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SENSA

A MYSTERY PLAY IN THREE ACTS
ADAPTED FROM
THE IDYLL OF THE WHITE LOTUS

Contents

DRAMATIS PERSONAE <i>Symbolism</i>	1
ACT I	3
ACT II	15
ACT III	26

This Drama is a story which has been told in all Ages, and among every people. It is the tragedy of the Soul.

Attracted by Desire, the Ruling Element in the lower nature of Man, the Soul stoops to sin; brought to itself by suffering, it turns for help to the redeeming Spirit within, and in the final sacrifice, achieves apotheosis and sheds a blessing on mankind.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Symbolism

AN EGYPTIAN PEASANT WOMAN

Isis or Mother Nature.

SENSA (Her Son)

The Human Soul entering into possession of its temple, the Body, at adolescence.

THE LADY OF THE LOTUS

The Spiritual Principle in Sensa.

THE DARK GODDESS

The Sensual Principle in Sensa.

SEBOUA (A Gardener)
Intuition.

AGMAHD (A High Priest of the Temple)
Ambition.

KAMEN-BAKA (A High Priest of the Temple)
Desire.

"THE TEN"
The Five Senses in their two aspects; active and receptive.

"THE FOUR" Priests of the Temple
Psychic Senses and their spiritual counterparts.

THE OLD PRIEST
Intellect without Vision.

HESEP-TI (A Nobleman) and THE PEOPLE
Represent demands from the Outer World.

A DREAM WOMAN
The Artistic Principle in Sensa.

NEOPHYTES and OTHER PRIESTS
Instruments of Action.

ACT I

Scene i - The Adolescent

PERIOD *Ancient Egypt.*

TIME *Dawn.*

PLACE *A broad green plain outside a massive Temple on the banks of the Nile. The river can be seen winding away in the distance. The Morning Hymn to Ra at the Rising of the Sun, is just dying away within the Temple.*

[*Enter an Egyptian peasant woman, and Sensa, a young Egyptian fellah.*]

Sensa What a glorious sunrise! I am longing to go into the city streets and hear the noise, and be among the crowds. It is a feast day, Mother. I hear the cries of the men already, selling sweets and flowers and holy water. Let us go there, Mother.

Mother No, Sensa, that cannot be! You have been at my side since your baby feet first learned to run, but that is all over now, for here is the gate of the Temple which you are to enter.

Sensa At last!

Mother Yes, at last -- and we must part.

Sensa Do not go, Mother. Do not leave me yet. Let me spend the day in the city with you, first.

Mother No, Sensa, no. It is not now that you can enter the city and look upon its pleasures. You are still a child, a pupil, and have to enter upon your noviciate.

Sensa Oh, I have always longed for the haunts of men! I do so want to know all things.

Mother And so you shall, Sensa, but now you have to enter upon your destiny, through the gate of that Temple.

Sensa But, Mother, I need not enter the Temple till the day is ended. I long for the hours of the feast day in the city.

Mother You have first to become a man, and if you desire to enter the city then, you will be a part of it. Now you would be but a child, lost and helpless. For I could not guide you as I have done hitherto. The moment has come. The hour has struck which parts us. You have to enter upon the great ordeal of manhood, and I must go back to my other children who will follow you to this gate, ever pressing into life and longing for manhood.

Sensa Go? You are going, Mother! You will not leave me alone in this strange place? I am only a boy -- I am not able to go on alone.

Mother You will not be alone, for you will at once find yourself with others on the great pilgrimage through life to immortality.

Sensa Dare I enter this mysterious gate! What strong walls -- what a fast-closed door! Mother, I am afraid!

[Draws back from the Temple and clings to her.]

Mother Have no fear. Shake it from you! Be bold!

[Puts off his clinging hands, and makes him stand alone.]

For so soon as you have become a man, you will be in possession of powers such as belong to neither angel or demon. When man is afraid, it is because he is ignorant and does not realize himself. Be you a learner, my son, and discover your own great gifts. For great they are indeed. And greatest of all is the power to control your own destiny! Through this gate, and by the joy and pain which the soul finds within it, alone can you attain to immortality. Go! Pass bravely in. Experience all things which sensation can give you. Taste to the full all the mystery and joy of life, and having tasted them, pass beyond them -- free!

Sensa The joy of life?

Mother *[Passionately]* The unutterable, inexpressible joy of human life. Take it, glory in it, and free yourself from it.

Sensa Your words rouse me from my dreams! Yes, Mother, it is true!

[Approaches the closed gate as he speaks.]

The joy of life! I feel it rising within me with the strength of a great serpent uncoiling itself.

As he approaches the gate, it slowly opens, and a black-robed Novice looks out. Seeing Sensa, he opens the gate wide. Sensa hastens forward as if to enter at once, but is stayed by the sight of Agmahd within. He retreats a little towards his Mother.

Mother! Who is that? That splendid priest! How tall and stately he is, and how calm! He might be a beautiful statue. How slowly he walks -- like some great being far removed from men. His dress is all white, embroidered with gold, and his beard that lies upon it, might be cut in gold.

Mother *[Also looking in]* That is Agmahd, the High Priest of the Temple. He is very great and ambitious, and would rule all Egypt.

Sensa How common and mean my dress is! Oh, to wear a robe like his!

[Sensa goes forward towards the gate.]

Mother Would you wear the robe of the High Priest? Does Ambition already call you?

Sensa Yes, Yes! I want to be like him -- great and strong! Above all others! To rule Egypt! He is fitted to rule not only Egypt, but the whole world. See how he keeps his eyes upon the ground. Thought holds him. Mother, *[Turns back a little]* I dread the raising of those drooping lids!

Mother You need not fear his gaze. You can conquer him.

Sensa *[Incredulously]* I?

Mother Yes. If you are a true learner, you can control all things.
 [To the Waiting Novice.]
 Admit the youth. It is his time to enter.

Sensa Mother!

Mother [With an imperious gesture] Go!

Sensa Yes, I obey!
 [He crosses the threshold. As he steps within the Temple, the Mother drops a dim grey veil before her face. Sensa turns. Holds out his arms.]

Mother!

[She does not move.]
 Let me see your face once more before I go!

