

Aida (complete libretto)
Music: Elton John
Lyrics: Tim Rice
Book by Linda Woolverton, Robert Falls & David Henry Hwang

ACT ONE

Prologue

THE MUSEUM

Lights up on the Egyptian wing of a Modern Art Museum. A contemporary crowd, chic and beautifully dressed, is gathered around various artifacts, all under glass: a small boat, a model of a soldier with a bow and arrow, a mannequin of AMNERIS, ancient female Pharaoh of Egypt. The crowd moves appreciatively around the exhibits. In the center of the room, also behind glass, is a mysterious object - an ancient burial chamber, a tomb. A man and a woman also dressed in the fashions of today approach the tomb from different sides. They are both drawn to it. They circle it, intrigued as if they have seen it before. The man is RADAMES; the woman is AIDA. In a musical moment, they look up. Their eyes meet and all the action in the room freezes as AMNERIS, wearing a royal headdress, emerges from the glass encasement. As she sings, the cast of the modern museumgoers leaves the stage.

1: EVERY STORY

AMNERIS

Every story, tale or memoir
Every saga or romance
Whether true or fabricated
Whether planned or happenstance

Whether sweeping through the ages
Casting centuries aside
Or a hurried brief recital
Just a thirty-minute ride

(AMNERIS steps off of the pedestal and stands before the audience.)

Whether bright or melancholy
Rough and ready, finely spun
Whether with a thousand players
Or a lonely cast of one

Every story, new or ancient
Bagatelle or work of art
All are tales of human failing
All are tales of love at heart

(The lights change violently with a rock and roll chord. Frozen on stage: the Man staring at a model of the boat. The WOMAN looks at the figure of the Archer.)

This is the story
Of a love that flourished
In a time of hate

Of lovers no tyranny could separate
Love set into motion on the Nile's shore
Destiny ignited by an act of war

Egypt saw the mighty river as its very heart and soul
Source of life for all her people
That only Egypt could control
Destruction of her southern neighbor justified
Nubia exploited, left with little more than pride
Ohhhhhhhhhh.

ACT ONE

Scene One

A SLAVE BARGE

As the WOMAN moves off with the model of the boat, large red sails fly in, creating an Egyptian barge on stage. EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS man the sails as riches and the spoils of war are loaded on to the deck of the ship.

2. FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE

SOLDIERS

Oh, Oh

Fortune Favors the Brave

Oh, Oh

Fortune Favors the Brave

(RADAMES, an Egyptian Army Captain enters.)

RADAMES

We have swept to glory,

Egypt's mastery expands

From the Nile's northern most delta

To the dry, dry southern sands

The more we find, the more we see,

The more we come to learn

The more that we explore,

The more we shall return

SOLDIERS

Oh, oh

Fortune favors the brave

RADAMES

It's all worked out, my road is clear

The lines of latitude extend

Way beyond my wildest dreams

Toward some great triumphant end

We seize the day

We turned the tide

We touched the stars

We mocked the grave

We moved into uncharted lands

RADAMES & SOLDIERS

Fortune favors the brave

RADAMES

The more we find, the more we see

The more we come to learn
The more that we explore
The more we shall return

Nothing is an accident
We are free to have it all
We are what we want to be
It's in ourselves to rise or fall

This is easy to believe
When distant places call to me
It's harder from the palace yard
Fortune favors the free

SOLDIERS
Oh, oh

RADAMES
Fortune favors the young!

SOLDIERS
Oh, oh

RADAMES
Fortune favors the brave!

(Suddenly, AIDA and NUBIAN WOMEN are pushed onstage. She stumbles. RADAMES goes over to inspect the Nubians.)

RADAMES
What have we here?

SOLDIER #1
We found them along the riverbank, Captain.

(SOLDIER pushes AIDA forward, into RADAMES' path.)

RADAMES
(to AIDA)
Your country is at war and you go wandering along the Nile's edge. You must have a burning desire to see Egypt.
(to SOLDIER)
Put her in Chains
(SOLDIER begins putting AIDA in chains. RADAMES turns to another SOLDIER.)
Have you finished the map?

SOLDIER #2
Yes, Captain.

RADAMES
Good work. But this is wrong.
(He traces his finger over the map)
But this is wrong, from the east it looked like it curved to the North...like this. Here, let me show you.

(AIDA has taken a sword from a drunken soldier and is pointing it at the man who shackled her.)

SOLDIER #1

My sword! My sword!

(AIDA sword fights with the soldiers, taking one captive.)

AIDA
Release them.

RADAMES
(Crossing to AIDA)
Hand it over. Now!

AIDA
(She holds the sword close to the soldier's neck.)
You took us from Nubia...and now you say we belong to you, yes?

RADAMES
Yes.

AIDA
Well, I took this soldier from your ranks. So, by your own logic he belongs to me. Now let them go.

(RADAMES smiles in acknowledgement, then points to THE WOMEN. SOLDIERS instantly grab them. AIDA lays down the sword. A SOLDIER snatches it up.)

SOLDIER #1
Throw her in the River.

RADAMES
No, I have a better plan for her.

ACT ONE
Scene Two
RADAMES' QUARTERS

RADAMES leads AIDA off as the set rises to reveal the ship's lower quarters. Once in his quarters, RADAMES lifts his hand. AIDA covers her face.

AIDA
Don't.

RADAMES
You don't want me to remove your shackles?
(She holds up her hands for him and he unlocks her manacles.)
They'll only get in the way. Very impressive up there. I should enlist you in my army. Make you my Lieutenant.

AIDA
Are you mocking me, Captain?

RADAMES
No. Admiring you.
(He removes his coat, dropping it to the floor almost as a dare.)
Do you know what's going to happen now? You're going to scrub the filth of battle from my skin.
(RADAMES sits on a stool in front of her. AIDA sees the basin of water and the sea sponge.)
It's been a long time since I've felt clean.

(AIDA begins to scrub his back with all her force.)
You're much better with a sword than you are with a sponge.

AIDA
I wish I had a sword now.

RADAMES
There's mine. Help yourself. Who taught you to use a weapon?

AIDA
My father.

RADAMES
Because he knows that Nubian men can't protect their women?
(She straightens, furious.)
You're not finished.

AIDA
Yes, I am.

RADAMES
On your knees!
(He stands to confront her.)
You enjoy living dangerous, don't you?

AIDA
About as much as I enjoy washing your filthy Egyptian skin

(AIDA throws the sponge to the ground. RADAMES raises his hand to strike her.)

RADAMES
You...

3. THE PAST IS ANOTHER LAND

AIDA
No...

You know nothing about me and care even less
How could you understand our emptiness
You've plundered our wisdom, our knowledge, our wealth
In bleeding us dry
You long for our spirit
But that you will never possess

The past is now another land
Far beyond my reach
Invaded by insidious
Foreign bodies, foreign speech
Where timeless joys of childhood
Lie broken on the beach

RADAMES
What is your name?

AIDA
Aida...

SOLDIER #3 (offstage)

Captain, we're ready to dock!

(RADAMES scoops up the shackles from the floor and forces them on AIDA.)

AIDA

Please, leave them off.

RADAMES

You're a slave now! And if you want to survive you better remember it.

AIDA

The present is an empty space
Between the good and bad
A moment leading nowhere
Too pointless to be sad
But time enough to lay to waste
Every certainty I had

(The platform from RADAMES' ship appears onstage, as slaves exit from the ship and onto the dock.)

The future is a barren world
From which I can't return
Both heartless and material
Its wretched spoils not my concern
Shining like an evil sun
As my childhood treasures burn
Shining like an evil sun
As my childhood treasures burn

ACT ONE

Scene Three

THE DOCKS

The scene has now changed to the docks in Egypt, where RADAMES' soldiers are unloading the ship and securing the slaves. A MERCHANT enters, carrying gold. MEREB, RADAMES' young servant, enters after MERCHANT, carrying a few casks of wine.

MERCHANT

Mereb, Mereb...Is that the wine?

MEREB

You have the gold?

(They exchange gold and wine. The MERCHANT runs off. RADAMES comes down the platform and onto the docks.)

RADAMES

Mereb!

MEREB

(He stuffs the bag of gold down his shirt, then turns.)
Master, I am so glad you've returned.

RADAMES

(Descending gangplank.)
Have you kept my house in order?

MEREB

Yes, well except for a few casks of wine, which have mysteriously disappeared.

RADAMES

Again?

(ZOSER and his MINISTERS enter from SR to RADAMES and MEREB.)

ZOSER

Here you are my son, home at last! Step aside Mereb!

