

FRANCE PALADINS

Synopsis

A puppet theatre. An old and lame attendant arranges the hanging puppets.

As he goes away the puppets come to life and begin to speak about their strange fate of warriors: they are Astolfo, Orlando, and Ruggiero who has many doubts.

Paris. Charlemagne calls the Paladins to celebrate the birth of his last child. During the party at court, appears Angelica: unexpected, unknown and beautiful princess from Cathay. She's with Argalai, her bellicose brother.

The beautiful Angelica challenges the Paladins to a duel: who has the courage to fight against his brother Argalai and will win the duel, will get married with her, otherwise the defeated Paladin will become her slave. The young princess did not say that his brother has a magic lance.

Starting duels: Astolfo is immediately unhorsed, the same fate has Ferraù who at the ground - and in transgressing the rules of the duel - kills Argalai. Angelica is startled, cries, runs away in the Ardennes forest, pursued by some Paladins in love: among these Astolfo and Orlando who fight for the hand of the beautiful princess. They fight until Medoro, messenger from Charlemagne, arrives to say that the King recall them in Paris because war breaks out, France is attacked by the armies of Spain, Persia, Russia and the by Moors.

Astolfo takes the opportunity to save himself and returned in Paris, Orlando wanders into the woods to kill him. Angelica instead falls in love and kiss Medoro immediately. When Orlando reappears, there's only a shepherd who reveals the love blossomed between Angelica and Medoro. Orlando goes mad and loses his sense.

Meanwhile Bradamante, a woman Paladin, and Marfisa, Queen of Persia, are fighting: Ruggiero, a warrior who fights with the Moors, separates them and say to Bradamante that Charles wants her at court. The two women fall in love with Ruggiero, but they don't know Marfisa is Ruggiero's sister and both are not from the East, but they are children of a French prince who was kidnapped in tender age. But the tragic side of it is nobody (but Charlemagne) knows that there is a curse upon Ruggiero and Bradamante: as soon as they get married, all the paladins will inexorably perish.

Meanwhile, under the city walls of Paris, the battle is becoming more and more desperate: Orlando's absence, with his fury and folly, is causing death and defeat among the French troops. Charlemagne needs a voluntary for a crucial battle: going to Moon to bring back Orlando's lost sense and judgement, because – it is known – all the things got lost by men land on the Moon, including loves and regrets, and above all, Orlando's sense.

Astolfo is willing to start the quest and so he flies to the Moon. There he finds the two-headed Caronte, The guardian of the Moon and all the lost things. He gives back Orlando's sense to Astolfo and he even offers him a winged horse to come back on Earth.

In spite of that, Astolfo falls down to Earth, finds Orlando and has him drink his sense. Orlando becomes "sensible" and wise again and he hastens to the battle in Paris. Once under the walls of the city, Orlando slaughters hundreds of Spanish, Moors, Persians and Russians. He also fights against Ruggiero and he nearly butchers him, until Bradamante comes between them: it is now time for Charlemagne to unveil the truth, well aware he will save both Bradamante and Ruggiero, but also that their union will have baleful consequences.

Now all is clear and Bradamante and Ruggiero announce their engagement. Ruggiero proposes the cease of the hostilities and the beginning of a long, durable peace. They all decide to go to Charlemagne and to sign the peace in Roncesvalles, at the border between the two countries.

Paladins verify that it is not a trap. King Charles ordered Orlando to stop in front of any suspicions and to play the horn to ask for reinforcements. The overbearing Orlando goes without any doubt. Indeed, he's a little sorry that unexpected peace has taken away the fun of making war.

Just they arrived in the heart of the gorge, the Paladins discover the tragic truth: there's a million Spanish and Moor soldiers to wait for three hundred glorious knights of Charlemagne. Orlando refuses to play the horn and decided to confront the enemy. It's a massacre. All the Paladins die, the last Astolfo, Ruggiero and Orlando: they die under beautiful clouds in Roncesvalles.

The show is over. The old attendant comes back to the arrange puppets, that in a few minutes are ready for the next show. Yet those clouds, as beautiful they are...