

DIE WALKÜRE

by Richard Wagner

Characters

SIEGMUND, mortal son of Wotan (tenor)
SIEGLINDE, Siegmund's twin sister (soprano)
HUNDING, husband of Sieglinde (bass)
WOTAN, ruler of the gods (bass-baritone)
BRÜNNHILDE, a Valkyrie (soprano)
FRICKA, Wotan's wife, goddess of marriage (soprano)
GERHILDE, a Valkyrie (soprano)
ORTLINDE, a Valkyrie (soprano)
WALTRAUTE, a Valkyrie (mezzo-soprano)
SCHWERTLEITE, a Valkyrie (contralto)
HELMWIGE, a Valkyrie (soprano)
SIEGRUNE, a Valkyrie (mezzo-soprano)
GRIMGERDE, a Valkyrie (mezzo-soprano)
ROSSWEISSE, a Valkyrie (mezzo-soprano)

ACT ONE

Prelude and Scene One

(The curtain rises.)

(The inside of a dwelling place; an apartment built of wood surrounds the stem of a great ash tree standing in the center. On the right, in the foreground, is the hearth, behind it the store-room; at back, the great entrance door; on the left, at back, steps lead up to an inner room; lower down, on the same side, a table with a broad bench behind it, fixed to the wall; some wooden stools in front of it.)

(The stage remains a while empty; storm without, just subsiding.)

(Siegmund opens the entrance door from without and enters. He holds the latch in his hand and looks round the room: he appears exhausted with over-exertion: his dress and appearance show that he is in flight. Seeing no one, he closes the door behind him, walks, as with the last efforts of an exhausted man, to the hearth, and there throws himself down on a rug of bearskin.)

Siegmund

Whoe'er own this hearth,
here must I rest me.

(He sinks back and remains stretched out motionless.)

(Sieglinde enters from the inner chamber, thinking that her husband has returned. Her grave look shows surprise when she finds a stranger stretched on the hearth.)

Sieglinde

(still at the back)

A stranger here? why came he hither?

(She comes nearer.)

What man is this who lies on the hearth?

(As Siegmund does not move, she comes still nearer and looks at him.)

Worn and way-weary lies he there.

Is it but weariness? or is he sick?

(She bends over him and listens.)

I hear still his breathing,

'tis sleep that hath seized him.

Valiant is he, meseems,

though so worn he lies.

Siegmund

(suddenly raising his head)

A draught! a draught!

Sieglinde

I bring thee water.

(She quickly takes a drinking horn and goes out.

She returns with it filled and offers it to Siegmund.)

Drink to moisten thy lips I have brought thee:
Water, as thou didst wish!

(Siegmund drinks and gives the horn back. As he signs his thanks with his head, his eyes fix themselves on her with growing interest.)

Siegmund

Cooling relief the water has wrought,
my weary load now is made light:
refreshed is my heart, mine eyes are gladdened
by blissful raptures of sight.
Who is't that gladdens them so?

Sieglinde

This house and this wife
call Hunding owner;
stranger, take here thy rest:
tarry till he return!

Siegmund

Weaponless am I: a wounded guest
will thy husband make welcome.

Sieglinde

(with anxious haste)

Thy wounds now shew to me straight!
(Siegmund shakes himself and springs up quickly to a sitting position.)

Siegmund

But slight are they, unworthy a word;
still whole are my limbs and trustily knit.
If but half so well as my arm
shield and spear had availed me,
ne'er from foe had I fled;
but in splinters were spear and shield.
The horde of foe-men harried me sore,
by storm and stress spent was my force;
but quicker than I from foe-men
fled my faintness from me:
darkness had sunk on my lids;

now laughs the sunlight anew.

(Sieglinde goes to the storeroom, fills a horn with mead, and offers it to Siegmund with friendly eagerness.)

Sieglinde

A quickening draught of honeyed mead
may'st thou not scorn from me.

Siegmund

Let it first touch thy lips?

(Sieglinde sips from the horn and gives it back. Siegmund takes a long draught, while his gaze rests on her with growing warmth. Still gazing, he removes the horn from his lips and lets it sink slowly while the expression of his features expresses strong emotion. He sighs deeply and gloomily lets his eyes sink to the ground.)

(with trembling voice)

Thou hast tended an ill-fated one:
(quickly) ill-fate would I might turn from thee!
(He starts up.)

Good rest I found here and sweet repose:
onward wend I my way.
(He goes toward the back.)

Sieglinde

(turning quickly around)

Who pursues thee, that thou must fly?

Siegmund

(has stopped)

Ill-fate pursues me where'er I wander;
Ill-fate o'ertakes me where'er I linger:
to thee, wife, ne'er may it come!
forth from thy house I fly.
(He goes hastily to the door and lifts the latch.)

Sieglinde

(in impetuous self-forgetfulness, calling to him)

Then bide thou here!

Ill-fate thou canst not bring there,
where ill-fate has made its home!
(Siegmund, deeply moved, remains standing, he looks searchingly at Sieglinde, who casts down her eyes in shame and sadness. Siegmund returns.)

Siegmund

Wehwalt called I myself:
Hunding here then shall find me.

(He leans against the hearth: his eyes fix themselves with calm and steady sympathy on Sieglinde: she slowly raises her eyes again to his; they regard each other, during a long silence, with an expression of the deepest emotion.)

Scene Two

(Sieglinde starts, listens, and hears Hunding, who is leading his horse to the stable outside. She goes quickly to the door and opens it. Hunding, armed with shield and spear, enters and pauses at the threshold on perceiving Siegmund. Hunding turns to Sieglinde with a look of stern enquiry.)

Sieglinde

(answering Hunding's look)

Faint, this man lay on our hearth:
need drove him to us.

Hunding

Hast tended him?

Sieglinde

A draught I gave to him,
welcomed him as guest!

Siegmund

(firmly and quietly watching Hunding)

Rest and drink offered she:
wouldst therefore chide the woman?

Hunding

Sacred is my hearth:
sacred hold thou my house.

(He takes off his armor, and gives it to Sieglinde.)

(to Sieglinde)

Set the meal now for us!

(Sieglinde hangs the arms on the branches of the ash tree, fetches food and drink from the storeroom, and prepares supper.)

(Involuntarily she again turns her gaze on Siegmund.)

(Hunding looks keenly and with surprise at Siegmund's features, which he compares with Sieglinde's.)

(aside)

How like to the woman!

The serpent's deceit
glistens, too, in his glances.

(He hides his surprise and turns unconcernedly to Siegmund.)

Far, I trow, led thee thy way;
no horse rode he who here found rest:
what rugged paths have wearied thy feet?

Siegmund

Through brake and forest,
meadow and moor,
storm has pursued and sorest need:
I know not the way I have come.
Whither it led me, also I know not:
fain would I learn it from thee.

Hunding

(at the table, offering Siegmund a seat)

The roof and room that shelter thee,
Hunding calls his own;
wendest thou hence to the west thy way,
in homesteads rich findest thou kinsmen
who guard the honor of Hunding:
guest, now grant me a grace,
and thy name make known in return.

(Siegmund, who has taken his place at the table, gazes thoughtfully before him. Sieglinde has placed herself next to Hunding, opposite to Siegmund, on whom she fastens her eyes with visible sympathy and intentness.)

(watches them both)

Fearest thou to give me thy trust,
to the wife here tell thy secret:
see her longing in her looks!

Sieglinde

(unembarrassed and interested)

Guest, who thou art I would know.

(Siegmund looks up, gazes into her eyes and begins gravely.)

Siegmund

Friedmund may I not call me;

Frohwalt, would that I were:

but Wehwalt so must I name me.

Wolfe, I called my father:

alone was I not born;

for a sister twinned with me.

Soon lost were both mother and maid;

her who me bore, her who with me was born,

scarce have I ever beheld.

Warlike and strong was Wolfe,
 and foes full many he found.
 A-hunting oft went the son with the father;
 once, worn from the chase,
 we came to our home,
 there lay the wolf's nest waste.
 To ashes burnt the goodly abode,
 to dust the oak tree's branching stem;
 struck dead was the mother's valorous form,
 and lost in the ruins the sister's trace:
 the Neidings' cruel host
 had dealt us this deadly blow.
 Unfriended fled my father with me;
 many years the stripling lived on with Wolfe
 in woodlands wild:
 oft beset were we by our foes;
 but bravely battled the Wolf-pair still.
(turning to Hunding)
 A Wolfing tells thee the tale
 whom as "Wolfing" many well know.

Hunding

Marvels and monstrous stories
 tellest thou, daring guest,
 Wehwalt the Wolfing!
 Methinks, of the warrior pair
 I heard dark rumors spoken,
 though I nor Wolfe nor Wölfig knew.

Sieglinde

Yet further tell us, stranger:
 where roams thy father now?

Siegmund

A fiery onset on us
 then did the Neidings begin:
 but slain by the wolves fell many a hunter,
 in flight through the woods,
 chased by their game,
 like chaff were scattered the foes.
 But torn from my father was I;
 his trace I saw not though long was my seeking:
 in the woods a wolfskin found I alone;
 there, empty it lay; my father found I not.
 From the woods driven afar;
 my heart longed for men and for women.
 Amongst all folk, where'er I fared,
 if friend or wife I sought to win,
 still was I ever mistrusted:
 ill-fate lay on me.
 Whate'er right thing I wrought,

others counted it ill;
 what seemed evil to me,
 others greeted as good.
 In feuds I fell wherever I dwelt,
 wrath met me wherever I fared;
 striving for gladness, woe was my lot:
 my name then be Wehwalt ever;
 for woe still waits on my steps.
*(He turns his eyes to Sieglinde and notes her
 sympathetic look.)*

Hunding

She who cast thee fate so forlorn,
 the Norn then loved thee not:
 gladly greets thee no man
 to whom as guest thou com'st.

Sieglinde

Craven hearts only fear
 a weaponless, lonely man!
 Tell us yet, guest, how in the fight
 at last thy weapon was lost?

Siegmund

A sorrowful child cried for my help:
 her kinsmen sought to bind in wedlock
 unloved, a man with the maid.
 Help against wrong gladly I gave,
 her ruthless clan met me in fight:
 before me foe-men fell.
 Struck down and dead lay her brothers:
 her arms round their bodies she clasped,
 her grief had banished her wrath.
 From wildly streaming eyes
 she bathed the dead with her tears;
 for her brothers in battle slain
 lamented the ill -fated bride.
 Then the host of kinsmen surged like a storm;
 full of fury, vengeance they vowed on me:
 ever new foe-men rose to assail me.
 But from the place ne'er moved the maid;
 my shield and spear sheltered her long,
 till spear and shield were hewn from my hand.
 Wounded, weaponless stood I;
 death I saw take the maid:
 I fled from the furious host;
 lifeless lay she on the dead.
(to Sieglinde with a look of sorrowful fervor)
 Now know'st thou, questioning wife,
 why 'tis not Friedmund who greets thee!

