

РИХАРД ВАГНЕР

THE RHINEGOLD & THE
VALKYRIE. THE RING OF
THE NIBLUNG, PART 1

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The Rhinegold & The Valkyrie.
The Ring of the Niblung, part 1

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The Rhinegold & The Valkyrie / The Ring of the Niblung, part 1:*

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Richard Wagner

The Rhinegold & The Valkyrie / The Ring of the Niblung, part 1

THE RHINEGOLD



CHARACTERS

GODS: WOTAN, DONNER, FROH, LOGE

NIBELUNGS: ALBERICH, MIME

GIANTS: FASOLT, FAFNER

GODDESSES: FRICKA, FREIA, ERDA

RHINE-MAIDENS: WOGLINDE, WELLGUNDE,

FLOSSHILDE

SCENES OF ACTION

I. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RHINE

II. OPEN SPACE ON A MOUNTAIN HEIGHT NEAR THE
RHINE

III. THE SUBTERRANEAN CAVERNS OF NIBELHEIM

IV. OPEN SPACE AS IN SCENE II.

FIRST SCENE



At the bottom of the Rhine

A greenish twilight, lighter above than below. The upper part is filled with undulating water, which streams respectively from right to left. Towards the bottom the waves resolve themselves into a mist which grows finer as it descends, so that a space, as high as a mans body from the ground, appears to be quite free from the water, which floats like a train of clouds over the gloomy stretch below. Steep rocky peaks jut up everywhere from the depths, and enclose the entire stage. The ground is a wild confusion of jagged rocks, no part of it being quite level, and on every side deeper fisures are indicated by a still denser gloom. Woglinde circles with graceful swimming movements round the central rock.

WOGLINDE

Weia! Waga!
Roll, O ye billows,
Rock ye our cradle!

Wagala weia!

Wallala, weiala, weia!

WELLGUNDE [*From above.*

Woglinde, watchest alone?

WUGLINDE

If Wellgunde came we were two.

WELLGUNDE [*Dives down to the rock.*

How keepest thou watch?

WUGLINDE [*Swimming off, eludes her.*

Wary of thee.

[*They playfully tease and chase one another.*

FLOSSHILDE [*From above.*

Heiaha weia!

Ho! ye wild sisters!

WELLGUNDE

Flosshilde, swim!

Woglinde flies:

Help me to hinder her flying.

FLOSSHILDE [*Dives down between the two at play.*]

The sleeping gold

Badly ye guard;

Watch with more zeal

The slumberer's bed,

Or dear you'll pay for your sport!

[They swim asunder with merry cries. Flosshilde tries to catch first the one, then the other. They elude her, and then combine to chase her, darting like fish from rock to rock with jests and laughter. Meanwhile Alberich climbs out of a dark ravine on to a rock. He pauses, still surrounded by darkness, and watches the frolic of the Rhine-Maidens with increasing pleasure.]

ALBERICH

Hey, hey! ye nixies!

Ye are a lovely,

Lovable folk!

From Nibelheim's night
Fain would I come,
Would ye be kind to me.

[The maidens, as soon as they hear Alberich's voice, stop playing.]

WOGLINDE

Hei! Who is there?

WELLGUNDE

A voice! It grows dark!

FLOSSHILDE

Who listens below?

[They dive down and see the Nibelung.]

WOGLINDE AND WELLGUNDE

Fie! the loathsome one!



The frolic of the Rhine-Maidens.

FLOSSHILDE [*Swimming up quickly.*]

Look to the gold!
Father warned us
Of such a foe.

*[Both the others follow her, and all three gather quickly
round the central rock.]*

ALBERICH

You above there!

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

What wouldst thou below there?

ALBERICH

Do I spoil sport
By standing and gazing here?
Dived ye but deeper,
Fain the Niblung
Would join in your frolic and play.

WELLGUNDE

He wishes to join us?

WUOLINDE

Is he in jest?

ALBERICH

Ye gleam above me
So glad and fair!
If one would only
Glide down, how close in my arms
Fondly clasped she would be!

FLOSSHILDE

I laugh at my fears:
The foe is in love.

WELLGUNDE

The amorous imp!

WUOLINDE

Let us approach him.

[She sinks down to the top of the rock, whose base Alberich has reached.]

ALBERICH

Lo! one of them comes!

WOGLINDE

Climb up to me here!

ALBERICH

[Climbs with gnome-like agility, though with repeated checks, to the summit of the rock. Irritably.]

Horrid rock,
So slippery, slimy!
I slide and slip!
My hands and feet vainly
Attempt to hold on
To the slithery surface!
Vapour damp
Fills up my nostrils—
Accursed sneezing!

[He has got near Woglinde.]

WOGLINDE [*Laughing.*]

Sneezing tells
That my suitor comes!

ALBERICH

Be thou my love!
Adorable child!

[*He tries to embrace her.*]

WOGLINDE [*Escaping from him.*]

Here thou must woo,
If woo me thou wilt!

[*She swims up to another rock.*]

ALBERICH [*Scratching his head.*]

Alas! not yet caught?
Come but closer!
Hard I found
What so lightly thou didst.

WOGLINDE [*Swims to a third rock lower down.*]

Deeper descend:
Thou'lt certainly seize me!

ALBERICH [*Clambers down quickly.*]

Down there it is better!

WOGLINDE [*Darts upwards to a higher rock at the side.*]

But better still higher!

WELLGUNDE AND FLOSSHILDE [*Laughing*]

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ALBERICH

How capture this coy,
Elusive fish?
Wait for me, false one!

[*He tries to climb after her in haste.*]

WELLGUNDE

[Has sunk down to a lower rock on the other side.

Heia! my friend there!
Dost thou not hear?

ALBERICH *[Turning round.*

What? Didst thou call?

WELLGUNDE

Be counselled by me:
Forsake Woglinde,
Climb up to me now!

ALBERICH

[Climbs hastily over the river-bottom towards Wellgunde.

Thou art more comely
Far than that coy one;
Her sheen is duller,
Her skin too smooth.
But thou must deeper
Dive to delight me!

