MRS. BAKER: The attendant wouldn't lie to us. Mr. Arnold has regained his sight. As we will. How can you doubt that...how do you dare? He is cured. (PAUSE) Come along, they're waiting.

(VERA assists MRS. BAKER and MRS. EDEN as the three women exit.)

MR. CLAK: Yes. He is cured.

(From afar down the corridor we hear the ATTENDANT begin "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow". The voices of MRS. EDEN and MRS. BAKER join his. Finally MR. CLAK joins in also. There are tears in his blind eyes.)

MR. CLAK: (SINGING) ...which nobody can deny.... can deny.......

THE LIGHTS FADE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Patients:

MR. ARNOLD
MRS. BAKER
MR. CLAK
MRS. EDEN

The Staff:

VERA
AN ATTENDANT

SCENE

A bare room. UP RIGHT, through an empty door frame, we see the white-tiled wall of a hospital corridor. There are no windows. Two drab colors divide the room horizontally; mustard above, a dirty brown below. The only furnishings are an old coffee table ringed about with hospital pillows, LEFT. The name of CLEARVIEW HOSPITAL is stencilled on the black and white tick.

AT RISE

The empty room. If we listen carefully, we can hear the distant hum of OLD VOICES in happy conversation. We now begin to be made aware of two cases tapping slowly toward us through the long, echoing passage. We now can hear snatches of a weak attempt at "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow". There is a party in progress in some far corner of the hospital. The tapping is closer. We hear:
MR. ARNOLD: (OFF) Did you hear that, Mrs. Baker? They were actually singing!

MRS. BAKER: (OFF) Well, they are happy and full of hope. So am I. Are we here?

MR. ARNOLD: (OFF) Another few steps, I think. Isn't it wonderful about Mr. Pace? Yes, here we are.

MRS. BAKER: Good, good! The Oriental Room! Oh, Mr. Arnold, yes, it is wonderful. Just think, he can really see again, after all these years....

(MR. ARNOLD, a gentleman of eighty-odd years, leads MRS. BAKER into the "Oriental Room". She is a pink-cheeked, vivacious old lady and quite excited at this moment. MR. ARNOLD leads her with his left hand. In his right he grips a dark wooden cane, which he sweeps ahead of himself, feeling for obstacles in his path. She, too, carries a dark cane. They both seem rather fragile. Both are totally blind.)

MR. ARNOLD: Our turn will come, Mrs. Baker.

MRS. BAKER: Yes. Yes, it will. It's a pity, isn't it though, that he wouldn't stay for our little celebration? It was for him, after all.....

MR. ARNOLD: Well, I suppose that Mr. Pace just couldn't wait to put his miracle to work - and every cure here is just that.

MRS. BAKER: Yes. I have often thought that this sanitarium should have been named "Miracle House" instead of Clearview. Hmm, I suppose you're right about Mr. Pace. (PAUSE) There isn't much furniture here, I understand.... cushions or something.... and a low table somewhere. Mrs. Eden told me a little about it. I think Doctor told her.

MR. ARNOLD: That's right. The attendant described it to me in detail. Doctor wanted us to be able to appreciate the new room.... besides, he was afraid we'd bump our shins, I think, so he

MRS. BAKER: (CONTROLLING TEARS) Yes, he was. And a good old friend.

(VERA returns with an ATTENDANT. He is a large man in his mid-thirties. He wears a hospital jacket over his colored shirt and dark trousers. He wears no tie. The jacket is stenciled with the hospital's name. He saunters into the room with obvious disinterest. He has met this situation many times. VERA helps MRS. EDEN to her feet.)

MRS. EDEN: Vera? (RISING) Thank you. I would like to go to my room, please.

(ATTENDANT picks up MR. ARNOLD'S body)

ATTENDANT: Wait a minute, Mrs. Eden.

MR. CLAK: It's the attendant.

ATTENDANT: Doctor tells me you folks should have a little celebration.... says it looks like old Mr. Arnold is cured. (ATTENDANT CARRIES BODY OUT. NO ONE MOVES. WE HEAR THE ATTENDANT'S SHORT LAUGH A MOMENT LATER ECHO IN THE HALL)

MR. CLAK: Cured?

(VERA turns slowly to watch MR. CLAK and MRS. BAKER, who stand CENTER, stunned)

MRS. BAKER: Why didn't the Doctor come himself?

MR. CLAK: (LOUDER) ... but he's dead! He's dead, Mrs. Baker. You know it. We all know it!

(MRS. BAKER remains quiet, thinking, staring into blackness. Everything waits. MRS. BAKER makes her decision. She takes a slow, deep, purposeful breath.)

