
Prologue

Scene 1. *A square in Aquileia.*

Attila, the king of the Huns, appears on a chariot amid the ruins of Aquileia, acclaimed by his hordes. A group of women prisoners is brought before him, despite his orders to spare no one. Uldino tells him that this is a tribute to the king, since the Italian maidens have taken up arms to defend their brothers. Attila wishes to know the reason for such valour: Odabella, the daughter of the deceased lord of Aquileia, explains that the reason is their love for their homeland. Impressed by the courage of the young woman, Attila grants her a favour: Odabella wants her sword back and he gives her his own. The young woman is overjoyed at the idea of being able to take her revenge with this weapon at some time in the future. The king is attracted to Odabella and orders her to remain in his camp. Then he receives the Roman general, Ezio, who promises him both the Eastern and the Western Empires in exchange for Italy. Attila disdainfully refuses and Ezio has a surge of pride.

Scene 2. *Rio Alto in the lagoons of the Adriatic.*

Some hermits leave their huts and move towards the altar, where they recall the sad night and pray to the Lord. Some boats moor in the lagoon and the refugees from Aquileia disembark, led by the young knight, Foresto. His thoughts are for his beloved Odabella, whom he knows to be a prisoner. The chorus encourages him to be hopeful.

Act 1

Scene 1. *A wood near Attila's camp.*

At the gates of Rome, the Huns prepare to attack the city. It is night; Odabella gives leash to her pain and fancies that she can see the faces of her father and Foresto among the clouds. Foresto suddenly appears, dressed as a barbarian, and accuses her of betraying him with the enemy; but the young woman justifies herself, informing him of her intention to have revenge.

Scene 2. *In Attila's tent.*

In his sleep, the king of the Huns is disturbed by a dream: while he is about to attack Rome, an old man orders him to turn back and not to violate the sacred place. Afraid, Attila recounts his dream to Uldino who urges him to ignore his fears; Attila then orders the chiefs of his army to move immediately on Rome. But the trumpet calls are echoed by distant voices singing a sacred hymn.

Scene 3. *Attila's camp.*

From a distance a procession of maidens and boys advances, led by pope Leo and six elders who command Attila to retreat from Rome. The king is terrified: his premonitory dream has come true.

Act 2

Scene 1. *Ezio's camp.*

Disgusted, Ezio reads the decree of the Emperor Valentinian ordering him to seek a truce with the Huns. While the Roman general dreams of a reawakening of his homeland, a group of Attila's slaves arrives to invite him to the barbarians' camp. Ezio accepts the invitation. One of the slaves reveals that he is Foresto: he tells Ezio that Attila is about to be killed and asks him to descend on the enemy camp at an agreed signal. Ezio rejoices, despite the uncertainty of the forthcoming clash.

Scene 2. *Attila's camp.*

The Huns' camp is ready for the solemn banquet. While the warriors are singing, Attila goes to take his place, with Odabella at his side. A trumpet call announces the arrival of Ezio and the Roman officers, accompanied by Foresto in military attire.

The Druids try to warn Attila that the omens are inauspicious; while the priestesses sing a happy song, a sudden gust of wind blows the torches out, amid a general sense of fear.

Attila and Ezio renew their warlike intentions. When the torches are relit, Foresto indicates to Odabella which of the cups contains the poison meant for the king of the barbarians. But the young woman, who wants the revenge all to herself, warns Attila of the deception and asks him to pardon Foresto. The king agrees and orders her to become his wife. Odabella urges Foresto to escape, while the Huns incite their leader to begin the massacres once more.

Act 3

A wood separating the camps of Attila and Ezio.

Foresto learns from Uldino that Attila is about to marry Odabella; he orders the Roman forces to prepare to invade the enemy camp and, once alone, weeps for his lost love. Ezio arrives from the Roman encampment, ready for the attack. Foresto is smitten with jealousy, but Ezio calms him; Odabella arrives, after escaping from the Huns' camp, and she begs Foresto to believe that she has been faithful to him. The three of them are surprised by Attila who, seeing that he has been betrayed, reproaches Odabella for her ingratitude, Foresto for the pardon received and Ezio for plotting to save Rome. Meanwhile, the Romans attack the Huns' camp. Foresto tries to strike Attila, but Odabella stops him and stabs the barbarian chieftain herself, avenging her father and her people.

(Traduzione di Chris Owen)

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