WELLGUNDE

[Sinking down till she is a little nearer him.]

Well, now am I near?

ALBERICH

Not near enough.
Thine arms around me
Tenderly throw,
That I may fondle
Thy neck with my fingers,
And closely may cling
To thy bosom with love and with longing.

WELLGUNDE

Art thou in love?
For love art thou pining?
Approach and show me
Thy face and thy form.
Fie! thou horrible
Hunchback, for shame!
Swarthy, horny-skinned
Rogue of a dwarf!
Find thou a sweetheart
Fonder than I!

ALBERICH

[Tries to detain her by force

I may not be fair,
But fast I can hold!

WELLGUNDE

[Swimming up quickly to the middle rock.

Hold firm, or I will escape!

WOGLINDE AND FLOSSHILDE *[Laughing.*

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ALBERICH *[Angrily calling after Wellgunde.*

Fickle maid!
Bony, cold-blooded fish!
Fair if I seem not,
Pretty and playful,
Smooth and sleek—
Hei! if I am so loathsome
Give thy love to the eels!

FLOSSHILDE

What ails thee, dwarf?
Daunted so soon?
Though two have been wooed,
Still a third waits thee,
Solace sweet
Fain at a word to grant!

ALBERICH

Soothing song
Sounds in my ear!
'Twas well I found
Three and not one!
The chance is I charm one of many,
Whilst, single, no one would choose me!
Hither come gliding,
And I will believe!

FLOSSHILDE [*Dives down to Alberich.*]

How senseless are ye,
Silly sisters,
Not to see he is fair!

ALBERICH [*Hastening towards her.*]

I well may deem them
Dull and ill-favoured,
Seeing how lovely thou art!

FLOSSHILDE

Sing on! Thy song,
So soft and sweet,
Entrancing sounds in my ear!

ALBERICH [*Caressing her with confidence.*]

My heart burns
And flutters and fails,
Flattered by praises so sweet!

FLOSSHILDE [*Gently resisting him.*]

Thy grace and beauty
Make glad my eye;
And thy smile refreshes
My soul like balm

[She draws him tenderly towards her.]

Dearest of men!

ALBERICH

Sweetest of maids!

FLOSSHILDE

Wert thou but mine!

ALBERICH

Wert mine for ever!

FLOSSHILDE [*Ardently.*

To be pierced by thy glance,
To be pricked by thy beard,
To see and to feel them for aye!
Might thy hair hard as bristles
Flow ever more
Enraptured Flosshilde wreathing!
And thy form like a frog's,
And the croak of thy voice—
O could I, dumb with amaze,

Marvel forever on these!

WOGLINDE and WELLGUNDE

[Dive down close to them and laugh.]

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ALBERICH *[Starting in alarm.]*

Wretches, dare ye thus scoff?

FLOSSHILDE *[Suddenly darting away from him.]*

A suitable end to the song.

[She swims up quickly with her sisters.]

WOGLINDE AND WELLGUNDE *[Laughing.]*

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ALBERICH *[In a wailing voice.]*

Woe's me! Ah, woe's me!

Alas! Alas!

The third one, so dear,

Does she too betray?
O sly and shameful
Worthless and dissolute wantons!
Live ye on lies
Alone, O ye false nixie brood?

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Wallala! Wallala!
Lalalelai leialalei!
Heia! Heia! ha! ha!
Shame on thee goblin,
Scolding down yonder!
Cease, and do as we bid thee!
Faint-hearted wooer,
Why couldst not hold
The maid, when won, more fast?
True are we,
And troth we keep
With lovers when once caught.
Grasp then and hold;
Away with all fear!
In the waves we scarce can escape.
Wallala!
Lalaleia! Leialalei!
Heia! Heia! Ha hei!

[They swim apart hither and thither, now lower, now

higher, to provoke Alberich to give chase.



The Rhine-Maidens teasing Alberich.

ALBERICH

Fiercely within me
Passionate fires
Consume and flame!
Love and fury,
Wild, resistless,
Lash me to frenzy!
So laugh and lie your fill—
One of you I desire,
And one must yield to my yearning!

[He starts chasing them with desperate energy. He climbs with terrible agility, and, springing from rock to rock, tries to catch one maiden after another. They keep eluding him with mocking laughter. He stumbles and falls into the abyss, and clammers up quickly again and resumes the chase. They sink down a little towards him; he almost reaches them, but falls, back again, and once more tries to catch them. At last he pauses out of breath, and, foaming with rage, stretches his clenched fist up towards the maidens.]

ALBERICH

If but this fist had one!

[He remains speechless with rage, gazing upwards, when he is suddenly attracted and arrested by the following spectacle. Through the water a light of continually increasing

brilliance breaks from above, and, at a point near the top of the middle rock, kindles to a radiant and dazzling golden gleam. A magical light streams from this through the waves.

WOGLINDE

Look, sisters!
The wakener laughs to the deep.

WELLGUNDE

Through the billows green
The blissful slumberer greets.

FLOSSHILDE

He kisses the eyelid,
Making it open;
Bathed in splendour,
Behold it smiles,
Sending, like a star,
Gleaming light through the waves.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

[Swimming gracefully round the cliff together.]

Heia jaheia!

Heia jaheia!
Wallala la la la leia jahei!
Rhinegold!
Rhinegold!
Radiant delight,
How glorious and glad thy smile,
Over the water
Shooting effulgence afar!
Heia jahei!
Heia jaheia!
Waken, friend!
Wake in joy!
That we may please thee,
Merry we'll play,
Waters afire,
Billows aflame,
As, blissfully bathing,
Dancing and singing,
We dive and encircle thy bed!
Rhinegold!
Rhinegold!
Heia jaheia!
Heia jaheia!
Wallala la la la heia jahei!

[With increasing mirthful abandonment the maidens swim round the rock. The water is filled with a glimmering golden light.]

ALBERICH

[Whose eyes, strongly attracted by the radiance, stare fixedly at the gold.]