(He stands up and walks to the hearth. Sieglinde looks on the ground pale and deeply moved.)

Hunding

(rises)

I know a riotous race;
not holy it holds what men revere:
'tis hated by all and by me.
For vengeance forth was I summoned,
payment to win me for kinsmen's blood:
too late came I, and now return home,
the flying outcast's trace
to find again in my house.

(He comes down.)

My house holds thee, Wolfing, today;
for the night, safe be thy rest:
with trusty weapon defend thee tomorrow;
I choose the day for the fight:
as death-debt past thou thy life.

(With anxious gestures Sieglinde steps between the two men.)

(harshly)

Hence from the hall! linger not here!
My night-draught set me within,
and wait thou there for me.

(Sieglinde stands a while undecided and thoughtful. She turns slowly and with hesitation steps toward the storeroom. There she again pauses and remains standing, lost in thought, with half-averted face. With quiet resolution she opens the cupboard, fills a drinking horn, and shakes some spices into it from a box. She then turns her eyes on Siegmund so as to meet his gaze which he keeps unceasingly fixed on her.)

(She perceives Hunding watching them and turns immediately to the bedchamber. On the steps she turns once more, looks yearningly at Siegmund and indicates with her eyes, persistently and with eloquent earnestness, a particular spot in the ash tree's stem.)

(Hunding starts and drives her with a violent gesture from the room.)

(With a last look at Siegmund, she goes into the bed chamber and closes the door after her.)

(taking his weapons from the tree stem)

With weapons man should be armed.

(Going, he turns to Siegmund.)

Thou, Wölfing, meet me tomorrow:

my word hearest thou, ward thyself well!

(He goes into the chamber; the closing of the bolt is heard from within.)

Scene Three

(Siegmund alone. It has become quite dark. The hall is only lighted by a dull fire on the hearth.)

(Siegmund sinks on a bench by the fire and broods silently for some time in great agitation.)

Siegmund

A sword, my father foretold me,
should serve me in sorest need.
Swordless I come to my foe-man's house;
as a hostage here helpless I lie:
a wife saw I, wondrous and fair,
and blissful tremors seized my heart.
The woman who holds me chained,
who with sweet enchantment wounds,
in thrall is held by the man
who mocks his weaponless foe.
Wälse! Wälse! Where is thy sword?
The trusty sword,
that in fight shall serve me,
when from my bosom outbreaks
the fury my heart now bears?

(The fire falls together. From the flame which springs up a bright light strikes on the spot in the ash stem indicated by Sieglinde's look, on which a sword hilt is now clearly seen.)

What gleameth there from out the gloom?
What a beam breaks from the ash tree's stem!
The sightless eye beholdeth a flash:
gay as laughter its light!
How the glorious gleam doth pierce my heart!
Is it the glance of the woman so fair
that there clinging behind her she left
as from the hall she passed?

(The fire now gradually sinks.)

Darkening shadow covered mine eyes,
but her glance's beam fell on me then:
bringing me warmth and day.

Blessing came with the sun's bright rays;
the gladdening splendor encircled my head,
till behind mountains it sank.

(Another faint gleam from the fire.)

Once more, ere day went hence,
 fell a gleam on me here;
 e'en the ancient ash tree's stem
 shone forth with a golden glow:
 now pales the splendor, the light dies out;
 darkening shadow gathers around me:
 deep in my breast alone
 yet glimmers a dim, dying glow.

(The fire is quite extinguished: complete darkness.)

(The door at the side opens softly. Sieglinde, in a white garment, comes out and advances lightly but quickly toward the hearth.)

Sieglinde

Sleep'st thou, guest?

Sigmund

(in joyful surprise)

Who whispers there?

Sieglinde

(with furtive haste)

It is I: list to my words!

In deepest sleep lies Hunding;
 o'ercome by a slumberous draught:
 now, in the night, save thy life!

Sigmund

(interrupting her passionately)

Thy coming is life!

Sieglinde

A weapon let me now shew thee:
 o might'st thou make it thine!
 The first of heroes then might I call thee:
 to the strongest alone was it decreed.
 O heed thou well what I now tell thee!
 The kinsmen gathered here in the hall,
 to honor the wedding of Hunding:
 the woman he chose,
 by him unwooed, miscreants gave him to wife.
 Sad I sat the while they were drinking;
 a stranger entered the hall:
 an old man clad all in grey
 low down hung his hat,
 and one of his eyes was hidden;
 at the other's flash fear came on all men
 when their eyes met its threat'ning glance:
 yet on me lingered his look with sweet yearning

regret, sorrow and solace in one.
 On me glancing, he glared on the others,
 as a sword he swung in his hands;
 which then he struck in the ash tree stem;
 to the hilt buried it lies:
 but one man might win the weapon,
 he who could draw it forth.
 Of all the heroes, though bravely they labored,
 not one the weapon could win;
 guests came hither and guests departed;
 the strongest tugged at the steel ...
 not a whit it stirred in the stem:
 there cleaves in silence the sword.
 Then knew I who he was
 who in sorrow greeted me: I know too
 who alone shall draw the sword from the stem.
 O might I today find here the friend;
 come from afar to the saddest wife:
 what e'er I have suffered in bitterest pain,
 what e'er I have borne in shame and disgrace,
 sweet were my vengeance, all were atoned for!
 Regained were then whate'er I had lost,
 and won, too, were then all I have wept for,
 found the delivering friend,
 my hero held in my arms!

Sigmund

(embracing Sieglinde with ardor)

Thee, woman most blest, holds now the friend,
 for weapon and wife decreed!

Hot in my breast burns now the oath
 that weds me ever to thee.

Whate'er I have sought in thee now I see;
 in thee all that has failed me is found!

Though thou wert shamed and woe was my lot;
 though I was scorned and dishonored wert thou:
 joyful revenge now laughs in our gladness!

Loud laugh I in fullest delight,
 holding embraced all thy glory,
 feeling the beats of thy heart!

(The great door springs open.)

Sieglinde

Ha, who went? who entered here?

(The door remains open: outside a glorious spring night; the full moon shines in, throwing its bright light on the pair, so that suddenly they can fully and clearly see each other.)

Siegmond*(in gentle ecstasy)*

No one went, but one has come:
 laughing, the spring enters the hall!
*(Siegmond draws Sieglinde to him on the couch
 with tender vehemence, so that she sits beside
 him. Increasing brilliance of the moonlight.)*
 Winter storms have waned in the moon of May,
 with tender radiance sparkles the spring;
 on balmy breezes, light and lovely,
 weaving wonders, on he floats;
 o'er wood and meadow wafts his breathing,
 widely open laughs his eye:
 in blithesome song of birds resounds his voice,
 sweetest fragrance breathes he forth:
 from his ardent blood
 bloom out all joy-giving blossoms,
 bud and shoot spring up by his might.
 With gentle weapons' charm
 he forces the world;
 winter and storm yield to his strong attack:
 assailed by his hardy strokes now
 the doors are shattered that, fast and
 defiant, once held us parted from him.
 To clasp his sister hither he flew;
 'twas love that lured the spring:
 within our bosoms deeply she hid;
 now gladly she laughs to the light.
 The bride and sister is freed by the brother;
 in ruin lies what held them apart;
 joyfully greet now the loving pair:
 made one are love and spring!

Sieglinde

Thou art the spring
 that I have so longed for
 in frosty winter's spell.
 My heart greeted thee with blissfullest dread,
 as thy look at first on me lightened.
 Strange has seemed all I e'er saw,
 friendless all that was round me;
 like far off things and unknown,
 all that ever came near.
 When thou camest all was made clear:
 as my eyes on thee fell, mine wert thou only:
 all I hid in my heart, all I am;
 bright as the day dawned on my sight,
 like echoing tones struck on my ear,
 as in winter's frosty desert
 my eyes first beheld the friend.

*(She hangs in rapture on his neck and gazes
 closely into his face.)***Siegmond***(with transport)*

O sweetest enchantment! woman most blest!

Sieglinde*(close to his eyes)*

O let me closer to thee still press me
 and see more clearly the holy light
 that forth from eyes and face doth break
 and so sweetly sways all my sense.

Siegmond

Beneath spring's moon
 shinest thou bright;
 wrapped in glory of waving hair:
 what has ensnared me now well I know
 in rapture feasteth my look.

Sieglinde*(pushes the locks back from his brow and
 gazes at him with astonishment)*

How broadly shines thy open brow,
 the wandering veins in thy temples entwine!
 I tremble with the rapture of my delight!
 A marvel wakes my remembrance:
 my eyes beheld thee of old
 whom first I saw today!

Siegmond

A love-dream wakes in me the thought:
 in fiery longing cam'st thou to me!

Sieglinde

The stream has shewn me my pictured face,
 and now again I behold it:
 as from the water it rose,
 show'st thou my image anew!

Siegmond

Thou art the image I held in my heart.

Sieglinde

(quickly turning her eyes away from him)
 O hush! again the voice is sounding:
 I heard it, methinks, once as a child—
 but no! of late I have heard it,
(excitedly)

yes, when the echo's sound
gave back my voice in the woods.

Sigmund

O loveliest song that sounds as I listen!

Sieglinde

(again gazing into his eyes)

Thine eyes' bright glow erewhile on me shone:
the stranger so glanced, greeting the wife,
as he soothed with his look her grief.
By his glance then knew him his child;
almost by his name did I call him!

(pausing)

Wehwalt art thou in truth?

Sigmund

Ne'er call me so, since thou art mine:
now won is the highest rapture!

Sieglinde

And Friedmund may'st thou gladly not
name thee?

Sigmund

Call me, thyself,
as thou wouldst I were called:
my name I take but from thee!

Sieglinde

Yet calledst thou Wolfe thy father?

Sigmund

Wolf was he to fearful foxes!
But he whose eye proudly did glisten,
as, fairest one, glistens thine own, of old,
Wälse was named.

Sieglinde

(beside herself)

Was Wälse thy father, and art thou a Wälsung?
Struck was for thee the sword in the stem,
so let me now name thee as I have loved thee:
Sigmund, so name I thee!

Sigmund

(springs up)

Sigmund call me for Sigmund am I!
Be witness this sword I hold now undaunted!
Wälse foretold me in sorest need
this should I find: I grasp it now!

