Still politely dismissive.)* Ah.

MR. EMERSON. What I mean is that you can have *our* rooms, and we'll have *yours*. *(A very brief pause.)* We'll change.

CHARLOTTE. Thank you very much indeed. That is out of the question.

MR. EMERSON. Why?

CHARLOTTE. *(Taken aback but covering her surprise.)* Because it is quite out of the question, thank you.

MR. EMERSON. But why? Women like looking at a view; men don't. *(Turning to his son.)* George, persuade them.

GEORGE. *(Matter-of-factly, focusing on his meal.)* It's obvious they should have the rooms. There's nothing more to say.

MR. EMERSON. *(More emphatically.)* Why shouldn't you change? We'll be cleared out in half an hour. *(Rising from the table and exiting.)* Come on, George. *(George gulps down the last of his meal and wine, deposits his napkin on the table, gives Lucy a look, and exits following his father. Charlotte, dumbfounded, looks at the Miss Alans. They return her look sympathetically. Lucy has stopped eating and is waiting to see how Charlotte will respond.)*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

CHARLOTTE. (*Quietly to Lucy.*) Eat your dinner, dear. (*Then more privately to Lucy.*) This pension is a failure. We shall find another tomorrow. (*MR. BEEBE, a pleasantly friendly clergyman, suddenly enters.*)

MR. BEEBE. Apologies, all. Sorry to be so late. (*Lucy, thrilled to see a familiar face, stands to greet Mr. Beebe.*)

LUCY. Why, look Charlotte, it's Mr. Beebe! (*Meanwhile, the SIGNORA and possibly some other Pensione Servants enter.*)

MR. BEEBE. (*Seeing the Signora.*) *Mi scusi, Signora!* [Excuse me, ma'am!]

SIGNORA. *Prego.* [Please come through.] (*Noticing that the Emersons have left the table, the Signora and the Pensione Servants begins to clear their dishes.*)

LUCY. (*Effusive.*) And here in Florence! Oh, how perfectly lovely! (*Now sitting, to Charlotte.*) Oh, we must stay here now, however bad the rooms are! (*The Signora gives Lucy and Charlotte a look and she and the Pensione Servants exit with the Emersons' dishes. Mr. Beebe approaches the table.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*Maintaining her polite dignity as much as possible.*) How do you do, Mr. Beebe? I expect that you have forgotten us: Miss Bartlett and Miss Honeychurch? We met at Turnbridge Wells that very cold Easter? (*Mr. Beebe takes a seat at the table.*)

LUCY. (*Still excited.*) Mother has just written that you will be our new vicar back home in Summer Street!

MR. BEEBE. Yes, I move into the Rectory there in June. What luck to be appointed to such a charming neighborhood.

LUCY. How lucky we are! It's just mother and me generally. It's not often that we get my brother to church— (*Meanwhile, the Signora has entered with Mr. Beebe's plate and sets it before him.*)

MR. BEEBE. (*Interrupting.*) *Grazie, Signora.* [Thank you, ma'am.]

SIGNORA. *Non c'è di che.* [You're welcome.] (*Mr. Beebe wants to eat, but politely refrains while Lucy continues speaking.*)

LUCY. (*Continuing her thought.*) What I mean is, the church is rather far off.

CHARLOTTE. Lucy, dearest, let Mr. Beebe eat his dinner.

MR. BEEBE. (*Finally taking a bite.*) I am eating it, thank you, and enjoying it. Have you been to Florence before, Miss Honeychurch?

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

LUCY. Oh, no, never. This is my first time traveling abroad. I am fortunate that Cousin Charlotte suggested we go together.

MR. BEEBE. Yes, quite.

LUCY. Florence is absolutely lovely, isn't it?

MR. BEEBE. Indeed, but don't neglect the country round. The first fine afternoon drive up to Fiesole, and round by Settignano.

MISS LAVISH. (*Brashly.*) Oh, no, Mr. Beebe, you are wrong! Your ladies must go to Prato—a place too sweetly squalid for words. I love it! I revel in shaking off the trammels of respectability, as you know. (*The lights dim on the dinner table and the music begins again, indicating a transition. All rise from the table. As Charlotte and Lucy step away, the Miss Alans join Miss Lavish in circling Charlotte and Lucy as they eagerly offer their advice.*)

MISS CATHARINE. (*Circling Charlotte and Lucy.*) And you simply must see the Basilica de Santa Croce. It is truly breathtaking—!

MISS TERESA. (*Circling Charlotte and Lucy.*) —Breathtaking—no doubt—but I prefer the quiet grandeur of the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte—

MISS LAVISH. (*Circling Charlotte and Lucy.*) —Once you have tasted the delicious biscotti of Prato you will never abide English shortbread again! (*The Miss Alans and Miss Lavish have exited. Meanwhile, the Signora and other Pensione Servants have cleared the dining room furniture and props. Charlotte and Lucy move to another lighted area of the stage to join Mr. Beebe who drinks espresso from a cup and saucer he has carried with him. The music fades under the following dialogue.*)

CHARLOTTE. We are most grateful to you, Mr. Beebe. The first evening at a pension means so much.

MR. BEEBE. Indeed, Miss Bartlett.

CHARLOTTE. Do you, by chance, know the name of the older man who sat opposite us at dinner?

MR. BEEBE. Emerson.

CHARLOTTE. Is he a friend of yours?

MR. BEEBE. We are friendly—as one is in pensions.

CHARLOTTE. Then I will say no more.

MR. BEEBE. Concerning ... ?

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

CHARLOTTE. I am, as it were, the chaperone of my young cousin Lucy, and it would be a serious thing if I put her under an obligation to people of whom we know nothing. Mr. Emerson's manner was somewhat unfortunate. I hope I have acted for the best in declining his offer to exchange rooms.

MR. BEEBE. Undoubtedly, but, all the same, I don't think much harm would have come of accepting.

CHARLOTTE. No *harm*, of course—but we could *not* be under an obligation.

MR. BEEBE. He is a rather peculiar man, but I think he would not take advantage of your acceptance. Mr. Emerson has the merit—if it is one—of saying exactly what he means. He has rooms he doesn't value and he thinks you *would* value them. I am sure he thought only of being polite.

LUCY. I was hoping that he was nice. I do always hope that people will be nice.

MR. BEEBE. I think he *is* nice—if a bit tiresome. He simply does not keep his opinions to himself.

CHARLOTTE. Am I to conclude that he is a Socialist? (*Mr. Beebe nods.*) And presumably he has brought up his son to be a Socialist as well?

MR. BEEBE. (*With a wink.*) I hardly know George, as he seemingly hasn't learned to talk yet.

CHARLOTTE. So you think I ought to have accepted their offer? You feel I have been narrow-minded and suspicious?

MR. BEEBE. Not at all.

CHARLOTTE. But ought I not to apologize, in any case, for my apparent rudeness?

MR. BEEBE. That will be quite unnecessary. (*Changing his tone.*) Good evening, Miss Bartlett. Miss Honeychurch. (*Mr. Beebe exits.*)

CHARLOTTE. Was I a bore? Why didn't you talk, Lucy? I'm sure he prefers young people.

LUCY. Mr. Beebe is nice. Just what I remembered. He sees the good in everyone. No one would ever take him for a clergyman.

CHARLOTTE. Lucy—!

LUCY. Well, you know what I mean. (*The Miss Alans enter and approach.*)

MISS CATHARINE. We are so sorry you are disappointed in your rooms, Miss Honeychurch.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

MISS TERESA. But at least here you are safe—safe as a stone in a peach.