MEREB

(He bows to ZOSER)

Yes, oh Chief Minister Zoser... loved by the Gods, the people and himself.

ZOSER

Careful boy or I'll have you...

RADAMES

(He embraces ZOSER.)

It's good to see you father.

ZOSER

You were gone for so long Radames, I was beginning to worry. You weren't injured in battle?

RADAMES

No.

ZOSER

I kept telling the princess that no man could best you with a sword.

RADAMES

No man got the better of me. Though a certain woman might have...

ZOSER

Really?

RADAMES

Listen, beyond the fifth cataract the Nile heads directly toward Khartoum.

ZOSER

Then we can attack the city by water? Excellent! You recorded the landscape?

RADAMES

With the maps we made, an illiterate foot soldier could find his way through Nubia.

ZOSER

And you brought us captives. Good. Take them to the copper mines. We can't seem to keep them alive down there.

(ZOSER motions the GUARDS forward)

RADAMES

Stop! Not this one.

(He takes AIDA from the GUARD.)

I need a gift for the princess.

ZOSER

Yes. She'll be expecting something.

RHADAMES

Take the others to the Palace Groundskeeper. They can help with the harvest.

(To ZOSER.)

They're all women. They wouldn't last a day underground.

ZOSER

As you wish. They're your slaves.

(RADAMES turns AIDA to face him.)

AIDA

Thank you.

RADAMES

Give me your hands, Aida.

MEREB

Your name is Aida?

RADAMES

Mereb.

(To Aida, taking her chains off.)

I'm going to remove these. But know that if you dare try to escape, I will come after you myself.

AIDA

You flatter me, Captain. You don't look like a man who would chase after any woman.

RADAMES

I'll make an exception for you.

(To Mereb.)

Mereb, take her to Princess Amneris with my compliments.

(AIDA and MEREB exit.)

ZOSER

You've been gone six months. I really think a personal appearance is in order.

RADAMES

In good time, father. Though you and the Princess should know that as soon as my crew is rested, I am setting out again.

ZOSER

You can't. Radames, Egypt needs you now. Pharaoh is not the powerful leader he was when you left.

4. ANOTHER PYRAMID

ZOSER

While you've been away cavorting

Matters here have moved apace

Now I need you home supporting

All the plans I've put in place

First of all this means your wedding
You'll recall your future bride
For the way that Pharaoh's heading
Time's no longer on our side

According to the hawk god, Horus
Our most regal invalid
Is not that much longer for us
Build another pyramid!

RADAMES
You mean Pharaoh has fallen ill? Is it serious?

ZOSER
I'm afraid so.

RADAMES
I must go to him.

ZOSER
Yes. That will bring him some comfort. I'll see you tonight at the banquet,
Captain.

There are many who'll be tearful
As our leader fades away
But our architects are cheerful
And each dog must have its day

If our country is to flourish
Then my son must take the lead
Be our inspiration, nourish
All our hopes our dreams our creed

Soon our monarch will have filled a
Tomb just like his fathers did
Summon Egypt's greatest builders
Re: another pyramid

MINISTERS
Build it, build it
Another pyramid

There will be a time for mourning
But for now put plans on hold

MINISTERS
Hold

For I give the nation warning
That before the corpse is cold

MINISTERS
Cold

ZOSER
We'll extend fair Egypt's power
Egypt's glory strength and style
We shall have our finest hour
Far beyond the mighty Nile

He must have a vault that's grand by
Any standards, floor to lid
Put five thousand slaves on stand by
Build another pyramid!

MINISTERS

Build it, build it
Build it, build it
Build it, build it
Build it-

(DANCE BREAK)

ZOSER

Someone has been telling Pharaoh about our private meetings.

MINISTERS

Shhhhhhhh

ZOSER

(To the ACCUSED MINISTER)
Traitor! He's become a liability.

(The other MINISTERS instantly surround the ACCUSED MINISTER. ASSASSIN
MINISTER crosses to MINISTER, pulls out a knife, and kills him. The Dance
goes into high gear.)

MINISTERS

Build it, build it
Build it-

(DANCE BREAK)

ZOSER

He must have a vault that's grand by
Any standards, floor to lid
Put five thousand slaves on stand by
Build another pyramid!

ZOSER

(To one MINISTER)
You extracted more arsenic?
(MINISTER hands ZOSER a vile of arsenic)
Who would have thought the copper mines would yield such an abundant supply?
Put some in Pharaoh's wine tonight at the banquet. Again, only a few drops.
We don't want him dying...just yet.

ACT ONE

Scene Four

HALLWAY IN THE PHARAOH'S PALACE

AIDA appears in a uniform of a Palace Slave.

MEREB

Well now you look like a handmaiden. But at least the Captain saw that you
are special.

AIDA

What that man sees and understands could be etched on a grain of sand.

MEREB

That may be, but Radames did save you and the other women from the copper mines.

AIDA

That was surprising and decent of him.

MEREB

When I was ten, Radames saved me from being beaten to death by a palace guard. He promised he'd look after me from then on. He has kept his promise. (AIDA turns away.)

Look, I know what you are thinking...that I've become one of them. But I am still Nubian. I will always be Nubian.

AIDA

Of course

5. HOW I KNOW YOU

MEREB

I grew up in your hometown
At least began to grow
I hadn't got to my first shave
before the body blow
Egyptians in the courtyard

My family in chains
You witnessed our abduction
Which possibly explains
How I know you
How I know you

(MEREB takes AIDA upstage)

Before that fateful morning
My family enjoyed
A privileged existence
For my father was employed
As advisor to the King no less
Which surely rings a bell

For as you are his daughter
You probably can tell
How I know you
Yes I know you

AIDA

You know too much and what you say
Is better left unknown
And now I'm just a slave like you
Our lives our not our own

MEREB

I never have abandoned
And nor I think could you
That spark of hope for freedom
No terror can subdue

AIDA
My only hope is silence
You've never seen my face

MEREB
No you remain a princess
In any time or place

AIDA
You don't know me

MEREB
Yes, I know you

AIDA
You don't know me

MEREB
How I know you
How I know you

Princess...

AIDA
Mereb, you must treat me like any other slave. If the Egyptians knew I was the daughter of the Nubian King...

MEREB
They would kill you. But our people will keep your secret.

AIDA
No. You must not tell anyone who I am. From now on, I am nothing but a gift from an Egyptian captain to his Princess.

MEREB
Just so you know, Amneris is more than that to Radames. She's his betrothed.

AIDA
He's to be married? When?

MEREB
The day his ship sinks and the royal builders refuse to make him another. Come; let's get you to the Princess.

ACT ONE
Scene Five
THE BATHS

Steam begins to fill the stage. WOMEN OF THE PALACE enter wrapped in sheets. SLAVES stand by with trays of fruit, oils and cosmetics. We see two girls swimming.

AMNERIS
(Climbing out of the pool and changing into robe)
It is such hard work maintaining perfection. But worth the effort, don't you think?

WOMEN

Oh, yes. Definitely worth it! You're perfect.

AMNERIS

Really? Perfect? Really? Then maybe one of you can explain to me why Radames, the man destined to be my one and only, is neglecting me?

(AIDA and MEREB enter unseen.)

He's been to see my father. I hear he's spent time with his father. In fact, he's probably chummed it up with every withered old man in Egypt. But clearly, the thought of visiting a ripe young princess, with fabulous hair, leaves him cold.

(AMERNIS powders herself.)

MEREB

(Bowing low.)

Princess Amneris - first in beauty, wisdom, and accessories. Captain Radames has not forgotten you. He knows you will be at the feast tonight in all your extravagant finery. And he can hardly wait. But for now, he sends you this gift.

AMNERIS

(Turns to see AIDA.)

Another handmaiden? I don't need another handmaiden. Does this gift have a name?

AIDA

Aida.

AMNERIS

Did you just speak?

AIDA

My name is Aida, Princess. And I think you might wish to know...

AMNERIS

How dare you! You do not lower your eyes. You do not tremble. Are you not afraid of me?

AIDA

Would it please you if I were?

AMNERIS

Not so much.

AIDA

Then I am doing as you please.

AMNERIS

True. Well that's true. You started to say something about...

AIDA

Captain Radames.

AMNERIS

What do you know of the captain?

AIDA

Only that he is well. He suffered no injuries in battle. I thought you might want to know that.

AMNERIS

I did. You see I've been so... You're very astute, aren't you, Aida?