What is it, sleek ones,
That yonder gleams and shines?

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Where dost thou hail from, O churl,
Of the Rhinegold not to have heard?

WELLGUNDE

Knows not the elf
Of the famed eye golden
That wakes and sleeps in turn?

WONGLINDE

Of the star resplendent
Down in the depths
Whose light illumines the waves?

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS [*Together*]

See how gaily
We glide in the glory!
Wouldst thou also
Be bathed in brightness,
Come, float and frolic with us!
Wallala la la leia lalei!
Wallala la la leia jahei!

ALBERICH

Has the gold no value
Apart from your games?
It were not worth getting!

WONGLINDE

He would not scoff,
Scorning the gold,
Did he but know all its wonders!

WELLGUNDE

That man surely
The earth would inherit
Who from the Rhinegold
Fashioned the ring
Which measureless power imparts.

FLOSSHILDE

Our father told us,
And strictly bade us
Guard with prudence
The precious hoard
That no thief from the water might steal it.
Be still, then, chattering fools.

WELLGUNDE

O prudent sister,
Why chide and reproach?
Hast thou not heard
That one alone
Can hope to fashion the gold?

WOGLINDE

Only the man
Who love defies,
Only the man
From love who flies
Can learn and master the magic
That makes a ring of the gold.

WELLGUNDE

Secure then are we
And free from care:
For love is part of living;
No one would live without loving.

WONGLINDE

And least of all he,
The languishing elf,
With pangs of love
Pining away.

FLOSSHILDE

I fear him not
Who should surely know,
By his savage lust
Almost inflamed.



"Mock away! Mock away!
The Niblung makes for your toy!"

WELLGUNDE

A brimstone brand
In the surging waves,
In lovesick frenzy
Hissing loud.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS [*Together.*

Wallala! Wallaleia la la!
Join in our laughter,
Lovable elf!
In the golden glory
How gallant thy sheen!
O come, lovely one, laugh as we laugh!
Heia jaheia!
Heia jaheia!
Wallala la la la leia jahei!

[They swim, laughing, backwards and forwards in the light.

ALBERICH

[His eyes fixed on the gold, has listened attentively to the sisters rapid chatter.

Could I truly
The whole earth inherit through thee?
If love be beyond me

My cunning could compass delight?

[In a terribly loud voice.

Mock away! Mock!
The Niblung makes for your toy!

[Raging he springs on to the middle rock, and clammers to the top. The maidens scatter, screaming, and swim upwards on different sides.

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Heia! Heia!heia jahei!
Save yourselves!
The elf is distraught!
Swirling waters splash
At every leap:
The creature's crazy with love!
Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ALBERICH

[Reaching the top with a last spring.

Still undismayed?
Go, wanton in darkness.
Water-born brood!

[He stretches his hand out towards the gold.

My hand quenches your light;
I tear the gold from the rock;
Forged be the ring for revenge!
Bear witness, ye floods—
I forswear love and curse it!

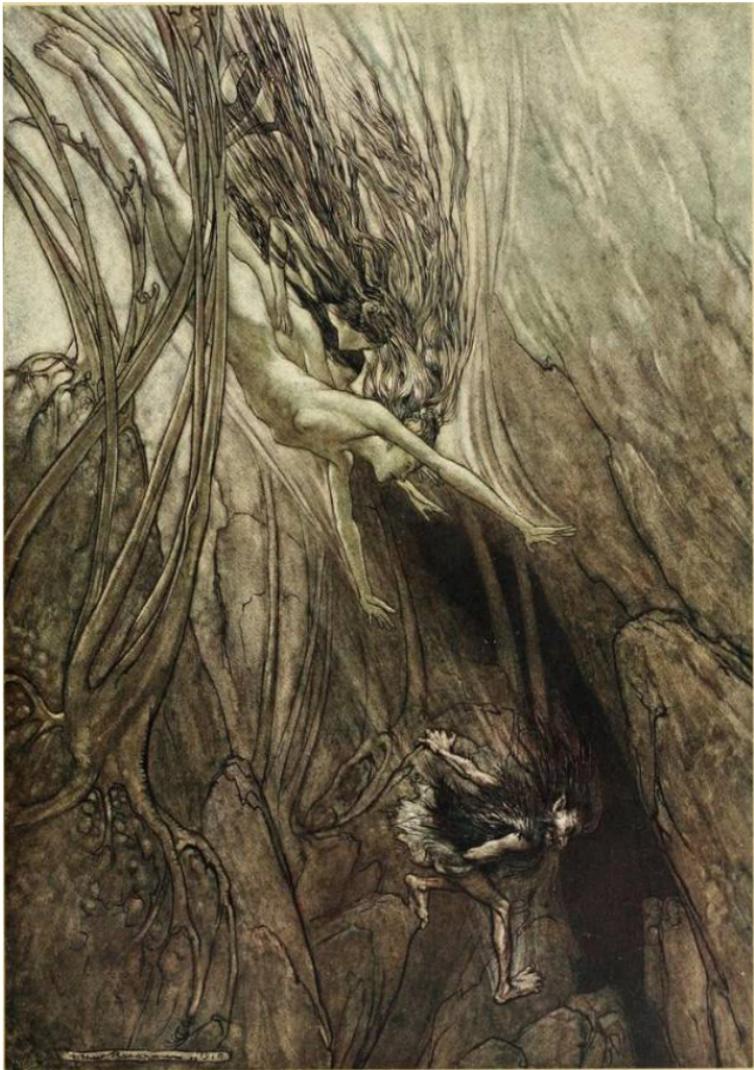
[He tears the gold from the rock with terrific force, and immediately plunges with it into the depths, where he quickly disappears. Sudden darkness envelops the scene. The maidens dive down after the robber.]

THE THREE RHINE-MAIDENS

Seize the despoiler!
Rescue the gold!
Help us! Help us!
Woe! Woe!

[The water sinks with them. From the lowest depth Alberich's shrill, mocking laughter rings up. The rocks are hidden by impenetrable darkness. The whole stage from top to bottom is filled with black waves, which for some time appear to sink even lower.]





