

Sensa

by Mabel Collins & Maud Hoffman

ACT III

Scene i - The Solitary Soul

PLACE *The Temple Garden*

TIME *Before Dawn*

The Scene is dim and shadowy, just enough faint light to show the outlines of the plants and trees and the fountain. The Lotus tank is Center, and from a rich tall growth of leaves, rises a glorious thousand-petalled Lotus.

The Garden is full of tall, strong plants, covered with flowers -- myrtle, acacia, mimosa in great yellow, feathery masses, and a palm tree on each side. All round the sides, against the high wall of the garden is a trellis, on which roses are trained. Thousands of roses of all colors hang their heads from this trellis, necking a background of the most vivid coloring. By the side of the tank (or right in front of it), is Sensa seated deeply plunged in concentration and remaining in a correct Egyptian attitude of meditation. A faint movement stirs the leaves of the plants and there is a whispering amongst them. A delicate form emerges from the center of the trees and bushes. They step forward in charming attitudes and look at Sensa quite silently. Then, in perfect silence and unison, they dance in a circle round him, with gestures of blessing as they pass. At the climax of the dance, they all join hands above him, meeting in the center.

Magnolia The dawn is near!

Acacia I feel the ethereal glow upon me!

Magnolia With the first ray of light, our Queen, the Lady of the Lotus will be here.

Myrtle Dear leaves, arise and let the dew drop off!
[*The spirits of the Roses now appear, hiding their faces.*]

Roses [*In unison*] Alas! Today we die!

All the other Spirits Die? Die?

Magnolia [*In center of group*] No! Only change form and live again.

Roses We suffer! We suffer!

Magnolia Alas! For you are passionate.
[*All the Spirits try to soothe and cheer the Roses.*]

Acacia Rejoice! Rejoice! New life is all!

Mimosa Our flowers, too, are demanded by the High Priests for the festival.

Camelia But it is not death -- only entrance into new life.

Magnolia Raise your beautiful heads, dear Roses, ready to welcome our Queen! Let us think no more of ourselves, but give of our best to Sensa. Learn that Sacrifice is life. Let us waft our perfumes to him.

[All the Spirits do so, except the Roses, who stand uncertain and questioning.]

This poor little human soul has been terrified by the dreadful Ten; he has been the slave of the High Priests; he has been the mouth-piece of the Dark Goddess of Desire! Come, let us surround him with sweet airs.

[They all sway round him.]

Roses *[With more abandon than the others]* Soul of Love! We welcome you! We bless you. *[They shower rose-petals on him]* Take us! Take us! May our passion make you strong!

Magnolia Behold, the dawn approaches! *[To Sensa]* Sensa's vigil is ended -- and our long night of watching is past. Come! He has earned the right to stand in the presence of our Lady. This is his great day. Come! We will lose ourselves that he may live. Come!

They all cast petals upon him and then softly return to their places. A moment of once, and then a beam of light strikes directly upon Sensa's forehead.

Sensa *[Rises]* I thank thee, dear flowers, for rousing me. *[He kisses the petals that lie on his hand.]*

My vigil is over.

[He raises his arms in front of his head and stands with his hands lifted to heaven, turned towards the coming light.]

"Hail! All hail! Thou who art Ra! When thou riseth, thou riseth! Thou shinest! Thou shinest! Thou who art crowned King of the Gods!"

[The light grows stronger. The Lady of the Lotus appears.]

Lotus Lady What would you hear and see, and what have you in mind to learn and know?

Sensa I long to learn the things that are, and comprehend their nature, and know God.

Lotus Lady Hold in your mind all you wish to know, and I will teach you.

Sensa Oh, Queen of Wisdom! I have passed through the blackness of desolation and have learned that no possession is permanent and that no thing endures. For many nights I have kept vigil, praying for speech with you when you should enter your garden.

Lotus Lady And yours! The garden of your soul, Sensa. You are at home here. Do you not feel new life within you?

Sensa Yes -- I am reborn. Tell me, Queen of Wisdom, what am I to do?

Lotus Lady Live according to the law of Love.

Sensa Oh, Lady -- what is Love?

Lotus Lady It is the losing of your self. It is the finding of your Self.

Sensa It is a thousand times harder than to live according to the law of Hate.

Lotus Lady Yes; but live according to the law of Love. Give all that you have. Teach the people. Rouse them! Awaken them! Tell them of the Three Truths great as life itself -- yet simple as the simplest heart of man. Feed the hungry with them.

Sensa Where can I find these truths?

Lotus Lady Within yourself. In every human heart, the Lotus blooms. For those who live in Love, there is no death -- for Love and Immortality are one!

Sensa To this great effort I now pledge myself. The divine satisfaction has fallen upon me. I am conscious that Love is infinite, though I can hold but one drop. I myself have nothing, and am nothing. Yet I am all, and have all.

[Turns. *In the perplexity of ecstasy.*]

I sleep and wake at the same time. Within me is the measureless content which is eternal Rest. My being is absorbed into the Absolute Peace.