MISS CATHARINE. If only Mr. Emerson were more tactful. We were so sorry for you at dinner.

MISS TERESA. I think he was meaning to be kind.

CHARLOTTE. Undoubtedly he was. Mr. Beebe has just been scolding me for my suspicious nature.

MISS CATHARINE. Of course one can't be too careful with a young girl. Now, about Mr. Emerson—no, he is not tactful—

MISS TERESA. (*Interrupting.*) —yet, have you ever noticed that there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time ... beautiful?

CHARLOTTE. Beautiful? Are not beauty and delicacy the same?

MISS TERESA. So one would have thought—but things are so difficult, I sometimes think. (*Mr. Beebe enters again and approaches.*)

MR. BEEBE. (*Cheerily.*) Miss Bartlett, I am happy to report it's all right with the rooms. Mr. Emerson was talking about it in the smoking room, and I encouraged him to make the offer again. He has let me come to ask you.

LUCY. (*Excited.*) Oh, Charlotte, I knew Mr. Emerson was nice. We *must* have the rooms now! (*Charlotte is silent.*)

MR. BEEBE. (*Contritely.*) I fear I have been officious. I apologize for my interference. (*Mr. Beebe turns to go but stops when Charlotte speaks.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*To Lucy.*) My own wishes, dearest, are unimportant in comparison with yours, when I am only here through your kindness. If you wish me to turn these gentlemen out of their rooms, I will do so. (*Now to Mr. Beebe.*) Would you then, Mr. Beebe, kindly tell Mr. Emerson that I accept his kind offer, and then conduct him to me, that I may thank him personally?

MR. BEEBE. As you wish. (*Mr. Beebe exits.*)

MISS TERESA. How fortunate for you, Miss Honeychurch!

CHARLOTTE. Remember, Lucy, I alone am implicated in this. I do not wish the acceptance to come from you. (*George Emerson hurriedly enters, followed by Mr. Beebe.*)

GEORGE. My father has gone up for his bath, so you cannot thank him personally—but any message given by you to me will be given by me to him as soon as he comes out. (*Charlotte and the Miss Alans try to repress their shock at George's remark; Lucy and Mr. Beebe try to repress their delight.*)

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

George slyly acknowledges Lucy's delight as the lights dim/change, the music resumes, and the scene transitions. The Miss Alans, Mr. Beebe, and George exit. Lucy and Charlotte move to another lighted area which serves as their new rooms where they unpack. A small bench might stand in for a bed in Lucy's room, and a chair and side table might serve to represent Charlotte's room. There is an imaginary wall between the two rooms. The music fades as the dialogue begins.)

CHARLOTTE. *(Calling to Lucy through the imaginary wall.)* Lucy, dear! Just a word? *(The light dims on Lucy's room as she crosses to Charlotte's adjoining room.)*

LUCY. *(Entering Charlotte's room.)* Yes?

CHARLOTTE. I wanted to explain why it is that I have taken the larger room. Naturally, of course, I should have given it to you, but I happen to know that it belonged to the young man, and I was sure your mother would not like that.

LUCY. I don't understand.

CHARLOTTE. *If you are to accept a favor, it is more suitable you should be under an obligation to the father rather than the son. I am a woman of the world, in my small way, and I know where things lead to.*

LUCY. *Mother wouldn't mind, I'm sure. (Lucy notices a piece of paper on the side table beneath a bowl of flowers and a candle in a holder. She moves the objects, picks up the paper, and examines it. On it is drawn only a large, bold question mark.)* Look. The young Mr. Emerson's left this.

CHARLOTTE. Let me see. *(Lucy hands the paper to Charlotte.)* An interrogatory?

LUCY. What can it mean? *(Lucy looks at it with her.)*

CHARLOTTE. I'm sure I haven't the faintest.

LUCY. *(After a pause.)* Goodnight, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. Goodnight, dear. *(The music begins again. Lucy exits. Charlotte carefully puts the piece of paper with the question mark between two pieces of tissue which she has in her suitcase and sets it aside as the lights transition.)*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

SCENE 2

The music transitions to something brighter, and lights come up to isolate Miss Lavish. It is the next day. Miss Lavish is speaking to Charlotte, but, in fact, she speaks directly to the audience. The music continues underscoring her speech.

MISS LAVISH. What a terrible inconvenience, Miss Bartlett, about your headache, but it really is of no matter. Being English, you see, Miss Honeychurch will be perfectly safe out on her own. Italians understand. A dear friend of mine, Contessa Baroncelli, has two young daughters, and when she cannot send a maid with them to school, she lets them go in sailor hats. That way, everyone takes them for English, especially if their hair is strained tightly behind. *(A pause.)* As for myself, I plan to spend a long morning in Santa Croce—*(Lucy enters, dressed for a day's outing. The music continues.)*—and if Miss Honeychurch would like to accompany me, I'd be delighted. *(Lucy joins Miss Lavish.)* It's settled then. And, if you bring me luck, Miss Honeychurch, we shall have an adventure.

LUCY. *(Consulting her Baedeker travel guide.)* Where exactly is Santa Croce?

MISS LAVISH. Tut, tut, Miss Lucy! I shall soon emancipate you from your Baedeker. *(They begin to walk. The music transitions into sounds of Florentine daily life: pushcarts traversing cobbled streets, horses clopping along, lively conversations, etc. Other Tourists and Italian Locals pass by from time to time.)* Mr. Baedeker, I fear, does but touch the surface of things. As to the true Italy—he does not even dream of it. The true Italy is only to be found by patient observation. *(They stop. City sounds continue.)* Ah! A true Florentine smell! Every city has its own smell.

LUCY. Is it a very nice smell?

MISS LAVISH. One doesn't come to Italy for niceness—one comes for life! *(Calling to some Italian Locals passing by.)* Buon giorno! Buon giorno! [Good morning! Good morning!] *(Pointing to an unseen wine cart passing by.)* Look at the adorable wine cart. How the driver stares at us, poor simple soul. *(Calling to the unseen driver.)* Buon giorno! *(Again to Lucy.)* Take the word of an old woman, Miss Lucy: You will never repent of a little civility to

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

your inferiors. *That is true democracy! (They continue to walk again.)* You are from Surrey, is that right?

LUCY. In the Surrey hills—about five miles from Dorking.

MISS LAVISH. I know Surrey well—full of the very nicest people. Do you know Lady Louisa—oh, what is her surname? She had taken a house near Summer Street the other year—

LUCY. *(Interjecting as Miss Lavish continues.)* That's quite near us.

MISS LAVISH. *(Continuing.)* —but she didn't like it, which was very odd of her. *(Changing her tone, looking about.)* Oh, now I remember. Lady Louisa— *(A bit defeated.)* Ah, me ... now, I'm not sure— *(Suddenly exclaiming.)* Lost! Oh, bless and save us, we've lost the way! My dear Lucy, we have taken a wrong turn. Two lone females in an unknown town. *(Changing her tone.)* Now this is what *I* call an adventure! *(Lucy starts to consult her guidebook.)* And no, you are not, *not, not* to look at your Baedeker. Give it to me; I shan't let you carry it. *(Lucy hands the book to Miss Lavish.)* We will simply drift. *(The music returns. Street sounds continue as they walk. The lights dim/change to indicate time passing. Lucy stops to observe something for a moment, but Miss Lavish pulls her onward. Several Tourists trickle in, including the Miss Alans. They are led by MR. EAGER, an English clergyman. Mr. Emerson and George wander on. Lucy and Miss Lavish stop, having finally arrived at their destination. The Tourist group is gathered in one spot, waiting to enter the Basilica. The Emersons stand near, but not in the same group as, the rest of the Tourists. The lights transition.)* Ah! Here we are, Miss Honeychurch: the Basilica de Santa Croce! *(Lucy, excited, takes a step forward as if to join the Tourists. Miss Lavish, noticing the Emersons, grabs Lucy's arm to hold her back.)* Stop a minute. Let those Emerson men go on ahead of us, or I shall have to speak to them. I do detest conventional intercourse. *(Disdainfully.)* Oh, the British abroad!