"Seize the despoiler!
Rescue the gold!
Help us! Help us!"

Woe! Woe!"

SECOND SCENE



The waves have gradually changed into clouds which, becoming lighter and lighter by degrees, finally disperse in a fine mist. As the mist vanishes upwards in light little clouds an open space on a mountain height becomes visible in the dim light which precedes dawn. At one side Wotan with Fricka beside him both asleep, lie on a flowery bank. The dawning day illumines with increasing brightness a castle with glittering pinnacles which stands on the summit of a cliff in the background. Between this and the foreground a deep valley is visible through which the Rhine flows.

FRICKA

[Awakes; her gaze falls on the castle, which has become plainly visible; alarmed.]

Wotan! My lord! Awaken!

WOTAN *[Continuing to dream.]*

The happy hall of delight

Is guarded by gate and door:
Manhood's honour,
Power for aye,
Rise to my lasting renown!

FRICKA [*Shakes him.*]

Up from deceitful
Bliss of a dream!
My husband, wake and consider!

WOTAN

[Awakes and raises himself slightly. His glance is immediately arrested by the view of the castle.]

The walls everlasting are built!
On yonder summit
The Gods' abode
Proudly rears
Its radiant strength!
As I nursed it in dream
And desired it to be,
Strong it stands,
Fair to behold,
Brave and beautiful pile!

FRICKA

While thou rejoicest,
Joyless am I.
Thou hast thy hall;
My heart fears for Freia.
Heedless one, hast thou forgotten
The price that was to be paid?
The work is finished,
And forfeit the pledge:
Hast thou then no care for the cost?

WOTAN

My bargain well I remember
With them who built the abode.
'Twas a pact tamed them,
The obstinate race,
So that this hallowed
Hall they have built me.
It stands—the strong ones' doing:—
Fret not thou, counting the cost.

FRICKA

O laughing, insolent lightness!
Mirth how cruel and callous!
Had I but known of thy pact,
The trick had never been played;

But far from your counsels
Ye men kept the women,
That, deaf to us and in peace,
Alone ye might deal with the giants.
So without shame
Ye promised them Freia,
Freia, my beautiful sister,
Proud of playing the thief.
What remains holy
Or precious to men
Once grown greedy of might?

WOTAN [*Calmly.*

From such greed
Was Fricka then free
Herself when the castle she craved?

FRICKA

I was forced to ponder some means
To keep my husband faithful,
True to me when his fancy
Tempted him far from his home.
Halls high and stately,
Decked to delight thee,
Were to constrain thee
To peaceful repose.

But thou hadst the work designed
Intent on war alone;
It was to add
More to thy might still,
To stir up to tumult still fiercer
That built were the towering walls

WOTAN

Wouldst thou, O Wife!
In the castle confine me,
To me, the god, must be granted,
Faithful at home,
The right to wage war
And conquer the world from without.
Ranging and changing
All men love:
That sport at least thou must leave me.

FRICKA

Cold, hard-hearted,
Merciless man!
For the idle baubles,
Empire and sway,
Thou stakest in insolent scorn
Love and a woman's worth!

WOTAN

When I went wooing, to win thee
I staked ungrudging,
Gladly one of my eyes:
What folly now then to scold!
Women I honour
Beyond thy desire!
I will not abandon
Frei, the fair:
Such never was my intent.

FRICKA

[Anxiously looking towards a point not on the stage.

Then succour her now:
Defenceless, in fear,
Hither she hastens for help!

FREIA

[Enters as if flying from someone.

Help me, sister!
Shield me, o brother!
From yonder mountain
Menaces Fasolt:
He comes to bear me off captive.

WOTAN

Let him come!
Sawest thou Loge?

FRICKA

To this tricky deceiver
O why wilt thou trust?
He always snares thee anew,
Though from his snares thou hast suffered.

WOTAN

I ask for no aid
Where simple truth suffices;
But to turn the spite
Of foes to profit,
Craft and cunning alone
Can teach, as by Loge employed.
He whose advice I obeyed
Has promised ransom for Freia:
On him my faith I have fixed.

FRICKA

And art left in the lurch.
The giants come.
Lo! hither they stride:
Where lingers now thine ally?

FREIA

Where tarry ye, my brothers,
When help ye should bring me,
Weak and bartered away by my kin?
O help me, Donner!
Hither! Hither!
Rescue Freia, my Froh!

FRICKA

Now the knaves who plotted and tricked thee
Abandon thee in thy need.

*[Fasolt and Fafner, both of gigantic stature, enter, armed
with stout clubs.]*

FASOLT

Soft sleep
Sealed thine eyes

While we, both sleepless,
Built the castle walls:
Working hard
Wearied not,
Heaping, heaving
Heavy stones.
Tower steep,
Door and gate
Keep and guard
Thy goodly castle halls.

[Pointing to the castle.]

There stands
What we builded,
Shining fair
Beneath the sun.
Enter in
And pay the price!

WOTAN

Name, Workers, your wage.
What payment will appease you?

FASOLT

We made the terms
That seemed to us meet.
Hast thou forgot so soon?
Freia, the fair one,
Holda, the free one—
The bargain is
We bear her away.

WOTAN [*Quickly*].

Ye must be mad
To moot such a thing!
Ask some other wage;
Freia I will not grant.

FASOLT

Stands for a space speechless with angry surprise.

What is this? Ha!
Wouldest deceive?—
Go back on thy bond?
What thy spear wards
Are they but sport,
All the runes of solemn bargain?

FAFNER

O trusty brother!
Fool, dost now see the trick?

FASOLT

Son of light,
Light, unstable,
Hearken! Have a care!
In treaties keep thou troth!
What thou art
Thou art only by treaties,
For, built on bonds,
There are bounds to thy might.
Though cunning thou,
More clever than we:
Though we once freemen,
Are pledged to peace,
Cursèd be all thy wisdom;—
Peaceful promises perish!—
Wilt thou not open,
Honest and frank
Stand fast by a bargain once fixed.
A stupid giant
Tells thee this:
O wise one, take it from him!