Mother [Firmly] It is too late. Go. Look not back. Farewell.

[The great gate of the Temple closes.]

Sensa, you have at last fully entered into the world of mortals. But no mortal has yet removed the veil that shades my divinity from human eyes. Thou terrible Temple! Place of suffering, place of joy, place of experience and sensation, how it draws my children from me, from me, the Mother and the lover of the souls of men. I bring all mortals hither, but I do not suffer them to look back from that inexorable gate which, once closed, Destiny alone can open! Oblivion of his mysterious past has now fallen on the soul of Sensa; he will know only that he is man!

CURTAIN

Scene ii - The Novice

A large and beautiful room in the Interior of the Temple, with pillars. It is circular in shape, and very dim. The walls and pillars are covered with hieroglyphs.

A row of 5 pillars extends across R. The pillars begin at wall up back R. of Center, and extend down R. the last being against wall just above Orchestra Pit. Between these 5 pillars are hung 4 curtains. The pillars, beginning with the lowest down R. are indigo, green, red, violet, blue, symbolical of the Five Senses. The curtains symbolize the four principal elements, and, beginning down R. are green, red, violet, blue.

Behind the curtains is the Sanctuary of The Dark Goddess of the Temple. In the Center at Back, 3 steps lead up to a closed door. Opposite the Sanctuary is an Exit leading out through pillars. Above the Sanctuary, R. is a couch. Below the center door L., sits The Old Priest and two Neophytes, bending over the papyri on their knees. Sensa is standing with his hand on the wall, reading from the hieroglyphs. He is dressed in the black robe of the Novice. The Neophyte's robes are white, stitched with black. The Old Priest's robe is white, embroidered with blue. The High Priest, Kamen-baka, stands just below the Sanctuary, R. His robe is white, delicately embroidered with golden characters. He is tall and stately, with dignified but kindly look. His beard is light brown.

Five young Priests and five young Priestesses, softly twanging musical instruments, stand grouped about the Sanctuary. Their robes are of different colors, with vari-colored embroidery. They are known throughout the Play as "The Ten."

Two young Priests and two young Priestesses stand, two on either side of the steps, Center. Their robes are yellow and blue.

Incense issues from the Sanctuary.

Priests [Chanting]

[On Stage] Queen Mother!

[Within Sanctuary] Queen Mother!

[On Stage] Great Goddess of the Temple!

[Within] Great Goddess of the Temple!

[On Stage] Hear us!

[Within] Hear us!

[This alternating refrain is chanted three times.]

Priests [On Stage, speaking] We demand a spell! We demand a word of power. We demand a spell!

The re-iterated chanting continues inside the Sanctuary. Sensa, with his hand upon the wall, and finger indicating one of the hieroglyphs, turns and gazes with large, fascinated eyes at the Sanctuary, deeply inhaling the incense, and listening while the chanting proceeds. As the chanting pauses, the Old Priest glances up.

Old Priest [In a dull, level voice of reprimand] Sensa! Have you found the sign you were bidden to look for?

[Sensa does not hear. Louder.]

Sensa!

Sensa [Starts slightly] My lord?

[Continues to gaze dreamily.]

Old Priest Why do you gaze, as one charmed, at the Sanctuary?

Sensa I know not. The Incense. [Inhales deeply] How strange and subtle it is! It draws me, yet it sickens me. And the chanting -- it thrills me with a strange, new ecstasy!

Old Priest Return to your task. You have much to learn. The service of the Sanctuary is not for you. You have this work to do.

An uproar of many voices can be heard in the distance. Every one listens apprehensively. The Old Priest shakes violently, becoming greatly agitated.

Sensa It is the people! Are they coming again to attack the Temple?

Old Priest Yes! Yes! They come to demand the Spell to cure the blindness of the Lord Hesepti. The Spell for which we search. It must be here. Do not lose your place, or the work of the whole morning will be lost.

The curtains of the Sanctuary are slowly drawn aside, and Agmahd appears. He looks utterly downcast. The Priests rise. Sensa looks on.

Agmahd I have placed the jewels of the lady of Hesepti at the feet of the Goddess. But all is dark. All is silent. No word. No sign. We have no Seer in the Temple. No one who can speak to her or see her.

Kamen-baka It is because we have no Seer that we have fallen into the power of the seven destroying spirits.

The Ten [*Intoning*] Seven are they. Seven are they. In the abyss of the deep -- seven are they. Law and order know they not. Prayer and supplication hear they not. Evil are they. Baleful are they.

Sensa turns to his task. All is still, save for the soft chanting within the Sanctuary. Sensa again becomes distracted.

Sensa [*Passionately*] Oh, I cannot stay here always, poring over these signs. This is not life! These dim letters mean nothing to me. There can be no spell of power in these pictures of a dead past.

Old Priest Patience, child; you have much to learn. Each one of those signs that you look upon contains a meaning which you will understand when you have read the whole, and another meaning which I shall understand, and yet another mysterious inner meaning which only the High Priest himself can unravel. Resume your task.

Sensa turns again to the writing on the wall. The chanting law ceased. A deep silence reigns. Only the musical sound of running water can be heard, coming from behind the door, Center.

Sensa [*Starts*] What is that sound of water? Water, falling?
 [*Turns listening towards the door. "The Ten" change their positions and look apprehensively from Sensa to the door.*]
 How beautiful it is! It is behind that door. All the time I have been here, I have never seen behind that closed door. Why is it always closed?

Old Priest It is only the Garden where the flowers grow that we use for the days of feasting.

Sensa A garden where the flowers grow! Why, the sun must shine there! Is it in the Temple?

Old Priest [*Indifferently*] Yes. Oh, yes, it is in the Temple -- but, see -- you have lost the place.

Enter Neophyte. Kamen-baka comes out of the Sanctuary.

Neophyte The household of Hesepti! And people from the city are at the Gate! They clamor for a spell. A spell to remove the blindness of the Lord Hesepti.

Old Priest [*Tremblingly*] We cannot find it.

