**One of our Robots is Missing**

(a 10 minute comedy by Claire Booker)

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bookerplays@yahoo.co.uk

 **Characters**

 Grimaldi: Senior robot.

 Sasha: Work-experience robot.

 Lady Phylidia Kay: A human survivor of nuclear conflagration

 **Set and Props**

An open set represents the inside of a nuclear bunker. Lady Kay carries a Gucci handbag and wears a pair of cheap wellingtons. A second pair of more decorous wellingons are required. Grimaldi wears a dark suit. Sasha is in a leotard and apron.

*Lights rise on Lady Kay who is standing, stage left. Grimaldi is beside her holding a menu.*

Lady K (*miming the action of looking through a periscope*) I can see a foot! (*pause*) No, it’s just another of those disgusting giant worms.

Grimaldi Will your ladyship be dressing for dinner?

Lady K One must maintain standards, Grimaldi.

Grimaldi (*shouts towards stage right*) Sasha! Fresh wellingtons for milady! (*to Lady K*) Might I recommend the finely crushed gougeon of cockroach on a bed of organically grown mould.

Lady K (*sighs*) I wish Harold had looked more closely at the small print when he ordered our bunker.

Grimaldi The mould is from our very own farm.

Lady K How are the horses?

Grimaldi Much as might be expected.

Lady K One yearns to take long rides across the Downs. To smell sea air. To kill a fox or two. I suppose the foxes are all dead.

Grimaldi We cannot say for certain that anything is dead, milady. Only that no life – apart from the giant worms – has been seen through our periscope for three years.

Lady K There is hope then?

Grimaldi Hope?

Lady K That Lord Kay is still alive. Somewhere. (*sighs*) I’ll never forgive myself for sending him out that final morning: “Go fetch some azaleas, Harold”, I said. “I need colour, I need joy, I need to see things grow.”

Sasha (*enters carrying a pair of plain wellington boots*) Wellingtons. Wellingtons.

Lady K (*sees the wellingtons*) No, no. The Louboutins.

Sasha La whats?

Grimaldi (*explaining*) The rose wellingtons.

Sasha Right you are. (*she exits stage right*)

Lady K I need shoes. Shoes. I can’t live without shoes.

Grimaldi Space is at a premium in the Economy Class bunker, milady.

Lady K Don’t I know it. (*pause*) Hold my hand, Grimi.

Grimaldi Certainly. (*he does so*)

Lady K (*shyly*) How do you find it?

Grimaldi (*beeps whilst assessing her hand*) 10% humidity. 20th percentile for bacterial growth.

Lady K Do you like it, though? Could you feel affection even?

Grimaldi I’m not programmed for affection, milady.

Lady K (*removes her hand*) You could have been. I begged Harold to splash out on emotionally literate robots. But no, no, always the penny pincher. “Nuclear war will never happen”, he said. “Why waste good money on extras that won’t get used?” Well, he’s laughing on the other side of his face now.

Grimaldi Always asuming he still has a face, milady.

Lady K Dear God, another thirty years with only robots for company.

Grimaldi Sasha is very fond of you.

Lady K She’s a congenital idiot.

Grimaldi Who is very fond of you.

Lady K She knows nothing about anything.

Grimaldi And likes you a lot.

Lady K I suppose she cares in her funny little robot way.

Grimaldi (*beeps*) Time to descend to the lower water chamber. We’re running low on urine.

Lady K I’m sick of sitting on that contraption five times a day bombarding those ghastly little nematodes.

Grimaldi Whose slime provides the protein from which all your delicious meals are made.

Lady K Pee equals food equals more pee equals more food . . .

Grimaldi An elegant equation.

Lady Kay You’ve no idea what it’s like to be held prisoner by one’s own body.

Grimaldi Human flesh does seem an over-rated luxury. (*indicates the menu*) Final decision?

Lady K I’ll take the gougeon of cockroach.

Grimaldi Al dente?

Lady K As if there’s a choice.

Grimaldi Excellent.

Lady K Have it laid it out in the West Wing, on the . . . yes, Royal Minton. Thank you, Grimaldi.

Sasha (*enters holding wellies with large paper roses on them*) Your Labottoms, milady!

Lady K Later, Sasha. I have to re-fuel the larder. (*she exits*)

Sasha (*Grimaldi checks Lady Kay is out of hearing range then pulls out a small piece of radio apparatus from his pocket*) Oh. It’s complicated, isn’t it? Wellies and toilets and that funny box with knobs you play on when milady’s back is turned.

Grimaldi We don’t mention the funny box.

Sasha (*attempting a joke by winking*) What funny box?

Grimaldi Go and do something useful, Sasha. Dust the West Wing.

Sasha The whole of it?

Grimaldi It’s only a small broom cupboard.

Sasha That’s true. You are clever, Grimaldi.

Grimaldi Technically, I’m a second.

Sasha No?

Grimaldi By some fluke, my circuits were fused to create a dangerously human trait. Self-interest.

Sasha Oh.

Grimaldi And by an equal fluke, this self-interest was cross-circuited with free will and choice.

Sasha Does that mean you drop things a lot?

Grimaldi Whereas you, Sasha, are defective in all modalities except loyalty - which runs through your circuits like a stick of rock.

Sasha That’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me, Grimaldi. (*suddenly spins*) Ooh, dusting. (*heads off*) Dust, dust, dust. I’ll dust until my fingers are worn to their copper struts.

Grimaldi One more thing.

Sasha Yes.

Grimaldi (*thoughtful for a moment*) What would you say, if I offered you free will?

Sasha If you think it’s a good idea, Grimaldi.

Grimaldi You’ve no inkling what it is, have you?

Sasha Free willllllllll. It’s sending nice vibrations right down my ball bearings.

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bookerplays@yahoo.co.uk

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