Freia, the fair one

WOTAN

How sly to judge us serious
When plainly we were but jesting!
The beautiful Goddess
Light and bright—
For churls what charm could she have?

FASOLT

Jeerest thou?
Ha! how unjust!
Ye who by beauty rule,
Proud and radiant race!
How foolish, striving
For towers of stone,
Woman's love to pledge—
Price of walls and of halls!
We dolts, despising ease,
Sweating with toil-hardened hands,
Have worked, that a woman
With gentle delight
In our midst might sojourn
And ye call the pact a jest?

FAFNER

Cease thy childish chatter;
No gain look we to get.
Freia's charms

Mean little;
But it means much,
If from the Gods we remove her.
Golden apples
Ripen within her garden;
She alone
Grows the apples and tends them.
The goodly fruit
Gives to her kinsfolk,
Who eat thereof,
Youth everlasting.
Sick and pale,
Their beauty would perish,
Old and weak,
Wasting away,
Were not Freia among them.

[Roughly.

From their midst, therefore, Freia must forth!

WOTAN [*Aside.*

Loge lingers long!

FASOLT

We wait for thy word!

WOTAN

Ask some other wage!

FASOLT

No other: Freia alone!

FAFNER

Thou there, follow us!

[Fafner and Fasolt press towards Freia. Froh and Donner enter in haste.]

FREIA

Help! Help from the harsh ones!

FROH *[Clasping Freia in his arms.]*

To me, Freia!

[To Fafner.

Back, overbold one!
Froh shields the fair one!

DONNER [*Confronting the giants.*

Fasolt and Fafner,
Have ye not felt
With what weight my hammer falls?

FAFNER

What means thy threat?

FASOLT

What wouldst thou here?
No strife we desire;
We want but our due reward.

DONNER

Oft I've doled out
Giants their due:
Come, your reward is here

Waiting, full measure and more!

[He swings his hammer.

WOTAN

[Stretching out his spear between the combatants.

Hold, thou fierce one!
Nothing by force!
All bonds and treaties
My spear protects;
Spare then thy hammer's haft!

FREIA

Woe's me! Woe's me!
Wotan forsakes me!

FRICKA

Can such be thy thought,
Merciless man?

WOTAN

[Turns away and sees Loge coming.

There comes Loge!
Hot is thy haste
Smoothly to settle
Thy sorry, badly-made bargain!

LOGE

[Has come up out of the valley in the background.]

What is this bargain
That I am blamed for?—
The one with the giants
That thou thyself didst decide?
O'er hill and o'er hollow
Drives me my whim;
House and hearth
I do not crave.
Donner and Froh,
They dream but of roof and room:
Wedding, must have
A home in which to dwell,
A stately hall,
A fortress fast.
It was such Wotan wished.
Hall and house,
Castle, court,
The blissful abode
Now stands complete and strong.
I proved the lordly

Pile myself;
In fear of flaws,
Scanning it close.
Fasolt and Fafner
Faithful I found;
Firm-bedded is each stone.
I was not slothful
Like many here:
Who calls me sluggard, he lies!

WOTAN

Cunningly
Thou wouldst escape!
Warned be, and wisely
Turn from attempts to deceive.
Of all the Gods
I alone stood by thee
As thy friend,
In the gang that trusted thee not.
Now speak, and to the point!
For when the builders at first
As wage Freia demanded,
I gave way only,
Trusting thy word
When thou didst solemnly promise
To ransom the noble pledge.

LOGE

Perplexed to puzzle,
Plans to ponder
For its redeeming—
That promise I gave;
But to discover
What cannot be,
What none can do,
No man can possibly promise.

FRICKA

See the treacherous
Rogue thou didst trust!

FROH

Named art Loge,
But liar I call thee!

DONNER

Accursèd flame,
I will quench thy fire!

LOGE

From their shame to shelter,
Foolish folk flout me.

[Donner threatens to strike Loge.]

WOTAN

[Stepping between them.]

Forbear and let him alone!
Ye wot not Loge's wiles.
His advice,
Given slowly, gains
Both in weight and in worth.

FAFNER

Do not dally;
Promptly pay!

FASOLT

Long waits our reward.

WOTAN

[Turns sternly to Loge.

Speak up surly one!
Fail me not!
How far hast thou ranged and roamed?

LOGE

Still with reproach
Is Loge paid!
Concerned but for thee,
Thorough and swift,
I searched and ransacked
To the ends of the earth
To find a ransom for Freia
Fair to the giants and just.
In vain the search,
Convincing at last
That the world contains
Nothing so sweet
That a man will take it instead
Of woman's love and delight.

[All seem surprised and taken aback.

Where life moves and has being,
In water, earth and air

I questioned,
Asking of all things,
Where weak still is strength,
And germs only stirring,
What men thought dear—
And stronger deemed—
Than woman's love and delight.
But where life moves and has being
My questions met
But with laughter and scorn.
In water, earth and air
Woman and love
Will none forego.

[Varied gestures of amazement.]

One man, one only,
I met who, renouncing love,
Prized ruddy gold
Above any woman's grace.
The Rhine's pure-gleaming children
Told me of their sorrow.
The Nibelung,
Night-Alberich,
Wooed for the favour
Of the swimmers in vain,
And vengeance took,
Stealing the Rhinegold they guard.

He thinks it now
A thing beyond price,
Greater than woman's grace.
For their glittering toy
Thus torn from the deep
The sorrowful maids lamented.
They pray, Wotan,
Pleading to thee,
That thy wrath may fall on the robber
The gold too
They would have thee grant them
To guard in the water for ever.
Loge promised
The maidens to tell thee,
And, keeping faith, he has told.



"The Rhine's pure-gleaming children
Told me of their sorrow"

WOTAN

Dull thou must be
Or downright knavish!
In parlous plight myself,
What help have I for others?

FASOLT

[Who has been listening attentively, to Fafner.