LUCY. But they have given us their rooms. They were so very kind.

MISS LAVISH. But just look at them. They walk through my Italy like a pair of cows. *(Suddenly noticing someone offstage who catches her attention.)* Oh, there goes Signor Colori! I must have a word with him! *(Exiting.)* Signor Colori! *Mi scusi, signor!* [Excuse me, sir!] *(Miss Lavish having left, Lucy finds herself alone without her guidebook. She looks about,*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

uncertainly at first, then resolves to making the best of the situation. The lights change.)

MR. EAGER. *(Lecturing.)* Santa Croce, you remember, was built by faith in the full fervor of medievalism before any taint of the Renaissance had appeared.

MR. EMERSON. *(Ostensibly speaking only to George, but a little too loudly.)* Built by faith, indeed! That simply means the workers weren't paid properly. *(Mr. Eager ignores Mr. Emerson and gestures for the Tourists to follow him. As the scene continues, the Tourist group moves from spot to spot to observe and listen to Mr. Eager discuss the various sites inside the church. Mr. Emerson and George trail behind separated from the group. Mr. Emerson notices Lucy and approaches her congenially.)* Miss Honeychurch? But what are you doing here? Are you doing the church or are you through with it?

LUCY. No. I came here with Miss Lavish, and just by the door, she simply ran away, and I had to come in by myself.

MR. EMERSON. Why shouldn't you?

LUCY. But Miss Lavish has taken my Baedeker.

GEORGE. *(With a hint of sarcasm.)* If you've no Baedeker, you'd better join us.

LUCY. *(Not knowing how to respond, reverting to her learned politeness.)* Thank you very much, but I could not think of that—but I do thank you for so kindly giving us your rooms last night. I hope you have not been put to any great inconvenience.

MR. EMERSON. *(Gently.)* My dear, I think you are repeating what you have heard older people say. Tell me instead what part of the church you want to see.

LUCY. *(Trying to maintain her composure.)* It is the Giotto's I'd like to see if you will kindly tell me where they are. *(George nods and leads the way. Mr. Emerson follows. They tag along at the end of the group of Tourists that had entered earlier.)*

MR. EAGER. *(Continuing his lecture.)* Observe how Giotto, in these frescoes, is untroubled by the snares of anatomy and perspective.

MR. EMERSON. *(Referring to Mr. Eager.)* George, I believe that clergyman was the curate at Brixton.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

GEORGE. Perhaps so. I don't remember.

MR. EAGER. *(Continuing his lecture.)* Could anything be more majestic, beautiful, and true?

MR. EMERSON. *(Remarking only to George and Lucy, but, as before, speaking too loudly.)* I see no truth in them. Look at that fat man in blue! He must weigh as much as I do, and yet he is shooting up into the sky like an air-balloon.

MR. EAGER. *(To Mr. Emerson.)* Pardon me. The chapel is somewhat small for two parties. We will incommode you no longer. *(Mr. Eager and his group of Tourists move on.)*

MR. EMERSON. *(Protesting, wanting to be congenial.)* No, stop! There's plenty of room for us all! *(The Tourist group continues to exit.)* Why did they go? Did we talk too loudly? I shall go and say we are sorry. Perhaps they will come back. *(Mr. Emerson exits after the Tourists.)*

GEORGE. They'll not come back. My father has that effect on nearly everyone. He will try to be kind.

LUCY. I hope we all try.

GEORGE. Because we think it will improve our characters. But he is kind to people because he loves them—and they find him out and are offended—or frightened.

LUCY. *(Unsure what to say.)* How silly of them. I think that a kind action done tactfully—

GEORGE. *(Interrupting, scoffing disdainfully)* Tact! *(Lucy is stunned into silence. George moves away from Lucy. She observes George who cuts a handsome, if somewhat tragic, figure. Mr. Emerson re-enters. George approaches his father.)* Were you snubbed?

MR. EMERSON. *(Regretfully.)* We have spoilt the pleasure of I don't know how many people. They won't come back. *(George wanders away to look at the fresco they were observing before. Lucy stays behind with Mr. Emerson.)* Why will he look at that fresco? I saw nothing in it.

LUCY. I like Giotto. Though I prefer the Della Robbia babies.

MR. EMERSON. So you ought. A baby is worth a dozen saints. And my baby's worth the whole of Paradise, but, as far as I can see, he lives in Hell. *(A pause.)* He's unhappy.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

LUCY. *(Unsure how to respond.)* Oh, dear. *(George exits, wandering off to look at another part of the church.)*

MR. EMERSON. How can he be unhappy when he is strong and alive? And think how he has been brought up—free from all the superstitions and ignorance that lead men to hate each other in the name of God—I thought he was bound to grow up happy. *(A pause.)* I only know *what* it is that's wrong with him, not *why* it is.

LUCY. And what is it?

MR. EMERSON. The old trouble—things won't fit.

LUCY. What things?

MR. EMERSON. The things of the universe—and it's quite true. They don't.

LUCY. Mr. Emerson, whatever do you mean?

MR. EMERSON. *(Speaking A.E. Housman's verse in a very ordinary voice.)* "From far, from eve and morning, / And yon twelve-winded sky, / The stuff of life to knit me / Blew hither: here am I." George and I both know this, but why does it distress him? Let us rather love one another, and work, and rejoice. I don't believe in this world's sorrow.

LUCY. I agree.

MR. EMERSON. *(Now more fervently.)* Then make my boy think like us. Make him realize that by the side of the everlasting "Why" there is a "Yes"—a transitory "Yes," if you like, but a "Yes!"

LUCY. *(Laughing in response to her confusion.)* I'm very sorry. You'll think me unfeeling, but—but—*(Now sounding more like her mother and less like herself.)*—your son—has he no particular hobby? Why, I myself have worries, but I can generally forget them at the piano, and collecting stamps did no end of good for my brother. *(A solo Beethoven piano piece, played well but not with great expertise, begins very softly under as the scene continues. Mr. Emerson is disappointed and saddened by Lucy's response. George returns.)*

GEORGE. I've seen your cousin. Miss Bartlett.

LUCY. *(Suddenly worried and upset.)* Oh! Where?

GEORGE. In the nave.

MR. EMERSON. *(Reaching out and taking Lucy's hand in response to her distressed state.)* Poor girl.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

LUCY. *(Pulling her hand away, suddenly defensive.)* “Poor girl”? I fail to understand the point of that remark. I think myself a very fortunate girl, I assure you. I’m thoroughly happy and having a splendid time. *(A pause.)* Goodbye. Thank you so much for all your kindness. *(Turns to go, spotting Charlotte, off.)* Ah, yes—there she is. *(Turning again to the men.)* A delightful morning! Santa Croce is a wonderful church. *(The music grows louder as Lucy exits quickly. Mr. Emerson and George exit as the lights dim/change to indicate a passage of time and a change of scene.)*

SCENE 3

The music continues. Additionally, we hear sounds of rain and occasional thunder. Two Pensione Servants enter to place two chairs. Lucy enters and sits at the piano. It is she who has been playing with some degree of passion. The lights brighten and we are in the sitting room of the Bertolini Pensione that afternoon. Mr. Beebe enters, though Lucy is unaware of his presence. He watches Lucy playing, listening to and enjoying the music. Lucy finishes the piece. She sits without moving, still entranced by the music.