AIDA

Only on occasion. But my true talent lies with a needle. And if you will allow me, Princess, I will make you a robe in a shade closer to that of your eyes. There's a dyeing process I use that makes fabrics glow. It's a secret that was passed down by the handmaidens of Queen Neferteti.

AMNERIS

A slave who knows her fabrics? I'm keeping her! Oh Radames, he knows me. He really, really knows me. Go, Mereb, show Aida the sewing room.

(AIDA and MEREB exit.)

All right ladies, let's polish this gem.

6. MY STRONGEST SUIT

AMNERIS WOMEN

In life one has to face a huge assortment
Of nauseating fads and good advice
There's health and fitness
Diet and deportment

And other pointless forms of sacrifice
Conversation? Wit? I am a doubter
Manners? Charm?
They're no way to impress
So forget the inner me, observe the outer
I am what I wear and how I dress

Oh now I believe in looking
Like my time on earth is cooking
Whether polka dotted
Striped or even checked
With the some glamour guaranteeing
Every fiber on of my being
Is displayed to quite remarkable effect

From your cradle via trousseau
To your deathbed you're on view, so Ah
Never compromise, accept no substitute Ah
I would rather wear a barrel Ah
Than conservative apparel Ah
For my dress has always been Ah
My strongest suit Ah
Ah
Overwear
Underwear
Anytime
Anywhere

Staying in or hitting town wards
From the top and working downwards Ooh ooh ooh ah
I ensure that every stitch Ooh ooh ooh ah
Is stitched in time Ooh ooh ooh ah

Whether wig or hat or turban
Whether clad boudoir or urban Is stitched in time
Not to strut your stuff Ooh ooh ooh ah
Outrageously's a crime Ooh ooh ooh ah
Ooh ooh ooh ah

And the few who are invited Such a crime
To my wardrobe are delighted Oooh overwear
As they wander through my things Oooh underwear
To find en route Oooh anytime
We're wandering through your th

That in negligee or formal Ooh negligee
I am anything but normal Ooh anything but normal normal

Ooh ah
For my dress has always been
My strongest suit Overwear, underwear
Anytime, anywhere
Overwear, underwear
I am what I wear Anytime, anywhere
Overwear, underwear
Anytime, anywhere
I said anytime Overwear,underwear
Anytime
Anywhere

Finest
So bring me all my finest Divinest
Most audacious, my divinest
Most revealing
Most expensive and to boot
Most revealing most
expensive
Most arresting Most arresting
Most heartstopping
Most heartstopping Most heart-stoping
Most free-flowing Overwear
Most eye-popping Underwear
Most arresting Anytime
Most heart-stopping
Anywhere
Dress has always been Dress has always been
My strongest suit
I am what I wear
My strongest suit
I am what I wear
You know that
I am what I wear I am what I wear

Dress has always been
Dress has always been My strongest
My strongest My strongest
My strongest My strongest suit My strongest
My strongest My strongest
My stroooooooooongest suit My strongest suit

My strongest suit!

ACT ONE

Scene Six

THE PHARAOH'S PRIVATE BANQUET ROOM

(Upstage three exotic dancers, preparing for the Palace entertainment, begin to dance. Downstage MEREB enters and immediately after, RADAMES searching him out. They cross the stage.)0

RADAMES

Mereb, was the Princess please with my gift?

MEREB

Yes. Aida managed to make herself indispensable in record time.

RADAMES

I'm not surprised. Did she tell you anything about herself? Because, I've never met a woman like her before. And I can't help but wonder...

MEREB

No! Nothing! She said nothing.

(MEREB exits quickly. And the THREE DANCING GIRLS sweep downstage in an ecstatic display. The music builds. The PHARAOH makes a grand entrance on a special sedan chair, carried on shoulders by Palace Servants. He appears very ill. The stage is set with a long low table filled with delicacies.)

RADAMES

(To AMNERIS.)

You look lovely tonight.

AMNERIS

Thank you.

RADAMES

Is this the latest fashion?

AMNERIS

It is now. So your expedition went well?

RADAMES

Oh yes, we got well past Aswan, into territory where no Egyptian has ever set foot.

AMNERIS

Really? That sounds very... scenic. Maybe next time I'll go with you.

RADAMES

If you like, Princess. We sleep with sand mites; live on dried monkey meat; and this time the water was so tainted we vomited for days.

AMNERIS

Whew! Then again, I'm pretty busy.

(The dance continues for a bit and dissolves into the scene with the dancing girls showing themselves off to the rich and powerful men of Egypt. AIDA is pouring wine. A NUBIAN SERVANT passes her.)

NUBIAN

Princess, the word of your arrival has spread through the Nubian camps.

NUBIAN

(Another NUBIAN slave, dancing with the court dancers, addresses AIDA while dancing)

Your people cannot wait to see you. Welcome, welcome.

AIDA

(Calling in MEREB'S direction.)

Mereb!

MEREB

Okay, so I told one person. Maybe two. Princess, your people need to know.

PHARAOH

(Holding his chalice up for a toast.)

Captain. To a successful expedition. Thanks to the routes you have discovered, our troops will now be able to attack Nubia with overwhelming force. The Gods willing, this long war shall soon end, with Egypt's complete and final victory.

(The court drinks to the toast.)

Amneris, shall I continue?

AMNERIS

What ever you think is best, father.

PHARAOH

Radames. You came to me this morning with a request to set out on another journey. But I have a more important mission for you. Although it means you can never leave Egyptian soil again, I believe this will be a joyous assignment. One I would only trust to a man I have long regarded as a member of my own family

RADAMES

It has been my privilege to serve you, Your Majesty.

PHARAOH

As you all know, Captain Radames and my daughter have been betrothed for nine years now. Long enough, I'd say.

(PHARAOH laughs, but is stopped by a debilitating coughing attack.)

I want to see her and our nation happily settled before I leave this world.

Therefore, in seven days, Radames, son of Zoser, will wed the Princess

Amneris. The Son of Isis has spoken.

(AMNERIS runs to her father's side and shows her appreciation for the announcement. The men gather and congratulate RADAMES. Suddenly, PHARAOH has another attack, coughing uncontrollably. The court gathers around him and escorts him offstage. ZOSER and RADAMES are left alone in the banquet hall with AIDA and another servant.)

ZOSER

A toast to the bridegroom. If I'd known such an awkward young girl would turn into such a stunning young woman, I would have offered for her myself.

RADAMES

It's not too late.

ZOSER

I thought you loved Amneris?

RADAMES

Of course I do. We grew up together.

ZOSER

Then what is it?

(He waits for an answer.)

Radames I've spent years working toward this day. And you are not going to ruin it - not for yourself, or me! Welcome to your new life, son.

7. FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE (Reprise)

RADAMES

Nothing is an accident

We are free to have it all

We are what we want to be

It's in ourselves to rise or fall

(RADAMES picks up a goblet from the table.)

This is easy to believe

When distant places call to me

It's harder from the palace yard

Fortune favors the...

(RADAMES turns upstage and throws the chalice off. AIDA and the SERVANT turn and begin to walk off.)

RADAMES

(To Aida.)

No, stay...

AIDA

Yes, Captain?

RADAMES

Where are you from?

AIDA

Ikaita. It a village near...

RADAMES

...near the Second Cataract. The river's an entirely different color there.

AIDA

No, it's an entirely different color here.

RADAMES

Fair enough.

AIDA

My father and I use to spend days sailing the Nile. He'd let me choose the course. And sometimes I'd even run us aground on purpose... whenever I wanted to see something on the shore.

RADAMES

Did you ever sail north?

AIDA

No. My father felt the First Cataract, being so close to the border of Egypt was too...Was too dangerous a place to take me.

RADAMES

But there are no Egyptians in the First Cataract. Only these tiny, grassy islands. And the sunlight is different there. In Egypt it is direct and harsh. But there it shimmers. It's the most beautiful place I've ever seen.

AIDA

Of course, it's Nubia. I would like to see that part of my country.

8. ENCHANTMENT PASSING THROUGH

RADAMES

To sail away to half discovered places
To see the secrets so few eyes have seen
To see moments of enchantment on our faces
The moments when we smile and those in between

AIDA

Are you talking about Nubia now?

RADAMES

Yes, in a way.

AIDA

If I could leave this place then I'd be sailing
To corners of my land where there would be
Sweet southern winds of liberty prevailing
The beauty so majestic and so free

RADAMES

I will take you sailing. South, you can be my guide.

AIDA

Would you let me steer?

RADAMES

Would you run us aground?

AIDA

Oh yes. Wherever there are no people. I'd jump out of the boat, kick off my sandals and run. And there'd be no one there to scold me and tell me to behave like a good...to behave.