The Niblung has much annoyed us;
I greatly grudge him this Rhinegold;
But such his craft and cunning,
He has never been caught.

FAFNER

Other malice
Ponders the Niblung;
Gains he might from gold
Listen, Loge!
Tell us the truth.
What wondrous gift has the gold,
That the dwarf desires it so?

LOGE

A plaything,
In the waves providing

Children with laughter and sport,
It gives, when to golden
Ring it is rounded,
Power and might unmatched;
It wins its owner the world.

WOTAN [*Thoughtfully.*

Rumours I have heard
Of the Rhinegold;
Runes of riches
Hide in its ruddy glow;
Pelf and power
Are by the ring bestowed.

FRICKA [*Softly to Loge.*

Could this gaud,
This gleaming trinket
Forged from the gold,
Be worn by a woman too?

LOGE

The wife who wore
That glittering charm
Never would lose

Her husband's love—
That charm which dwarfs are welding,
Working in thrall to the ring.

FRICKA [*Coaxingly to Wotan.*]

O could but my husband
Come by the ring!

WOTAN

[*As if falling more and more under the influence of a spell.*]

Methinks it were wisdom,
Won I the ring to my service.
But say, Loge,
How shall I learn
To forge and fashion it true?

LOGE

A magic rune
Can round the golden ring.
No one knows it,
Yet plain the spell to him
Who happy love forswears.

[Wotan turns away in annoyance.

That suits thee not;
Thou art too late too.
Alberich did not delay;
Fearless he mastered
The potent spell,

[Harshly.

And wrought aright was the ring.

DONNER [*To Wotan.*

We should all be
Under the dwarf,
Were not the ring from him wrested.

WOTAN

The ring I must capture!

FROH

Lightly now,
Without cursing love it were won.

LOGE [*Harshly.*

Just so:

Without guile, as in children's games!

WOTAN

Then tell us how.

LOGE

By theft!

What a thief stole

Steal thou from the thief;

How better could object be won?

But with baleful arms

Battles Alberich.

Wary, wise

Must be thy scheming,

If the thief thou wouldst confound,

[With warmth.

And restore the ruddy

And golden toy,

The Rhinegold, to the maidens.
For this they pray and implore.

WOTAN

The river-maidens?
What profit were mine?

FRICKA

Of that billow-born brood
Bring me no tidings,
For they have wooed
To my woe
Full many a man to their caves.

[Wotan stands silent, struggling with himself. The other Gods gaze at him in mute suspense. Fafner, meanwhile, has been consulting aside with Fasolt.]

FAFNER *[To Fasolt]*

Worth far more than Freia
Were the glittering gold.
Eternal youth, too, were his
Who could use the charm in its quest.

[Fasolt's gestures indicate that he is being convinced against his will. Fafner and Fasolt approach Wotan again.]

FAFNER

Hear, Wotan,
Our word while we wait;
Freia we will restore you,
And will take
Paltrier payment:
The Niblung's red-gleaming gold
Will guerdon us giants rude.

WOTAN

Ye must be mad!
With what I possess not
How can I, shameless ones, pay you?

FAFNER

Hard labour
Went to those walls;
How easy
With fraud-aided force
(What our malice never achieved)
The Niblung to break and bind!



Fasolt suddenly seizes Freia and drags her to one side with Fafner

WOTAN [*More quickly.*

Why should I make
War on the Niblung?—
Fight, your foe to confound?
Insolent
And greedily grasping
Dolts you grow through my debt!

FASOLT

*[Suddenly seizes Freia and drags her to one side with
Fafner.*

Maiden, come!
We claim thee ours!
As pledge thou shalt be held
Till the ransom is paid.

FREIA *[Screaming.*

Woe's me! Woe's me! Woe!

FAFNER

From your midst
We bear her forth!
Till evening—mark it well!—
As a pledge she is ours.
We will return then.

But when we come,
If the Rhinegold be not ready,
The Rhinegold bright and red—

FASOLT

The respite is ended,
Freia is forfeit
And bides among us for aye!

FREIA

Sister! Brothers!
Save me! Help!

[The giants hasten off, dragging Freia with them.]

FROH

Up! Follow fast!

DONNER

Fall now the heavens!

[They look inquiringly at Wotan.]

FREIA [*In the distance.*]

Save me! Help!

LOGE [*Looking after the giants.*]

Downward over stock and stone
Striding they go;
Through the ford across the Rhine
Wade now the robbers.
Sad at heart
Hangs Freia,
Thrown rudely over rough shoulders!
Heia! hei!
The louts, how they lumber along!
Through the Rhine valley they reel.
Not till Riesenheim's march
Is reached will they rest!

[He turns to the Gods.

How darkly Wotan doth dream!
What ails the high, happy Gods?

[*A pale mist, gradually increasing in density, fills the stage. Seen through it the Gods look more and more wan*

and aged. All stand in dismay and apprehension regarding Wotan, whose eyes are fixed broodingly on the ground.

LOGE

Does a mist mock me?
Tricks me a dream?
Dismayed and wan,
How swiftly ye fade!
Lo! the bloom forsakes your cheeks,
And quenched is the light of your eyes!
Courage, Froh!
Day's but begun!
From thy hand, Donner,
The hammer is falling!
And why frets Fricka?
Sees she with sorrow
That Wotan's hair, growing grey,
Has made him gloomy and old?

FRICKA

Woe's me! Woe's me!
What does it mean?



The Gods grow wan and aged at the loss of Freia.

DONNER

My hand sinks down.

FROH

My heart stands still.

LOGE

I have it: hear what ye lack!
Of Freia's fruit
Ye have not partaken to-day.
The golden apples
Within her garden
Restored you your strength and your youth,
Ate ye thereof each day.
The garden's guardian
In pledge has been given.
On the branches dries
And droops the fruit,
To drop soon and decay.
My loss is lighter,
For still did Freia,
Stingy to me,
Stint the delectable fruit.
Not half as godlike
Am I, ye high ones, as you!