MR. BEEBE. *(Breaking the silence.)* If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting—both for us and for her.

LUCY. *(The spell now broken.)* Oh, Mr. Beebe! *(A pause.)* Someone once said something just like that to Mother—and Mother said to me she trusted I should never live a duet.

MR. BEEBE. Doesn’t your mother like music?

LUCY. She doesn’t mind it, but she doesn’t like to see anyone get excited over anything. She thinks I’m silly about it. *(A pause.)* Once I said I liked my own playing better than anyone’s, and she never got over it. Of course, I didn’t mean that I played well. I only meant—

MR. BEEBE. *(Interrupting, understandingly.)* Of course.

LUCY. You see, music— *(Unable to put her thought into words, Lucy stops speaking. She rises and goes to look out the window at the rain.)*

MR. BEEBE. *(After a pause.)* What about music? *(The Miss Alans enter. Miss Catharine goes to Lucy at the window.)*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

MISS CATHARINE. (*Attempting to escort Lucy from the window.*) Oh, dear Miss Honeychurch, you will catch a chill! Who would suppose this was Italy?

MISS TERESA. We could hear your beautiful playing, Miss Honeychurch, though we were in our rooms with the doors shut.

MISS CATHARINE. Doors shut—indeed most necessary. No one has the least idea of privacy in this country.

LUCY. I have noticed.

MR. BEEBE. (*Gently mocking.*) I quite agree as well, Miss Alan. The Italians are a very unpleasant people. They pry everywhere, see everything, and know what we want before we know it ourselves. We are at their mercy.

MISS TERESA. (*Somewhat amused.*) Oh, Mr. Beebe!

LUCY. (*Still looking out the window.*) Poor Charlotte will be sopped.

MR. BEEBE. Miss Lavish has led your cousin astray. She hopes to find the true Italy in the wet, I believe.

LUCY. (*Peering out the window again.*) They will both be sopped, I'm afraid. (*Trying to make more interesting conversation.*) Miss Lavish is so original. I understand she is writing a novel?

MR. BEEBE. Dealing with modern Italy, I believe.

LUCY. We started as such friends—but I don't think she ought to have run away with my Baedeker this morning. I couldn't help being a little annoyed with her.

MISS TERESA. She is a little too—I hardly like to say unwomanly—but she did behave most strangely when the Emersons arrived.

LUCY. How so?

MISS CATHARINE. At dinner the night they arrived, Miss Lavish seemed intent on proving that England, our great country, rests on nothing but commerce. Teresa was very much annoyed and left the table before the cheese.

MISS TERESA. I certainly did—but before I left, I pointed to that beautiful portrait of Lord Tennyson that hangs in the dining room, and I said, "*There, Miss Lavish. There is one who can refute you better than I.*"

MISS CATHARINE. And Miss Lavish said, "Tut! The early Victorians!"

MISS TERESA. Just imagine! "Tut! The early Victorians!"

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

MISS CATHARINE. Well, I felt bound to speak, so I said, “Miss Lavish, I am an early Victorian, and I will hear no breath of censure against our dear Queen.”

MISS TERESA. Can you imagine such horrible speaking?

MISS CATHARINE. But that was not all. After dinner, Miss Lavish approached and said to me, “Miss Alan, I am going into the smoking room to talk to that nice Mr. Emerson and his son. Won’t you come, too?” Needless to say, I refused.

MISS TERESA. Just imagine! *(The rain sounds begin to diminish.)*

MR. BEEBE. Miss Lavish tried to get everyone at the table to go with her, including myself, and then finally said, “I shall go alone.” And off she went.

LUCY. Mr. Beebe—old Mr. Emerson, is he nice or not nice?

MR. BEEBE. I think it is better for you to settle that question yourself.

LUCY. But it is so difficult. Sometimes he is so silly, and then I don’t mind him. *(To Miss Catharine.)* Miss Alan, what do you think? Is he nice?

MR. BEEBE. I consider that you are bound to classify him as nice, Miss Alan, after that business with the violets.

MISS CATHARINE. *(Shocked.)* Oh, dear!

LUCY. The violets?

MISS CATHARINE. Who told you about the violets?

MISS TERESA. How things do get around! A pension is a sad place for gossips.

MISS CATHARINE. No, I cannot forget how they behaved this morning at Santa Croce.

MISS TERESA. Oh, poor Miss Honeychurch! It really was too bad.

LUCY. Still, I do believe they are nice. *(There is a moment of silence. Lucy walks to the window.)* The rain seems to have stopped. *(Gathering her things to leave.)* I think I shall go out.

MISS TERESA. *(A word of warning.)* Be careful, dear. Italians, you know.

LUCY. *(A bit cheekily.)* Perhaps I shall meet someone who reads me through and through. *(Lucy notices the Miss Alans’ looks of disapproval.)* I will only go for a little walk and keep to the tourist street. *(Lucy exits.)*

MR. BEEBE. She oughtn’t really go at all, and she knows it. I put it down to too much Beethoven. *(Music begins again. The lights dim/transition to*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

indicate again the passage of time and change of scene. Mr. Beebe and the Miss Alans strike the sitting room chairs and exit.)

SCENE 4

The music continues. We are now on the Piazza Signoria later that day. There is a Photograph Vendor with a cart. Other Italian Locals and Tourists walk and shop. The lights transition to indicate early evening. Lucy wanders on and buys some photographs of famous works of art from the photograph vendor. She saunters over to sit on some steps. Two YOUNG MEN in the crowd suddenly break into an impassioned argument over a debt. The music fades under the following dialogue.

YOUNG MAN 1. *(Shouting.) Perché non mi paghi ora?! [Why don't you pay me now?!]*

YOUNG MAN 2. *(Shouting and shoving.) Ti ho pagato molta! [I paid you a lot!]*

YOUNG MAN 1. *(Shouting and fighting more violently.) Cinque lire, bastardo! Cinque lire! [Five lire, you bastard! Five lire!] (Others take notice of the fight and give the two Young Men room. They grapple with each other for just a few moments, ultimately holding each other in close combat. Young Man 1 pushes Young Man 2 away from him and runs off. Young Man 2 stumbles toward Lucy, who, by this point, is standing, looking as if Young Man 2 is about to say something to her. Instead, a stream of red blood pours from Young Man 2's mouth and he collapses. Some men from the crowd rush to pick up Young Man 2 and carry him off. The rest of the crowd, including the Vendor with the cart, exits. Lucy swoons and is about to faint when George emerges from the crowd. He rushes to Lucy as she falls faint and catches her. Setting her down gently, he notices that the photographs she had been holding have fallen to the ground. He picks them up and sees they are now covered in blood. He quickly puts them into his satchel, then wipes the blood off his hands with his handkerchief. He attempts to revive Lucy.)*

GEORGE. Miss Honeychurch? Miss Honeychurch?

LUCY. *(Recovering, opening her eyes.)* Oh ... what's happened ... ?

GEORGE. You fainted.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

LUCY. I—I'm very sorry.

GEORGE. How are you now?

LUCY. *(Recovering slowly.)* I ... I'm well. Perfectly well—absolutely well.

