

Act 1

In the Egyptian wing of a modern museum, a man and a woman touring the exhibit catch each other's eyes. A statue of Amneris, a female Paraoth, comes to life ("Every Story Is a Love Story") and transports them to Ancient Egypt, where Radames, captain of the Egyptian army, and his men are returning from an expedition through the land of Egypt's long-time enemy, Nubia ("Fortune Favors the Brave"). When his soldiers capture a group of Nubian women, he is captivated by one of the women, Aida, who tries to free herself by out-dueling one of his soldiers. Radames forces her to wash his back, but she refuses, saying that although the Egyptians took everything from the Nubians, they will never take their spirit ("The Past Is Another Land"). Radames saves Aida's companions from the copper mines (and certain death) by sending them to the palace groundskeeper instead. He also ensures Aida serves as a handmaiden to his betrothed, Princess Amneris. Radames' father, Chief Minister Zoser, greets his son with news that the Pharaoh is dying, and Radames must prepare to become the next ruler of Egypt ("Another Pyramid"). Unbeknownst to Radames, his father is poisoning the Pharaoh in order to accelerate Radames' ascension to the throne.

Radames' Nubian servant, Mereb, is a young man who has learned the tricks of survival in Egypt. While delivering Aida to the princess, Mereb recognizes her as the daughter of the Nubian king under whom he had served during his days in Nubia. She commands him to keep her identity a secret, lest the Egyptians kill her ("How I Know You"). Presented to Amneris, Aida is liked immediately, and she perceives that the Princess' love of fashion only serves as a mask of her insecurities ("My Strongest Suit"). At a banquet, Amneris and Radames learn from the Pharaoh that they are to marry in seven days, leaving the captain distraught that his days as an explorer have ended ("Fortune Favors the Brave (Reprise)"). Together, he and Aida share their dreams and regrets ("Enchantment Passing Through").

Later that night, Amneris worries about her father's illness, and finds in Aida someone who understands and encourages her ("My Strongest Suit (Reprise)"). Bursting into his fiancée's chamber, Radames steals a moment with Aida to share his growing attraction to her. Aida is taken by Mereb to the Nubian camp, where she reluctantly submits to her people's pleas to lead them ("Dance of the Robe"). When she implores Radames to help the Nubians, he opens his heart by giving his possessions to them ("Not Me") and declaring his love for Aida ("Elaborate Lives"). Unable to fight her feelings any longer, she falls into his embrace. Their bliss is interrupted by news that Radames' armies have captured Amonasro, king of Nubia and also Aida's father. Unable to comfort her, Radames leaves Aida in distress. Rallying her people, Aida assures them that Nubia will never die ("The Gods Love Nubia").

Act 2

Amneris, Radames, and Aida are entangled in conflicted loyalties and emotions ("A Step Too Far"): Amneris is afraid that Radames's affection for her is waning, Radames worries his love for Aida could end his life as he knows it, and Aida fears she might be a traitor to her people as she loves Radames. Aida and Mereb bribe their way into Amonasro's prison cell, where she is reunited with her father. Mereb hatches a plan to escape with the king during the commotion of Amneris' wedding. To save her father and her nation, Aida must betray the

man she loves ("Easy as Life"). Meanwhile, Zoser discovers Radames' affair and warns his son that it could cost him the throne, but Radames no longer shares his father's ambitions ("Like Father, Like Son"). After an emotional bout with his son, Zoser orders his men to find Aida and kill her.

At the Nubian camp, Aida receives a written apology from Radames for the thoughtless way he acted upon hearing of Amonasro's capture ("Radames' Letter") and for his lack of showing affection. When Egyptian soldiers arrive seeking Aida, another Nubian, Nehebka, sacrifices herself so that the princess can live. Now even more determined to leave Radames forever, Aida goes to say good-bye to him over Mereb's objections ("How I Know You (Reprise)"). Radames informs Aida that he is calling off the wedding. Aida knows that this would ruin her father's escape and tells him he must go through with it ("Written in the Stars"). Radames agrees, on condition that she escapes to freedom on a boat he will provide. The heartbroken lovers part, but Amneris has overheard their entire conversation and tries to face the fact that her upcoming marriage is a sham ("I Know the Truth").

News of Amonasro's escape disrupts Amneris' wedding. Radames learns the truth of Aida's identity when he arrives at the docks just as she is about to board his boat with her father. Although he is angry that Aida hid this from him, she says she never lied about loving him. In the ensuing chaos, Mereb is mortally wounded by Zoser, and Radames makes possible Amonasro's escape by cutting the rope tied to the dock, but Aida stays with Radames and a dying Mereb. Zoser flees, and Mereb dies in the arms of his kind master and beloved princess. Radames and Aida are then arrested for treason. At the ensuing trial, Pharaoh announces Zoser's apprehension and sentences both Aida and Radames to be buried alive. Amneris reprises her role as a future Pharaoh by convincing her father to let the lovers die in the same tomb, an act of mercy for two people she has come to love. Facing death, Aida looks to Radames for strength ("Elaborate Lives (Reprise)"). As they are slowly deprived of light and air ("Enchantment Passing Through (Reprise)"), Radames swears he will search through a hundred lifetimes to find her again if he has to.

Back in the contemporary museum, the spirit of Amneris reveals that as she became Pharaoh, "the lovers' deaths gave birth to a reign of peace" between Egypt and Nubia. She watches as the modern man and woman are strangely drawn to each other. They are the reincarnations of Aida and Radames, finding each other in a new beginning ("Every Story is a Love Story (Reprise)").