Kamen-baka It is useless to ask the Goddess for it. All is dark within the Sanctuary. Go! tell the people they must be patient. [*Exit Neophyte*] If no word of power is given to the High Priest in the Sanctuary, we are lost! The Temple will be destroyed!
 [*The Priests fall on their knees, horror-stricken.*]

Sensa [*Exultantly*] And I shall be free from these hateful tasks!
 [*The chanting within Sanctuary is softly resumed.*]

Priests Queen Mother! Save the Temple. If the Temple falls, we are lost!

Agmahd re-enters the Sanctuary. *The Old Priest* crosses tremblingly to *Sensa*.

Old Priest Child, do not rebel. Have you kept the place?

Sensa [*Indicating*] It is here.
 [*The Old Priest* peers closely at signs then returns to his place, shaking his head.]

Old Priest There is no mention of the spell of power.

Shouting and the noise of a tumult become more distinct, drawing nearer, and the sound of running feet is heard in the Corridor.

[*Enter two Neophytes, Agmahd comes out of the Sanctuary.*]

1st Neophyte The Lord Hesepti himself is at the Gate. He demands admission.

2nd Neophyte He asks, is there no life in the Temple? He says, 'Are we all dead, that he gets no answer.'

Agmahd He must be admitted. Open the gate.
 [*Exeunt Neophytes.*]

Kamen-baka [*To Agmahd*] What shall we say to him? If we can not appease him, we shall starve. The kitchens are waiting now for cattle from his fields.

Agmahd We must make him promises.

Kamen-baka Can we make him believe us? We cannot risk losing the jewels of the Lady Hesepti. They are priceless. What must we do?
 [*Priests groan at each sentence.*]

Agmahd Promises. Promises. We must promise that if not now, it shall be done later, even if we have to descend into the uttermost depths to obtain the spell.
 [*The Priests draw back to the sides.*]

Enter Hesepti, a Nobleman in the prime of life, but crushed by his affliction. He is totally blind, and is supported by two Neophytes. His manner, though feeble, is regal.

Hesepti [*Anxiously*] Is the High Priest here?

Agmahd [*Steps forward*] I am, my lord.

Hesepti [*With a gesture of salutation*] Life! Health! Strength!

Agmahd [*Raising his hand*] Peace to the Lord Hesepti. Peace. Peace. Will you not sit, my lord?

Hesep-ti [Trembling] I cannot sit. I am aflame with rage. I, Hesep-ti, Chief of the Signet Bearers of the great king, the king of the world, the King of Egypt, I -- I -- [*He is speechless: then breaks out.*]

That offering! My wife's jewels! Those precious stones I gave her! I must have them back.

The Ten Back! Back! [*Sullenly*] He cannot have them back! No! No! We need them.

[*Agmahd silences them with a gesture. They draw back, but look ugly.*]

Agmahd Be calm, most noble Hesep-ti. The Casket is safe at the feet of the Goddess who is ready to befriend you. Has other evil befallen you besides the curse of blindness? Surely the offering is true; surely the lady of Hesep-ti is greatly devoted, to make so rich an offering.

Hesep-ti Devoted! She, that has taken advantage of the evil spell which has fallen upon me, to betray me in my very presence! While she was actually with me, she gave gifts into the hand of her hire-woman for a young soldier and bade her fetch him; and he came into my presence and looked on her and she on him, with favor -- I, not knowing, because I could not see!

[*He becomes speechless from rage.*]

Agmahd What is it you ask of me?

Hesep-ti That my enemy shall taste death to the full, in torture and shame. I demand that he lie in chains in the Underworld and have fetters fastened upon him. Do this, and I will give you untold gold. Do this, and I will have driven into your yards great herds of cattle.

Agmahd Your demand is just. Your enemy shall be destroyed.

Hesep-ti Swear it. Swear it on this Amulet of the Pillow which is to be placed beneath my head when I am dead.

[*Holds out Amulet.*]

Agmahd [Placing hand on Amulet] I swear it. Your sight shall be restored, and your enemy trampled under foot. Go in confidence. All shall be done as you desire.

Hesep-ti [With strength] From the country of Magan, rare stones I shall cause to be brought. Gold dust from the mountains of Gharghum. In the Interior of this Temple, a Sanctuary of cedarwood I shall cause to be built, to the Goddess. At the feet of the Sun God seven times seven shall I prostrate myself!

Agmahd 'Tis well. Go then in peace.

Hesep-ti [Trembling and bowed] Lead me back to my own place -- where I, Hesep-ti, Chief of the Signet Bearers to the King, my Lord, will sit and wait for my sight to be restored, and my enemy destroyed.

[*Exit, accompanied by two Neophytes. Agmahd paces up and down. "The Ten" strike sad, dirge-like chords, and there is a general air of dejection.*]

The Ten [Intoning] Oh, Great Goddess, pronounce Thy blessing upon our works. Command our prosperity.

Agmahd What is to be done? I have promised. I have promised a spell. And I have no spell. I have no power to speak with the Goddess. [*Turns angrily to Old Priest*] You --

Old Priest [*Turns tremblingly*] My lord?

Agmahd You! -- and you students of the Ancient Writings --
 [*They rise and bow humbly.*]
 Have you not been searching? Can you not find the spell that I need?
 [*They look hopelessly at the Old Priest.*]

Old Priest The characters are difficult, my lord, and my eyesight is faded: -- I --

Agmahd [*Sternly*] And these? These students who have worked with you so long: -- are they not capable of searching for the spell?

Old Priest My lord, they, too, are losing the strong sight needed to read these difficult characters. They --

Agmahd Then have we no student fitted to do our work?

Old Priest This Novice, my lord [*Indicating Sensa*] is young, and his eyesight is strong. He --

Agmahd Bid him search, then. Keep him close here until he has found what I need.

Sensa [*Starts*] Keep me close here! What! Closer than I have been kept? I shall go mad!
 [*Agmahd gives him a cold stare and Exits.*]

Old Priest How dare you speak before the High Priest thus? You are greatly honored. But be not over-proud. It is your youth which has marked you out for this honor.

Sensa [*Starting up*] My youth! I want my youth for myself! I do not want to spend it in the study of these crabbed signs. I want to use it for beauty and joy and life -- not to waste it within these dead walls!