Holiest love's most highest need,
love-longing's piercing passionate need,
burning bright in my breast,
drives to deeds and death:
Nothung! Nothung! so name I thee, sword.
Nothung! Nothung! conquering steel!
Shew now thy biting, severing blade!
come forth from thy scabbard to me!
*(With a powerful effort Sigmund pulls the
sword from the tree, and shows it to the
astonished and enraptured Sieglinde.)*
Sigmund, the Wälsung, seest thou here!
As bride-gift he brings thee this sword;
so wins for him the woman most blest;
from foe-man's house thus bears her away.
Far from here follow me now,
forth to the laughing house of spring:
there guards thee Nothung the sword,
when Sigmund lies captive to love!
*(He has embraced her in order to draw her
away with him.)*

Sieglinde

*(in highest excitement tears herself away
and stands before him.)*

Art thou Sigmund, standing before me?
Sieglinde am I, who for thee longed:
thine own twin sister thou winnest at once
with the sword!

(She throws herself on his breast.)

Sigmund

Bride and sister
be to thy brother:
then flourish the Wälsungs for aye!
*(He draws her to him with passionate fervor.
The curtain falls rapidly.)*

ACT TWO

Prelude and Scene One

(The curtain rises.)

*(A wild rocky place. In the background a gorge
slopes from below to a high ridge of rocks, from
which the ground again sinks to the front.)*

Wotan

*(fully armed, carrying his spear, before him
Brünnhilde, as a Valkyrie, likewise fully armed)*

Now bridle thy horse, warrior maid;
soon will blaze furious strife.
Brünnhilde, haste to the fray
to shield the Wälsung in fight!
There let Hunding go where he belongs;
in Walhall want I him not.
Then, ready and fleet, ride to the field.

Brünnhilde

*(springs shouting from rock to rock up
the height on the right)*

Hojotoho! hojotoho! heiaha! heiaha!
hojotoho! hojotoho! heiaha! heiaha!
hojotoho! hojotoho! hojotoho! hojotoho!
heiaha ha! hojoho!

*(On a high peak she stops, looks into the gorge
at the back, and calls to Wotan.)*

Take warning, Father, look to thyself;
storm and strife must thou withstand.
Fricka comes to thee here,
drawn hither in her car by her rams.
Hei! how she swings the golden scourge!
The wretched beasts are groaning with fear;
wheels furiously rattle;
fierce she fares to the fray.
In strife like this I take no delight,
sweet though to me are the fights of men;
then take now thy stand for the storm:
I leave thee with mirth to thy fate.
Hojotoho! hojotoho! heiaha! heiaha!
hojotoho! hojotoho! heiaha! heiaha!
hojotoho! hojotoho! hojotoho! hojotoho!
heiaha ha!

*(Brünnhilde disappears behind the mountain
height at the side.)*

*(Fricka, in a car drawn by two rams, comes up
from the ravine to the top of the pass, where she
stops suddenly and alights. She strides impetu-
ously toward Wotan in the foreground.)*

Wotan

(seeing Fricka approaching him; aside)
The wonted storm, the wonted strife!
But firm here must I hold me!

Fricka

*(as she approaches, moderates her pace and
places herself with dignity before Wotan)*
Where in mountain wilds thou hid'st,
to shun the eyes of thy wife,

lonely here seek I thee out,
that help to me thou may'st promise.

Wotan

What troubles Fricka freely be told.

Fricka

I have heard Hunding's cry,
for vengeance called he on me,
and wedlock's guardian gave ear to him:
I made oath to punish the deed
of this infamous pair
who rashly wrought him a wrong.

Wotan

What so evil wrought the pair
whom spring united in love?
'Twas love's enchantment enraptured them;
I rule not where love doth reign.

Fricka

Thou feign'st to be foolish and deaf,
as though thou knew'st not, in sooth,
that now for wedlock's holy oath,
profaned so rudely, I call thee!

Wotan

Unholy hold I the oath
that binds unloving hearts;
from me, prithee, do not demand
that by force I hold what withstands thy power:
for where bold spirits are moving,
I stir them ever to strife.

Fricka

Deemest thou praiseworthy wedlock's breach,
then prate thou yet farther and call it holy
that shame now blossom forth
from bond of a twin-born pair!
I shudder at heart,
my reason doth faint,
brother embraced as bride his own sister!
When was it e'er known
that brother and sister were lovers?

Wotan

Known 'tis now to thee!
Then learn thou so what unhelped may happen,
though never before it befell.
That love has enslaved them, clearly thou seest;
then words of wisdom now hear:

that sweetest bliss for thy blessing reward thee,
with loving laughter bless thou
Siegmond's and Sieglinde's bond.

Fricka

(breaking out in deep indignation)

Is all, then, at end with the glory of godhood
since thou begatt'st the riotous Wälsungs?
I now speak it; pierced is thy thought?
Nought worth is to thee the race of eternal!
Away thou castest what once thou didst honor;
thou breakest the bonds
thou thyself hast ordained,
loosest laughing all heaven's hold
that in wanton freedom may flourish
this insolent twin-born pair,
of thy falseness the unholy fruit.
O why wail I o'er wedlock and vows
which thyself thou first hast profaned.
The truest wife thou still hast betrayed;
never a deep and never a height
but there turned thirsting ever thy looks,
as thy changeful humor allured thee,
and stung my heart with thy scorn.
Saddened in spirit, must I behold thee
fare to the fight with the graceless maidens,
whom lawless love hath given to thee:
for thy wife still fearest thou so,
that the Valkyries' band
and Brünnhild' herself,
thine own wish's bride,
to the goddess as handmaids thou gav'st.
But now, when unwonted names
have ensnared thee,
as "Wälse" wolfish in woods
thou hast wandered;
now that to deepest disgrace thou hast fallen,
to foster mortals begot of thy falseness:
shamed by whelps of a wolf thou
fling'st at thy feet, too, thy wife!
Then finish thy work! Fill now the cup!
The betrayed one trample beneath thee!

Wotan

(quietly)

Nought learnedst thou
when I would teach thee
what never canst thou discern,
till day has dawned on the deed.
Wonted things only canst thou conceive,

but what ne'er yet befell,
thereon broodeth my thought.
This thing hear thou! Needed is one
who, free from help of the godhead,
fights free from the godhead's control.
So alone were he meet for the deed
which, tho' the need of our godhood,
to achieve is denied to a god.

Fricka

With darksome meanings
wouldst thou mislead me:
was aught of worth to heroes e'er granted
which to their gods themselves was denied,
by whose grace alone they may work?

Wotan

Their own spirit's freedom count'st
thou for nought?

Fricka

Who breathed their souls into men?
Who lightened their purblind eyes?
Behind thy shield bold is their mien,
spurred on by thee they strive to arise:
thou stirr'st them alone whom to me, thy wife,
thou dost laud.
With new deceit wilt thou now delude me?
by new devices wouldst thou escape me?
but not this Wälsung from me shalt thou win;
in him find I but thee,
for through thee dares he alone.

Wotan

In sorest sorrow
(with emotion) he wrought for himself:
my shield sheltered him not.

Fricka

Today, then, shield him not!
Take back the sword that thou hast bestowed.

Wotan

The sword?

Fricka

Aye, the sword,
the magical, glittering sword,
that thou, god, didst give thy son!

Wotan

(violently) Siegmund has won it himself
(with tremulous voice) in his need.
(From here Wotan's whole demeanor expresses ever-increasing uneasiness and gloom.)

Fricka

(continuing vehemently)
 Thou brought'st him the need,
 and the conquering sword.
 Wouldst thou deceive me
 who day and night in thy footsteps have fared?
 For him struckest thou the sword in the stem,
 thou didst promise him the sacred blade;
 wilt thou deny, then, that thy craft alone
 had lured him where it lay hid?
(Wotan makes a wrathful gesture.)
(more and more confident, as she sees the impression she has made on Wotan)
 The gods do not battle with bondsmen,
 the free but punish transgressors.
 Tho' against thy might war have I waged:
 yet Siegmund shall fall as my slave.
(Wotan makes another vehement gesture, then appears overcome by the feeling of his powerlessness.)
 He who as bondsman bendeth before thee,
 shall he outbrave thy eternal bride?
 Shall in my shame the basest one scorn me?
 to the forward a spur, a scoff to the free!
 That can my husband not wish me,
 not so shall a goddess be shamed.

Wotan

(gloomy) What demand'st thou?

Fricka

Shield not the Walsung!

Wotan

(with muffled voice)
 His way let him go.

Fricka

But thou shelter him not,
 when to arms the avenger calls!

Wotan

I shelter him not.

Fricka

(more animatedly)
 Seek not to trick me, look in my eyes:
 the Valkyrie turn, too, from him!

Wotan

The Valkyrie free shall choose.

Fricka

Not so;
 for alone thy command she obeys:
 give order that Siegmund fall.

Wotan

(breaking out, after a violent inner struggle)
 I cannot o'erthrow him,
 he found my sword.

Fricka

Destroy then its magic,
 be shattered the steel!
 Shieldless let him be found!
(Brünnhilde's call is heard from the heights.)

Brünnhilde

Heiaha! heiaha! Hojotoho!

Fricka

There comes now thy valiant maid:
 shouting hither she fares.

Brünnhilde

Heiaha! heiaha!
 Heiohotojo hotojoha!

Wotan

I called her for Siegmund to horse!
(Brünnhilde appears with her horse on the rocky path to the right. On seeing Fricka she breaks off suddenly and, during the following, she slowly and silently leads her horse down the mountain path and hides it in a cave.)

Fricka

Thy eternal consort's holiest honor
 her shield shall guard today!
 Derided by men, deprived of our might,
 surely we gods were o'erthrown,
 were today my right, resplendent and pure,
 not avenged by thy valorous maid.

The Wälsung falls for my honor:
Doth Wotan now pledge me his oath?

Wotan

(throwing himself onto a rocky seat in deep dejection)

Take the oath!

(Fricka strides toward the back: there she meets Brünnhilde and pauses a moment before her.)

Fricka

Warfather waits for thee:

let him now tell thee how the lot is decreed.

(She drives quickly away.)

(Brünnhilde comes forward with wondering and anxious mien to Wotan, who, leaning back on the rocky seat, is sunk in gloomy brooding.)

SCENE TWO

Brünnhilde

Ill surely closed the strife;

Fricka laughs at its ending.

Father, what woe hast thou to tell me?

Gloomy seem'st thou and cheerless!

Wotan

(drops his arm helplessly and lets his head sink on his breast)

I lie in fetters forged by me,

I, least free of all living!

Brünnhilde

Ne'er saw I thee so:

what gnaws at thy heart?

(From this point Wotan's expression and gestures grow in intensity, culminating in a fearful outburst.)

O infinite shame!

O shameful distress!

Gods' despair! Gods' despair!

Unbounded rage! Unending grief!

Most joyless am I of all living!

(Terrified, Brünnhilde throws shield, spear and helmet from her and sinks at Wotan's feet in anxious solicitude.)

Father! Father! Tell me what ails thee?

Why so fill'st thou thy child with dismay?

Have trust in me, to thee aye true!