RADAMES

There'd be no ties of time and space to bind me

AIDA

And no horizon I could not pursue

RADAMES

I'd leave the world's misfortunes far behind me

AIDA

I'd put my faith and trust in something new

RADAMES & AIDA

But why should I tell you this

AIDA
A stranger I just met

RADAMES
A woman whom I hardly know at all and should forget

RADAMES & AIDA
A journey we can only dream of
Enchantment passing through
And how is it I say these things
So easily to you

RADAMES
This is meaningless! I'll never take you sailing. I'm never going to leave
Egypt again. Instead, I'll sit on the throne and send other men off on
their expeditions.

AIDA
You talk as though you've been enslaved.

RADAMES
Not with chains, maybe, but with a marriage promise.
(AIDA begins dabbing her eyes with her dress.)
What is that for?

AIDA
To dry my weeping eyes. Forced to marry a princess? Oh, what hardships. I
know - you want to go to lands where people have been living for centuries
and say that you "discovered" them. But instead, you're being thrust onto
the Pharaoh's throne. It is a great tragedy.

RADAMES
You go too far.

AIDA
No! You go too far. If you don't like your fate, change it. You are your own
master. There are no shackles on you. So don't expect any pity or
understanding from this humble palace slave.

RADAMES
Stop! I command you to stop!

RADAMES
But why did I tell her this?
A stranger I've just met
A woman who I hardly know at all and will forget
Anonymous and gone tomorrow
Enchantment passing through
And all I've done is tell her things
she already knew
She knew ...She knew....

ACT ONE
Scene Seven
AMNERIS' DRESSING ROOM

AMNERIS sits at her dressing stand, brushing her hair, forcibly. AIDA enters.

AIDA

(Offers to brush AMNERIS' hair.)

Here, let me.

(AMNERIS hands her the brush. AIDA brushes the Princess' hair.)

How is your father?

AMNERIS

I don't understand it. This illness of his came on so suddenly. Weeks ago he was healthy. And the court physicians, they have no idea what it is. Well, it was a magnificent feast, though, wasn't it?

AIDA

Yes, princess.

AMNERIS

Oh, there is so much to do to get ready for the wedding ceremony. From the bronzed entry statue of me, to the centerpieces of lilies and roses arranged to look like... me.

AIDA

It must be difficult.

AMNERIS

Planning a wedding?

AIDA

No. Being a Princess.

AMNERIS

Oh, you have no idea. The responsibilities are... overwhelming.

AIDA

Your people must expect so much.

AMNERIS

They want a goddess and I'm just...

AIDA

Human.

9. STRONGEST SUIT (Reprise)

AMNERIS

I may leave a great impression
As I race through a succession
Of the latest crazes, chase the newest fad
I feel better when beguiling
Find that fashion keeps me smiling
But in my heart I know it's rather sad

AIDA

That a life of great potential
Is dismissed, inconsequential

AMNERIS

And only ever seen as being cute
So I'll flutter to deceive

AIDA

Oh no you must believe
That one day you're bound to find

AIDA & AMNERIS
A Stronger Suit

(RADAMES enters the room, catching AIDA & AMNERIS off guard.)

AMNERIS
Radames! This is my bedchamber. You can't just... you know you shouldn't...
Aida, leave.

(AIDA turns to walk out.)

RADAMES
No, stay. Pour the princess a cup of wine.

(AIDA goes to the wine pitcher and pours the wine.)

AMNERIS
Are you trying to get me drunk, Radames? You know it's not necessary.

RADAMES
Is that your bed in there?

AMNERIS
Silk covered and fat with feathers.

RADAMES
Why don't you go in and I'll join you in a moment.

AMNERIS
Radames, are you sure? We're going to be married in a week.

RADAMES
Amneris, we've been engaged nine years.

AMNERIS
Good point.

(AMNERIS turns and runs offstage.)

RADAMES
You think you can speak to me like that, scold me like a shrew then walk away? You forget that I can have you carried off to the copper mines.

AIDA
And you forget that I am her property now, not yours.

(AIDA turns to leave.)

RADAMES
It doesn't matter. Because I know now that you were right.
(AIDA gives him a disconcerting look.)
What?

AIDA
I'm shocked. Even in enlightened Nubia, one never hears a man admit he's wrong.

AMNERIS
(Offstage.)
Radames, I'm ready!

RADAMES
(Calling offstage.)
I'll be right in princess.
(He turns back to AIDA.)
Aida, I was wrong. I have been selfish. If Pharaoh does not recover, Egypt is going to need a new leader. A strong leader. And I don't think that is Amneris.

AMNERIS
(Offstage.)
Radames, your engagement party is waiting.

AIDA
You should go to her.

RADAMES
Were you a noblewoman before you were captured?

AIDA
What does it matter? There's nothing noble about me now.

RADAMES
You're wrong. You are noble and courageous. Very few of us dare to speak so honestly. And considering you're a slave...

AIDA
Yes, we mustn't ever forget that I'm a slave.

RADAMES
I cannot take back the past, Aida. But even if I could... I'm not sure I want to. Aida, I -

(AMNERIS interrupts him, storming into the room wrapped in a sheet.)

AMNERIS
Radames! You barge into my bedchamber, waging a full-frontal attack, so to speak... and now you're stalling. Why?

RADAMES
I'm sorry, I didn't realize...

AMNERIS
There's a buck-naked princess lounging in her bed, calling your name. What exactly didn't you realize? Before our wedding night, pack up some of that dried monkey meat and have the royal cartographer draw you a map of the female body, Captain. Maybe then you'll be more inclined to come explore. (RADAMES looks around and then runs out of the room.)
Was it something I said? When we were children we understood each other so well. Now he's a mystery to me.

ACT ONE
Scene Eight
THE NUBIAN SLAVE CAMP

As AMNERIS exits offstage, the set changes to the Nubian camp. AIDA stands in the middle of the stage as MEREB approaches her.

MEREB

Aida, there you are. Will you come with me?

AIDA

Where?

MEREB

The Nubian camp. Look, everybody knows that I'm the one who can get things. And our people... They've have asked me to bring them... you.

AIDA

Why? So they can see a reckless fool dressed as a servant? No that is what I am, Merb. My father told me not to leave the boundaries of our village, but I could not be so constrained. I took Nehebka and the other women up the river. I had to see the countryside. And that's where the Egyptians captured us. I deserve this. And our people deserve a leader who thinks of them. Not of her own selfish pleasures.

MEREB

Aida, the Nubians want their princess.

10. DANCE OF THE ROBE

AIDA

It's knowing what they want of me that scares me
It's knowing having followed that I must lead
It's knowing that each person there compares me
To those in my past whom I now succeed
But how can whatever I do for them now
Be enough
Be enough

NUBIANS

Aida! Aida!
All we ask of you
Is a lifetime of service, wisdom, courage
To ask more would be selfish
But nothing less will do
Aida! Aida!

NEHEBKA

You robe should be golden, your robe should be perfect
Instead of this ragged concoction of thread
But may you be moved by its desperate beauty
To give us new life for we'd rather be dead
Than live in the squalor and shame of the slave
To the dance!
To the dance!

NUBIANS

Aida! Aida!
All we ask of you

All we ask is a lifetime of
Service, wisdom, courage
To ask more would be selfish

But nothing less will do
Aida! Aida!

NUBIANS
Aida! Aida!
Aida! Aida! Aida!

AIDA
I know expectations are wild and almost
Beyond my fulfillment but they won't hear
A word of a doubt or see signs of weakness
My nigh on impossible duty is clear
If I can rekindle my ancestors' dreams
It's enough
It's enough

AIDA
It's enough
NUBIANS
Aida!

NUBIANS
Aida! Aida!
Aida! Aida! Aida!

AIDA
It's enough
NUBIANS
Ah,ah,ah,ah,ah,ah

(When the song ends, the NUBIAN give AIDA her robe and she places it on her head. She is escorted onto the back of another NUBIAN and is carried around the camp. They exit.)

ACT ONE
Scene Nine
THE NILE'S EDGE

The great washing day. Under the music, a parade of WOMEN enters with baskets of laundry on their heads. A ritualistic rhythm takes hold as the linens are soaked, wrung and beaten to dry. AIDA enters and joins in the work. RADAMES enters with a SOLDIER. As they talk, AIDA watches him covertly. RADAMES dismisses the SOLDIER.

RADAMES
(To AIDA.)
You were watching me again. All week your eyes have been on me.

AIDA
What do you mean?