[Freely, but quickly and harshly.]

But ye trusted solely
To the fruit that makes young,
As well both the giants wist.
Your life they played for,
Plotted to take;
Contrive so that they fail.
Lacking the apples,
Old and worn,
Grey and weary,
Wasting, the scoff of the world,
The Gods must pine and pass.

FRICKA [*Anxiously*]

Wotan, alas!
Unhappy man!
See what thy laughing
Lightness has brought us—
Scoff and scorn for all!

WOTAN [*Coming to a sudden resolve, starts up.*]

Up, Loge,
And follow me!
To Nibelheim hastening downward,

I go in search of the gold.

LOGE

The Rhine-daughters
Thy aid invoked:
Not vainly they hoped for thy help then?

WOTAN [*Angrily.*

Fool, be silent!
Freia, the fair one—
Freia's ransom we go for.

LOGE

Where thou wouldst go
Gladly I lead.
Shall we dive
Sheer through the depths of the Rhine?

WOTAN

Not through the Rhine.

LOGE

Then swift let us swing
Through this smoky chasm.
Together, come, creep we in!

[He goes in front and vanishes at the side through a cleft, from which, immediately afterwards, sulphurous vapour streams forth.]

WOTAN

Ye others wait
Till evening here;
The golden ransom
When got will again make us young.

[He descends after Loge into the chasm. The sulphurous vapour which rises from it spreads over the whole stage and quickly fills it with thick clouds. Those who remain behind are soon hidden.]

DONNER

Fare thee well, Wotan!

FROH

Good luck! Good luck!

FRICKA

O come back soon
To thy sorrowing wife!

[The sulphurous vapour darkens till it becomes a black cloud, which rises upwards from below. This then changes to a dark, rocky cavern which keeps rising, so that the stage seems to sink deeper and deeper into the earth.



THIRD SCENE



From various points in the distance ruddy lights gleam out. An increasing clamour, as of smiths at work, is heard on all sides. The clang of the anvils dies away. A vast subterranean chasm becomes visible which seems to open into narrow gorges on all sides. Alberich drags the screaming Mime out of a side cleft.

ALBERICH

Héhé! Héhé!
Come here! Come here!
Mischievous dwarf!
Prettily pinched
Promptly thou'lt be
Hast thou not ready,
Wrought to my wish,
The dainty thing I desire!

MIME [*Howling.*

Ohé! Ohé!

Oh! Oh!

Let me alone!

It is forged;

Heeding thy hest

I laboured hard

Till it was done!

Take but thy nails from my ear!

ALBERICH

Then why this delay

To show thy work?

MIME

I feared that something

Might still be wanting.



MIME, *howling.*

"Ohé! Ohé!

Oh! Oh!"

ALBERICH

What is there to finish?

MIME [*Embarrassed.*

Here—and there—

ALBERICH

How here and there?

Hand me the thing!

[He tries to catch hold of his ear again. In his terror Mime drops a piece of metal-work which he has been clutching convulsively. Alberich picks it up hastily and examines it with care.

Rogue, observe!

See how all wrought is

Well finished and feat,

Done as desired!

The simpleton wants

Slyly to trick me

And keep by cunning

The wonderful work,
Though all his skill
Came alone from my craft.
Thou art discovered, thief.

[He puts the Tarnhelm on his head.

The helmet fits the head;
But will the spell prosper too?

[Very softly.

"Night and darkness,
Seen of none!"

[He vanishes, and a pillar of cloud takes his place.

Brother, canst see me?

MIME [*Looks round in amaze.*

Where art thou? I see no one.

ALBERICH [*Invisible.*

Then feel me instead,

Thou lazy scamp!
Take that for thy thievish thoughts!

MIME

[Writhes under the lathes he receives, the sound of which is heard without the whip being seen.]

Ohé! Ohé!
Oh! Oh! Oh!

ALBERICH *[Invisible and laughing.]*

Ha! ha! ha!
Ha! ha! ha!
I thank thee, blockhead;
Thy work has stood the test.
Hoho! Hoho!
Nibelungs all
Bow now to Alberich!
For he is everywhere,
Waiting and watching;
Peace and rest
Are past for ever;
Ye must all serve him,
Though see him can none;
Where he cannot be spied
Look out for his coming;
None shall escape from his thralldom!

[Harshly.

Hoho! hoho!

Hearken, he nears:

The Nibelung's lord!

[The pillar of cloud disappears in the background. Alberich's scolding voice is heard more and more faintly. Mime lies huddled up in pain. Wotan and Loge come down through a cleft in the rock.

LOGE

Nibelheim here.

Through pale mists gleaming,

How bright yonder fiery sparks glimmer!