See, Brünnhild' entreateth.

(She lays her head and hands with loving concern on his knees and breast. Wotan looks long in her eyes; then he strokes her hair with unconscious tenderness. As if coming to himself out of deep brooding, he at last begins.)

Wotan

(very softly)

If I now tell it,

shall I not loosen my will's o'er-mastering hold?

Brünnhilde

(very softly)

To Wotan's will thou speakest,
when thou tell'st what thou wilt;
what am I, if not thy will alone?

Wotan

(very softly)

What in words to none other I utter,
still will remain unspoken forever:

I speak in secret, speaking to thee.

(with a muffled voice)

When youthful love's delight from me fled,
my spirit yet longed for sway:

by force of wildest wishes impelled,

I won myself the world; faithless,

I wrought in unknowing falseness,

binding by bargains what hid mishap;

craftily guided by Loge,

who wandered then afar.

Yet the passion of love would not loose me,

in my might for love was my longing.

The child of night, the craven Nibelung,

Alberich, broke from its bonds;

for love he foreswore and so won by his oath

the glist'ning gold of the Rhine,

and with it unmeasured might.

The ring that he wrought I craftily won me,

but to the Rhine gave it not again:

with it I paid the price of Walhall,

the home the giants had built me,

wherefrom I now ruled all the world.

She who doth know all things that were,

Erda, the wisest holiest Wala,

spoke ill redes of the ring,

told of eternal disaster.

(more vehement)

Of the downfall I craved yet more tidings;

but voiceless she vanished from sight.
(*with animation*)

Then was saddened my lightsome heart,
to know then became all my need:
to the womb of earth wended I my way,
by love's enchantment forced I the Wala,
troubling her wisdom's calm,
and constrained her tongue to speak.
Counsel I won from her words;
from me yet she harbored a pledge:
the world's wisest of women gave me,
Brünnhilde, thee.

With eight sisters fostered wert thou;
that ye Valkyries might forfend
the doom that the Wala's dark words foretold:
the shameful defeat of the great ones.
That foes might find us strong for the strife,
heroes I bade you to bring me:
the slaves we had held by our laws in bondage,
the mortals whom in their might we defied,
whom, enthralled by darksome,
treacherous bargains,
we bound in obedience blindly to serve us
(*becoming more animated, but with moderate power*)
these ever to storm and strife should ye kindle,
their hearts rouse up to ruthless war,
that valiant hosts of heroes
should gather on Walhall's height!

Brünnhilde

And thy halls filled we with heroes:
many I brought to thee there.
If we ne'er have failed thee,
whence cometh thy fear?

Wotan

(*with more suppressed voice*)
Another ill, heed thou it well!
darkly the Wala foretold.
Through Alberich's host threatens our downfall:
with envious rage burneth the Niblung,
(*becoming animated*)
but no more I dread now
his dusky battalions,
by my heroes safe were I held.
(*suppressed*)
Yet, if e'er the ring were won by the Niblung,
(*more suppressed*)
then lost were Walhall forever:

for to him alone, who love forswore,
is it given to use the runes of the ring
to the endless shame of the gods;
(*becoming animated*)

my heroes' faith from me would he turn,
and stir to strife my fighters themselves,
and with their might give battle to me.
(*suppressed*)

Urged by fear then I thought
to rob the ring from the foe-man.
(*suppressed*)

The giant Fafner,
who from my hand the accursed gold
as wage did win:
he now guardeth the hoard
for which his brother he slew.
From him must I wrest the ring,
that myself I gave him as guerdon.
But the bond I have made,
forbids me to strike him;
mightless my force would fall before him:
(*bitterly*)

these are the fetters that now hold me:
I, who by bargains am lord,
to my bargains eke am a slave.
But one may dare what to me is denied:
a hero never helped by my counsel,
to me unknown and free from my grace,
unaware, forced by his need,
without command, with his own right arm,
doeth the deed that I must shun,
the deed my tongue ne'er told,
though yet my deepest desire.
He, at war with the god, for me fighteth,
the friendliest foe. O, how shall I find
or shape me the free one, by me ne'er shielded,
in his firm defiance the dearest to me?
How fashion the Other who, not through me,
but from his will for my ends shall work?
O, godhead's distress! Soarest disgrace!
In loathing find I ever myself
in all my hand has created;
the Other whom I have longed for,
that Other I ne'er shall find:
himself must the free one create him;
my hand nought shapeth but slaves.

Brünnhilde

But the Walsung, Siegmund?
works for himself?

Wotan

Wildly roaming with him in woodlands,
 ever against the gods, then his spirit I stirred:
 now 'gainst the godhead's vengeance
 guarded is he by the sword,
(slowly and bitterly)
 that thro' the grace of a god was bestowed.
 Why would I trick myself with my cunning?
 So lightly my falsehood Fricka laid bare:
 before her glance I stood in my shame!
 To her will I now must yield me.

Brünnhilde

Then tak'st thou from Siegmund thy shield?

Wotan

When my hand touched Alberich's ring,
 greed was mine for the gold.
 The curse that I fled now flies not from me:
 What I love best, must I surrender;
 slay him whom most I cherish,
 basely betray who in me trusts!
*(Wotan's gestures change from the expression
 of terrible pain to that of despair.)*
 Fade then away, splendor and pomp,
 glory of godhood's glittering shame!
 Let fall in ruins what I have raised!
 Ended is my work, but one thing waits me yet:
 the ending, the downfall!
(He pauses in thought.)
 And for the downfall works Alberich;
 now I grasp all the secret sense,
 that filled the words of the Wala:
 "when the dusky foe of love
 grimly getteth a son,
 the doom of gods delays not long."
 Of the Niblung late a rumor I heard,
 that the dwarf had won a woman,
 by gold gaining her grace:
 the fruit of hate beareth a wife;
 the child of spite grows in her womb;
 this wonder befell the loveless Niblung;
 yet, tho' I loved so truly,
 the free one I never might win.
(rising up in bitter wrath)
 Then take thou my blessing, Nibelung son!
 What I have loathed now may'st thou inherit;
 the empty pomp of the gods
 thy envious greed shall consume!

Brünnhilde

(alarmed) O say! tell me,
 what task must be mine?

Wotan

(bitterly) Fight truly for Fricka;
 ward for her wedlock's oath!
(dryly) What she doth choose,
 that too be my choice:
 what good can my will e'er gain me?
 for the free one can it not fashion:
 for Fricka's servants fight thou alone!

Brünnhilde

Ah! repent thee, take back thy word!
 Thou lov'st Siegmund; knowing thy love,
 to serve thee, safe will I shield him.

Wotan

Siegmund shalt thou vanquish,
 and Hunding as victor shall strike!
 Ward thyself well, and hold thyself firm;
 bring all thy boldness and skill to the strife:
 a sure sword swings Siegmund;
 faint heart wilt thou not find!

Brünnhilde

He whom thou still hast taught me to love,
 who in glorious valor was ever thy dearest,
 for his sake now thy wavering word I defy!

Wotan

Ha, darest thou? Floutest thou me?
 Who art thou, who but the fettered,
 blind slave of my will?
 In that I have spoken, such is my shame
 that e'en thou, my creature,
 dost meet me with scorn?
 Know'st thou, child, my wrath?
 Thy spirit were crushed if on thee lighted
 its fierce withering flash!
 Within my bosom fury lies hid,
 that in woe and waste layeth a world
 that in my joy on me laughed:
 woe to him whom it strikes!
 Sad in sooth were his fate!
 I warn thee then, wake not my wrath!
 With heed fulfill my behest:
 Siegmund strike thou!
 Such be the Valkyrie's task!
(He storms away and quickly disappears among

the rocks to the left. Brünnhilde stands for a long time confused and alarmed.)

Brünnhilde

Ne'er saw I Warfather so,
though stirred to anger oft by strife.
(She stoops down sadly and takes up her weapons, with which she arms herself again.)

Why irks me my weapon's weight?
Ah, how light they lay when freely I fought!
A hateful fight drags me hence today.
(She gazes thoughtfully before her.)
(sighing)

Woe! my Wälsung!
In sorest sorrow the true one
must falsely forsake thee!
(She turns slowly toward the back.)

Scene Three

(Arrived at the rocky pass, Brünnhilde, looking into the gorge, perceives Siegmund and Sieglinde: she watches them for a moment and then goes into the cavern to her horse, disappearing from the audience.)

(Siegmund and Sieglinde appear on the pass. Sieglinde comes hastily forward. Siegmund tries to restrain her.)

Siegmund

Stay thou but here, rest thee a while!

Sieglinde

Farther! Farther!

Siegmund

(embraces her with gentle force)

No farther now!

(He clasps her firmly to him.)

O linger, sweetest one, here!
From blissfullest rapture break'st thou away,
with frenzied haste fleeing afar:
scarce could I o'ertake thy flight;
through wood and field over rock and fell,
speechless, silent flying along,
my voice called thee in vain!
(Sieglinde stares wildly before her.)
Take now thy rest: speak but a word!

End all this speechless dread!
See, thy brother holdeth his bride:
Siegmund's heart is thy home!
(She gazes with growing rapture into his eyes, then throws her arms passionately round his neck and so remains.)
(She then starts up in sudden terror.)

Sieglinde

Away! away! fly the profaned one!
Unholily holds thee my arm;
disgraced, dishonored, dead is this form:
cast it from thee, flee from the corpse!
let winds waft her away
who, graceless, herself gave to thee!
When in his loving embrace,
when blissful delight she found,
when all his love was her own,
who all her love had awaked
from the holiest height of sweetest rapture,
that all her soul and senses o'erflowed,
loathing and horror, for hateful dishonor,
filled with dismay the traitorous woman,
who once a bridegroom obeyed,
and loveless lay in his arms!
Leave the accurst one, far let her flee!
Dishonored am I, bereft of grace:
the purest hero must I abandon
to thee, the most glorious, ne'er may I give me.
Shame would fall on the brother,
scath on the rescuing friend!

Siegmund

Whate'er shame has been wrought
be paid by the sinner's blood!
Then flee thou no farther;
wait for the foe-man;
fall must he before me:
when Nothung's point doth pierce his heart,
vengeance then wilt thou have won!

Sieglinde

(starts up and listens)
Hark! the horns call, hearest thou not?
All around cries of revenge,
from wood and vale, swell on our ears.
Hunding has wakened from heavy sleep!
Kinsmen and bloodhounds calls he together;
goaded to rage, dogs are howling,
loud baying to heaven,
against breaking of wedlock's oath!

(She gazes madly before her.)

Where art thou, Siegmund? still art thou here?
 fervently loved one, radiant brother!

Let thine eyes' bright beams fall
 yet once more upon me:

do not disdain the accursed woman's kiss!

