

Start

AMONASRO / AIDA / MEREB

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 jailer 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, Meréb. 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.)

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, but 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.

(Beat.)

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.

(The lights fade. A shaft of light remains on AIDA.)

end

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 THE WORLD BUT MYSELF TO PROTECT ME
AND I WON'T LIE DOWN, ROLL OVER AND DIE~~

~~*(MEREK and AMONASRO exit as the Prison Cell disappears, dissolving
to a solitary place where AIDA is left alone with her thoughts.)*~~

~~ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FORGET HOW MUCH I LOVE HIM~~

SCENE 4: HALLWAY IN THE PHARAOH'S PALACE

(AIDA and MEREB enter. AIDA is dressed as a palace servant.)

Start

MEREB

Well now you look like a handmaiden. But at least the Captain saw that you're 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 the palace guards. He promised he'd look out for me from then on. He's kept that promise.

(Sighs.)

Look, I know what you're thinking... that I've become one of them. But I'm still Nubian. I'll always be Nubian.

AIDA

Of course.

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.

(AIDA and MEREB exit as the scene changes to the Palace Baths.)

end

SCENE 8: THE NUBIAN SLAVE CAMP

(Music. MEREB enters.)

mereb/aida

Start

* Start aida
mendloge

MEREB

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

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AIDA

Where?

MEREB

The Nubian camp.

(She turns from him and starts to walk away.)

Look, everybody knows I'm the one who can get things. And our people...

(Sighs.)

They've asked me to bring them... you.

AIDA

Why? So they can see a reckless fool dressed as a servant?

(MEREB starts to protest.)

That is what I am, Mereb. 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 is where the Egyptians captured us.

(She touches her dress.)

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.

end

THE DANCE OF THE ROBE

AIDA

~~IT'S KNOWING WHAT THEY WANT OF ME THAT SCARES ME
IT'S KNOWING HAVING FOLLOWED 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~~

AMNERIS

Then again, I'm pretty busy.

(The dance dissolves into the Banquet scene, as the EXOTIC DANCERS show themselves off to the rich and powerful men of Egypt. AIDA is pouring wine. A NUBIAN SERVANT passes her.)

NUBIAN SERVANT

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

DANCER

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

(NUBIAN SERVANT moves away quickly. AIDA turns on MEREB who is trying to look innocent.)

AIDA

Mereb!

MEREB

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

PHARAOH

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.

(Ad-libs "well done".)

Amneris, shall I continue?

AMNERIS

Whatever 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 say.

Start

Pharaoh/
Radames/
Zoser

Pharaoh
Radames
Zoser

(Banquet guests laugh. PHARAOH is struck with a sudden pain and pauses to compose himself.)

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.

(There is much applause and cheering. COURTIERS rush forward to congratulate AMNERIS and RADAMES. RADAMES is in shock; AMNERIS is delighted. Suddenly PHARAOH starts to cough up blood. As he is hurried off accompanied by AMNERIS, MEREB, COURTIERS and NUBIAN SERVANTS, AIDA and one or two NUBIAN SERVANTS remain. ZOSER turns to RADAMES.)

ZOSER

A toast to the bridegroom. If I'd known such an awkward girl could 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?

(RADAMES cannot answer.)

Radames, I've spent years working towards this day. And you are not going to ruin it—for yourself, or me!

(Pause.)

Welcome to your new life, son.

(ZOSER exits.)

end

FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE (REPRISE)

RADAMES

(Clearly upset.)

~~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~~

SCENE 5: THE BATHS

(WOMEN OF THE PALACE enter wrapped in sheets. SLAVES stand by with trays of fruit, oils and cosmetics. AMNERIS enters, somewhat winded.)

Start

AMNERIS

It is such hard work maintaining perfection.

(She is flushed and panting from exercise but she looks fabulous.)

But worth the effort, don't you think?

WOMEN

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

AMNERIS

Really? Perfect? 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.

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

Another handmaiden? I don't need another handmaiden.

(Sighs in disgust.)

Does this gift have a name?

Aida, Merob,
Amneris

AIDA

Aida.

(MEREB and WOMEN gasp at her audacity.)

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

Well that's true. You were starting 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! I've been so... You're very astute, aren't you, Aida?

AIDA

Only on occasion. My true talent lies with a needle. And if you would 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 which makes fabric glow. It's a secret that was passed down from the handmaidens of Queen Nefertiti.

(Everyone cowers... waiting for AMNERIS to explode.)

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 exits with MEREB.)

All right ladies, let's polish this gem.

end

MY STRONGEST SUIT

(The SLAVES exit during the song leaving AMNERIS with the WOMEN.)

AMNERIS

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 POLKADOTTED, STRIPED OR EVEN CHECKED
WITH SOME GLAMOUR GUARANTEEING
EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING
IS DISPLAYED TO QUITE REMARKABLE EFFECT

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~~

(As dawn rises and the docks are still somewhat in the shadows, an EGYPTIAN MAN of questionable reputation appears.)

EGYPTIAN MAN *Start*

Mereb! Mereb!

(MEREb enters with several casks of wine.)

Is that the wine?

MEREb

You have the gold?

(EGYPTIAN MAN and MEREb make the exchange.)

RADAMES

(Entering.)

Mereb!

MEREb

Master!

(The EGYPTIAN MAN runs off.)

I'm so glad you're home.

RADAMES

Have you kept my house in order?

MEREb

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

RADAMES

Again?

(ZOSER enters accompanied by MINISTERS.)

ZOSER

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

MEREb

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



Mereb
Radames
Zoser

* Zoser's short
monologue at
end

ZOSER

Careful, boy or I'll have you—

RADAMES

It's good to see you, Father.

ZOSER

You were gone 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 can best you with a sword.

RADAMES

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

ZOSER

(Amused.)

Really?

RADAMES

Listen, beyond the fifth cataract, the Nile heads directly towards 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

(Notices the NUBIAN WOMEN.)

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

(ZOSER motions the SOLDIERS forward.)

RADAMES

Stop!

(He takes AIDA from the SOLDIERS.)

Not this one.

(To ZOSER.)

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. NO, YOU MUST BELIEVE
THAT ONE DAY YOU'RE BOUND TO FIND~~

~~AIDA/AMNERIS
A STRONGER SUIT
(RADAMES enters.)~~

Start

Amneris / Aida / Radames

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

RADAMES
No, stay. Pour the Princess a cup of 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
Short
Monologue
at
end

AMNERIS

Good point.

(AMNERIS exits. RADAMES turns to AIDA. She is intimidated, starts to exit. RADAMES blocks her path, standing too close.)

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'm her property now, not yours.

RADAMES

It doesn't matter...

(Pause.)

... because I know now that you are right.

(AIDA gives him a 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

I'll be right in, Princess. Aida, I was wrong. I have been selfish. If Pharaoh does not recover, Egypt's going to need a new leader. A strong leader. And I don't think that's Amneris.

AMNERIS

(Offstage.)

Radames, come and claim your kingdom.

AIDA

You should go to her.

RADAMES

Were you a noblewoman before you were captured?

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

(Hurt.)

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

RADAMES

(Gently.)

I cannot take back the past, Aida. But even if I could...

(He touches her.)

I'm not sure I want to. Aida, I—

AMNERIS

Start
Radames!

(RADAMES and AIDA move apart just as AMNERIS enters. She is wrapped in a sheet.)

You barge into my bedchambers, 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 exits. To AIDA.)

Was it something I said? When we were children we understood each other so well. Now he's a mystery to me.

(AMNERIS exits. AIDA remains, alone in her thoughts, as the Dressing Room dissolves.)

end

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