GEORGE. Then let us go home, shall we? *(With Lucy still seated, George extends his hand to her, which she doesn't take.)*

LUCY. How very kind you have been. *(A pause.)* But I am well now. I can go alone, thank you. *(George's hand is still extended. Lucy looks about her for her belongings.)* Oh, my photographs!

GEORGE. Your what?

LUCY. I bought some photographs. *(Getting an idea.)* I must have dropped them out there in the square. *(Secretly hoping to be able to leave while George is distracted.)* Would you be so kind as to fetch them for me?

GEORGE. *(Not wanting to tell Lucy that her photographs are now blood-stained.)* Yes, of course. *(George decides to pretend to go to look for the photographs, but as soon as his back is turned, Lucy rises to start to leave. George turns and sees her.)* Miss Honeychurch! *(Lucy doesn't make it more than a couple of steps before she feels faint and starts to swoon again.*

George rushes back to her and supports her as she falters. He escorts Lucy back to the steps.) You sit still. You aren't fit to go home alone.

LUCY. *(Protesting, not sitting.)* Yes, I am, thank you so very much.

GEORGE. No, you aren't. You'd go openly if you were.

LUCY. But I had rather—

GEORGE. *(Interrupting.)* Then I don't fetch your photographs.

LUCY. I'd rather go alone.

GEORGE. *(A bit imperiously.)* The man is dead—or probably dead. Now, sit down till you're rested. *(She sits.)* And don't move until I come back. *(George exits. Lucy sits and gathers herself together a bit more, adjusting her apparel, hair, etc. Two or three Tourists pass by. George returns.)*

LUCY. Did you find them? *(George doesn't respond.)* Mr. Emerson? *(A pause.)* My photographs? Were you able to—?

GEORGE. *(Interrupting, his voice anxious and boyish.)* They were here, where you fainted—but they were covered with blood, and I didn't know what to do with them, so I put them in my satchel—*(Even more anxious and becoming impassioned.)*—and now I've gotten rid of them. There! I've told you and I'm glad of it. They're gone. It seemed better that way—I don't

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

know. I may just mean they frightened me. (*Excited.*) Don't you see, something tremendous has happened—and I must face it without getting muddled. It isn't just that a man has died. (*A pause. More internal now, but still grappling with the passion he's experienced.*) It has happened—and I mean to find out what it is. (*George sits next to Lucy, but they do not look at each other. They can't. They are seated in almost identical positions.*)

LUCY. (*Excited but frightened.*) Mr. Emerson— (*A pause.*) I want to ask you something before we go back. (*She moves a little.*) I have behaved ridiculously. I've never been so much ashamed of myself in my life. I cannot think what came over me.

GEORGE. (*Hopeful she might put into words what he cannot.*) I nearly fainted myself.

LUCY. Well, I owe you a thousand apologies.

GEORGE. (*Disappointed.*) Oh—all right.

LUCY. And—this is the real point—you know how silly people are gossiping—you understand what I mean?

GEORGE. I'm afraid I don't.

LUCY. I mean ... would you not mention it to anyone, my foolish behavior?

GEORGE. Your behavior? Oh, yes, all right—all right.

LUCY. Thank you. And would you— ? (*Suddenly, she can't say to him what she is thinking, about being in his arms, about the blood, etc. It's too much.*)

Well, thank you very much. (*A pause.*) How quickly these accidents happen, and then one returns to the old life.

GEORGE. (*Sincerely.*) I don't.

LUCY. (*Anxious.*) What?

GEORGE. (*Working it out for himself.*) I shall probably want to live.

LUCY. But—Mr. Emerson? Whatever do you mean?

GEORGE. (*Firmly.*) I shall want to live, I say. (*The music begins and the lights dim/change to indicate again the passage of time and change of scene. George and Lucy exit.*)

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

SCENE 5

The music becomes softer and continues as underscore. Charlotte enters and is isolated in light. She addresses Lucy, but is, in fact, addressing the audience.

CHARLOTTE. Lucy, Mr. Beebe and the others are walking up to the Torre del Gallo this morning. Why not join them? I'm sure it will be so much lovelier today than it was in yesterday's downpour. I have shopping to do, money to change, and letters to fetch—all of which I must accomplish this morning and can do so easily on my own. *(Another light comes up isolating Lucy, speaking to Charlotte, but in fact, addressing the audience.)*

LUCY. *(Still troubled by the events of the previous day.)* Oh, no, Charlotte. It is very kind of Mr. Beebe, but I am certainly coming with you. I had much rather.

CHARLOTTE. Very well then, dear. *(The lights illuminate the stage as Lucy goes to join Charlotte. They stroll. The music fades and is replaced by street sounds that continue throughout the scene. As before, other Tourists and Italian Locals pass through during the scene. The Photograph Vendor with his cart sets up shop. Miss Lavish enters.)*

MISS LAVISH. Aha! Miss Honeychurch! I am in luck. That murder in the Plaza has given me an idea for a new novel. Now—you are to tell me absolutely everything that you saw from the beginning. *(Noticing Lucy's reaction.)* Or perhaps you would rather not?

LUCY. I'm sorry—if you could manage without it, I think I would rather not.

MISS LAVISH. It is I who am sorry. We literary hacks are shameless creatures.

CHARLOTTE. A new novel? What is the plot?

MISS LAVISH. Of course, I've only got the barest outline, but it shall be full of love, murder, abduction, and revenge. And, of course, there will be a great deal of local color, and I shall introduce some humorous characters as well. And let me give you fair warning: I intend to be merciless to the British tourist.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

CHARLOTTE. (*Delightedly.*) Oh, you wicked woman. I am sure you are thinking of the Emersons. (*Miss Lavish gives a sly smile and exits.*) Now that Eleanor Lavish is my idea of a really clever woman. We had a long talk yesterday. She has a high opinion of the destiny of women— (*She spies Mr. Eager, who has entered earlier.*) Oh, Mr. Eager! How nice! What a pleasant surprise!

MR. EAGER. Ah, not for me, for I have been watching you and Miss Honeychurch for quite a little time.

CHARLOTTE. We were chatting to Miss Lavish.

MR. EAGER. (*Condescendingly.*) So I saw. (*Now changing his tone.*) I am about to venture a suggestion. Would you and Miss Honeychurch be disposed to join me in a drive up into the hills some day this week? The view of Florence there is most beautiful— far better than the hackneyed view of Fiesole. It is the view that Alessio Baldovinetti is so fond of introducing in his landscapes.

CHARLOTTE. (*Who has not heard of Baldovinetti but is impressed nevertheless.*) Ah, yes.

MR. EAGER. Your Mr. Beebe will join us as well. In these days of toil and tumult one has the great need of the country and its message of purity. (*A pause, disdainfully.*) The town, beautiful as it is, is still the town.

CHARLOTTE. Quite so. (*A group consisting of Mr. Beebe, Miss Lavish, and the Emersons gather in another part of the square.*)

MR. EAGER. This very square—so I am told—witnessed yesterday the most sordid of tragedies.

CHARLOTTE. Miss Honeychurch happened to be passing through just at that moment. She can hardly bear to speak of it. (*Now taking notice of Mr. Beebe's group.*) Look, Lucia—there are Mr. Beebe and his Torre Del Gallo party. Are you sure you would not prefer to join them?

LUCY. (*A bit peevish.*) No, thank you. I said not.

MR. EAGER. That is Mr. Emerson with Mr. Beebe, is it not?

CHARLOTTE. And his son George.