*(She throws herself sobbing on his breast:
 presently she starts up again in terror.)*

Hark! o hark! that is Hunding's horn!

All his pack pursue in mighty force:

no sword helps thee against the hounds:

let it go, Siegmund! Siegmund, where art thou?

Ha, there! I see thee now! Terrible sight!

Dogs are gnashing their teeth after flesh;

no heed they take of the hero's glance;

by thy feet they seize thee

with fast-holding fangs.

Thou fall'st; in splinters the sword hath sprung:

the ash-tree sinks, the stem is rent!

Brother! my brother!

(She sinks senseless into Siegmund's arms.)

Siegmund, ha!

Siegmund

Sister! Beloved!

(He listens to her breathing and convinces himself that she still lives. He lets her slide downward so that, as he himself sinks into a sitting posture, her head rests on his lap. In this position they both remain until the end of the following scene.)

(A long silence, during which Siegmund bends over Sieglinde with tender care, and presses along kiss on her brow.)

Scene Four

(Brünnhilde, leading her horse by the bridle, comes out of the cave and advances slowly and solemnly to the front. She pauses and observes Siegmund from a distance.)

(She again slowly advances. She stops, somewhat nearer.)

(She carries her shield and spear in one hand, resting the other on her horse's neck, and thus, in grave silence, she watches Siegmund for some time.)

Brünnhilde

Siegmund! Look on me!

I come to call thee hence.

(Siegmund raises his eyes to her.)

Siegmund

Who art thou, say,

who dost stand so beauteous and stern?

Brünnhilde

Death-doomed is he who looks upon me;

who meets my glance

must turn from the light of life.

On the war-field alone I come to heroes;

those whom I greet

with me needs must go hence!

(Siegmund looks long, firmly and searchingly into her eyes, then bows his head in thought and at length turns resolutely to her again.)

Siegmund

If death be his,

whither lead'st thou the hero?

Brünnhilde

To Wotan, who casteth the lot,

lead I thee: to Walhall wend with me.

Siegmund

On Walhall's height,

Wotan alone shall I find?

Brünnhilde

The fallen heroes' hallowed band

shall greet thee there

with high welcome and love.

Siegmund

Dwelleth in Walhall

Wälse, the Wälsung's father?

Brünnhilde

His father there will the Wälsung find!

Siegmund

(tenderly)

Gladly will woman welcome

me there?

Brünnhilde

Wish-maidens wait on thee there:
Wotan's daughter friendly there filleth thy cup!

Sigmund

Fair art thou,
and holy before me stands Wotan's child:
yet one thing tell me, immortal!
Go brother and sister to Walhall together?
shall there Sigmund Sieglinde find?

Brünnhilde

Here on earth must she still linger:
Sigmund will find not Sieglinde there.
*(Sigmund bends softly over Sieglinde, kisses
her gently on the brow and again turns quietly
to Brünnhilde.)*

Sigmund

Then greet for me Walhall,
greet for me Wotan,
greet for me Wälse and all the heroes,
greet too the beauteous wish-maidens:
(firmly)
to them I follow thee not!

Brünnhilde

Thou sawest the Valkyrie's withering glance;
with her must thou now fare!

Sigmund

Where Sieglinde lives in weal or woe,
there will Sigmund too linger:
thy withering glance served not to fright me,
nor shall it e'er force me hence.

Brünnhilde

While life is thine,
force were in vain;
but death shall vanquish thee, fool:
death-doom to bring thee I am here.

Sigmund

Whose hand, then, shall strike,
if I must fall?

Brünnhilde

Hunding striketh the blow.

Sigmund

Bring threats more dire

if thou wouldst daunt me.
Lurkest thou here lusting for strife,
choose thou him for thy prey:
methinks he will fall in the fight!

Brünnhilde

Thine Wälzung, hearken to me:
thine is the death decreed.

Sigmund

Know'st thou this sword?
From him it came who holds me safe:
through his sword thy threats I defy!

Brünnhilde

(with emphasis)
He who bestowed it sends thee now death:
for the spell he takes from the sword!

Sigmund

(vehemently)
Still and fright not the slumberer here!
*(He bends tenderly, in an outburst of grief, over
Sieglinde.)*
Woe! woe! Sweetest wife!
Thou saddest among all thy faithful!
'Gainst thy peace rages the world now in arms;
and I, who alone am thy friend,
for whom thou the world hast defied,
may I not shield, may I not defend thee,
betray thee must I in the fight?
O shame on him who bestowed the sword
and tricks me with trustless blade!
If I must fall then,
to Walhall I fare not:
Hella hold me her own!
(He bends low over Sieglinde.)

Brünnhilde

(moved)
So lightly prizest thou bliss everlasting?
(slowly and hesitatingly)
All to thee is this hapless wife
who, faint and care-worn,
helplessly hangs in thine arms.
Nought else deemst thou good?

Sigmund

(looking up to her bitterly)
So young and fair thou shinest to me,
yet how cold and hard

now knows thee my heart!
 Canst thou but mock me,
 then take thyself hence,
 thou cruel, merciless maid!
 Or if thou dost hunger for my distress,
 then freely feast on my woe;
 let my grief quicken thy envious heart:
 but of Walhall's loveless raptures
 speak not, prithee, to me!

Brünnhilde

I see the distress
 that doth gnaw at thy heart,
 I feel all the hero's holiest grief!
 Siegmund, to me give thy wife,
 let her safeguard be my shield!

Siegmund

No other than I,
 while she lives, shall safeguard the pure one;
 if death be my doom,
 I will slay the slumberer here!

Brünnhilde

(with increasing emotion)
 Wälsung! Madman! Harken to me!
 to me trust thy wife, for the pledge's sake,
 that in rapture from thee she received.

Siegmund

(drawing his sword)
 This sword,
 though by traitor to true man decreed;
 this sword,
 that fails me in face of my foe:
 serves it not then against foe,
 right well it shall serve against friend!
(He points the sword at Sieglinde.)
 Two lives now laugh to thee here:
 take them, Nothung, envious steel!
 take them with one fell stroke!

Brünnhilde

(in a passionate outburst of sympathy)
 Forbear! Wälsung!
 Harken to me! Sieglind' shall live then,
 and, Siegmund, live thou with her!
 'Tis thus decreed;
 recalled the death-doom: thine, Siegmund,
 thine be triumph and bliss!
 Hear'st thou the call?

Prepare thyself now!
 Trust to the sword, and strike without fear:
 sure striketh the blade,
 as the Valkyrie's shield is sure!
 Farewell, Siegmund, hero most blest!
 On the field once more shall I find thee!
(She rushes away, and disappears with her horse in a ravine on the right. Siegmund looks after her with joy and exultation.)

(The stage has gradually darkened; heavy storm clouds sink down and cover the background, gradually veiling the cliffs, ravine and rocky pass completely from view.)

Scene Five

(Siegmund again bends over Sieglinde, listening to her breathing.)

Siegmund

Slumber charms with soothing spell
 the fair one's pain and grief.
 When the Valkyrie hither came,
 brought she then this blissful repose?
 Should not the furious fight
 wake fear in her sorrowing heart?
 Lifeless seems she who yet hath life:
 her sorrow is soothed by a smiling dream.
 So slumber still on
 till the fight be fought,
 and peace to thee bring joy!
(He lays her gently on the rocky seat and kisses her forehead as farewell.)
(He hears Hunding's horn-call and starts up with resolution)
 Thou who dost call, arm thyself now;
 whate'er is due take thou here:
(He draws his sword.)
 Nothung payeth the debt!
(He hastens to the background and, on reaching the pass, disappears in the dark storm cloud, from which a flash of lightning immediately breaks.)

Sieglinde

(begins to move restlessly in her dreams)
 Would now but father come home!
 With the boy he still roams in the woods.
 Mother! Mother! I quake with fear,

with eyes unfriendly glower the strangers!
 Misty darkness fills all the air ...
 fiery tongues are flaming around ...
 they burn the house! o, help us, brother!
 Siegmund! Siegmund!

(She springs up.)

(Violent thunder and lightning.)

Siegmund! Ha!

(She stares about her in growing terror: nearly the whole of the stage is veiled with black thunderclouds.

Hunding's horn-call sounds near.)

Hunding

(in the background, from the mountain pass)

Wehwalt! Wehwalt! Stand there and fight,
 else with the hounds must I hold thee.

Siegmund

(from farther off in the ravine)

Where hidest thou,
 that I can find thee not?
 Stand, that I may face thee!

Sieglinde

(listening in fearful terror)

Hunding! Siegmund! Could I but see them!

Hunding

Fly not, thou traitorous wooer!
 Fricka striketh thee here!

Siegmund

(now likewise from the pass)

Still ween'st thou me weaponless,
 craven wight?
 Threat not with women, thyself do battle,
 lest Fricka fail thee at last!
 For see! from thy house-tree's blossoming stem,
 I drew undaunted the sword;
 and its edge right soon shalt thou taste!
(A flash of lightning illuminates the rock for an instant, during which Hunding and Siegmund are seen in mortal combat.)

Sieglinde

(with her utmost force)

Hold your hands, ye madmen!
 murder me first!

(She rushes toward the pass: but suddenly, from above the combatants on the right, a flash breaks forth so vividly that she staggers aside as if blinded.)

Brünnhilde

Strike him, Siegmund!

trust to the sword!

(In the glare of light Brünnhilde appears, floating above Siegmund, and protecting him with her shield. Just as Siegmund aims a deadly blow at Hunding, a glowing red light breaks from the left through the clouds, in which Wotan appears, standing over Hunding, holding his spear across in front of Siegmund.)

Wotan

Go back from the spear!

In splinters the sword!

(Brünnhilde, in terror before Wotan, sinks back with her shield: Siegmund's sword snaps on the outstretched spear. Hunding plunges his spear into the disarmed Siegmund's breast. Siegmund falls dead to the ground: Sieglinde, who has heard his death-sigh, falls with a cry, as if lifeless, to earth.)

(With Siegmund's fall the two lights disappear; dark clouds cover all but the foreground; through them Brünnhilde is indistinctly seen, as she turns in haste to Sieglinde.)

Brünnhilde

To horse! that I may save thee!

(She lifts Sieglinde quickly onto her horse, which is standing near the side gorge, and immediately disappears with her.)

(At this moment the clouds divide in the middle, so that Hunding, who has just drawn his spear from the fallen Siegmund's breast, is clearly seen.)

(Wotan, surrounded by clouds, stands on a rock behind, leaning on his spear and sadly gazing on Siegmund's body.)

Wotan

(to Hunding)

Go hence, slave! Kneel before Fricka:

tell her that Wotan's spear avenged
 what wrought her wrong. Go! Go!

(Before the contemptuous wave of Wotan's

*hand, Hunding sinks dead to the ground.
(suddenly breaking out in terrible rage)*
But Brünnhilde! Woe to the guilty one!
Dire wage shall she win for her crime,
if my steed o'ertake her in flight!