MRS. BAKER: He is cured.

MR. CLAK: But...
(Quickly VERA goes to assist MR. ARNOLD. He takes a few steps, collapses. VERA eases him to the floor, listens to his heart, runs for help. She leaves those remaining in the Oriental Room in a state of panic.)

MRS. BAKER: Mr. Arnold! Mr. Arnold!

MR. CLAK: Vera! Where is Vera?

MRS. EDEN: Is it Mr. Arnold? Where is he? Mr. Arnold?

MR. CLAK: Mr. Arnold, where are you?

(ALL search for MR. ARNOLD. There is no sound other than the shuffling, breathing and tapping of the frightened old hunters. Eventually, MRS. BAKER stumbles on MR. ARNOLD'S BODY.)

MRS. BAKER: (SCREAMS) Ohhh! Ohhhh.

MRS. EDEN: What is it, Mrs. Baker?

MRS. BAKER: (QUIETLY) I've found him. He's over here. (THEY COME TAPPING TOWARD HER) Keep coming...over here....(MRS. BAKER TAPS SO OTHERS CAN FIND HER)

MR. CLAK: (REACHES BODY) I'm here, Mrs. Baker.

MRS. EDEN: How is he?

(THEY kneel around the body, try to make MR. ARNOLD comfortable, put a coat under his head. THEY feel his pulse, listen to his heart, his breathing.)

MR. CLAK: (ONLY AFTER HE IS SURE) He's gone.

MRS. EDEN: Are you sure?

MR. CLAK: Yes.

MRS. BAKER: Ohhhh. Oh, poor Mr. Arnold.

MRS. EDEN: (WEeping) He was such a fine man...

made sure that the attendant would describe it so that we could find our way around in it. Doctor's a very considerate man. A wonderful man!

MRS. BAKER: He must be. Oh, he is! A real saint. (SHE MOVES ABOUT SLOWLY, EXPLORING) This is a real treat, being the first in the new room.

MR. ARNOLD: Isn't it? I'm a bit excited myself; I confess. You know, I feel that we've put one over on the others...slipping away from the party like that.

MRS. BAKER: (NODS, GIGGLES) We really did, didn't we?

MR. ARNOLD: We certainly did. Mmmm. (REMEMBERING) You know, Mr. Quigly did the same thing....

MRS. BAKER: How's that?

MR. ARNOLD: Mr. Quigley.

MRS. BAKER: He was cured a year ago.

MR. ARNOLD: That's right. I wasn't sure you'd remember. He didn't stay for his party, either.

MRS. BAKER: Well, it's just the same for Mr. Quigley as it must have been for Mr. Face. They just couldn't wait to put their miracle to use. As you said. I'm not so sure I will be able to wait for mine either. I know it seems rude, but I understand it perfectly.

MR. ARNOLD: Oh, yes. So do I....

MRS. BAKER: Oh, the excitement! I tell you, Mr. Arnold, it will be hard to keep me here five extra minutes after I'm cured, pleasant here as it is. Oh, my! I'll be able to go about without any help anywhere I want! Why, I'll just hang this old cane on the end of my bed and dance down to the front gate. (SHE PLAY-FULLY CONDUCTS A BIT OF A WALTZ WITH HER CANE) Well, maybe I'll walk, but as fast as I can! I'm - oh, my! I'm all out of breath... (PAUSE) Oh, it is difficult to wait, isn't it?
MR. ARNOLD: Yes, it is. Doctor says it's our worst enemy and he's right.

MRS. BAKER: (INTERESTED) Doctor said that?

MR. ARNOLD: Yes. Well, the attendant did. He says that Doctor says it all the time.

MRS. BAKER: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh.

MR. ARNOLD: Yes. It makes terrible demands on your faith. Waiting, waiting...wasting precious time waiting. But, as we say here, Mrs. Baker, "Our turn will come".

MRS. BAKER: (SMILES. FINDS HIS HAND) Our turn will come. Yes. Now, tell me about the room, please.

MR. ARNOLD: All right. I don't know if Doctor told you anything about it or not, or what Mrs. Eden might have told you. You do know that we have decided to call it the "Oriental Room"? (MRS. BAKER NODS AUDIBLY) Because of the design. You must know that it has been re-done from the private room that is never used on this floor? (SHE NODS AGAIN) And I assume that we will sit on the little Oriental cushions and have our afternoon tea or coffee from the little Oriental table. Simply a nice sitting room...a pleasant place to rest and find some quiet. It will be a change from the old Victorian room that we have enjoyed for so long...

MRS. BAKER: Tea!

MR. ARNOLD: (STOPPED) Tea?