RADAMES
Do you think you're going to gain your freedom, just because you've gained my attention? You are beautiful, but I am not so easily led.

AIDA
If I've looked in your direction, it was only to see if your chalice needed refilling.

RADAMES

I have no chalice now... and yet you're looking.

AIDA

(Getting up from the bank, picking up her basket and linens.)

Excuse me, Captain, but I have linen to wash.

RADAMES

(As AIDA walks away from him, he turns after her.)

I do not excuse you. Stop there.

AIDA

(She turns to look back at him.)

You wanted something from me?

RADAMES

Oh yes. I want to make your life easier, Aida. Tell me how. What can I do for you?

AIDA

Help my people.

RADAMES

I want to help you.

AIDA

I am my people. And I cannot continue to live in the comfort of the palace while my countrymen are dying. You want my "affection," captain?

RADAMES

I can have your "affection" right here if I command it. I want to know if you feel anything for me - aside from contempt.

AIDA

I don't know.

RADAMES

Then let's find out.

(RADAMES kisses AIDA, she drops her basket; they are stopped when MEREB enters.)

MEREB

(Shocked at the sight of seeing RADAMES and AIDA kissing.)

Aida, I just saw - Aida, Amneris requests your presence. The princess...

(To RADAMES.)

...your betrothed.

(AIDA leaves)

11. NOT ME

RADAMES

I once knew all the answers

I stood on certain ground

A picture of true happiness

Confidence so effortless

No brighter could be found

MEREB

Oh No

RADAMES

I never asked the questions
That trouble me today
I knew all there was to know
Love worn lightly
Put on show

My conquest on display

MEREB

I can't believe He's changing

And who'd have thought that

Oh, no

Confidence could die?

Not me, Not me

Not me, not me

That all I took for granted was a lie

Not me, Not me

And who'd have guessed

I'd throw my world away

To be with someone I'm afraid will say

Not me, not me

This can never

be

(RADAMES exits as the backdrop rises above the stage.)

MEREB

He's in love

But he's not the only one

Who'll be changed

(AMNERIS and AIDA enter. AIDA is carrying a piece of cloth. AMNERIS is carrying an umbrella.)

AIDA

(Showing AMNERIS the cloth in her hand.)

This would be lovely on you. I'll say this for you Egyptians; your thread count is amazing.

AMNERIS

Why hasn't Radames come to see me again? We're to be married in three days and yet...Aida, I must make things right with him.

AIDA

I shall not envy lovers

But long for what they share

AMNERIS

An empty room is merciless

Don't be surprised if I confess

I need some comfort there

AIDA & AMNERIS

And who'd have thought

That love could be so good?
Not me, not me
And show me things I never understood
Not me, not me

NEHEBKA
(Entering with clothes and other items.)
Aida.

AIDA
Nehebka, where did you get that?

NEHEBKA
The Egyptian Captain! He's giving away everything he owns. And he's giving it all to us.

ACT ONE
Scene Eleven
RADAMES' TENT

NUBIANS and other Egyptian slaves stand around RADAMES' tent. RADAMES appears from the tent with a basket of food, and a jug of wine. MEREB appears with another basket handing out fruit.

AIDA & AMNERIS
Who'd have guessed he'd
Throw his world away
To be with someone til his dying day
Not me, not me

RADAMES, AMNERIS, AIDA
And who'd have thought that love
Could be so good
Not me, not me
My/his secrets &
My/his passions understood
Not me, not me

Who'd have guessed
I'd/ he throw My/his world away
To be with someone til my/his dying day
Not me/not me

MEREB
Not me, not me
Not me, not me
This can never be

AMNERIS
Look, he is preparing to move into the Palace. So, whatever doubts he had the other night must be gone. But you stay, Aida. Apologize for me.

AIDA
Oh, no! I can't.

AMNERIS
You can. You always say the right thing. I never do.

AIDA

No princess, please don't make me.

AMNERIS

I would never make you. But I am asking you, as my friend.

(AMERNIS exits just as RADAMES spots AIDA.)

AIDA

Thank you.

RADAMES

It was nothing. Actually, it was everything, but it doesn't matter.

AIDA

Captain, I just came to tell you that the princess is sorry for what she said the other night. And she wants you to know that...

RADAMES

Aida...

(RADAMES tries to take AIDA'S hand but she pulls away.)

AIDA

You are betrothed to my mistress!

RADAMES

It was arranged by my father, and it will be unarranged by me.

AIDA

You could raid another country tomorrow and rebuild your fortune. Radames, you're an Egyptian! Nothing will ever change that fact. I don't even know why you bothered to do this.

RADAMES

Don't you?

12. ELABORATE LIVES

We all lead such elaborate lives
wild ambitions in our sights
How an affair of the heart survives
days apart and hurried nights
Seems quite unbelievable to me
I don't want to live like that
seems quite unbelievable to me
I don't want to love like that
I just want our time to be
slower and gentler, wiser, free

We all live in extravagant times
playing games we can't all win
Unintended emotional crimes
Take some out, take others in

I'm so tired of all were going through
I don't want to live like that
I'm so tired of all were going through
I don't want to love like that
I just want to be with you

Now and forever , peaceful, true
This may not be the moment
to tell you face to face
But I could wait forever
for the perfect time and place

AIDA & RADAMES

We all lead such elaborate lives
We don't know whose words are true
Strangers, lovers, husbands, wives
Hard to know who's loving who

AIDA

Too many choices tear us apart
I don't want to live like that

RADAMES

Too many choices tear us apart
I don't want to love like that
I just want to touch your heart
May this confession

RADAMES & AIDA

Be the start

(They kiss. The lights fade out. When the lights come up they are in each other's arms.)

RADAMES

Are you cold?

AIDA

You could have at least kept a blanket.

RADAMES

No. I could not. Man enters this world naked, without possessions. I want to be a new man for you, Aida. Cleansed of my past sins.

(Drums sound from offstage.)

AIDA

What is it?

RADAMES

My armies have returned. Pharaoh will expect a victory celebration. Go back to the palace. You'll be safe there.

(He gets up and puts his shirt back on. He begins to walk away and then turns back.)

Wait, take my amulet. If anyone stops you, show them this and they'll let you pass.

(He starts to leave again.)

AIDA

I love you.

RADAMES

I heard that. Say it again. I command you. I command...

(SOLDIER enters.)

SOLDIER
Captain!

(AIDA turns her face away from the SOLDIER.)

RADAMES
I heard the drums.

SOLDIER
But we have captured the Nubian King!

RADAMES
The king? You have taken him alive? Find out which men are responsible for this. I'll see they receive the highest honors. Tell the others I'm on my way.

SOLDIER
Yes, Captain.

RADAMES
(He sees AIDA is upset by the news.)
Aida, our countries are at war. I can't change that.

AIDA
But he's my...He's my king.

(AIDA begins to cry as RADAMES exits.)

ACT ONE
Scene Twelve
THE NUBIAN SLAVE CAMP

She leaves him. RADAMES realizes what he's done - and hates himself for it. A crowd of Nubians appear and circle AIDA. The light changes and we are at the Nubian Slave Camp.

NEHEBKA
Princess - say it's not true!

MALE NUBIAN #1
I saw our king dragged through the streets with my own eyes.

FEMALE NUBIAN #1
I heard they've already executed him.

MALE NUBIAN #2
And they are carrying his head through the street on the end of a spike.

AIDA
No, No!

MEREB
Amonasro of Nubia is alive. I saw him taken to the prison.

NEHEBKA
But it's only a matter of time before the Egyptians slaughter him.

MALE NUBIAN #1

I always imagined that your father would march upon Egypt in triumph. But now we have no hope. When the king dies - so does Nubia.

AIDA

Nubia will never die! Whether we are enslaved or whether we are far from our native soil, Nubia lives in our hearts. And therefore, it lives.

13. THE GOD'S LOVE NUBIA

Take me in my dreams recurring
Cheerful as a childhood dance
Into one more taste of freedom
One more longing backward glance

In the sway of somber music
I shall never, never understand
Let me slip into the sweeter
Chorus of that other land

The gods love Nubia, the beautiful, the golden
The radiant, the fertile, the gentle and the blessed

The pain of Nubia is only for the moment
the desolate the suffering
the plundered, the oppressed

NEHEBKA

The gods love Nubia, their glorious creation
Its songs roll sweetly across the harvest plain

NEHEBKA & AIDA

The tears of Nubia, a passing aberration
They wash into the river and are never cried again

AIDA, NEHEBKA, MEREB & NUBIAN WOMEN

The gods love Nubia, we have to keep believing
The scattered and divided, we are still it's heart

AIDA

The fall of Nubia, ephemeral and fleeting
The spirit always burning though the flesh is torn apart.