(He disappears with thunder and lightning. The curtain falls quickly.)

ACT THREE

Scene One

(The curtain rises. On the summit of a rocky mountain. On the right a pinewood encloses the stage. On the left is the entrance to a cave; above this the rock rises to its highest point. At the back the view is entirely open; rocks of various heights form a parapet to the precipice.)

(Occasionally clouds fly past the mountain peak, as if driven by storm. Gerhilde, Ortlinde, Waltraute and Schwertleite have ensconced themselves on the rocky peak above the cave: they are in full armor.)

Gerhilde

(on the highest point, calling toward the background, where a thick cloud passes)
Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!
Helmwige! Here! Guide hither thy horse!

Helmwige

(at the back, offstage)
Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Hojotoho!
Hojotoho! Heiaha!
(A flash of lightning breaks through a passing cloud: in the light a Valkyrie on horseback becomes visible: on her saddle hangs a slain warrior. The apparition, approaching the rocky cliff, passes from left to right.)

Gerhilde, Waltraute, Schwertleite

(all three calling to her as she approaches)
Heiaha! Heiaha!
(The cloud with the apparition disappears to the right behind the wood.)

Ortlinde

(calling toward the wood)
By Ortlinde's filly fasten thy horse:
gladly my grey will graze near thy chestnut!

Waltraute

(calling toward the wood)
Who hangs at thy saddle?

Helmwige

(coming from the wood)
Sintolt, the Hegeling!

Schwertleite

Far from the grey, then, fasten thy chestnut:
Ortlinde's filly bears Witting, the Irming!

Gerhilde

(coming down lower)
For foes have been ever Sintolt and Wittig!

Ortlinde

(starts up) Heiaha! Heiaha!
The horse attacketh my mare!
(She runs to the wood.)

Helmwige, Gerhilde, Schwertleite

(laughing)
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Gerhilde

The heroes' strife makes foes of the horses!

Helwige

(call back into the wood)
Quiet, Brownie! break not the peace, now.

Waltraute

(on the topmost point, where she has taken Gerhilde's post as watcher)
Hoioho! Hoioho!
(calling toward the right-hand side of the background)
Siegrune here! Where stayst thou so long?
(She listens toward the right.)

Siegrune

(offstage, from the back on the right)
Work to do!
Are the others all here?

Schwertleite

(calling toward the right-hand side of the background)

Hojotoho!

Waltraute

(the same)

Hojotoho!

Gerhilde

(the same)

Heiaha!

Waltraute, Schwertleite

Heiaha!

(Their gestures, as well as a bright light behind the wood, show that Siegrune has just arrived there.)

Grimgerde

(from the back on the left, offstage)

Hojotoho!

Rossweiße

(from the same place, offstage)

Hojotoho!

Grimgerde, Rossweiße

Heiaha!

Waltraute

(toward the left)

Grimgerd' and Rossweiße!

Gerhilde

(the same)

Together they ride.

(In a bank of clouds, passing from the left, Rossweiße and Grimgerde appear, illumined by a flash of lightning. Both are on horseback, and each carries a slain warrior on her saddle. Helmwige, Ortlinde and Siegrune have come out of the wood and wave to the approaching Rossweiße and Grimgerde from the edge of the precipice.)

Helmwige, Ortlinde, Siegrune

We greet you travelers!

Rossweiß' and Grimgerde!

Rossweiße, Grimgerde

(offstage)

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

(The apparition disappears behind the wood.)

The other six Valkyries

Hojotoho! Hojotoho!

Heiaha! Heiaha!

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!

Hojotoho! Heiaha! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

Hojotoho! Heiaha! Hojotoho! Heiaha!

Heiaha! Heiaha!

Gerhilde

(calling into the wood)

Leave there in the forest your steeds to graze!

Ortlinde

(likewise calling into the wood)

Lead off the mares afar from each other,
till all our heroes' anger is calmed!

Waltraute, Schwertleite

(laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Gerhilde, Siegrune

(laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Helmwige

The grey has paid for the heroes' anger!

Waltraute, Schwertleite, Helmwige, Gerhilde

(laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Ortlinde, Siegrune

(laughing)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Rossweiße, Grimgerde

(coming out of the wood)

Hojotoho! Hojotoho!

The other six Valkyries

Be welcome!

Be welcome!

The eight Valkyries

Be welcome!

Schwertleite

Rode ye valiant ones paired?

Grimgerde

Apart journeyed we,
and met but today.

Rossweisse

Are we all then assembled?
then stay no longer:
to Walhall wend we our way;
Wotan awaiteth the slain.

Helmwige

Are we but eight? wanting is one.

Gerhilde

By the brown-eyed Wälsung
lingers yet Brünnhild'.

Waltraute

Till she comes hither still must we stay:
greeting full grim would Warfather give,
if without her we should come.

Siegrune

(on the lookout) Hojotoho! Hojotoho!
(calling toward the back) Hallo! Hallo!
(to the others)
In furious haste there Brünnhilde flies.
(All hasten to the lookout.)

The eight Valkyries

Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha!
Brünnhilde, hei!
(They watch with growing astonishment.)

Waltraute

To the wood guides she her staggering horse.

Grimgerde

From fierce riding
how Grane pants!

Rossweisse

So fast none e'er saw Valkyrie flying!

Ortlinde

What lies on her saddle?

Helmwige

That is no man!

Siegrune

See, a maid bears she.

Gerhilde

Where found she the maid?

Schwertleite

With ne'er a sign greets she the sisters!

Waltraute

(calling down, very loudly)
Heiaha! Brünnhilde! hearest thou not?

Ortlinde

Hasten ye from her horse to help her!

Helmwige, Gerhilde

(both running toward the wood)
Hojotoho! Hojotoho!

Siegrune, Rossweisse

(running after them)
Hojotoho! Hojotoho!

The other four Valkyries

Heiaha! Heiaha!

Waltraute

(looking into the wood)
To earth sinks down Grane the strong one!

Grimgerde

From the saddle swiftly swings she the maid!
(All run toward the wood.)

Ortlinde, Waltraute, Grimgerde,**Schwertleite**

Sister! sister!
What has befall'n?
(All the Valkyries come back to the stage: with them comes Brünnhilde, supporting and leading Sieglinde.)

Brünnhilde

(out of breath)
Shield me and help in direst need!

Grimgerde, Siegrune, Gerhilde, Helmwige

Whence rodest thou
hither? why in such haste?

Ortlinde, Waltraute, Rossweisse, Schwertleite

So ride those only who
flee!

Siegrune

Art thou pursued?

Brünnhilde

I flee for the first time,
and am pursued:
Warfather follows close!
(All the Valkyries violently alarmed.)

Helmwige, Gerhilde, Siegrune, Grimhilde

Lost are thy senses?
Speak to us! What? Fleest thou from him?

Ortlinde, Waltraute, Rossweisse, Schwerleite

Ha! Speak!
Pursues thee Warfather? O say!

Brünnhilde

(turns anxiously to look out and then comes back)
O sisters, look from the rocky summit!
Look to northward if Warfather nears?
(Ortlinde and Waltraute spring up to watch from the rocky peak.)

Brünnhilde

Speak! Tell what ye see!

Ortlinde

A thunderstorm nears from northward.

Waltraute

Gathering clouds range themselves
here!

The other six Valkyries

Warfather rideth his sacred steed!

Brünnhilde

The wild pursuer
who hunts me in wrath,
he nears, he nears from northward!
Shield me, sisters! Shelter this wife!

Six Valkyries

What aileth the woman?

Brünnhilde

Hear me then quickly: Sieglinde is she,
Siegmund's sister and bride:
'gainst all the Wälsungs
doth Wotan angrily rage;
to strike the brother dead in the fight
was Brünnhilde's task;
but Siegmund held I safe with my shield:
Wotan in wrath
then struck him himself with his spear:
Siegmund fell; but I fled forth with the wife;
and to save her flew I to you that in danger
(in fear)
ye might hide me from the threatening blow!

Six Valkyries

(in great consternation)
What madness urged thee this deed to do?
Lost one! Brünnhilde, lost one!

Helmwige, Siegrune, Grimhilde

Brok'st thou, rebellious
Brünnhilde, Warfather's holy behest?

Gerhilde, Rossweisse, Schwertleite

Brok'st thou Warfather's holy behest?

Waltraute

(on the lookout)
Darkness comes from the north like the night.

Ortlinde

(on the lookout)
Raging steereth hither the storm.

Rossweisse, Grimhilde, Schwertleite

Loud neigheth Warfather's steed!

Helmwige, Gerhilde, Schwertleite

Panting hither it flies.

Brünnhilde

Woe to the wife if the god find her here:
for all of the Wälsungs dooms he to downfall!
O say, who will lend the trustiest horse,
to save the wife from his wrath?

Siegrune

Wouldst lead us his rage to defy?

Brünnhilde

Rossweisse, sister,
lend me but thy courser!

Rossweisse

From Warfather ne'er yet fled he in fear.

Brünnhilde

Helwige, hear me!

Helmwige

I brave not our father.

Brünnhilde

Grimgerde! Gerhilde!

Grant me a horse!

Schwertleite! Siegrune! See my dismay!

True be to me, as I have been true:

save now this sorrowing wife!

(Sieglinde, who has hitherto stared gloomily and coldly before her, starts up with a repellent gesture as Brünnhilde embraces her warmly, as if to protect her.)

Sieglinde

Let sorrow not vex thee for me:

only death is my due.

Who bade thee bear me, maid, from the battle?

Perchance my death-stroke I there had won

from the very weapon that dealt his death;

in life's last moment made one with him!

Far from Siegmund. Siegmund, from thee!

O shelter me, death, from remembrance!

Lest for thy help my curse should requite thee,

now hearken, maid, to my prayer:

thrust thou thy sword into my heart!

Brünnhilde

Live still, o woman,

for love doth call thee!

Rescue the pledge that from him thou hast won:

(forcibly and urgently)

a Walsung's life thou dost bear!

(Sieglinde starts violently: suddenly her face glows with sublime joy.)

Sieglinde

Rescue me, brave one! Rescue my child!

Guard me, ye maidens,

with mighty defence!

(An ever-darkening thunderstorm approaches from the back.)

Waltraute

(on the lookout)

The storm cometh near!

Ortlinde

(on the lookout)

Fly, all who fear it!

The other six Valkyries

Hence with the woman!

danger is here:

the Valkyries' shelter dare we not give!

Sieglinde

(on her knees before Brünnhilde)

Rescue me, maid! rescue the mother!

Brünnhilde

(raises Sieglinde with sudden determination)

Away, then, fly swiftly, and fly thou alone!

