

Millennium Shock
By
Wayne Peter Liebman

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by Wayne Peter Liebman
liebmanw@dogearplays.org

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COLORFORMS: Bug specimens.

FURNITURE: Block couch.

COSTUMES: Lab coat. Caterpillar. Butterfly.

PROPS: Rope. Bolt of cloth.

SLIDE #1: Interior, laboratory. Spooky.

Scene 1

SETTING: Dusk. DARLENA'S laboratory.
Countdown clock and bug specimens on wall.

AT RISE: **SOUND:** Music: Bach, Toccatà and Fugue in D Minor. DARLENA in lab coat. IGOR enters, hunched, pulling MILLIE with rope. MILLIE is a caterpillar. SHE has antennae and a caterpillarish posterior. IGOR speaks in a deep, gravelly voice. DARLENA has the exaggerated manner of a diva. **SOUND:** Music stops.)

IGOR
(unties MILLIE)
Another specimen, mistress.

DARLENA
The hour is late, Igor. But we must not give up hope.

IGOR
Yes, mistress.

DARLENA
Igor!

IGOR
Mistress?

DARLENA
Stand up straight. Speak from your diaphragm. Discipline, Igor. You are a warrior. Be strong for me!
(IGOR contorts his body upward,
grunts and exits.)
What an odd bug! I've never seen one like this before.

MILLIE

Another fine mess! What have I done now?

DARLENA

It talks? Interesting.

MILLIE

I was just eating some leaves.

DARLENA

My, my. It's a very homely bug. Where are it's controls?

MILLIE

That's not a nice thing to say.

DARLENA

It looks so innocent. But these antennae--so metallic! What an ingenious disguise.

MILLIE

I have a stomach ache, too.

DARLENA

And the skin. So cool, so grey, so uniform.

MILLIE

I think I'm going to cry.

DARLENA

Heaven forbid. You'll rust your motherboard.

MILLIE

My what?

DARLENA

And upset my nerves.

MILLIE

I'm not sure I like this place. I definitely don't like your butler.

DARLENA

He's not a butler. He's a pet. I made him.

MILLIE

You're a doctor?

(**SOUND:** Song)

DARLENA

(sings and dances a Tango with
MILLE)

DARLENA (cont'd)

IT APPEARS SO HARMLESS, SO DISARMING,
YOU'D NEVER SUSPECT THE DANGER THAT LURKS
BENEATH A THING SO CHARMING!

MILLIE

SHE LIKES ME, I RECKON.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT ME THAT SEEMS TO BECKON
HER INTEREST. OR SOMETHING.

DARLENA

OH, YES, I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.
YOUR GOAL TO WREAK HAVOC,
WELL I WILL NOT HAVE IT.

MILLIE

BUT PARDON ME, I'D LIKE TO SUGGEST
I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK,
YOU SHOULD GIVE IT A REST.

DARLENA

YOU MUST LEAVE THE THEORIES TO ME.
IT IS AFTER ALL MY JOB TO SEE:
TO PREDICT, TO CONTROL, NATURE'S SECRETS TO UNROLL.

MILLIE

I THINK SIGMUND FREUD WOULD DO WELL TO AVOID
AN ARGUMENT WITH YOU.

DARLENA

YOU ENTICE ME. YOU REPEL ME.
HOW I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU A HUG.
YOUR SUBTLETY HAS DISPELLED ALL DOUBT,
YOU ARE...THE MILLENNIUM BUG!

MILLIE

The Millennium Bug? What's that?

DARLENA

Oh, how it weaves it's web! But I am beyond fooling! See
that clock?

(SHE points offstage, center.)

MILLIE

It's a very strange clock.

DARLENA

Do not pretend with me! You know that when it reaches
midnight tonight, a terrible bug will stop everything from
working. The world...will shut down!

MILLIE

Oh, that bug.

DARLENA

My laboratory! My machines! My systems!
 (weeps)
 They leap so beautifully to my command!

DARLENA (CONT'D)

It's not a real bug. It's a computer bug.

DARLENA (CONT'D)

Not a real bug! Not a real bug! You are crafty! But you
 have met your match in me! A computer bug can wear a
 disguise. And whatever you are--

MILLIE

I'm Millie.

(pause)

DARLENA

Indeed. Millie. Well bugs are very sneaky, slimy, squirmy
 things. But they don't have motherboards and metallic
 antennae!

MILLIE

I guess I'm not as up on computers as I thought.

DARLENA

You're the Millennium Bug and don't even know it.

MILLIE

But I don't feel like a computer. I like to eat leaves.

DARLENA

Of course. They programmed you to do that. But why did they
 make you so homely?

MILLIE

My mother said I have inner beauty.

DARLENA

Nonsense! What does that mean?

MILLIE

Someone stepped on her and I never found out.

DARLENA

I can see we'll have to do some probing. Lie down. I must
 find your flaw and re-configure it.

(MILLIE lies on the couch.)

Now. Close your eyes. What's the first thing you see?

MILLIE

Leaves.

DARLENA

Leaves? That's ridiculous.