ALL

The fall of Nubia
Ephemeral and fleeting
The spirit always burning
Though the flesh is torn apart

Take me in my dreams recurring
Cheerful as a childhood dance
Into one more taste of freedom
One more longing backward glance
The gods love Nubia, the beautiful, the golden
The radiant, the fertile, the gentle and the blessed
The pain of Nubia is only for the moment
the desolate the suffering
the plundered, the oppressed

The gods love Nubia

we have to keep believing
Though scattered and divided we are still it's heart
The fall of Nubia ephemeral and fleeting the spirit always
Burning though the flesh is torn apart
The spirit always burning though the flesh is torn apart

AIDA

Apart

AIDA & NUBIANS

Take me in my dreams recurring
One more longing backward glance

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene One

STARSCAPE

AIDA, RADAMES and AMNERIS are alone in their thoughts, frozen in separate places. The laser forms the triangle around them.

14. A STEP TOO FAR

AMNERIS

It's so strange he doesn't show me
more affection than he needs
Almost formal too respectful
never takes romantic leads
There are times when I imagine
I'm not always on his mind
He's not thinking what I'm thinking
Always half a step behind
Always half a step behind

Oh,oh,oh,oh

Oh,oh,oh,oh

Oh,oh,oh,oh

RADAMES

I'm in every kind of trouble
Can't you tell, just look at me
Half ecstatic, half dejected
All in all I'm all at sea
Easy terms I thought I wanted
Fill me now with chilling dread
You could never know the chaos
Of a life turned on its head
Of a life turned on its head

Oh,oh,oh,oh

RADAMES & AMNERIS

Oh,oh,oh,oh

Oh,oh,oh,oh

Oh,oh,oh,oh

AIDA

I am certain that I love him
But a love can be misplaced
Have I compromised my people
In my passion and my haste?
I could be his life companion
Anywhere but where we are
Am I leader? Am I traitor?
Did I take a step too far?

AMNERIS

It's so strange he doesn't show me
more affection than he needs
Almost formal too respectful
never takes romantic leads
There are times when I imagine
I'm not always on his mind
He's not thinking what I'm thinking
Always half a step behind
Always half a step behind

RADAMES

I'm in every kind of trouble
Can't you tell, just look at me
Half ecstatic, half dejected
All in all I'm all at sea
Easy terms I thought I wanted
Fill me now with chilling dread
You could never know the chaos
Of a life turned on it's head
Of a life turned on it's head

AIDA

I am certain that I love him
But a love can be misplaced
Have I compromised my people
In my passion and my haste?
I could be his life companion
Anywhere but where we are
Am I leader? Am I traitor?

AIDA

Oh, oh, oh, oh

AIDA & RADAMES

Oh, oh, oh, oh

AIDA, RADAMES & AMNERIS

Oh, oh, oh, oh

Did I take a step too far!

ACT TWO

Scene Two

THE PRISON

The lights change and the set transforms to a prison cell. AIDA and MEREB

are with a GUARD. MEREB glances around and hands the GUARD a sack of gold.

MEREB

A word with the prisoner.

GUARD

Alright, Meréb. But be quick about it.

(Guard exits. AIDA and MEREB enter the cell.)

AIDA

Father?

AMONASRO

Aida? I knew you would survive. That I trained my daughter well. At least, I would not allow myself to believe anything else.

AIDA

Have they mistreated you?

AMONASRO

No, I believe they are saving that part for my execution... Three days from now.

AIDA

It won't come to that. We'll get you out of here.

MEREB

In two days, the daughter of the Pharaoh will wed. Most of the guards will be needed to control the crowds

AMONASRO

And who is this young Minister of War?

AIDA

This is Meréb. You remember... Henu's boy.

AMONASRO

Henu. Your father was a great warrior. He had hopes you would grow up to be a scholar.

MEREB

Sire. The chief jailor will attend Amneris' wedding. They've assigned a lowly guard to take his place - a man I know.

AMONASRO

You are suggesting you may be able to bribe this guard?

MEREB

Let's just say, we've done business in the past.

AIDA

That would take a lot of gold

MEREB

I have it. For years I've been stealing from the palace. I thought maybe, someday, I could use it to get back to Nubia. But if I can send my King home...

AMONASRO

We will all be going home soon, Mereb. Now, how are the docks guarded?

MEREB

By the Captain's soldiers.

AMONASRO

So the odds are slim. Can you use a sword, boy?

MEREB

Me? Actually I'm better at providing encouragement from the sidelines.

AIDA

A fight won't be necessary. They'll let us through.

(Aida takes out the amulet RADAMES gave her. MEREB gasps.)

MEREB

Captain Radames gave you that?

AMONASRO

Who is this Captain? An Egyptian?

AIDA

Yes, but he's not like the others, father.

AMONASRO

He leads Pharaoh's army, and he did not lay waste to our country like the others?

AIDA

He regrets his past.

AMONASRO

Aida! Do not shame yourself and me with such witless sentiment. Do not tell me this Egyptian grieves for the Nubian men executed, the women ravaged, and the children taken into slavery. Any soft look you have given this Captain, any soft word, betrays the innocents who suffered at his hands and at the hands of every soldier he commands. You will cut this man from your heart.

AIDA

Yes, Father

AMONASRO

I would not have thought it possible that these Egyptians could give me one more reason to hate them.

15. EASY AS LIFE

AIDA

This is the moment when the gods expect me
To beg for help but I won't even try
I want nothing in this world but myself to protect me
But I won't lie down, roll over and die
All I have to do is to forget how much I love him
All I have to do is put my longing to one side
Tell myself that love's an ever-changing situation
Passion would have cooled and all the magic would have died

It's easy, it's easy

All I have to do is to pretend I never knew him
On those very rare occasions when he steals into my heart
Better to have lost him when the ties were barely binding
Better the contempt of the familiar cannot start
It's easy, It's easy

Until I think about him as he was when I last touched him
And how he would have been were I to be with him today
Those very rare occasions don't let up they keep on coming
All I ever wanted and I'm throwing it away
It's easy, it's easy as life

But then I see the faces of a worn , defeated people
A father and a nation who won't let a coward run
is this how the gods reward the faithful through the ages ?
Forcing us to prove the hardest things we've done
Are easy
So easy

And though I'll think about him 'til the earth draws in around me
And though I choose to leave him for another kind of love
This is no denial, no betrayal but redemption
Redeemed in my own eyes and in the pantheon above
It's easy
It's easy as life
It's easy as life
It's easy as life

ACT TWO
Scene Three
THE WAR ROOM OF THE PALACE

ZOSER is showing AMNERIS a giant map of the Nile.

AMNERIS
But why did we invade Babylon?

ZOSER
Because once we have control of the waterways, the rest of the world opens up
for us.

AMNERIS
Yes, but our Egyptian armies just stormed in and seized power? How oppressive
of us.

ZOSER
Perhaps, Princess. But where do you think that beautiful necklace came from?

(He points to her necklace. AMNERIS looks down at it, then removes it,
placing it on Zoser's table.)

AMNERIS
Suddenly it's not so beautiful

(RADAMES enters.)

ZOSER

I've been explaining our foreign campaigns to Amneris.

RADAMES

Really?

ZOSER

Yes. Because she wanted to know what's been preoccupying you of late.

AMNERIS

Radames, I feel like we haven't had a moment along since you returned from Nubia. I miss you. Can't we spend this afternoon together?

RADAMES

Of course. Of course, we can. But first, I'd like to have a word with my father.

(He takes a scroll from the table and hands it to AMNERIS.)

Here, you can read this while you wait.

AMNERIS

"The Campaign at Kadesh."

RADAMES

It will give us something to talk about.

AMNERIS

I didn't realize we were at a loss for topics. But then there's a lot I haven't realized

(AMNERIS exits.)

RADAMES

That was clever of you.

ZOSER

I can't have you neglecting the girl. Not after all the trouble I've gone to.

RADAMES

You arranged a marriage.

ZOSER

There have been other arrangements as well, son. Things I've done on your behalf.

RADAMES

I haven't asked you to do anything for me!

ZOSER

No you're right, you haven't because you've been too busy whiling away the hours with that slave girl.

RADAMES

Oh, your spies are good.

ZOSER

Radames, you can have your little diversion, just wait until after you've wed.

RADAMES

Like you did?