MR. EAGER. I came across Emerson at Brixton. The son of a laborer. He was a mechanic of some sort when he was young, then took to writing for the Socialistic Press before he made an advantageous marriage.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, so he has a wife.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

MR. EAGER. Dead, Miss Bartlett, dead. I wonder how he has the effrontery to look me in the face. The other day in Santa Croce, when he was with Miss Honeychurch, I snubbed him. Let him beware that he does not get more than a snub.

LUCY. (*Shocked.*) Whatever for?

MR. EAGER. (*Hissed.*) Exposure!

LUCY. (*Confused.*) Do you mean that he is an irreligious man? We know that already.

CHARLOTTE. (*Gently reprimanding Lucy.*) Lucy, dear—

MR. EAGER. (*Interrupting.*) I should be astonished if you knew it *all*. The boy I will exclude. God knows what his education and his inherited qualities may have made him.

CHARLOTTE. Perhaps it is something we had better not hear.

MR. EAGER. I will say no more.

LUCY. (*Sharply.*) You have said very little.

MR. EAGER. (*Coldly.*) It was my intention to say very little. (*Mr. Beebe and his group exit. There is a silent stand-off between Mr. Eager and Lucy. Mr. Eager finally breaks it.*) Murder, if you want to know. The man murdered his wife!

LUCY. (*Indignantly.*) How?

MR. EAGER. Well, to all intents and purposes, he murdered her. That day in Santa Croce—did they say anything against me?

LUCY. Not a word.

MR. EAGER. Oh. I thought they had been libeling me to you. (*A pause.*) I suppose it is only their personal charms that makes you defend them.

LUCY. (*Losing her courage.*) I am not defending them. They're nothing to me.

CHARLOTTE. How could you think she was defending them?

MR. EAGER. She will find it difficult—for that man has murdered his wife in the sight of God. (*There is an awkward silence, as Mr. Eager refuses to say more.*) I must be going. Good day.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, good day, Mr. Eager. (*Mr. Eager exits.*) Oh, Lucy—our drive! Is our drive with Mr. Eager still to happen?

LUCY. Bother the drive! It is the *same* drive we had arranged with Mr. Beebe without any fuss at all. Why should Mr. Eager invite us on a drive to

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

which we have already been invited? We might as well invite *him*. We are each paying for ourselves. (*They stroll again, heading to the bureau at which they will receive letters.*)

CHARLOTTE. If that is so, dear, then I foresee a sad kettle of fish.

LUCY. How so?

CHARLOTTE. Because Mr. Beebe has also asked Eleanor Lavish to come.

LUCY. That will mean another carriage.

CHARLOTTE. Far worse. Mr. Eager clearly does not care for Miss Lavish. She is too unconventional for him. (*A pause.*) In any case, we must be prepared. (*Another pause.*) It is *you* they really want; I am only asked for appearances. You shall go with the two gentlemen, and Eleanor and I will follow behind. (*Another pause.*) How difficult it is! (*They have arrived at the bureau, indicated by the presence of a uniformed Attendant who has entered. Throughout the following, Charlotte acknowledges the Attendant who nods and hands over a small stack of letters. Charlotte looks through the letters and hands all but one to Lucy.*)

LUCY. It is indeed.

CHARLOTTE. What do you think about it?

LUCY. I don't know what I think, nor what I want. (*They leave the bureau. The Attendant exits. Charlotte deposits her letter in her handbag, while Lucy looks through her stack as they walk. Lucy opens one of the letters and scans it.*)

CHARLOTTE. Oh, dear, Lucy! I do hope Florence isn't boring you. Speak the word, and, as you know, I would take you to the ends of the earth tomorrow.

LUCY. Thank you, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. (*Referring to Lucy's letters.*) And the news?

LUCY. (*Referring to the unopened letter.*) One from Freddy— (*Now referring to the one she has opened and is scanning.*) —and one from Mother. (*Noticing something in the letter.*) Oh—Mrs. Vyse and her son Cecil have gone to Rome. Do you know the Vyses?

CHARLOTTE. (*Stopping Lucy and changing direction.*) Oh, no, Lucy, not that way back. We can never have too much of the dear Piazza Signoria.

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

LUCY. *(Referring to the letter again.)* They're nice people, the Vyses. *(Starting to hatch an escape plan.)* So clever—*my* idea of what's really clever. Don't you long to be in Rome, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. I die for it!

LUCY. Here's an idea. What if we popped off to Rome tomorrow—straight off—to the Vyses' hotel? *(More insistent.)* Now I *do* know what I want. I'm sick of Florence. *(Charlotte looks skeptical.)* You said you'd go to the ends of the earth!

CHARLOTTE. *(Laughing good-humoredly, not taking Lucy seriously.)* Oh, my droll little Lucy! Pray, what would become of your drive in the hills? *(It takes Lucy a moment to recognize that her idea of going to Rome has been swiftly dismissed, but, once she does realize it, she immediately reverts to politeness.)*

LUCY. Yes, you're right, of course. *(They exit, as the music begins and the lights dim/change indicating a passage of time and a change of scene.)*

SCENE 6

The music continues as Pensione Servants, a YOUNG DRIVER, a YOUNG WOMAN, and an OLDER DRIVER bring on chairs/benches that will serve as stand-ins for the two carriages the group of travelers will take on their drive to the country. The Young Driver and the Young Woman, his would-be paramour, sit in the front of the first "carriage." The Older Driver sits at the front of the other "carriage." The travelers enter: Mr. Eager, Mr. Beebe, Lucy, Charlotte, and Miss Lavish, followed by Mr. Emerson and George. Wordlessly, Mr. Eager expresses his dismay to Mr. Beebe to see that his party of four has grown in size, especially considering he will now be spending the day with people he dislikes. George subtly attempts to get Lucy's attention, but Lucy avoids him, allowing Mr. Eager to escort her into the first carriage. Miss Lavish, not waiting for an escort, climbs in and sits next to Lucy. Mr. Eager follows, sitting across from Lucy. Mr. Beebe escorts Charlotte into the other carriage, then seats himself across from Charlotte. Just as George is about to get into the carriage with Lucy, Mr. Emerson heads him off and sits beside Mr. Eager. George is left to find a seat next to Mr. Beebe in the carriage with Charlotte. The Drivers take the reins and

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

start the journey. Throughout, the Young Driver and the Young Woman flirt, touch, giggle, etc. The music continues, joined by sounds of horse hooves clopping along first on stones and then later, on earth. The music fades and the lights brighten.)

MR. EAGER. So, Miss Honeychurch, you are traveling as a student of art?

LUCY. Oh, dear me, no.

MISS LAVISH. Perhaps as a student of human nature, like myself?

LUCY. No. I am here as a tourist. *(Mr. Emerson nods off during Mr. Eager's following speech.)*

MR. EAGER. Are you indeed? If you will not think me rude, we residents sometimes pity you poor tourists—handed about like parcels of goods from Venice to Florence to Rome, living together in *pensiones*, quite unconscious of anything that is outside Baedeker.

MISS LAVISH. I quite agree. The narrowness of the English tourist is nothing less than a menace.