I stay in thy stead, draw on me Wotan's anger,

by me holding the wrathful one here,

whilst thou from his vengeance escap'st.

Sieglinde

Say, whither shall I turn me?

Brünnhilde

Which of you, sisters,

journeyed to eastward?

Siegrune

A forest wild spreads far to the east:

the Nibelung's hoard

by Fafner thither was borne.

Schwertleite

There as a dread dragon he dwelleth,

and in a cave there guardeth he Alberich's ring!

Grimgerde

For a helpless woman no home were there.

Brünnhilde

And yet from Wotan's wrath

shelter safe were the wood:

our father feareth and shunneth the place.

Waltraute*(on the lookout)*

Raging rides the god to the rock!

Six Valkyries

Brünnhilde,

hear how he nears like a storm!

Brünnhilde*(urgently)*

Fly then swiftly and turn to the east!

Bold in defiance endure ev'ry ill,
hunger and thirst, thorns and rough ways;
laugh whether want or suffering wound!

For one thing know and hold it ever:
the world's most glorious hero bears,
o woman, thy sheltering womb!

*(She takes the pieces of Sigmund's sword from
under her breastplate and gives them to
Sieglinde.)*

For him ward thou well the mighty splinters;
from his father's death-field
by good hap I saved them:
who once shall swing the sword new wrought,
his name from me let him take—
Siegfried in triumph shall live!

Sieglinde*(deeply moved)*

O radiant wonder! Glorious maid!
Thou bring'st me, true one, holiest balm!
For him whom we loved I save the beloved one:
may my thanks yet bring laughing reward!
Fare thou well! be blest in Sieglinde's woe!

(She hastens away on the right in front.)

*(Black thunderclouds surround the height; a
fearful storm approaches from the back: a
growing fiery light on the right.)*

Wotan*(offstage)*

Stay, Brünnhild'!

Ortlinde, Waltraute*(coming down from the lookout)*

The rock is reached by horse and rider!
*(Brünnhilde, after watching Sieglinde for a
while, turns toward the background, looks into
the wood, and comes forward again in fear.)*

All eight Valkyries

Woe, Brünnhild'!

raging he comes!

Brünnhilde

Ah, sisters, help!

my heart is faint!

His wrath will crush me,
if ye no shelter can give.

*(The Valkyries retreat up the rocky point in
fear; Brünnhilde lets herself be drawn with
them.)*

The Valkyries

Then hide, thou lost one!

Be thou not seen,
hide thee in our midst,
and heed not his call!

Be hid by us!

*(They hide Brünnhilde among them and look
anxiously toward the wood, which is now lit up
by brilliant firelight, while the background has
become quite dark.)*

Woe! Wotan swings him raging to earth!

Hither haste his steps for revenge.

Scene Two

*(Wotan strides in terrible wrathful excitement
from the wood and approaches the group of
Valkyries on the height, looking angrily around
for Brünnhilde.)*

Wotan

Where is Brünnhild',
where the rebellious one?
Would ye then dare to shield her from
vengeance?

The eight Valkyries

Fearful thy fury soundeth!
O father, what did thy children,
that they have wakened thy terrible wrath?

Wotan

Would ye then mock me?
Heed yourselves, rash ones!
I know, Brünnhilde hide ye from me.
Turn ye from her! cast off is she henceforth,
e'en as her worth from her she cast!

Rosswesse

To us fled the pursued one,

**Siegrune, Rosswesse, Grimhilde,
Schwertleite**

For our help prayed she to us;

Waltraute

Thy rage awoke her fear and dismay:

Siegrune

Fear and trembling seize the pursued one!

Schwertleite, Grimgerde

Thy rage awakened
her fear and shrinking,
for our sister pray we to thee!

Ortlinde

Father, hear our prayer!

Rosswesse, Waltraute

For our trembling sister
pray we to thee
that thy passion's rage may be calmed!

Gerhilde, Helmwige, Ortlinde

Soften thine anger!

Siegrune

Calm now thy passion's rage!

Helmwige

For her, calm thy passion's rage!

Wotan

Weak-hearted and womanish brood!
Such sorry valor won ye from me?
I fostered you bold to fare to the field,
hard and relentless your hearts I wrought,
and ye wild ones now weep and whine,
when my wrath on a traitor doth fall?
Then know, ye trembling ones,
what was her crime
for whom your tears now in pity are shed:
No one but she knew what lay hid in my bosom;
no one but she saw to the spring of my spirit!
In her deeds my desires were born to the day:
our holy bond she hath now so disdained
that, faithless, she my own will hath defied,
my sacred command openly scorned,

against me she lifted the spear
that by Wotan's will she bore!
Hear'st thou, Brünnhilde?

Thou on whom birny, helm and spear,
name and renown, life and delight I bestowed?
Hear'st thou my voice upraised,
and shrinking hid'st thee from me,
that thou may'st escape thy doom?
*(Brünnhilde comes forward out of the band of
the Valkyries and moves with humble but firm
steps down the rock, to within a short distance
from Wotan.)*

Brünnhilde

Here am I, father:
pronounce now my sentence!

Wotan

I sentence thee not:
thou thyself thy sentence hast shaped.
My will alone awoke thee to life:
yet against my will hast thou worked;
thine 'twas alone to fulfill my commands:
yet against me hast thou commanded;
wish-maid thou wert to me:
against me thy wish has been turned;
shield-maid thou wert to me:
against me thy shield was upraised;
lot-chooser thou wert to me:
against me the lot hast thou chosen;
hero-stirrer thou wert to me:
against me thou stirredst up heroes.
What once thou wert, Wotan hath spoken:
what now thou art, say thou to thyself!
Wish-maid art thou no more;
Valkyrie once wert thou called:
what now thou art, henceforth shalt thou be!

Brünnhilde

(violently terrified)
Thou dost cast me off?
What meaneth thy word?

Wotan

No more shall I send thee from Walhall;
to war-field no more far'st thou on quest;
no more bring'st thou heroes to fill my halls:
at the godhead's festal banquet
the drink-horn for me thou fillest no more;
thy childlike mouth no more shall I kiss;
the heavenly host no more shall know thee;

outcast art thou from the clan of the gods:
 for broken now is our bond,
 henceforth from sight of my face
 art thou banned.
*(The Valkyries, in great excitement, come a little
 further down the rocks.)*

The Valkyries
 Horror! Woe!
 Sister, oh sister!

Brünnhilde
 All thou once gavest
 thou tak'st away?

Wotan
 He who wins robs thee of all!
 For here on the rock bound shalt thou be;
 defenceless in sleep liest thou locked:
 the man shall master the maid
 who shall find her and wake her from sleep.
*(In the greatest emotion the Valkyries quite
 descend from the rock and in anxious groups
 surround Brünnhilde, who lies half kneeling
 before Wotan.)*

Waltraute
 Repent! repent!
 O Father! shall the maiden pale
 and be withered by man?
 Ah, deal not this shame!
 Ah, deal not this crying disgrace!
 deal not this shame,
 ah, deal not, Father, this disgrace,
 ah, deal not, deal not this shame,
 for our sister's shame on us would fall;

Ortlinde
 O Father! repent!
 Repent! hear now our prayer!
 O bring not on her this crying disgrace!
 God, in thy wrath,
 deal not this shame, deal it not!
 Ah, bring not, bring not disgrace on her,
 on us her disgrace would fall;

Grimgerde
 O Father!
 Shall the maiden pale and be withered by man?
 Bring not on her this crying disgrace!
 Give ear to us! Dread-Father, o bring not,

o bring not, ah, bring not on her
 this crying disgrace,
 deal not this shame!
 For our sister's shame on us too would fall,
 should the holiest maiden pale and be withered
 by man;

Schwertleite
 O Father!
 Shall the maiden pale and be withered by man?
 Shall the maiden pale and be withered?
 Ah, deal not this disgrace!
 Ah, bring thou not, Father,
 ah, bring not, ah, bring not on her
 this crying disgrace,
 ah, deal not this shame!
 Ah, deal not, deal not this shame!
 On us her shame would fall;

Helmwige
 Recall the curse!
 Repent! hear now our prayer!
 Bring not on her this crying disgrace!
 God, in thy wrath,
 bring not on her this crying disgrace!
 For our sister's shame on us would fall;

Gerhilde
 Recall the curse! O Father!
 Shall the maiden pale and be withered by man?
 O deal thou not, God, in thy wrath,
 deal not this shame, deal thou not,
 ah, deal not this shame!
 For our sister's shame falleth on us,
 should the holiest maiden pale and be withered
 by man;

Siegrune
 Recall the curse!
 Shall the maiden pale and be withered by man?
 Bring not on her this crying disgrace!
 Dread-Father, bring not on her
 this crying disgrace,
 ah, deal not this shame!
 For our sister's shame on us too would fall,
 should the holiest maiden pale and be withered
 by man;

Rosswisse

Recall the curse!
 Shall the maiden pale and be withered by man?
 Hard-hearted father!
 deal not this shame!
 Dread-Father, bring not, ah, bring not
 this crying disgrace on her,
 ah, deal not, deal not this shame!
 Our sister's shame on us would fall;

All the Valkyries

For our sister's shame on us too
 would fall!

Wotan

Have ye not heard Wotan's decree?
 From out your troop
 must your traitorous sister be banished;
 as once she rode
 through the clouds with you rides she no longer;
 her maidenhood's flower will fade away;
 a husband will gain all her womanly grace:
 the will of her master she now shall obey,
 by the hearth at home shall she spin,
 to all mockers a mark for scorn!

(Brünnhilde sinks with a cry on the ground; the Valkyries, horror-struck, recoil violently from her.)

Frights you her lot?
 Then fly from the lost one!
 Wend ye from her and bide ye afar!
 If one should venture near her to linger,
 in my despite befriending her fate;
 that rash one shareth her lot:
 then heed ye right well my word!
 Hence now away; hither return not!
 Swiftly ride from the mountain,
 lest ill-fate light on you here!

(The Valkyries separate with a wild cry and rush in hasty flight to the wood.)

The Valkyries

Woe! Woe!

(Black clouds settle thickly on the cliffs: a rushing sound is heard in the wood. A vivid flash of lightning breaks from the clouds; in it the Valkyries, in a closely packed group, are seen with their bridles loose, wildly riding away.)

(The storm soon subsides; the thunderclouds gradually disappear. During the following scene

twilight falls with returning fine weather, followed at the close by the night.)

Scene Three

(Wotan and Brünnhilde, who lies at his feet, remain alone. A long, solemn silence: positions unchanged.)

(She begins slowly to raise her head a little.)

Brünnhilde

(beginning timidly and becoming firmer)

Was my offense so laden with shame
 that the offender so shamefully is scourged?
 Was there such deep disgrace in my deed
 that I so deeply must sink in disgrace?
 Was then my crime so dark with dishonor,
 that it robs me of honor for aye?