ZOSER

Your mother never had any complaints.

RADAMES

She never had any choice.

ZOSER

Don't you realize that whore could cost you the throne?

RADAMES

I don't care about the throne, father. Because I'm not like you. And I never will be.

16. LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

ZOSER

Don't come on so cocksure boy, you can't escape your genes
No point in feeling pure boy, your background intervenes
Listen good and listen straight, you're not the master of your fate
To this you must be reconciled; you'll always be your father's child
At times acclaimed, at times reviled
You'll wind up doing just what I've done
Like father, like son

RADAMES

Don't assume your vices get handed down the line
That a parent's blood suffices to condemn the child's design
I've done wrong, I can't deny, but at least I know that I
Shouldn't blame that on my stock, this may come as quite a shock
I'm no chip off any block, I wouldn't wish those words on anyone
Like father, like son

ZOSER

Son you're nervous, take my hand
All is settled, all is planned
You've got the world at your command
I don't think you understand

Do you really want to throw away your future? All for some wretched slave!

RADAMES

She has a name!

ZOSER

In a few months, you won't even be able to remember her name!

RADAMES

I appreciate too well
The squalor at which you excel
it isn't very hard to tell
Evil's a distinctive smell

You can forget about your plans, father. There will be no wedding!

(RADAMES storms off, leaving ZOSER horrified.)

ZOSER

He's lost all sense of reason, and why?
Some foreign slut

Not only is that treason,
Some doors are slamming shut
Just like me he's found that flesh can excite but will enmesh
Once we rid him of this blight.
Once this harlot's out of sight.
Then I think he'll see the light.
He won't walk back to daddy he will run.
Like father, like son...

ZOSER & MINISTERS

Like Father, like son
Like Father, like son
Like Father, like

ZOSER

Son
(ZOSER turns to his men.)
Find the slave girl called Aida. And when you do...kill her.

ACT TWO

Scene Four

NUBIAN SLAVE CAMP

AIDA stands alone. Suddenly a slave woman appears outside the fence. She slips AIDA a folded note and disappears. AIDA begins to read and RADAMES appears in her imagination.

17. RADAMES' LETTER

RADAMES

I'm sorry for everything I've said
And for anything I forgot to say too
When things get so complicated
I stumble at best muddle through
I wish that our lives could be simple
I don't want the world only you

Oh I wish I could tell you this face to face
But there's never the time never the place
So this letter will have to do
I love you....

(A crowd of NUBIANS circle AIDA. AIDA hides the letter in the bosom of her dress as RADAMES moves back and disappears.)

MEREB

Tomorrow Princess, you and your father will be free!

NEHEBKA

We will live to tell our grandchildren of the King's great escape!

MEREB

Nubia will prevail! Quiet!

(Suddenly two GUARDS storm into the Nubian encampment. MEREB backs off while others push AIDA back into the crowd. Protectively, the Nubians surround AIDA, hiding her.)

GUARD #1

We are here for Aida. Which one is she?

(Before AIDA can speak, a Nubian man clamps a hand over her mouth. More NUBIANS block her from view. NEHEBKA steps forward.)

NEHEBKA
I am Aida!

(The guards drag NEHEBKA away. AIDA struggles to free herself. But the Nubians hold her until the guards are gone.)

MALE NUBIAN #1
Forgive us, Princess. But you cannot be sacrificed. Every person here would risk their life for Nubia.

(The NUBIANS begin a dance of anguish. AIDA is horrified, but she sees what her role is to be. She stumbles away. MEREB follows her.)

MEREB
Where are you going?

(She doesn't answer and she can't look at him.)

MEREB
You're going to meet him, aren't you?

AIDA
Mereb, I do not ask you to understand. I do not understand. I must meet him -

MEREB
No.

AIDA
But I do. I have to see him -

MEREB
(With the rage of the newly converted.)
No! No! You cannot give yourself to him. The Egyptians have taken enough from us already. You are our Princess, our inspiration, our promise of a new day.

AIDA
I'm sorry, Mereb.

(She runs off, MEREB watches her go.)

18. HOW I KNOW YOU (Reprise)

MEREB
There is a time
there is a place
When love should conquer all
The rest of life is pushed aside
as truth and reason fall
But only if that selfishness
can lead to something good
I thought I knew you princess
But I never understood
I don't know you
I don't know you

ACT TWO
Scene Five
RADAMES' GARDEN

RADAMES walks the Nile. AIDA enters. They stare at each other for a moment then embrace passionately.

RADAMES
Aida! I thought you were...

AIDA
They came for me. But they took another. I blame myself.

RADAMES
No. I put you in danger. But I swear, it will never happen again. I'm calling off the wedding. I am going to build you a house on an island at the border of our countries. And we will sail the Nile.

AIDA
Oh Radames -
(She stops herself short, realizes this foils her father's escape plans.)
No! You can't. You can't call of the wedding!

(AIDA pulls out of RADAMES' arms and steps away.)

RADAMES
Yes, I can. And I will.

AIDA
I love you, Radames. But you must marry the princess tomorrow. Tomorrow. What you want for us is impossible. They would hunt us down. It is a foolish plan.

RADAMES
I will find a way for us to be together.

19. WRITTEN IN THE STARS

AIDA
I am here to tell you we can never meet again
Simple really, isn't it, a word or two and then
A lifetime of not knowing where or how or why or when
You think of me or speak of me and wonder what befell
That someone you once loved so long ago so well

RADAMES
Never wonder what I'll feel as living shuffles by
You don't have to ask me and I need not reply
Every moment of my life from now until I die
I will think or dream of you and fail to understand
How a perfect love can be confounded out of hand
Is it written in the stars
Are we paying for some crime
Is that all that we are good for
Just a stretch of mortal time
Or some God's experiment
In which we have no say
In which we're given paradise
But only for a day

AIDA

Marry the Princess, Radames. You can help my people. This could be our chance to do something important. Don't you see? It may be the whole reason we met.

RADAMES

Then it would be a cruel trick!

AIDA

Not if the Gods put us together for some greater purpose.

Nothing can be altered, there is nothing to decide
No escape, no change of heart, nor anyplace to hide

RADAMES

You are all I'll ever want, but this I am denied
Sometimes in my darkest thoughts, I wish I'd never learned

AIDA & RADAMES

What it is to be in love and have that love returned

AIDA

Is it written in the stars
Are we paying for some crime
Is that all that we are good for
Just a stretch of mortal time

AIDA & RADAMES

For some God's experiment
In which we have no say
In which we're given paradise
But only for a day

RADAMES

I will do what you ask of me. But you must also do something for me. Go home, leave Egypt forever.

AIDA

What are you saying?

RADAMES

While I am taking my wedding vows, there will be a boat waiting for you at the docks to return you to Nubia. At least I will have a message of happiness knowing you are free.

(RADAMES kisses AIDA one last time and leaves. AIDA looks to the sky... knowing her gods have provided a way. The irony of it nearly breaks her in two. She exits in the opposite direction. AMNERIS emerges from the shadows. She has seen everything.)

20. I KNOW THE TRUTH

AMNERIS

How did I come to this?
How did I slip and fall?
How did I throw half a lifetime away
Without any thought at all?

This should have been my time

It's over, it never began
I closed my eyes to so much for so long
and I no longer can

I try to blame it on fortune
Some kind of shift in a star
But I know the truth and it haunts me
it's flown just a little too far
I know the truth and it mocks me
I know the truth and it shocks me
It's flown just a little too far.

ACT TWO

Scene Six

AMNERIS' DRESSING ROOM

AMNERIS is dressed for her wedding by four handmaidens. They present her with a fantastic wedding gown. She stands lifeless, still reeling from the shock of what she witnessed.

Why do I want him still?
Why when there's nothing there?
How to go on with the rest of my life
To pretend I don't care

This should've been my time
It's over-It never began
I closed my eyes to so much for so long
and I no longer can

I try to blame it on fortune
Some kind of twist in my fate
But I know the truth and it haunts me
I learned it a little too late

Oh I know the truth and it mocks me
I know the truth and it shocks me
I learned it a little too late
Too late

(AMNERIS is now fully dressed and stands there like a painted life-sized doll.)

ACT TWO

Scene Seven

THE ROYAL WEDDING

Flower petals fall from the heavens. ZOSER, MINISTERS and FOUR LADIES OF THE PALACE are in attendance. RADAMES takes his place at AMNERIS' side. He looks as numb and duty bound. The PHARAOH, sicker than ever, presides.