Old Priest Child, you will make your lot the harder. The High Priest can command you. Stand you here and continue your task. We will leave you in quiet to accomplish it.

He pushes Sensa back into his place and lifts from his own stool the faded manuscripts, and Exits, followed by the Neophytes. Sensa, left with "The Ten," leans his head upon his arms against the wall. "The Ten" are by the pillars in front of the Sanctuary.

Two of The Ten [*Chant rhythmically*] Oh, light of the Sun! Oh, light of Moon!. Oh, glory of the fields and the flowers!
 [*Sensa half turns to them.*]

Two Others [*Chant in rising cadence*] The voice of the birds! The music of the dance! The cries from the city!
 [*Sensa takes a step towards them.*]

Two Others [*Ecstatically*] Oh, the ripe fruit from the wall! And the honey of the bees! Oh, the sweetness of the honey!

The Ten [In unison] Oh, the joy and the pride of the earth, and the life of the earth!

Sensa [Moving dreamily towards them] Yes! Yes! It is sweet! How sweet!

Pause and a little silence. The sound of the running water is again heard. Sensa stops. The Four Priests by the door of the Garden chant softly but clearly with uplifted expression.

The Four Priests Do you not hear the waters of Life and Truth? They flow! They flow!

Sensa Yes! Yes, I hear! 'Tis the mystic sound! Oh, how it enters into my soul!

[*"The Ten"* begin to chant.]

Hush! [*Lifts his hand*] I must find this musical voiced water. [*At the steps*] It eases my longing. I must drink of that water!

[*He mounts the steps and knocks. "The Ten" come forward with menacing gestures.*]

The Ten Go not that way! Go not that way! We cannot follow you there. Go not! Go not!

[*They murmur angrily.*]

The Four Priests step forward and stand between "The Ten" and Sensa, who knocks again. "The Ten" threaten and snarl. Sensa knocks a third time, and steps back.

Sensa Oh, open to me, thou Mystery Gate!

The Gate opens, and a great shaft of light streams into the dim room. "The Ten" recede before it, and withdraw behind the curtains of the Sanctuary. The Four resume their places on either side of the gate.

The Two on The Right Come out of the darkness. Make the entrance on Light. Tell me my name -- what am I? Tell me my name.

Sensa [*Gazing at them*] Surely you are that which is True!

The Two on The Right [*Strike a strong chord*] It is well!

The Two on The Left Come out of the Darkness! Make the entrance on Light! Tell me my name -- what am I? Tell me my name.

Sensa [*Gazing at them*] Surely you are that which is Just!

The Two on The Left [*Strike a chord*] It is well!

All Together Enter through the hidden Lintel. Enter!

The Gate opens. Sensa steps back enraptured. A most exquisite Garden is revealed, full of light and color, glancing birds, and a great Lotus tank, fed by a rill of running water from a fountain. The Garden is full of exquisite blossoms and delicate young, pale-green foliage of Spring. The Lotus tank is in the center of the Garden. The Lotuses are in bloom, one large blossom stands high above the green leaves.

Sensa stands speechless for some seconds and then Seboua appears.

Seboua What do you seek?

Sensa The mystery that is hidden here. How beautiful it is! Light and air! And the flowers -- how sweet they smell!

Seboua Ah, you perceive their fragrance. The dull Priests care nothing for it. This garden is wasted upon them, poor fools.

Sensa Do they not come here?

Seboua Never. All they desire from this garden is fruit for their table, and the gratification of their appetites.

[Turns fiercely to Sensa.]

Are you like them? Do you desire to learn only the mystery of the growth of sin and deceit?

Sensa What is sin? What is deceit?

Seboua What? You are ignorant of the meaning of those words?

Sensa Must I, then, learn these things?

Seboua Not if you stay here with the spirits of the flowers.

Sensa Have they spirits?

Seboua How else could they be beautiful?

[Sensa looks at him in amazement.]

Nay, ponder my words, and by and bye, you will understand them. Sit here while I water my plants.

Seboua takes Sensa by the hand and leads him towards the tank. Then he takes a water jar and fills it at the rill of running water.

[Clasps his hands and leans toward the water.]

Sensa Oh, how delicate-voiced is that water!

Seboua Yes. It flows only to feed the Queen of Flowers.

[Looks at the Lotus. Then all round the Garden and back at the Lotus.]

Sensa Thou art indeed the Queen of Flowers. And is there a spirit in this flower, too?

Seboua Yes. But no mortal eyes have seen her since I have been in this garden. That flower is her home -- and it is from her that all Wisdom comes.

Sensa Perhaps I may see her!

Seboua What? A youth like you, -- when the High Priest himself cannot see her!

Sensa Why not? I am not so young. I have become a man since I entered the Temple. I do so long to know the truth of things.

Seboua The Priests are ignorant, because none in this Temple can see or hear our Lady of the Lotus.

Sensa But do they watch for her here, beside her home?

Seboua No. They are killing the cattle of Hesepti for the table -- or counting the coins of the offerings at the Gate.

[Goes on watering the plants.]

They have not time to wait and watch for her.

Sensa [Earnestly] Oh, I will see her! I must see her! I shall demand to see her! I tell you, Gardener, I shall watch and wait here for ever, until I do see her!

Seboua You are a strange youth! But I cannot linger here with you. I have my work to do.

[Exits with empty water jar.]

Sensa moves about and examines the flowers. Returns Center. Raises his arm.

Sensa I tremble before Thee.

[Crosses his arms on his breast.]

Oh, glorious Flower with thy soft, gold-dusted heart, open! Open that heart that I may see the Truth! Give me of thy Wisdom! I demand that the spirit within thee shall speak to the Spirit within me!

As he stands gazing in ecstasy, a fair and glorious woman appears. Sensa, amazed, strives to move. After a moment's pause, he holds out his arms, makes a step or two forward as though to go to her, but his strength failing him, he falls forward unconscious, his arms outstretched towards her.

The Lady of The Lotus [Rises. Stands over Sensa in a pitying attitude.]

Poor little human being. Little child of Time! Unconscious of Eternity, not knowing of your own great future, and all that I have for you in the day when you shall pass out of this imprisonment. Grow strong in the crucible of human life and experience. Prepare for the splendid Immortality to which I shall lead you. I, the Spirit of the Sacred Flower of Egypt, will give you the wisdom you ask when you are able to take it, but your strength has failed you. Alas! Farewell.