MRS. BAKER: I mean coffee would be out of place, don't you think, if we want to be authentic? In the Victorian room, of course, we have both, but here, I should think, just tea.

MR. ARNOLD: Why, yes. I suppose you're right. Yes.

MRS. BAKER: Yes. I would think so. I'm sorry. Please go on.

MRS. BAKER: He has such exquisite taste.

MR. CLAK: Yes. That inside-outside idea, for instance, is simply genius. Where is the outside, by the way?

MRS. BAKER: The windows? Mr. Arnold just pointed them out to me. There! (SHE POINTS WITH MR. CLAK'S CANE HAND AT DOORWAY UP RIGHT. VERA, STANDING THERE, SHAKES HEAD SADLY)

MR. CLAK: Oh, yes. Of course. That's just right, isn't it? (CAN E IS HEARD TAPPING IN THE CORRIDOR)

MRS. BAKER: Someone is coming...

(VERA goes to help the newcomer.)

MRS. EDEN: (OFF) Hello!

MR. CLAK: (CALLING) Here we are!

(VERA leads in MRS. EDEN, the other elderly resident of the hospital.)

MRS. EDEN: Thank you, Vera.

MR. CLAK: Is that you, Mrs. Eden?

MRS. EDEN: Yes. Mr....ahh, Clak?

MR. CLAK: It's me. And Mr. Arnold and Mrs. Baker are here with me. Welcome to the Oriental Room!

MRS. EDEN: I haven't heard Mr. Arnold... Where are you, Mr. Arnold?

MRS. BAKER: (LOWERS HER VOICE) He's resting at the table. He doesn't feel well.

MRS. EDEN: (QUIETLY) Oh, dear. Can we help you, Mr. Arnold?

MR. ARNOLD: Ohhhh....ohhhhh... (IN GREAT PAIN, STANDS, TEARS AT HIS SHIRT IN A VAIN ATTEMPT TO REACH ITS SOURCE. GASPING.) ... Heart... help me...
MRS. BAKER: It has features of all the Orient. No doubt parts of the Orient don't use this...tommorow.

MR. CLARK: Tatami.


MR. CLARK: Of course he does! I'm not trying to imply that I...oh...of course he does!

MRS. BAKER: He is quite an authority, actually.

MR. CLARK: I know he is. I contributed quite heavily for this room, you know.

MRS. BAKER: I know you did.

MR. CLARK: I certainly wouldn't have done a thing like that unless I had complete faith in the man. He's an expert!

MRS. BAKER: Yes, he is.

MR. CLARK: I'm no fool. I may be blind but I'm a good judge of human nature. I gave him that money because I felt that he would create a place here that would make the waiting more pleasant for all of us. I think it makes the waiting more bearable to be surrounded by beautiful things.

MRS. BAKER: We all feel that way. That's why we contributed, too. And I like to think that after we are cured many more who had given up all hope of having their vision restored will use this room...will gain the pleasures that we created when we made this room possible.

MR. CLARK: Yes. It's a very satisfying thought...so you see I wasn't questioning his knowledge or his taste.

MRS. BAKER: Heavens, no!

MR. CLARK: I thought the tatami might have been nice, but of course his way is more...right!

MR. ARNOLD: (NOW AN AUTHORITY) Well, one feature I have always admired about Oriental rooms....just a minute...if I can just find it. (MR. ARNOLD GROPES TO THE EMPTY DOORWAY) One thing I have always liked...Oh, dear!

MRS. BAKER: What is it, Mr. Arnold?

MR. ARNOLD: Why, the room should have a sliding screen door!

MRS. BAKER: Oh, yes. I remember them.

MR. ARNOLD: Yes. A sliding kind of screen called a "shoji".

MRS. BAKER: It wasn't there when we walked in. We didn't slide anything open.

MR. ARNOLD: I know. It's not here! I've tried both sides of the frame.

MRS. BAKER: Try the outside.

MR. ARNOLD: Oh, it wouldn't be on the outside. (TRIES ANYWAY) No. Not there. No. It should be on the inside of the door. The same size as the opening. It slides.

MRS. BAKER: Yes. I know what they are. Doesn't it slide on some sort of track?

MR. ARNOLD: Yes. Yes, it does. I'll try to find it! (TRIES)

MRS. BAKER: (AFTER WAITING) Did you find a track?

MR. ARNOLD: No track.

MRS. BAKER: Nothing? No way to slide anything over the doorway?

MR. ARNOLD: Nothing. Maybe...maybe it's not finished yet. I mean, the door probably would be the last thing...

MRS. BAKER: (RIGHTEOUSLY) Doctor told the attendant it was finished.
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