PHARAOH

As witnessed by the Gods and all of Egypt, I pronounce you man and wife. May your lives be filled forever with the joy of this moment.

GUARD #1

Your majesty, the Nubian King has escaped!

PHARAOH

Radames, call your men to arms.

RADAMES
Fan out across the city!

ZOSER
The fastest route to Nubia is by water. Send a regiment to search the docks.

RADAMES
(Remembers AIDA.)
No! Seal off the docks!

ZOSER
But...

RADAMES
No one must reach the pier before I arrive there.

(Chaos ensues. The dissipation of the wedding ceremony dissolves into the next sequence.)

ACT TWO
Scene Eight
THE DOCKS

A small boat floats at the water's edge. It is tied to the dock by a heavy rope. AIDA enters, wearing RADAMES' amulet around her neck. MEREB enters with AMONASRO.

MEREB
Princess, we must hurry. They've sounded the alarm.

(AMONASRO climbs into the boat as RADAMES appears.)

AIDA
Radames!

AMONASRO
Aida! Undo the rope.

AIDA
Forgive me Father, but I need one last moment with him.

AMONASRO
Daughter!

(She leaps out of the boat and runs to RADAMES. He puts it together.)

RADAMES
Of course, you're the Nubian Princess. And you had me marry Amneris just so your king could escape. What a fool I am. It was all a lie. An act. Every word. Every kiss.

AIDA
No! But I have made too many mistakes and too many people have suffered. I could not act selfishly now.

RADAMES
So you lied to me?

AIDA

Not when I said I love you. Say you believe me.

(As RADAMES struggles to find the answer, ZOSER appears on the rise.)

ZOSER

(Shocked to see AIDA. To one of the GUARDS.)

She's alive?

(MEREB rushes forward. He stands in front of ZOSER, brandishing a sword.)

MEREB

Stop there!

(MEREB and GUARD fight! MEREB cuts down the GUARD.)

AMONASRO

Aida, come!

RADAMES

Aida, get in the boat! This is your last chance.

(ZOSER pulls his sword and cuts MEREB down.)

AIDA

MEREB!

(AIDA pulls away from RADAMES and runs to MEREB. RADAMES takes MEREB'S sword and lifts it high above the rope that secures the boat.)

ZOSER

Radames! For the love of Egypt stop them!

(RADAMES brings his sword down on the rope...severing it.)

NOOOOO!

AMONASRO

AIDA!

(The boat is swept away.)

ZOSER

Radames! What have you done?

RADAMES

It's all over, Father. When they come for me, they'll take you away too.

ZOSER

No - that can't happen - Egypt needs me -

RADAMES

You're the one who tied our fates together. Like father, like son. I think you should run.

(ZOSER exits.)

AIDA

Radames. He's...

MEREB

Forgive me, Princess. I failed you.

AIDA

No...never! You, Mereb, inspired me.

MEREB

I wanted to go back to Nubia. Aida, take me home.

(AIDA holds MEREB as he dies. RADAMES moves forward and lifts AIDA into his arms as the guards surround them.)

ACT TWO

Scene Nine

THE JUDGEMENT HALL

AMNERIS approaches RADAMES and AIDA as the GUARDS pull them apart to put chains on them, AIDA is dragged to stage left, leaving RADAMES and AMNERIS in the center.

RADAMES

Amneris. I never meant to hurt you.

(Suddenly drums sound, announcing PHARAOH'S arrival. MINISTERS and SOLDIERS begin to file on upstage. AMNERIS is panicked.)

AMNERIS

Radames, if you deny everything there is a chance. My father might spare your life. Listen to me, they want to bury you alive.

RADAMES

Yes. That's what we do to traitors.

AMNERIS

You must say that everyone is wrongs and -

RADAMES

No, I can't. Aida is everything I thought I was meant to be. But her courage and her love for her people have put me to shame. Every act of my life has been wrong, except for this.

AMNERIS

Did you ever love me at all?

RADAMES

Amneris.

(He touches her cheek gently.)

I've loved you all my life.

(The GUARD drags RADAMES away, pushing him to stage right. On stage left, a GUARD forces AIDA to her knees. Angrily, AMNERIS calls to him.)

AMNERIS

Take your hands off her!

(AMNERIS crosses to AIDA.)

After all, she is a Princess.

(The GUARD backs away, leaving AIDA standing.)

AIDA

Amneris, there were so many times I wanted to tell you everything, but I couldn't.

AMNERIS

No wonder you understood me so well.

AIDA

Amneris, you must believe me. I am to blame for what has happened. Not Radames. Please, let him live. Amneris let him live.

AMNERIS

I can't.

AIDA

Yes, you can. You love him! Don't you love him?

PHARAOH

Amneris let us begin. Bring forth the prisoners.

(AIDA and RADAMES are pushed forward. To AMNERIS.)

Zoser has been apprehended, and we have uncovered his plot. Radames, I chose you. I trusted your father. Now I will make things right while I still can.

(PHARAOH turns to the assembly.)

The criminals will receive their sentences!

AMNERIS

Father, I have a request.

PHARAOH

A request?

AMNERIS

I know the traitors must die for crimes against Egypt. This is the law. But I would ask...that the prisoners be allowed to die together.

PHARAOH

But that would be mercy - after they disgraced you before the entire nation.

AMNERIS

I was wronged. It should be my decision.

PHARAOH

You don't know your own mind.

(A pronouncement.)

For their crimes, the traitors -

AMNERIS

Your Majesty, you have poison in your blood. We both know this. Soon I will be completely alone, because everyone I love will be gone. So you must allow me to exercise my will over Egypt. Because I am to be your successor. And because I demand it.

(PHARAOH studies AMNERIS a long moment, then nods and waves her forward.)

AMNERIS

(To the PEOPLE.)

For their crimes, the traitors will be buried beneath the sands of Egypt, in one tomb...together. The Daughter of Isis has spoken.

(AMNERIS turns and runs off, unable to watch. The music begins and AIDA and

RADAMES are isolated. Behind them, the Judgment Hall disappears.)

21. ELABORATE LIVES (Reprise)

AIDA

We all lead such elaborate lives
Wild ambitions in our sights
How an affair of the heart survives
Days apart and hurried nights
Seems quite unbelievable to me
I don't want to live like that
Seems quite unbelievable to me
I don't want to love like that
I just want our time to be
Slower and gentler, wiser, free

We all live in extravagant times
Playing games
we can't all win
Unintended emotional crimes
take some out take others in

Too many choices tear us apart
I don't want to live like that
Too many choices tear us apart
I don't want to love like that
I just want to keep your heart
May this confession be the start

I know you'll give me courage
to face what I must face
with all these complications
in another time and place

AIDA & RADAMES

We all lead such elaborate lives
We don't know whose words are true
An affair of the heart survives
All the pain the world can do

RADAMES

I'm so tired of all we're going through
I don't want to live like that

AIDA

I'm so tired of all we're going through
I don't want to love like that
I just want to be with you
Now and forever peaceful, true

ACT TWO

Scene Ten

THE INTERIOR OF THE TOMB

The tomb comes forward. GUARDS force AIDA and RADAMES into the tomb.

AIDA

It's so dark.

RADAMES

Give me your hand. I'm right here with you. There is another world waiting for us, Aida. I can feel it. The way I always knew there was a world beyond every bend in the Nile. Just waiting to be discovered.

AIDA

You will find me in that world?

RADAMES

If I have to search for a hundred life times, I will find you again, Aida.

22. ENCHANTMENT PASSING THROUGH (Reprise)

RADAMES

There'll be no ties of time and space to bind us

AIDA

And no horizon we shall not pursue

RADAMES & AIDA

We'll leave the world's misfortunes far behind us

And I will put my faith and trust in you

ACT TWO

Epilogue

THE MUSEUM

As the iris closes to reveal a single tiny shaft of light; a starburst and then the entire stage is filled with stars. AMNERIS enters, dressed as in the Prologue ... PHARAOH OF EGYPT. AMNERIS sings.

23. EVERY STORY (Reprise)

AMNERIS

From deep within a tomb

A gentle light still shone

Showing me my path

As I ascended to the throne

Certain in my heart

That ancient wars must cease

The lovers' deaths gave birth

to a reign of peace

And their story

And my journey

And the lesson they provide

Draw their strength and inspiration

from a love that never dies

(We are returning to our own time and the museum of the Prologue. Once again, the contemporary crowd gathers around various exhibits. The man and the woman circle the model of the tomb. Yes, they know this place. They look up. Their eyes meet. The man and woman move towards each other. FADE TO BLACK)

END OF ACT TWO

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