Lotus Lady There is no rest, no peace, for him who has become a Brother of Love.

Sensa [*Heroically*] I am ready. I am ready for ceaseless activity. Thou hast armed me for perpetual warfare. I am Thine.

Lotus Lady [*With great tenderness*] My beloved. My child. There is no more any parting of the ways. All the different paths have become the One path which leads to immortal Life.

She steps back and vanishes. The Garden is now in the full blaze of the sunshine, radiant with beauty. Birds glance hither and thither. Sensa remains standing gazing upon the open Lotus flower.

Seboua enters, carrying a great basket, and a knife.

Seboua [*To Sensa, with surprise*] Have you been here all night?

Sensa [*Still gazing*] Yes.

Seboua But you must go. It is the day of the festival. So far as the eye can see, the people have gathered.

Sensa [*Eagerly*] There are people at the gate?

Seboua All Egypt is at the gate!

Sensa Then I must go to them.

[*Turning to the Lotus.*]

Divine Lady, Queen of Love and Wisdom, I go to do Thy bidding.
[*Sensa goes out.*]

Seboua Oh, Osiris, father of men, guard and keep him! [*Lifts his hands for a moment in prayer; then he commences to cut the roses and magnolias, and put them into his great basket.*]

CURTAIN

Act III

Scene ii - The Man

The Interior of the Temple, stripped and bare. All the Priests have a depressed, exhausted and poverty-stricken look, and are angry and morose.

Sensa's chair is in the middle of the stage, opposite the Sanctuary. He is sitting, leaning forward, his arms on his knees. "The Ten" are grouped about, some at their pillars and some near the chair. Two are sitting on the floor, their heads resting on the chair. They look pale, starved, lean and unhappy. Sensa looks pale, but clear-cut alert and determined, about 30 years of age. Agmahd stands Center. Kamen-baka by the Sanctuary. They are dressed as in Act One.

There is an uproar outside the Temple, as before.

Sensa Tell the people that I will speak to them at the Gate, as before.
[*The Neophytes hesitate. "The Ten" move uneasily.*]

Agmahd So you are determined to defy us.

Sensa Yes.
[*A murmur of protest from "The Ten." Sensa turns to them.*]
Come.
[*He moves L.*]

The Ten You are destroying us. You are destroying us!

Two of the Ten [With their hands to their heads] We are deaf.

Another I am blind.

Another I cannot see.

Another [Touching a pillar] The world has gone from me.

Another I cannot feel it.

Two Others You are starving us.

Others of the Ten No longer do you make sacrifices to our Gods!

Sensa Your Gods! The Gods of the Senses! No! Soon you will be blind forever. Soon you will be deaf forever! Soon the world will be utterly lost to you forever. Are we then to work for these little gods of the Senses who themselves must die?

[The people are heard clamoring at the Gates. He stops and listens.]

Come with me. We will serve the One and not the many -- Osiris -- who is the Eternal. Come!

[Exeunt Sensa and "The Ten"]

Kamen-baka Again he defies us! We cannot endure this!

Agmahd He is useless to us!

Kamen-baka He is worse -- he is dangerous. It is no longer safe. Bring him back. Do not let him speak again to the people! He incites them against us.

[Agmahd turns to Neophytes.]

Agmahd Go! Bring him back! Quickly!

[Exeunt four of the Neophytes.]

After a slight pause, the door of the Garden, L. opens, admitting a great stream of light, and Seboua enters, bearing a large quantity of red roses.

Seboua *[To the Priests by the door]* These are for the Seer's chair. I have but little time -- the garlands for the walls are being made.

[Looks round.]

Where is the Seer?

A Neophyte He is teaching the people at the Gate.

Seboua *[Lifts his hands]* Osiris, protect him. The night is at hand, and the darkness must fall. But the truth shall be taught by our Seer, and left in the hearts of the people!

Agmahd *[Coldly]* We are waiting for the garlands.

[Exit Seboua.]

The Four Priests, having distributed the roses, return to their places. Sensa enters, led by Neophytes. He is preceded by "The Ten."

Agmahd Your service is needed. The hour for the ceremonial is at hand. I demand your obedience.

Sensa *[In tense excitement, looking round]* I stand alone!

[Pause. "The Ten" look ugly.]

One among many -- a solitary soul in the midst of a united crowd. Among you all, I am the only one who knows, and will teach. I have taught the worshipers at the gate, because of the power which dwells within me. I am upheld by it! I am made strong by it!

Kamen-baka He is in an ecstasy.

["The Ten" advance closer.]

Agmahd He is mad! He is dangerous!

The Ten Ah, this is Death! This is death! We shall all die!

Kamen-baka Yes, this is death! He is leading us to death!

The Four Priests [*Chanting*] Death is but a going home!
[*Sensa comes down to the chair, looks on the roses, with love.*]

Sensa The roses of my life! Cut and laid low! [*He sits*]
[*Voices of people heard without.*]
[*He springs up*] I hear the people! They are coming in. I will speak to them here!
[*A general murmur of protest.*]

The Ten [*Addressing him*] If you do, you will never again look on the light of the sun.