She vanishes. The leaves and branches rustle and sway and there is a murmur, as of a slight breeze. Seboua appears, and seeing Sensa lying prostrate on the ground, hurries towards him, lifts his head, and bathes his face with water from the jar he carries.

Seboua Was the heat too much for you? You look a strong lad to faint for the heat, and that, too, in this cool place!

Sensa [Reviving, murmurs] Where is she?

[He attempts to rise on his elbow and points towards the Lotus bed.]

Where is she?

[Enter Agmahd and Kamen-baka.]

Seboua [Excitedly] What? What have you seen, boy? Quickly! Speak!

Sensa I have seen the Queen. The Queen of the Garden. The Lady of the Lotus. She is most fair, and her hair is like gold, that runs upon her shoulders.

Seboua It was not your fancy? You did not dream it?
[*Raising Sensa, he moves to the gate with him.*]
Come -- Come with me!

Sensa [*Standing on the top step*] She was real! She was more real than you. I stood and gazed upon the flower -- and as I gazed, it seemed to change in form to expand and rise towards me -- and, lo, drinking at the stream -- stooping to take its drops upon her lips, I saw a woman with fair skin, and hair like dust of gold. I tried to go to her, but my strength failed me, and I fell.

Seboua [*Falls on his knees before Sensa*] You have seen her. You have seen her! All Hail! For you are destined to be a Teacher amongst us -- a help to the people! You are a Seer!
[*Seboua turns, sees the two High Priests who have witnessed this scene.*]

Agmahd My lords! My lords! This novice! This novice! He has seen! He has heard! He is a Seer. He is the one we have waited for. We are saved.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene i - Hypnotized

The Interior of the Temple, as in Act One. Agmahd is standing by the Curtains of the Sanctuary. Priests chant Hymn to Ra at the Setting of the Sun.

Enter Kamen-baka from L.

Kamen-baka They are bringing him! Is he to pass into the Sanctuary at once, without preparation?

Agmahd At once. There must be no delay.

Kamen-baka Is it wise? Is it safe?

Agmahd We must take the risk!

Kamen-baka But he may die! The experiment may kill him, and he would be lost to us!

Agmahd No. He is young and ignorant. "The Ten" will lead him on and sustain him.

[Enter a Neophyte hurriedly. To Neophyte.]

Is he ready?

Neophyte [Agitated and fearful] My lord, we have done all that you directed. He has slept, and we watched him as he slept. He has eaten: -- when he woke, we brought him food. We bathed him in the perfumed bath and we put upon him the Seer's robe.

Agmahd Then wherefore this delay?

Neophyte My lord, he is terrified. A sudden fear has fallen upon him.

Kamen-baka Fear? What has alarmed him?

Neophyte Not I, my lord. We have none of us spoken to him of what he is to do.

Kamen-baka But if he is afraid, can you not quiet him?

[Enter 2nd Neophyte.]

2nd Neophyte All is well, my lord. He is now coming. They are almost here.

The intoning of Priests draws nearer and about a dozen Priests in white, enter slowly in double file and place themselves above the Sanctuary. They are followed by four young Neophytes carrying vases of incense, who go to their places above the Sanctuary. Then a group of five of "The Ten," dressed in their violet-red robes, then Sensa, alone, in a pure white linen robe. He is followed by the other five of "The Ten."

Following are four more Incense Bearers who place themselves below the Sanctuary. Following are other Priests and Novices who fill the stage, L.

Kamen-baka [To Sensa] This is the chair of the Seer. Sit here.

Sensa hesitates. Looks round with an expression of uncertainty. Then takes his place, silent and alarmed.

Sensa Sit here? And what am I to do?

Agmahd [Sternly] Watch.

Agmahd and Kamen-baka move slowly down and draw aside the curtains, for the first time revealing the Opening to the Sanctuary, a square black hole leading into a dark corridor. They return to their places. Sensa has followed their movements fearfully.

And tell us what you see.

Sensa [Trembling voice] What should I see?

Agmahd Fear not. Watch.

Sensa turns his fearful eyes to the Sanctuary. All eyes are fixed on the Sanctuary, except Agmahd's. He watches Sensa. Sensa gazes with clasped hands deep into the dark opening. Gradually his hands relax on to the arms of the chair. He sinks back, chin on breast, eyes straight ahead. The light on the stage has become dimmer. There is absolute stillness. Presently Sensa lifts his head slowly as if seeing something within the corridor. He raises his whole body and leans forward gazing intently, breathing heavily. Suddenly he starts up with a strangled cry. There is a general suppressed cry of satisfaction from the Priests. Agmahd speaks calmly.

Agmahd What is it that you see?

[*Sensa shudders.*]

Tell us.

Sensa [Pointing] Do you not see the light? The light from the little doorway? There -- there, at the end of the corridor?

Other Priests [Murmuring and moving] No! No! There is no light. We cannot see a light. We cannot see . . .

Sensa Surely you see that the door has opened a little way, and a veiled figure stands there? [*He looks round on them.*]

A Murmur from the Priests No! No! We do not see. We cannot see.

Sensa Oh, send it away! Send it away. It frightens me!

Agmahd [Triumphantly] Our Queen is welcome.

Sensa No! No! Send it away. I shall die of fear! Send it away!

Agmahd Our Queen is welcome, and we do her all reverence.

[*Raising his arms with an Egyptian gesture of reverence. All the Priests do the same.*]

Will our Queen help her subjects? Will she remove the curse of blindness which has fallen upon the Lord Hesepti, and destroy his enemy? Will she show herself to the people? The

fortune of the temple is at stake. Unless our Queen helps us, the Temple must fall.
[Sensa has sat huddled with his hands over his eyes. He now moves and looks even more alarmed.]

Sensa A voice! A voice! Oh, I hear a dreadful voice! A voice like ice! She is speaking.
[General Stir.]

Agmahd *[Strong and controlled]* She speaks? Repeat her words. We cannot hear them. What does she say?