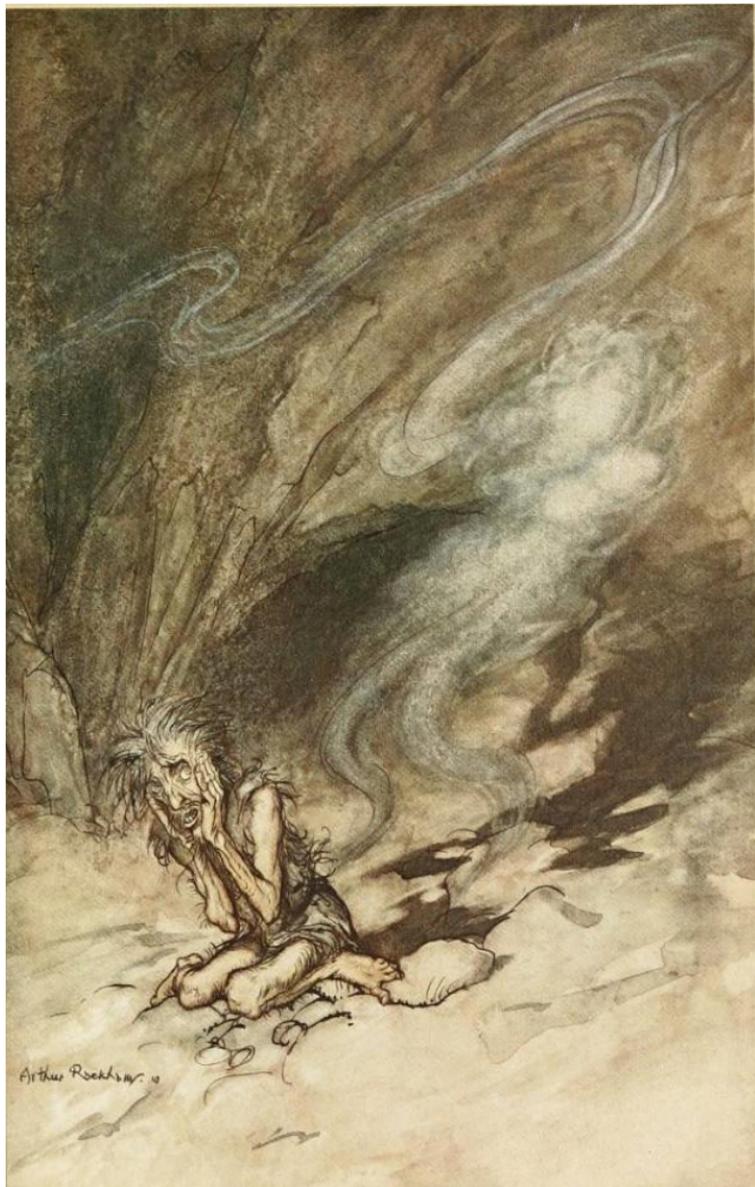
MIME

Oh! Oh! Oh!

WOTAN

I hear loud groans.

Who lies on the ground?



Mime writhes under the lashes he receives.

LOGE [*Bends over Mime.*

Why all this whimpering noise?

MIME

Ohé! Ohé!

Oh! Oh!

LOGE

Hei, Mime! Merry dwarf!

Who beats and bullies thee so?

MIME

Leave me in peace, pray.

LOGE

So much is certain,

And more still. Hark!

Help I promise thee, Mime!

[He raises him with difficulty.]

MIME

What help for me?
To do his bidding
My brother can force me,
For I am bound as his slave.

LOGE

But, Mime, how has he
Thus made thee his thrall?

MIME

By evil arts
Fashioned Alberich
A yellow ring,
From the Rhinegold forged,
At whose mighty magic
Trembling we marvel;
This spell puts in his power
The Nibelung hosts of night.
Happy we smiths
Moulded and hammered,

Making our women
Trinkets to wear—
Exquisite Nibelung toys—
And lightly laughed at our toil.
The rogue now compels us
To creep into caverns,
For him alone
To labour unthanked.
Through the golden ring
His greed can divine
Where untouched treasure
In hidden gorge gleams.
We still must keep spying,
Peering and delving:
Must melt the booty,
Which, molten, we forge
Without pause or peace,
To heap up higher his hoard.

LOGE

Just now, then, an idler
Roused him to wrath?

MIME

Poor Mime, ah!
My lot was the hardest.

I had to work,
Forging a helmet,
With strict instructions
How to contrive it;
And well I marked
The wondrous might
Bestowed by the helm
That from steel I wrought.
Hence I had gladly
Held it as mine,
And, by its virtue
Risen at last in revolt:
Perchance, yes, perchance
The master himself I had mastered,
And, he in my power, had wrested
The ring from him and used it
That he might serve me, the free man,

[Harshly

As now I must serve him, a slave!

LOGE

And wherefore, wise one,
Sped not the plan?

MIME

Ah! though the helm I fashioned,
The magic that lurks therein
I foolishly failed to divine.
He who set the task
And seized the fruits—
From him I have learnt,
Alas I but too late!
All the helmet's cunning craft.
From my sight he vanished,
But, viciously lashing,
Swung his arm through unseen.

[Howling and sobbing.]

This, fool that I am,
Was all my thanks!

[*He rubs his back. Wotan and Loge laugh.*]

LOGE [*To Wotan.*]

Confess, our task
Will call for skill.

WOTAN

Yet the foe will yield,
Use thou but fraud.

MIME [*Observes the Gods more attentively.*]

Who are you, ye strangers
That ask all these questions?

LOGE

Friends to thee,
Who from their straits
Will free all the Nibelung folk.

MIME [*Shrinking back in fear when he hears Alberich returning.*]

Hark! Have a care!
Alberich comes!

[*He runs to and fro in terror.*]

WOTAN

We'll wait for him here.

[He sits down calmly on a stone. Alberich, who has taken the Tarnhelm from his head and hung it on his girdle, is brandishing his scourge and driving before him a band of Nibelungs from the gorges below. These are laden with gold and silver treasure, which, urged on by Alberich, they pile up so as to form a large heap.]

ALBERICH

Hither! Thither!
Héhé! Hoho!
Lazy herd!
Haste and heap
Higher the hoard.
Up with thee there!
On with thee here!
Indolent dolts,
Down with the treasure!
Need ye my urging?
Here with it all!

[He suddenly perceives Wotan and Loge.]

Hey! Who are they
That thus intrude?
Mime! Come here!

Rascally rogue!
Gossiping art
With the pilgriming pair?
Off, thou idler!
Back to thy bellows and beating!

[Lashing Mime, he chases him into the crowd of
Nibelungs.

Hey! to your labour!
Get ye all hence now!
Swing ye down swift!
From the virgin gorges
Get me the gold!
This whip will follow,
Delve ye not fast!
That labour ye shirk not
Mime be surety,
Or surely the lash
Of my whip will find him;
That where no one would guess
I watch and I wander,
None knows it better than he.
Loitering still?
Lingering there?



Alberich drives in a band of Nibelungs laden with gold and silver treasure.

[He pulls the ring from his finger, kisses it and stretches it out in menace.

Fear ye and tremble,
O fallen host,
And obey
The ring's dread lord!

[Howling and shrieking, the Nibelungs, among them Mime, scatter, and creep down into the clefts in all directions.]

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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