Sensa I have seen the Divine Light!

The Ten But what of the glory of the constellations? The majesty of the moon when it rises upon the darkness? Have you not loved the moon? Have you not gazed upon it through that high window, trembling as if in an ecstasy? All that pleasure will be lost to you. What of the beauty of the summer upon earth? Have you not looked at the palm trees, at the magnolia blooms, like one enrapt? Those roses that cover your chair. . . .

Sensa [*Interrupting*] Stay! I have seen their spirits. It is their spirits that I love.

The Ten What of the beautiful women of earth? It is not the beauty of their spirits you adore -- it is the beauty of their earthly shapes.

Sensa [*Triumphantly*] I have seen the Lady of the Lotus!

The Ten Listen, my lord. Are you willing to lose the songs of the birds? The melodies of the whispering trees? The voices of your friends?

Sensa I have no friends in this Temple.

The Ten What of the cries of life? The sounds of the city? Will you lose them forever? What of the voice of the beautiful woman whom you loved?

Sensa [*Flings them from him*] Ah! I care for none of these! Go! You are nothing to me! I have done with you! Leave me!

[*A gasp of horror from "The Ten."*]

Poor and paltry things that you are! When I think of the years I have wasted with you!
Satisfying you, feeding you -- animating you --

[*Taking in Agmahd and Kamen-baka with his gesture. A pause, expressing unspeakable disgust.*]

Oh, I will go! No longer shall this Temple hold me!

[*"The Ten," with uplifted arms, utter a wild long drawn-out wail of despair.*]

The Ten Oh, we must die!

The People have rushed in from either side of the Temple and are crowding forward. Agmahd and Kamen-baka disappear into the Sanctuary. The Four Priests by the gate softly twang upon their musical instruments.

People Where is the young Priest? The young Priest who taught us?

Sensa [*Springing up, raises his voice*] People! My beloved people. [*Looks out over them*] Down-trodden, suffering, starving, untaught -- yet each with the divine spark within you. [*Holds out his arm*] Come near me, come round me, while I tell you of the three Truths which are absolute.

[*The People press closer.*]

People Yes! Yes!

Sensa "The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor have no limit."

People [*Appreciatively*] Ah!

Priests No! No! He is a traitor! Untrue to the Temple!
[*They try to press the People back. They struggle.*]

Sensa [*Speaking above the tumult*] "The principle which gives life, the Divine principle, dwells in us and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent."

People [*Assent joyfully*] Yes! Oh, yes! Speak on!

Priests No! No! Silence him! Silence him!
[*Certain of them try to pull Sensa down -- people pull the Priests away.*]

Sensa [*Shouting, but with great effort*] "Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory and gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment."

"The Ten" set upon him determinedly and drag him down. Others struggle with the People and drive them out through the Exit, L. All the Priests follow them, except "The Ten" and "The Four." The cries and shouts of the tumult gradually die away in the distance. All is quiet. "The Ten" are grouped round Sensa in attitudes of baffled despair. Sensa sits rigid in his chair in the Egyptian attitude of meditation. The Four Priests again play softly.

Sensa [*Introspectively*] "I go in like the Hawk, and I come forth like the Bennu bird, the morning star of Ra. May a path be made for me whereby I may enter in peace into the beautiful Amentit; and may I lie by the Lake of Horus, and may I lead the grey hounds of Horus; and may a path be made for me whereby I may enter in and adore Osiris, the lord of Life."

The Four Priests [*Softly chanting*] Death is but a going home! Enter across the hidden Lintel! Enter on light!

Sensa Oh, thou white crown of my Divine Form! Oh, thou resting-place of the Boat! I am the child! I am the child! I am the child!

[*"The Ten"* murmur low, and droop.]

The Four Priests Yes. Enter across the hidden Lintel! Enter on light!

Sensa [*With strength*] The slaughter block is made ready, as thou knowest!

[*A long, low moan from "The Ten," as they fade into the Sanctuary.*]

My going forth is as the going forth of the Lord Ra!

The Four Priests, still chanting, open the door of the Garden, disappear into it. The opening of the garden door sends a great shaft of light upon Sensa. He rises and turns towards the Garden.

Hail, thou Lotus! I am the man who knoweth Thee! Grant that I may see the Gods who are the divine guides through the Underworld. Grant that I may come forth whithersoever I please.

[*Turning again to the front.*]

And let me not be driven away from the presence of the great company of the gods -- but receive me, Oh, all ye gods, into the presence of the Lord of Eternity.

Oh, Osiris, verily I have come! I behold thee! I see my divine father! I scatter the gloom! I see my divine father, Osiris! I will perform all the ceremonies! I will open every way in heaven and earth! I am the son who loveth his father Osiris! I have become a khou -- I have become a sahu -- I am furnished with what I need. Hail, every god! Hail, every khou! I have made a path for myself. I myself am Osiris!

CURTAIN