Sensa What! Can you not hear her? Can you not hear her speak?
[Looks fearfully at them.]

Priests *[Murmuring low]* No, we cannot hear. We cannot see. All is dark and silent.

Sensa You cannot hear her? You cannot see her? It is only I -- I -- who hear her and see her?
[In a trembling voice of great fear.]
 No! No! I cannot! I cannot! No! No! I will not go in alone with you!

Agmahd What does she say? You must obey her command.

Sensa She says that you shall have all you ask.
[Murmurs of delight.]
 But that I must go in there alone with her. I cannot. I cannot.
[Yet he rises with outstretched hand and moves toward the Sanctuary as if drawn by an invisible hand, resisting all the way.]
 Yet I must. She draws me with her hand. It burns. It holds. It draws me.

He enters the Sanctuary. The Priests follow his every movement and press forward. There is an intense pause of waiting and anticipation. Suddenly, a terrific cry is heard, and Sensa flings himself forth from the Sanctuary, dashing wildly to escape, and falls in the midst of the priests. "The Ten" gather round him.

Oh, horror of horrors! What have I seen! Shall I ever forget that awful face!

One of the Ten Ah, be not afraid. That face is but a mask, and through it you will see things most beautiful and desirable.

Sensa But that voice! That cold and cruel voice!

Another of the Ten *[Insinuatingly]* That voice can be most soft and sweet. You have but to yield to its commands.

Sensa But her hand. Her hand that burnt me -- it was like fire.

Another of the Ten In that hand are all the passion and all the fire of life and joy.
["The Ten" press closer with soothing words and gestures. Sensa has removed his hands from his face and looks at them with wonder.]

Sensa Can that be so?

The Ten Yes, yes! Oh, yes!

Sensa That face of horror can ne'er be sweet -- that voice can ne'er be kind -- that hand be tender!

The Ten It can! It is! So sweet, so tender!

Sensa [*Bewildered*] Can it be so?

Agmahd It is so. Enter there.

[*Gesture towards the Sanctuary. Sensa turns. "The Ten" surround him, softly chanting.*]

The Ten Yes. Enter there! Enter there! Life is there. Joy is there. Love and wealth and power are here.

[*They are at the door.*]

Are here! Are here! She will give them to you. Come! Come! Have no fear. Life is here.

[*Sensa, being cajoled and soothed, disappears into the Sanctuary. Agmahd and Kamen-baka draw the Curtains across.*]

Agmahd [*Turning*] He is ours! On him I will raise the fortunes of the Temple!

CURTAIN

Scene ii - The Slave

The same Scene. The walls are hung with garlands of roses in great profusion. Incense vases stand against the five pillars. The couch stands, L. A pile of costly and beautiful fabrics is thrown on it. On the floor and on small stools are quantities of valuable articles -- jewelry, flasks of perfume, etc.

Sensa sits on his chair in the center of the stage, opposite the Sanctuary. He wears a white robe. He looks much older, and very weary and heavy. His head is sunk on his breast, and his arms hang over the arms of the chair. Agmahd stands Center, in a dress of cloth of gold, dominating the whole scene, triumphant, superb. "The Ten" stand by the pillars. The Four Priests still stand, two on either side of the steps. Neophytes light the incense in the vases. Priests and Neophytes move amongst the beautiful things, delightedly. Some twang softly on musical instruments. Kamen-baka's robe is rich and splendid, but not quite so gorgeous as Agmahd's.

Agmahd Does he sleep?

Kamen-baka He seems to sleep. He is exhausted. He suffers.

Agmahd He will recover. As I led him to this,

[*Wide gesture.*]

so I can lead him again. I have triumphed, and I shall go from one conquest to another.

[*Contemptuously.*]

Do you not remember how he feared to look upon the face of our Goddess? He has not been easy to break to my will. The common pleasures of ordinary men do not entice him. With those pleasures which reflect the life of the spirit -- with music, poetry, and great

accomplishments, I led him. He played with the golden ball of success, and always won. To and fro he tossed it -- and the ball was always his. All is well. I have conquered.

Kamen-baka But the people clamor still to see the Goddess. They desire speech with her. "The Ten" are restive and rebellious. They complain that you drive them too far -- and our Seer seems near the end of his strength. There is no limit to your ambition.

Agmahd Nor to your desire. Even so. It is but right. The whole Temple is uplifted and made splendid. Hesepti is a royal giver -- he has sent us of his best.

[*To Priests.*]

Sing the song of triumph. Raise your voices in acclamation.

Certain Priests who seem frenzied with delight, cry out in unison, on a high note, an Egyptian word of triumph.

Agmahd goes into the Sanctuary.

Kamen-baka joins the Priests, L. center.

Sensastirs. Also "The Ten" begin to move. They are beautiful, but sullen and depressed.

Sensa What is that cry, as of triumph?

[*He raises himself, looks about.*]

Who can rejoice over such poor matter as this? Gold -- jewels? Is this all that the years have brought me?

Pause. The Stage is very silent, and for an instant, the playing of the fountain is faintly heard. The Priestesses by Door, Center, strike one chord on their harps. Sensa lifts his head painfully. "The Ten" and Kamen-baka are alert. Agmahd comes out of the Sanctuary.

Oh, I dimly recall a garden where flowers grew and lifted their sweet faces to the sun. But that was long ago, when I was young and full of hope. The Lotus was in bloom that day. I heeded it not, and now I cannot reach it. But oh! there is a cry in my soul for a Far-away Peace; for a voice that is known to my heart alone -- and for a glimpse, but one glimpse -- of that Divine Lady. Why do I linger here in this spot, evermore?

[*Sensa rises and turns, and is confronted by Agmahd and Kamen-baka, one on either side of him. He falls back in his chair.*]

Oh, I shall stifle in this close place, all sickly with incense and perfume.

Kamen-baka [*Suavely*] You have been too much within doors. They shall not kill you with the ceremonies of the Temple, even though you are the only one who can receive the messages and obtain the spells.

[*Enter Neophyte.*]

Neophyte [*Excitedly*] My lord! The Lord Hesepti is entering!

