

AMNESIA 1

A confrontation. Enter, front of tabs, Amnesia

AMNESIA Woe, woe and thrice times woe.
And also welcome to our show
'Beware the Ides of March' I say
But their reply is 'Go away!'
No-one heeds a word I speak
I might as well be talking Greek!
Well... This tale is set in times long past,
When Roman power, spread quite vast,
Ruled all the land from... well, here to there (*indicates with flourishes*)
The Empire was a grand affair.
The Emperor, comes to town today
To get his rent and have his say...

BILIUS (*entering flourishing a dagger and interrupting*)
The knives will soon be out for him.
His future's looking rather grim,
We need a proper man to rule...

AMNESIA Who?
BILIUS Well me of course... you... (*to audience*) silly old fool.
I have a cunning plan you see
I'll soon put him where he should be. (*indicates hand across throat*)
And rule the Empire by myself
As emperor Bilius the twelfth.

AMNESIA Beware ambition 'tis a dangerous thing.
Within its tail may lie a sting.
Remember – woe! And thrice times woe!

BILIUS I think she's gonna have to go...
AMNESIA But first, with music, start the show.

Amnesia waves and the curtains open

Amnesia exits. Bilius stands to one side of stage.

AMNESIA 2

At the end of the tune Amnesia enters to give them lessons in the art of soothsaying. The mini-soothsayers sit around Amnesia.

AMNESIA Good morning girls and boys!

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS Good morning miss.

AMNESIA And who am I?

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS Amnesia, miss.

AMNESIA Good, good. Just like to be sure. Now all say (*spookily, arms and fingers waving*) 'Sooth, sooth'.

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS (*imitating Amnesia*) 'Sooth, sooth'.

AMNESIA Good, good. Now, (*movements again*) 'Beware, beware'.

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS (*imitating Amnesia*) 'Beware, beware'.

AMNESIA Good, good. Now, (*exaggerated movements again*) 'Woe, woe and thrice times woe'.

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS (*copying Amnesia*) 'Woe, woe and thrice times woe'.

AMNESIA Good. Now this is how you tell the news.

"News at Ten"

The news today is rather grim

The volcano's rumbling – quite a din.

I hope it won't blow up this time

Cos I've left me washing on the line...

Don't you have any good news, miss?

MINI-WITCH 1

AMNESIA

(*shocked*) Good news! We don't tell them any good news!

MINI-WITCH 2

Why not?

AMNESIA

Well... because... there isn't any.

VANILLA

(*entering and staying to one side of stage*) What Flavia?

AUDIENCE

Vanilla!

VANILLA

Great!

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS (*spookily with arm and finger movements*) What Flavia? Vanilla! Great!

AMNESIA

No, no! Not that!

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS (*with movements*) No, no! Not that!

AMNESIA

(*to audience*) Gawd! Who'd be a teacher?

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS Gaw...

AMNESIA

STOP!

VANILLA

Oh, it's just like (*local school*) This could be Amnesia the Soothsayer. They say she's a sort of ancient Boots the Chemist.

AMNESIA

SOOTH! SOOTH!

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS SOOTH! SOOTH!

VANILLA

Talking of ancient boots, have you seen that face! I wonder if it's her? I've heard of Roman ruins, but this is ridiculous!

AMNESIA

SOOTH! SOOTH!

MINI-SOOTHSAVERS SOOTH! SOOTH!

VANILLA

(*to audience*) Do you think it's her, boys and girls?

AUDIENCE

Yes!

VANILLA

I'll ask her. Excuse me, are you the Soothsayer?

AMNESIA

SOOTH! SOOTH!

VANILLA

(*to audience*) A woman of few words!

Mini-soothsayers amuse themselves playing games etc. during the following.

AMNESIA

SOOTH! SOOTH!

VANILLA

(*to audience*) You wouldn't think it took her three months to learn her lines, would you? (*losing patience*) Are you going to stand there all night saying 'SOOTH!' or are you going to get involved in the plot?

AMNESIA

What plot?

VANILLA

Yes, I see what you mean. No, no, there must be one. We just haven't got to it yet.