MR. EAGER. Quite so. *(The flirtations between the Young Driver and the Young Woman grow increasingly louder and more physical. Mr. Eager turns to address the Young Driver.) Piano! Piano! [Quiet! Quiet!] (He turns his attention again to Lucy.)* Now, the English colony at Florence, Miss Honeychurch, for the greater part are students. Lady Helen Laverstock is at present busy over at Fra Angelico. I mention her name because we are passing her villa on the left. *(Lucy strains to see it.)* No, you can only see it if you stand— *(Lucy stands precariously, as does Mr. Eager trying to help Lucy be seated again.)* No, do not stand, Miss Honeychurch, you will fall. *(As Mr. Eager aids Lucy in sitting, the Young Driver, who has been endeavoring to kiss the Young Woman, succeeds. Mr. Eager is shocked.) Basta! Subito! [Enough! Right now!] (Mr. Emerson awakens.)*

YOUNG DRIVER. *Va bene, signore, va bene, va bene!* [All right, sir, all right, all right!]

MR. EAGER. Stop the carriage at once! *Fermare la carrozza!* [Stop the carriage!]

YOUNG DRIVER. *(Stopping the carriage as instructed.) Mi scusi, signore.* [Excuse me, sir.]

MR. EAGER. *La giovane donna deve uscir!* [The young woman must come out!] Out, I say!

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

YOUNG DRIVER. *(In heavily-accented English.)* But she is my sister!

MR. EAGER. *Sei un bugiardo!* [You are a liar!] *(The Young Driver gets down from the carriage and goes around to try to persuade the Young Woman to leave the carriage.)*

YOUNG DRIVER. *(Trying to convince the Young Woman to step down.)*
Devi restare qui, cara mia. [You have to stay here, my darling.]

YOUNG WOMAN. *(Protesting and staying put.)* *No! Lo resto qui! Questi inglesi! Sono maleducati!* [No! I'm staying here! These English! They're rude!] *(The Young Driver endeavors to calm her down. They continue to argue quietly in Italian under the following.)*

MR. EMERSON. *(Sincerely.)* You mustn't separate these young lovers, Mr. Eager. It's not fair.

MR. EAGER. We must not submit! I knew he was trying it on. He is treating us as if we were a party of Cook's tourists.

MISS LAVISH. *(Insulted by the idea of being mistaken for a Cook's tourist.)* Surely no!

MR. BEEBE. *(Calling from the other carriage.)* Undoubtedly after this they will behave themselves properly, Mr. Eager!

MR. EMERSON. *(Growing more impassioned.)* To be driven by lovers—why, a king might envy us! And if we part them, it's more like sacrilege than anything I know!

YOUNG DRIVER. *(Turning around and appealing directly to Lucy.)*
Signorina?! [Miss?!]

YOUNG WOMAN. *(Also appealing to Lucy.)* *Per favore, signorina?!*
[Please, miss?!] *(Lucy does not know how to respond. She and the Young Woman look silently at each other for a moment. The Young Woman, receiving no reprieve from Lucy, finally gets down from the carriage.)*

MR. EAGER. Victory at last! *(The Young Driver takes the Young Woman aside and tries to console her.)*

MR. EMERSON. *(Still passionate.)* It is not victory—it is defeat! You have parted two people who were happy. *(The Young Woman remains angry with the Young Driver, and he returns to the carriage peeved and disappointed. He takes the reins and begins the journey again. The Young Woman exits.)*
You must agree with me, Miss Honeychurch. *(Shouting to his son.)* George?

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

(Neither Lucy nor George replies.) He has bargained to drive us, and he is doing it. We have no rights over his soul!

MR. EAGER. He was not driving us well. He jolted us.

MR. EMERSON. That I deny. I was as restful as sleeping. *(The carriage suddenly jolts.)*

MR. EAGER. Aha! He *is* jolting us *now*.

MR. EMERSON. Can you wonder? He would like to throw us out! *(Pointing to the view, still impassioned.)* Look. Fifty miles of Spring we've come up to admire. Do you suppose there's any difference between Spring in nature and Spring in man? But there we go, praising the one and condemning the other, ashamed that the same laws work eternally through both. *(The music returns and the lights dim/change to indicate a passage of time. The occupants and drivers of the carriages disembark and separate into groups: The Emersons engage in a conversation with the Drivers; Mr. Eager speaks with Mr. Beebe; Charlotte speaks with Miss Lavish. Lucy meanders around a bit near the two ladies, somewhat distracted. The music fades and the lights come up fuller.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Picking up in the middle of a conversation.)* And then I asked the young Mr. Emerson what was *his* profession. He only replied, "the railway." If I had known he would make such a dreadful answer, I would not have asked the question.

MISS LAVISH. *(Excited.)* The railway! Oh, but I shall die. Of course it was the railway! He is the very image of a porter—on the South-Eastern.

CHARLOTTE. *(Stifling a laugh.)* Eleanor, hush! The Emersons—they'll hear—

MISS LAVISH. *(Interrupting, laughing.)* I can't stop! Let me go my wicked way.

LUCY. *(Wandering nearby.)* I'm sure it's all right. The Emersons won't hear, and they wouldn't mind if they did.

MISS LAVISH. *(Unaware Lucy had been paying attention.)* Miss Honeychurch listening?! Shoo, shoo, you naughty girl—go away!

CHARLOTTE. Oh, Lucy, you ought to be with Mr. Eager, I'm sure. He'll be offended. It's your party.

LUCY. Please, I'd rather stay here with you. *(The Young Driver, who has been talking to the Emersons, exits.)*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

MISS LAVISH. All right, then, sit you down. Observe my foresight. *(Producing two mackintosh squares from her bag.)* Two mackintosh squares. *(She lays one on the ground, sits upon it, and holds the other one out offering it to the others.)* Who is to sit on the other?

CHARLOTTE. Lucy—without a moment's doubt. The ground will do for me. Really, I have not had rheumatism for years. If I do feel it coming on, I shall stand. Imagine your mother's feelings if I let you sit on the wet ground in your white linen. *(Sitting, but not on a mackintosh square.)* Even if my dress is thinner, it will show less, being brown. *(Addressing Lucy.)* Sit down, dear. *(As Lucy sits, Charlotte clears her throat.)* Now don't be alarmed—this isn't a cold. It's the tiniest cough, and I have had it three days. It's nothing to do with sitting here at all. *(The music returns and the lights dim/change to indicate another passage of time. Mr. Beebe and Mr. Eager wander off, exiting. Mr. Emerson and the Older Driver exit in another direction. George, too, wanders off by himself. Lucy rises, handing the mackintosh square back to Miss Lavish. Miss Lavish rises and exits with Charlotte to show her something of note. The Young Driver returns carrying a bunch of violets, as he plans to give them to the Young Woman when he sees her again. He reclines upon the carriage, setting the violets aside. He has a small cigar in his mouth. Lucy finds herself alone. The lights come up fuller and the music fades as Lucy approaches him. He stands when she nears him.)*

LUCY. *(To the Young Driver.)* Where ... um ... dove? [where?] *(The Young Driver smiles and makes a sweeping motion with his arm to show her the view.)* Um ... the clergymen? ... um ... good men? *Buoni uomini? Dove buoni uomini?* [Good men? Where are the good men?] *(The Young Driver shows Lucy his cigar. Lucy gestures to try to ask, "Was the cigar given to you by Mr. Beebe, the smaller of the two men?")* *Une ... piu ... piccolo? Mr. Beebe?* *(The Young Driver does not understand. Lucy seems sad and upset. The Young Driver fetches the bunch of violets.)*

YOUNG DRIVER. *(Handing the violets to Lucy.)* *Bellisimi fiori.* [Beautiful flowers.] *(Gesturing again to the view.)* *Bellisimi fiori ovunque.* [Beautiful flowers everywhere.]