Enter Hesepti, powerful, strong, full of lusty life, seeing, and gorgeously attired with jewels and panther-skin, and wearing a great, flashing jewel on his brow. He comes straight down, stands in front of Agmahd.

Hesepti [*Vigorously*] Life! Health! Strength!

Agmahd Peace.

[*Hesep-ti* takes the jewel from his brow and hands it to *Agmahd*.]

Hesep-ti This, my lord, is for you to place in your crown. You have more than fulfilled your pledge. Bring in that coffer -- bring in that casket. Are the bullocks driven into the yard of the Temple?

[*Assent from Attendants*.]

It is well. There is plenty, there is glory for you all. I have given from my thankful heart.

[*Sensa* falls back in his chair, with a gasp.]

Young Priests He is fainting, my lord -- he is fainting!

[*"The Ten"* rush towards *Sensa* with restoratives.]

The Ten Give him this! This. Give him this.

Sensa [*Turning away*] These things do not feed me.

Agmahd [*Waves "The Ten" aside*] He cares nothing for these.

Hesep-ti Is this a tortured slave? What has he done?

Agmahd He is our Seer. Through him we have worked the miracle which has restored your sight and destroyed your enemy.

Hesep-ti Then I pay him all homage.

[*Makes an obeisance, and goes out*.]

Sensa [*Half raises a drawn, white face*] Oh, Oh, I am dying.

The Ten No! No! You must not die!

They gather round him. One fans him, another soothes his hand. Another plays softly on a musical instrument. Another advances with a flask, kneels at his feet and pours out a fragrant liquid. A strong, pungent perfume fills the air. Sensa recoils in disgust.

Sensa [*Turning restlessly*] Peace -- Peace! I am too tired!

[*"The Ten"* linger. He pushes them away.]

Leave me. Can you not see that I have a feeling like death? Surely it is Death, and I shall be released from this bondage.

The Ten [*In surprise*] Bondage?

Sensa Yes. Am I not a tool, a slave? To you -- and you and you -- all! I cannot move. I cannot breathe. Night after night, I am in the Sanctuary, while you run hither and thither in the world. You enjoy the air, the sunshine, the people, the sweets of the earth -- and what do you bring to me, who sit here alone, keeping alive the fire in the Sanctuary? Only empty husks of empty things! Oh, if I did not know that behind that closed door, is my divine garden! If it were not that in sleep, I wander free where you cannot follow! If it were not that in profound, sweet sleep I touch the Infinite Source of all Refreshment, -- I could not return to this prison where I am a stranger -- alone and unloved!

Agmahd [*Scornfully*] Love? What has love to do with raising the fortune of the Temple?

Kamen-baka Love! [*Scornfully*] Though all men love me, I love no man.

Agmahd To raise the fortunes of the Temple and to lift it above all others, I have renounced my humanity.

Sensa It is nothing to me that it should be raised above all other Temples.

Agmahd If it is not above all others, it will be crushed by others.

The Ten [*All murmur*] Yes! Yes! We cannot endure that!

Agmahd We are one within the walls of this Temple. All our fortunes are at stake. You must obey. We will compel you to obey for the sake of our Temple, to make it the greatest in all Egypt.

Sensa I cannot. Oh, I cannot. I am too tired.

Kamen-baka We are destroying our priceless possession. We are stupefying him. He must have rest -- nay, more. He must have pleasure.

Agmahd Then you, who are versed in the mystery and magic of number and music and rhythm, bid him enter into pleasure.

Kamen-baka I will send him into the realms of joy, and the Ritual of "The Ten" shall be danced for him.

The Ten [*joyously*] Yes! Yes! We will dance for him! Come, dance!

They begin the Ritual Dance of "The Ten," accompanied by rhythmic music or intoning, from the Priests -- up Center. They circle round and round Sensa in a rhythmic dance. A moment of darkness falls upon the Stage. When it is again light, the Scene is witnessed through gauze. Sensa can be seen waking, and with a cry of joy he perceives a beautiful woman standing beside him. Her dress is of rosy red and pink shades. She has red roses round her head, and a great rope of roses round her shoulders, crossing her heart. "The Ten" continue a slow dance, over against the Curtains of the Sanctuary, now singly, now in unison. The dance is composed of strange Egyptian postures, and the effect against the curtains is that of a frieze. Their movements are slow and unobtrusive, but they continue through the scene.

Sensa Is it you?

Dream Woman Yes, it is I. Your love of the Ages, your Queen of joy.
[*She sways from him, down L.*]

Sensa [*Slowly rising*] My love of the Ages, my Queen of joy, my very Self. How I have longed for you. Now I can reach you, now I can touch you, now I can lose myself in you. Where have you been so long?

Dream Woman Revelling in the consciousness of joy, whilst you have been down in the place of fear. Come, dance with me. Am I not your joy self? Your pleasure self? Your very self?

Come, be with me, be of me. Be mine!

[He has approached as though drawn by an invisible thread. She clasps him to her.]

Sensa *[After a protracted pause, draws back, looking down at his clothes]* Oh, but this Priest's dress! How I hate it!

Dream Woman Be no longer a Priest. Be mine.

[She takes a glittering robe from the couch and casts it round him.]

Sensa Now I am utterly yours, until I am recalled.

Lifting a part of the rope of roses from her own throat, she throws it about him, uniting them. Gently, with seeming carelessness, she leads him to and fro as she wills upon the stage. At last she is seated in his chair, and he is kneeling beside her.

Sensa *[Adoringly]* How beautiful you are -- how beautiful! How I have longed for beauty!

Dream Woman And you -- how tired you are. Rest here. I will give you back your youth.

[She draws him to her.]

Sensa Oh, for eons of pleasure. Ages and eons of pleasure!

Dream Woman They are yours! Come to me. I will give them to you.

[She draws him into her arms. He sinks wearily into her lap.]

Sensa You have come to your beauty and I have not known you. How my years have been wasted.

Dream Woman These shall be the years of your triumph. Do not leave me again. Stay with me, and my passion will make you strong, to fulfil your destiny.

Sensa *[Lies in her arms in a trance of delight]* These walls no longer hold me. Ah, what broad, what open spaces! We are surrounded by innumerable shapes of exquisite beauty -- Is it not so, dear love?