AMNESIA

What do you want to know, old ugly one?

VANILLA

(*to audience*) She'll get a smack in the gob in a minute! Still, better be nice to her or she won't give me the love potion. (*to Soothsayer, smiling sweetly*) I want to know if you are Amnesia the famous and wonderful Soothsayer?

AMNESIA Of course I am you silly old bat. Why do you think I'm standing here saying 'SOOTH! SOOTH!'
VANILLA *(controlling herself with difficulty)* Sorry, I thought you might be looking for the local dentist. *(to audience)* D'you get it? Tooth, tooth. Os, make up your own jokes then! *(to Amnesia)* Then, good woman, if you are truly Amnesia, I have need of your services.

AMNESIA I can see into the future you know.
VANILLA *(impressed)* Really. What can you tell me about my future?
AMNESIA Well, you're wasting your time with a love potion for a start.
VANILLA *(to audience)* You've got to admit, she is good isn't she? *(to Amnesia)* And how did you know I wanted a love potion?
AMNESIA It's always the same with the ugly ones. They think a love potion will solve everything.
VANILLA She is good, you've got to hand it to her *(raises fist)* And I will in a minute. What do I need then?
AMNESIA A miracle, a sledgehammer, or a very short-sighted man.
VANILLA Oh thanks very much! No, no. Look, I must have a love potion. It's my last hope. I've met this man see... he's not much to look at but he's very rich. And you can't have everything, can you? *(to audience)* Oh, fancy being married to a rich emperor. Lazing about by the swimming pool all day. All your meals thrown in. *(to someone in the audience)* No, not in the pool you silly...

AMNESIA Have you got the wherewithal?
VANILLA *(preening)* I've never had any complaints.
AMNESIA Money. I mean money.
VANILLA Oh, right. Well, not really. Can't you let me have it on a long term loan?
AMNESIA How long do you think you're going to last?
VANILLA Charming!
AMNESIA I'll let you have a love potion if you do something for me in return.
VANILLA *(laughing)* What? You're not trying a love potion on someone are you? You've got less chance than me! *(round stage, laughing)* What a scream! *(to audience)* Her! With a love potion! Ha!

AMNESIA Do you want the potion or not?
VANILLA *(controlling herself)* Oh, yes, I'm sorry. I got carried away for a minute!
AMNESIA You should be.
VANILLA Oh, I'll do anything. You must help me, oh you must! *(up and down stage)* I'm desperate! I'm so lonely! Oh! What's going to become of me? Cast out! Nowhere to go! I'll be all on me own in me old age!

AMNESIA You will if you carry on like that.
VANILLA Do you mind! *(up and down the stage again)* Now, where was I? Oh, I'll be so kind, so loving, so thoughtful, so good at...

AMNESIA Overacting?
VANILLA Over... No! Cooking... Oh, I'll be so...
AMNESIA Silent?
VANILLA Steady on! I don't need a man that much! Oh dear I... I... What do you want me to do?

AMNESIA *(producing phial)* I want you to give this poison to Bilius, the Senator.
VANILLA Oh, Bilius, yes, he's horrible. Is it poison?
AMNESIA No, it's not poison.
VANILLA Pity. So what does it do? *(takes phial, takes top off, puts spot on her tongue with her finger)*
AMNESIA It makes you forget.
VANILLA *(smacking her lips and going vague)* Forget? Forget what?
AMNESIA It'll make Bilius forget.
VANILLA Bilius? Who's Bilius? *(tastes it again)*
AMNESIA Bilius, the Senator. Give him the potion.
VANILLA Potion? What potion?
AMNESIA *(losing patience)* That potion! Stop tasting it! Give it to Bilius.
VANILLA *(coming to)* Oh, Bilius, that ogre. Who am I? Here, it's good stuff, this, isn't it?
AMNESIA I owe him three months rent see, for me hovel. *(doing a 'Vanilla' round stage)* Oh times are so bad! Nobody comes to me for help any more! I'm so desperate! I'm so poor!

VANILLA *(watching her with surprise)* Do you mind! I'm the star here!