LUCY. *(Still a little sad.)* *Grazie.* [Thank you.] *(George enters, unseen by Lucy. The Young Driver, however, sees him.)*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

YOUNG DRIVER. *Ah! Il tuo buon uomo. [Ah! Your good man.] (Motioning to George.) Eccolo! [Here!] (Lucy turns to look at George. There is a moment between Lucy and George. The music returns, softly at first. The Young Driver speaks privately to Lucy, in heavily-accented English.)*
Courage! Courage and love. *(The Young Driver steps aside. The moment between George and Lucy builds in intensity, as the music builds in passion and volume. Finally, George goes to Lucy and kisses her. It is a lingering kiss. Their lips part. The music transitions to become gentler. Lucy is about to speak when Charlotte enters.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Shocked, sharply.) Lucy! (The music transitions again and the lights fade/change to indicate the passage of time. George, overwhelmed, exits. Charlotte goes to Lucy. They exit. We hear rain and thunder. The two Drivers, Mr. Eager, Mr. Beebe, and Mr. Emerson enter to strike the benches.)*

MR. EMERSON. *(As he strikes his bench, calling.) George? George? (Before he exits, the Young Driver sets his bench as Lucy's bed in her room in the pensione. The Signora enters and places the small side table that indicates Charlotte's room. A Pensione Servant enters placing a lit candle and a small bowl of flowers on the side table. Another Pensione Servant enters and sets a simple chair in Charlotte's room. The Signora and the Pensione Servants exit.)*

SCENE 7

The music continues, as do the sounds of rain and thunder. Charlotte enters her room at the pensione which, as before, is separated from Lucy's by an imaginary wall. The lights come up a little brighter now in Charlotte's room. Charlotte, still dressed, carries a hairbrush with her. Lucy, now dressed in a dressing gown and robe, enters her room and sits on the edge of her bed looking straight out, isolated now in light. Charlotte goes to the unseen wall that separates the two rooms and calls to Lucy softly, as if she is calling through the wall.

CHARLOTTE. *Lucy, dearest? Come into my room, and I'll brush your hair before bed. (Lucy crosses into Charlotte's room, as the light dims in Lucy's*

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

room. There is an awkward silence. Charlotte indicates that Lucy is to sit in the chair, and Lucy does, looking straight out as if she is looking into a mirror. Charlotte, standing behind, takes down Lucy's hair to brush it. The music fades as the dialogue begins. The sounds of rain and thunder continue.) What is to be done? (*Lucy, unprepared for this question, does not respond.*) I say, what is to be done? A point, dearest, which you alone can settle.

LUCY. (*After a pause.*) It has been raining for nearly four hours.

CHARLOTTE. How do you propose to silence him?

LUCY. The driver?

CHARLOTTE. My dear girl, no. Mr. George Emerson.

LUCY. (*Lying.*) I don't understand.

CHARLOTTE. How are you going to stop him from talking about it?

LUCY. I have a feeling that talking is a thing he will never do.

CHARLOTTE. I, too, intend to judge him charitably— (*Speaking more personally.*) —but unfortunately I have met the type before. They seldom keep their exploits to themselves.

LUCY. (*Shocked, pulling free from Charlotte's hands and moving away from the chair.*) Exploits?

CHARLOTTE. My poor dear, did you suppose this was his first? Come back here and listen to me. I am only gathering it from his own remarks.

(*Lucy returns to the chair.*) I am no prude, Lucy. There is no need to call him a wicked young man, but obviously he is thoroughly unrefined. So—what do you propose to do?

LUCY. I propose to speak to him. (*Charlotte gasps.*) As you said—it is my affair.

CHARLOTTE. You are too young and inexperienced to realize how men can be. This afternoon, for example, if I had not arrived, what would have happened?

LUCY. I can't think.

CHARLOTTE. When he insulted you, how would you have replied?

LUCY. I hadn't time to think. You came. (*Lucy gets up again and moves to the window.*)

CHARLOTTE. Yes, but what *would* you have done?

LUCY. I should have— (*Too muddled, she does not complete her thought.*)

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

CHARLOTTE. Come away from the window, dear. You will be seen from the road. *(Lucy does as instructed.)* Oh, for a real man! We are only two women, you and I. Mr. Beebe is hopeless. Of course, there is Mr. Eager—*(Lucy gives Charlotte a sharp look.)*—but, of course, you do not trust him. If only your brother were here! *(A pause.)* It will be a push to catch the morning train, but we must try.

LUCY. What train?

CHARLOTTE. The train to Rome.

LUCY. But—Signora Bertolini will be upset.

CHARLOTTE. We must face that.

LUCY. She will make us pay for a whole week.

CHARLOTTE. I expect she will. However, we shall be much more comfortable in the Vyses' hotel in Rome. *(Lucy is upset and silent. Charlotte goes to her.)* Dearest Lucy, how will you ever forgive me? I know very well how much I vex you at every turn.

LUCY. But no—

CHARLOTTE. *(Interrupting.)* Ah, but yes. I feel that our tour together is hardly the success I had hoped. I might have known I would not do. You want someone younger and more in sympathy with you. I am too uninteresting and old-fashioned—only fit to pack and unpack things.

LUCY. Please—

CHARLOTTE. *(Interrupting.)* You did have your own way with these rooms, at all events.

LUCY. *(Softly.)* You mustn't say these things.

CHARLOTTE. I have been a failure. Failed to make you happy. Failed in my duty toward your mother. I shall never face her again after this disaster.

LUCY. But mother will understand. It is not your fault, this trouble, and it isn't a disaster either.

CHARLOTTE. It is my fault, and it is a disaster. She will never forgive me. If I have vexed you, it is equally true that I have neglected you. Your mother will see this as clearly as I do—when you tell her.

LUCY. *(After a pause.)* Then why need mother hear of it?

CHARLOTTE. But you tell her everything—

LUCY. *(Interrupting.)* I suppose I do, generally.

CHARLOTTE. Unless you feel that this is a thing you could not tell her ...

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

LUCY. Naturally, I should tell her—but, in case she would blame you in any way, I promise I will not. I will never speak of it either to her or to anyone. *(Charlotte takes Lucy's hands in hers and kisses her on the cheek.)*

CHARLOTTE. Goodnight, dearest Lucy.

LUCY. Goodnight, Charlotte. *(The light on Charlotte's room dims as Lucy walks back into her own room where the light brightens a bit as she sits on the bed again looking straight out. George, dripping wet, enters, returning to the outside of the pensione. He rings the imaginary bell to be let in. Hearing the bell, Lucy rises, knowing it must be George finally returning. She wants to see him again, especially since she may not be able to in the morning. Simultaneously, Charlotte, also assuming it to be George returning, moves to her window, opens her imaginary shutters, and looks down at him. Lucy also starts to go to her window to see George. Just as Lucy is about to open her imaginary shutters, she hears Charlotte's voice. Lucy stands still, not even daring to breathe.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Calling discretely down to George in the street.)* Mr. Emerson. I wish a word with you in the drawing room, please. *(She closes the shutters. The Signora enters to let George in. He enters the "door," and he and the Signora exit. Simultaneously, Charlotte moves to the imaginary wall that separates her room from Lucy's and calls softly through the wall to Lucy.)* Go to bed at once, dear. You need all the rest you can get. *(Charlotte picks up the candle from the side table and carries it with her out of her room, exiting to speak to George. As she exits, the light in Charlotte's room fades completely. Lucy returns to sitting on the end of her "bed," her mind racing, full of dreams and disappointments. The light lingers for a moment on her, and then fades to ...)*

BLACKOUT
END OF ACT I

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***