[She laughs gleefully.]

They are dancing. I see their gleaming feet, their flying hair. Their tresses fall across my face. I feel the soft petals, I smell their fragrance. Their hands touch me, they clasp and draw me. I, too, am dancing -- dancing, dancing -- through the years.

[They laugh with delight. He buries his head in the roses at her breast.]

Dream Woman Listen to the music! Do you hear it?

Sensa *[Raises his head]* That is no music of earth! it is not played on instruments. It is the music of the Spheres. We are amongst the stars, and it is the stars that dance round us! Is it for an hour? -- or is it for an age?

Dream Woman Think not of Time, dear one. These are the years of our life. Hark!

Sensa *[Listening rapturously]* Surely I hear all the birds of all the worlds, singing at once! What cries of joy! *[Rises]* O, what a glorious life is mine!

The Stage is again darkened for an instant. When it is light, the gauze has been lifted, and Sensa is seated in his chair as before -- the Dream Woman has vanished. Sensa has lost the worn, weary look, and is now alert, strong, upright.

The curtains are drawn back, revealing the low, dark doorway of the Sanctuary. A loud clamor of the voices of the People is heard without.

People We want the Goddess! Oh, Priests, let us enter! Let us behold the great Goddess!

Sensa Go to the people. Tell them I shall this night work a wonder. They shall not only see the Goddess: they shall speak with her.

[Exeunt Neophytes.]

[Agmahd and Kamen-baka draw back the curtains from in front of the Sanctuary, with an air of triumph. Sensa enters the Sanctuary.]

A Priest Open the doors! Admit the people!

[Exeunt two Neophytes.]

Another Priest Lower the lights! The great Goddess is about to show herself.

[Exeunt two more Neophytes, and an instant later, the lights are lowered and the Stage is darkened.]

Priests [Chant] Great Queen! Glorious Queen! We welcome you!

This continues, until suddenly, a ray of light streams down from above and impinges on a mirror which is placed at a point to reflect the light on to the center of the Stage, where it dimly reveals the veiled figure of the Dark Goddess. The People and the Priests take up an attitude of worship.

People The Goddess!

Priests The Goddess!

[The Chanting ceases.]

Goddess [Stretching out her arms over the People] My people, I see your hungry hearts. I recognize my servants. You are a worthy army. I trust you to obey, not from duty, but from Desire.

People Yes, yes, Lady!

Goddess [Pointing to various people, touching some near her] You desire gold. *[Hands are outstretched]* Oh, that is easy. *[Pours gold into their hands]* It is yours. Take it. *[To a woman and youth]* You desire pleasure. Have it. *[Gives a rope of roses to each. Then to a man, a rather rough type]* You desire love. *[Takes the hand of a woman]* Here is another hungry heart. Feed each other. *[Man draws the woman to him. Then to a Nobleman]*

I see your secret desire. It cannot be uttered. I will give it to you. It shall be your secret and mine. It shall never be known. *[To a Peasant Woman]* The jewels make your eyes sparkle? Here. *[Throws a jewelled collar round her throat. To an Old Man]* And you long for youth? Poor dotard. Only believe you have it, and it is yours.

[He straightens him-self up. The People are getting excited, thronging forward. A woman grasps the robe of the Goddess and clings to it.]

Peasant Woman Lady, I am childless. I long for a man child!
 [Big, rough peasants, pushing forward, grasp her robe from the other side.]

1st Peasant Lady, I have never had a piece of gold in all my life!

2nd Peasant I have never seen a piece of gold!

Peasants Gold! Gold! Give us gold!

They all pull at her. The robe begins to tear. As the Goddess reaches for the gold and turns with her hands full, she staggers. The Crowd presses upon her, and she suddenly disappears. There is an uproar of baffled desire. The People are in a frenzy and tear at everything they can lay their hands on, and at each other. They run hither and thither.

People Where is she? Where is she? Here! No! Here! Here!

They now begin to rush out of the Temple, followed by all the Priests and Priestesses, except "The Ten." Some dash at the door of the Garden, Center, and tear it open. A great stream of light pours in, frightening them, and they rush shrieking away through the Exits. Sensa staggers from the Sanctuary and falls forward on the platform. The light streams on him.

The Lady of the Lotus appears at the Gate.

Lotus Lady [With wrath] Oh, Sensa, Beloved of the Gods was it for this that you were born?
 [Pause, Sensa stirs.]

Was it for this that your eyes were opened, and your senses made clear to perceive?

[Sensa half rises.]

You know it was not. Have you fallen so low that you will be a slave for ever?

[Sensa rises.]

Go, then. I will cleanse my Sanctuary. It shall no longer be the dwelling-place of selfish desire. It shall be silent, and none shall know that any gods exist. Go, and leave me to my silence.

[She turns.]

Sensa turns and goes slowly with dragging footsteps towards Exit. He hesitates. A wild burst of song from the People can be heard.

Sensa That song! That song of degradation! It is Her song! The song of the Goddess! The song that is sung under all skies and in all ages. Ah, my Mighty Ones in passion -- Kings in lust, Monarchs in desire. We have lighted a fire that will bum through the ages! Are you satisfied at last? And I -- I -- what of me? [Assumes an attitude of tense, introspective despair] I die of hunger -- I am stupefied, and poor, and starved. I am beset on every side. Desire, Ambition, Greed, Passion crowd in on me, darken my life, and compel me to this slavery. I am alone -- alone, in the midst of this crowd.

[Turns to the Lady of the Lotus, speaks with great passion.]

What can I do? Queen of Wisdom -- Light of my soul, do not forsake me! Help me!

Lotus Lady [Turns] Sensa! You have called me!

Sensa Oh, Queen of Wisdom, save me!

[He falls on his knees.]

Lotus Lady [*Comes down, touches his head*] *Sensa*, you have called me.

Sensa [*Distractedly*] *Lady*, tell me -- what am I to do?

Lotus Lady Seek me. Daily, hourly, in holy meditation. Seek me in this garden, deep in the garden of your Soul. Look not out for help, but ever within the inner-most Sanctuary of your own Being -- within the Lotus bloom of your own Heart -- for there am I!

CURTAIN

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

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