(She raises herself gradually to a kneeling position.)

O say: Father! look in my eyes:
 silence thy wrath, soften thy rage,
 and shew to me clear the hidden guilt,
 that in cruel anger doth force thee
 to cast off the child of thy heart.

Wotan

(in unchanged attitude, gravely and gloomily)

Ask of thy deed,
 and that will shew thee thy guilt!

Brünnhilde

By thy command only I fought.

Wotan

By my command
 didst thou fight for the Walsung?

Brünnhilde

So didst thou decree
 as lord of the lots!

Wotan

But my decree thou knew'st again I recalled!

Brünnhilde

As Fricka ensnared thy will to her service;
 when thou wert forced to befriend her,
 foe wert thou to thyself.

Wotan*(softly and bitterly)*

That thou understood'st me, weened I,
and chided thy insolent thought:
but coward and fool deemedst thou me!
So had I not treason to punish,
all too mean wert thou for my wrath.

Brünnhilde

No wisdom have I,
yet knew I this one thing,
that the Wälsung thou lovedst.
I knew all the strife, forcing thy will,
that drove that love from remembrance.
The other only couldst thou discern,
which, so sad to sight, prayed on thy heart
that Siegmund might not be shielded.

Wotan

Then knewest thou that,
and nathless gave him thy shield?

Brünnhilde*(beginning softly)*

As for thee I held but the one in my eyes,
when entrammeled wert thou by twofold desire,
blindly thy back on him turning!
She who in the field
wards thy back from the foe,
she saw now only what thou saw'st not:
Siegmund I beheld.
Death-doom I brought to him there;
I looked in his eyes, heard his lament;
I discerned the hero's bitter distress;
loudly resounded the plaint of the bold one:
unbounded love's most hopeless despair,
saddest heart's most dauntless disdain!
My ears have heard,
my eyes have seen what, deep in my bosom,
with awe and trembling filled all my heart.
Dazed and shrinking stood I in shame.
How I might serve him must I bethink me:
(with animation)
triumph or death to share with Siegmund:
that seemed only the lot I could choose!
He who this love into my heart had breathed,
whose will had placed the Wälsung at my side,
true only to him, thy word did I defy.

Wotan

So thou hast done
what so dearly I had desired,
yet by two-fold fate to my will was denied!
So light deemedst thou winning of hearts'
deepest rapture,
when burning woe in my heart outbroke,
when anguish awoke the grim intent,
for the world I loved so, the spring of love
in my tortured heart to imprison?
When 'gainst my own self in my torment I
turned me,
from weakness' pangs I rose up in frenzy,
furious yearning's fiercest desire
the fearful design in me wrought,
in the wreck of my ruined world
my unending sorrow to bury:
then thou wert lapped in blissful delights;
filled with emotion's rapturous joy,
thou drankest laughing the draught of love;
with mine, gall of the god's bitterest bondage
was mixed.

(dryly and shortly)

Now thy lightsome heart
henceforth shall lead thee:
from me hast thou turned away.
Aye must I shun thee;
together no more may we e'er whisper counsel;
henceforth our paths are parted forever,
for while life shall endure,
may the god ne'er give thee his greeting!

Brünnhilde*(simply)*

Unfit was for thee this foolish maid,
who, stunned by thy counsel,
nought understood,
when but one command
her own counsel made clear:
to love all that thou hadst loved.
Must I then leave thee and, fearing, shun thee,
must thou loosen our fast-woven bond,
and half thy being far from thee banish,
who once belonged to thee only,
thou god, forget not that!
Thy other self thou wilt not dishonor,
deal not disgrace that will shame thee too!
Thy own fame would be darkened,
were I the plaything of scorn!

Wotan

The might of love thou hast followed fain:
follow now him who shall force thy love.

Brünnhilde

Must I then go from Walhall,
no more to have part in thy working,
a man as my master henceforth must I serve:
to boastful craven make me not thrall,
not all unworthy be he who wins!

Wotan

From Warfather turnedst thou;
he may not fashion thy fate.

Brünnhilde

(softly and confidentially)
From thee rose a glorious race;
that race ne'er shall bring forth a craven:
the bravest of heroes, I know it,
shall bless the Wälsungs' line.

Wotan

Name not the Wälsungs to me!
When thee I cast off, cast off were they;
by envy wrecked was the race!

Brünnhilde

She who turned from thee rescued the race.
(secretly)
Sieglinde bears the holiest fruit;
(with animation)
in pain and grief
such as woman ne'er suffered
will she bring forth what in fear she hides!

Wotan

Ne'er seek at my hand shelter for her,
or for fruit her womb shall bear.

Brünnhilde

(secretly)
She guardeth the sword
that thou gavest Siegmund.

Wotan

(vehemently)
The sword that I in splinters struck!
Seek not, o maid, to vanquish my spirit,
await now thy fate, as it must fall;
I cannot change it for thee.

But hence must I now, far from thee fare;
too long I stay with thee here:
as from me turnedst thou, turn I from thee;
what wish is thine I may not e'en know:
the sentence now must I see fulfilled!

Brünnhilde

What hast thou decreed
that I shall suffer?

Wotan

In slumber fast shalt thou be locked:
who so the helpless one finds;
and wakes, shall win thee for wife!

Brünnhilde

(falls on her knees)
If fetters of sleep fast shall bind me,
for basest craven an easy booty;
this one thing must thou grant me,
in deepest anguish I pray:
o shelter me sleeping
with scaring horrors,
(firmly)
that but the first, most fearless of heroes
e'er may find me here on the fell!

Wotan

Too much thou cravest,
too great a grace!

Brünnhilde

(embracing his knees)
This one thing must thou grant me!
O crush thou thy child who clasps thy knee;
tread down thy dear one, destroy the maid,
let thy spear put out the light of her life:
but cast not, in thy wrath,
on her this most hateful shame!
(with wild ecstasy)
By thy command enkindle a fire;
with flaming guardians girdle the fell;
to lick with tongue,
to bite with tooth the craven,
who rashly dareth
to draw near the threatening rock!
*(Wotan, overcome and deeply moved, turns
eagerly toward Brünnhilde, raises her from her
knees and gazes with emotion into her eyes.)*

Wotan

Farewell, thou valiant, glorious child!
 Thou once the holiest pride of my heart!
 Farewell! farewell! farewell!
(very passionately)
 Must I forsake thee,
 and may my welcome
 of love no more greet thee;
 may'st thou now ne'er more ride
 as my comrade,
 nor bear me mead at banquet;
 must I abandon thee, whom I loved so,
 thou laughing delight of my eyes?
 Such a bridal fire for thee shall be kindled
 as ne'er yet has burned for a bride!
 Threatening flames shall flare round the fell:
 let withering terrors daunt the craven!
 let cowards fly from Brünnhilde's rock!
 For one alone winneth the bride;
 one freer than I, the god!

(Brünnhilde, deeply moved, sinks in ecstasy on Wotan's breast: he holds her in a long embrace.)

(She throws her head back again and, still embracing Wotan, gazes with deep enthusiasm in his eyes.)

Thy brightly glittering eyes,
 that, smiling, oft I caressed,
 when valor won a kiss as guerdon,
 when childish lisping of heroes' praise
 from sweetest lips has flowed forth:
 those gleaming radiant eyes
 that oft in storms on me shone,
 when hopeless yearning my heart had wasted,
 when world's delights all my wishes wakened,
 thro' wild wildering sadness:
 once more today, lured by their light,
 my lips shall give them love's farewell!
 On mortal more blessed once may they beam:
 on me, hapless immortal,
 must they close now forever.

(He clasps her head in his hands.)

For so turns the god now from thee,
 so kisses thy godhood away!
(He kisses her long on the eyes. She sinks back with closed eyes, unconscious, in his arms. He gently bears her to a low mossy mound, which is overshadowed by a wide-spreading fir tree, and lays her upon it.)

(He looks upon her and closes her helmet: his eyes then rest on the form of the sleeper, which he now completely covers with the great steel shield of the Valkyrie. He turns slowly away, then again turns around with a sorrowful look.)

(He strides with solemn decision to the middle of the stage and directs the point of his spear toward a large rock.)

Loge, hear! List to my word!
 As I found thee of old, a glimmering flame,
 as from me thou didst vanish,
 in wandering fire;
 as once I stayed thee, stir I thee now!
 Appear! come, waving fire,
 and wind thee in flames round the fell!

(During the following he strikes the rock thrice with his spear.)

Loge! Loge! appear!
(A flash of flame issues from the rock, which swells to an ever-brightening fiery glow.)

(Flickering flames break forth.)

(Bright shooting flames surround Wotan. With his spear he directs the sea of fire to encircle the rocks; it presently spreads toward the background, where it encloses the mountain in flames.)

He who my spearpoint's sharpness feareth
 shall cross not the flaming fire!

(He stretches out the spear as a spell. He gazes sorrowfully back on Brünnhilde. Slowly he turns to depart. He turns his head again and looks back. He disappears through the fire.)

(The curtain falls.)

English translation by Frederick Jameson

Glossary

aught — anything
 aye — always, forever
 birny — a type of armor
 bondsman — slave, servant
 boot — to profit, benefit
 brake — overgrown marsh or scrubland

craven — coward
 courser — a swift warhorse
 eke — also
 entrammeled — trapped, confined
 erewhile — until now
 fain — gladly, willingly
 fell — a barren hill or highland
 fly — to flee
 forfend — to prevent
 forswear — to renounce, give up
 Friedmund — a name Siegmund rejects,
 literally “peaceful”
 Frohwalt — a name Siegmund rejects, literally
 “cheerful”
 Grane — the name of Brünnhilde’s horse
 guerdon — payment, reward
 hap — fortune
 hapless — unfortunate, unlucky
 Hella — goddess of the underworld
 list — to listen
 meet — fit, suited
 nathless — nevertheless
 Neidings — a certain family clan (Hunding is a
 Neiding)
 Norn — a goddess of fate
 Nothung — name of Siegmund’s sword,
 literally “needful”
 prate — to talk idly
 prithee — please
 purblind — blind
 rede — advice; story
 rent — torn apart
 rune — secret
 scath — injury
 shew — to show
 sooth — truth
 trow — to believe
 wala — an earth spirit (in the *Ring* operas, “the
 wala” is Erda)
 Walhall — Valhalla
 Wälse — name used by Wotan as father of
 Siegmund and Sieglinde
 Wälsung — child of Wälse (Siegmund and
 Sieglinde are Wälsungs)
 weal — prosperity, advantage
 ween — to imagine, believe
 Wehwalt — a name for Siegmund, literally
 “woeful”
 wend — to travel, go
 wight — creature, person

Wolfe — Wälse
 Wölfig — Wälsung
 wonted — accustomed