MILLIE

And my stomach.

DARLENA

Your stomach?

MILLIE

It hurts. It's been hurting all day. And my chest hurts now too.

(MILLIE gets up from the couch,
sways upstage as if in a
trance.)

I don't feel like myself at all.

DARLENA

Igor! Igor! What did I tell you? It's got a virus!
(runs offstage; voice from
offstage)

Igor? Igor? Are you at the coke machine again?

MILLIE

Oh! I feel strange.

(**SOUND:** Sudden ominous note,
then Twilight Zone type music.
MILLIE wobbles to the SL door
(top open.) SHE retrieves a
bolt of cloth, spins, winding
the cloth around HERSELF,
making a cocoon, then exits
drowsily.)

DARLENA

(offstage)

No, Igor! No! Bad! Very Bad! You know what happens when
you have too much sugar.

(IGOR lurches in, prodded by
DARLENA.)

IGOR

Yes, Mistress.

DARLENA

(looking for MILLE)

Something has happened to the specimen! I was so close, Igor,
so close. I could taste it. Everything was to be revealed.

DARLENA (cont'd)

Everything! I don't understand. You know I cannot stand not understanding.

IGOR

I understand.

DARLENA

We've got to de-program it. Or the world will stop at the stroke of midnight! All my beautiful technology. Find it, Igor. Take it to the operating room. Prepare the coils at once!

IGOR

No mistress! Not the coils!

DARLENA

Now, Igor! There's no more time!

(LIGHTS: Blackout.)

SLIDE #2: Blank center, Tesla coils on either side. The ACTORS perform in shadow behind the white screen.

Scene 2

SETTING: Darlena's operating room.

AT RISE: **SOUND:** Music--spooky/Gothic theme. Two figures, DARLENA and IGOR, are seen as if hovering over an operating table.

IGOR

(behind screen)

The patient is ready, mistress.

DARLENA

(behind screen)

Hurry! I'm going to put the electrode on her head. When I give the signal, throw the switch. Understand?

IGOR

(behind screen)

Yes, mistress.

(IGOR reaches for switch.)

DARLENA

(behind screen)

Igor, what are you doing? I haven't given the signal. Not yet, Igor! Not yet!

(SHE waves her hands for HIM to stop. IGOR throws the switch. Immediately:)

SLIDE #3: Two Electric bolts coming diagonally from the sides, meeting in the center.

(**LIGHTS** flicker like lightening as SLIDE #3 appears. DARLENA'S body, between the electric bolts, shakes as if being shocked. SHE screams. **SOUND**: A discordant note.)

BLACKOUT

SLIDE #4: As slide #1--Interior, laboratory.

Scene 3

SETTING: Morning. DARLENA'S laboratory.

AT RISE: **SOUND**: Grieg--Morning from Peer Gynt. DARLENA on the floor. IGOR hovers.
SOUND: Music stops.)

IGOR

Mistress?

DARLENA

Igor? What has happened?

IGOR

It were an accident, mistress.

(MILLE enters with butterfly wings, flying.)

DARLENA

My specimen! My Millennium Bug!

IGOR

Look mistress.

DARLENA

Wings! It's worse than I thought. It has mutated!

MILLIE

Look at all these colors!

IGOR

It were a caterpillar turned into a butterfly, mistress!

MILLIE

I did have inner beauty after all.

DARLENA

Villainy! A computer bug shaped like a caterpillar turned into a butterfly. Igor, prepare the laser scalpel at once before it--

MILLIE

I'm not an "it!" My name is Millie.

DARLENA

(to IGOR)

Be quick! Before it's too late!

MILLIE

(to IGOR)

What's your name?

IGOR

Igor, if it please you, miss.

DARLENA

Don't speak to it, Igor! It is cunning.

IGOR

I will.

DARLENA

You dare defy me! I am your MOTHER!

IGOR

All the same, mistress, she's a butterfly. And I won't open her up.

DARLENA

Then the world must stop! All is lost!

MILLIE

The world didn't stop. It's six a.m.

DARLENA

It is? Oh, my machines! What a shock! Haven't I already had a shock?

MILLIE

We all have. Look at me! I just grew wings without any help from machines at all!

DARLENA

Can this be true?

IGOR

Begging your pardon, mistress, but you've lost touch.

DARLENA

You mean, you're just a butterfly?

MILLIE

Your lab's pretty cool. But you couldn't see your own nose.

DARLENA

But that means I've been wrong. Utterly, completely, wrong! I've never been wrong before. What a strange feeling. I sort of like it. Although, I don't like it. Do you know what I mean, Mille?

(MILLIE leads THEM in a dance.

SOUND: Song.)

MILLIE

WHEN YOU'VE BEAUTY IN AND OUT,
TRUST YOURSELF AND NEVER DOUBT.

IGOR

DO WHAT'S RIGHT AND BE A MANS
IF THEM WHAT MADE YOU NEVER CANS.

DARLENA

TO SAVE THE WORLD WON'T REALLY DO.
IT'S BEST TO SEE IN FRONT OF YOU.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY