

# Lohengrin

## by Richard Wagner

### Cast

HENRY, “the Fowler,” King of Germany (bass.)  
LOHENGRIN (tenor.)  
ELSA OF BRABANT (soprano.)  
DUKE GOTTFRIED (Godfrey.), her brother (silent.)  
FRIEDRICH (FREDERICK.) VON TELRAMUND, a Brabantine count (baritone.)  
ORTRUD, his wife (soprano.)  
THE KING’S HERALD (baritone or bass.)  
FOUR NOBLEMEN OF BRABANT (tenors and basses.)  
FOUR PAGES (sopranos and altos.)  
Saxon and Thuringian Counts and Noblemen,  
Brabantine Counts and Noblemen, Noblewomen, Pages, Vassals. Ladies, Serfs

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### ACT ONE

#### Scene One

*(A plain on the banks of the Scheldt near Antwerp. The river curves into the background; the view of it is obstructed on the right by trees, and it is visible again further off as it winds its way into the distance.)*

*(In the foreground king Heinrich is sitting under the Judgement Oak, next to him are Saxon and Thuringian counts, nobles and soldiers comprising the king’s levy. Opposite them are Brabantian counts and nobles, soldiers and people. They are headed by Friedrich of Telramund, next to him is Ortrud. The middle ground comprises an open circle. The king’s herald and four trumpeters proceed to the middle. The trumpeters play the king’s fanfare.)*

#### HERALD

Hear ye, counts, nobles and freemen of Brabant!  
Heinrich, King of the Germans,  
has come to this place  
to confer with you according to the law of the realm.  
Do you willingly obey his command?

#### BRABANTIANS

We willingly obey his command.  
Welcome, welcome, O King, to Brabant!

#### KING HEINRICH

*(standing up.)*

God greet you, worthy men of Brabant!  
Not for nothing have I journeyed here to you!  
I come to remind you of the Empire’s plight!  
Must I first tell of the scourge  
that has so often visited German soil  
from the East?

In the furthest marches of the realm you bade  
women and children pray:

“Dear Lord, save us from the wrath of the  
Hungarians!”

But it was I, head of the Empire, who saw fit  
to plan an end to such dreadful humiliation;  
victory in battle brought me peace  
for nine years — this I used to protect the  
Empire;

I ordered fortified towns and castles to be built  
and used the levy as a resistance army.

But now this period is over, the taxes are being  
denied us

and with threats the enemy is arming itself.  
Now it is time to defend the Empire’s honor;

East and West, to all I say:

let every acre of German soil

put forth troops of soldiers,

never again shall anyone abuse the German

Empire!

## SAXONS AND THURINGIANS

Let us away! With God for the honor of the German Empire!

## THE KING

*(sitting down again.)*

I come to you now, men of Brabant,  
to summon you to Mainz,  
there to join the troops.  
How grieved and saddened I am to see  
that without a prince you live in discord!  
I am told of confusion and wild feuding;  
thus I call on you, Friedrich of Telramund!  
I know you to be a man of the highest virtue,  
speak now, that I may know the reason for this  
strife.

## FRIEDRICH

I thank you, O King,  
for having come to pass judgement!  
I speak the truth, being incapable of deception.  
The Duke of Brabant lay upon his death bed  
when he assigned his children to my care,  
Elsa, the girl, and Gottfried, the boy;  
faithfully I tended his great youth,  
his life was the jewel of my honor.  
Imagine, O King, my grim sorrow,  
when I was robbed of this my honor's jewel!  
One day Elsa took the boy to the wood  
for a walk,  
but she returned without him;  
feigning concern she asked after her brother,  
for, having strayed a little from his side,  
she could not, so she said, find him again.  
All attempts to find the lost youth proved futile;  
when I pressed Elsa with threats,  
her pale trembling and apprehension  
proved to us her terrible crime.

I was seized with a horror of the girl;  
the right to her hand, granted me by her father,  
I willingly renounced there and then  
and took instead a wife who pleased me:

*(He introduces Ortrud,  
who bows before the king.)*

Ortrud, scion of Radbod, Prince of Friesia.  
*(He moves forward a few steps with great  
ceremony.)*

Now I bring a charge against Elsa of

Brabant; I accuse her of fratricide.  
And I rightfully claim this land for myself,  
since I am next in line to the duke  
and my wife is of the house that once  
gave its princes to these lands.  
You hear the charge, O King! Pass rightful  
judgement!

## ALL THE MEN

Ha, Telramund charges her  
with a dreadful crime!  
How this accusation fills me with horror!

## THE KING

What a fearful charge you utter!  
How could such crime be possible?

## FRIEDRICH

My Lord, rapt in dreams is the vain girl  
who so arrogantly spurned my hand.  
Thus do I accuse her of a secret amour:  
she clearly thought that, once rid of her brother,  
she as duchess of Brabant  
could rightfully refuse the vassal her hand  
and openly tend her secret lover.

## THE KING

*(interrupting the over-zealous Friedrich  
with a solemn gesture.)*  
Call the accused!  
Let the trial commence!  
May God grant me wisdom!  
*(The herald proceeds solemnly to the middle.)*

## HERALD

Shall trial be held in this place by might and  
right?  
*(The King hangs his shield on the oak tree with  
great ceremony.)*

## THE KING

May I remain unprotected by this shield  
until I have passed harsh and compassionate  
judgement!

## ALL THE MEN

*(They draw their swords, the Saxons and  
Thuringians plunging them into the ground in  
front of them, the Brabantians laying them flat  
on the ground.)*

May the sword not return to the scabbard  
until it sees justice done through judgement!

HERALD

Where the King's shield hangs,  
there shall you now see justice done  
through judgement!  
Thus do I call loudly and clearly:  
Elsa, appear at this place!

## Scene Two

*(Elsa appears in a simple white garment: she lingers in the background awhile before moving slowly and timidly towards center foreground. She is followed by women, also dressed in simple white clothes, but they initially remain in the background at the extreme edge of the Judgement Circle.)*

MEN

Behold! The accused approaches!  
Ah! How resplendent, how pure she looks!  
He who dared make such an accusation  
against her must be quite sure of her guilt!

THE KING

Are you Elsa of Brabant?  
*(Elsa nods her head in affirmation.)*  
Do you recognize me as your judge?  
*(Elsa turns towards the king, looks him in the eye and, by means of a trusting gesture, confirms that she does.)*  
Then I further ask you:  
are you aware of the serious charge  
that has been brought against you here?  
*(Elsa looks at Friedrich and Ortrud, shudders, bows her head sadly and nods.)*  
What have you to say against the charge?  
*(Elsa gestures, implying the answer "nothing!")*

THE KING

So you admit that you are guilty?

ELSA

*(starting sadly ahead for a while.)*  
My poor brother!

ALL THE MEN

How strange! What peculiar behavior!

THE KING

Speak Elsa! What have you to confide to me?

ELSA

*(quietly transfigured  
staring ahead of her.)*  
Lonely, in troubled days  
I prayed to the Lord,  
my most heartfelt grief  
I poured out in prayer.  
And from my groans  
there issued a plaintive sound  
that grew into a mightiest roar  
as it echoed through the skies:  
I listened as it receded into the distance  
until my ear could scarce hear it;  
my eyes closed  
and I fell into a deep sleep.

ALL THE MEN

How extraordinary! Is she dreaming?  
Is she enraptured?

THE KING

*(as though trying to wake Elsa from the dream.)*  
Elsa, defend yourself before the court!  
*(Elsa's expression goes from one of dream-like detachment to one of frenzied transfiguration.)*

ELSA

In splendid, shining armor  
a knight approached,  
a man of such pure virtue  
as I had never seen before:  
a golden horn at his side,  
leaning on a sword -  
thus he appeared to me  
from nowhere, this warrior true;  
with kindly gestures  
he gave me comfort;  
I will wait for the knight,  
he shall be my champion!

ALL THE MEN

May the grace of Heaven preserve us,  
that we may clearly see who is guilty here!

THE KING

Friedrich, you honorable man,  
think carefully — whom are you accusing?

FRIEDRICH

Her dreamy state deceives me not;  
 you hear how she raves about a lover!  
 I have sound reason to make the accusation  
 I do!  
 Her crime was reliably testified;  
 but to have to dispel your doubts with a witness  
 would truly offend my pride!  
 Here am I, here is my sword! Who of you  
 dares fight against my honor?

BRABANTIANS

None of us! We will only fight for you!

FRIEDRICH

And you, O King!  
 Do you remember how I have served you,  
 how I defeated the wild Dane in battle?

THE KING

Heaven forbid that I should need you  
 to remind me!  
 I freely admit that you are of the highest virtue;  
 in nobody's possession but yours  
 would I wish to know Brabant. -  
 God alone  
 must decide in this matter!

ALL THE MEN

Ordeal by battle! Ordeal by battle!  
 Let it begin!

THE KING

I ask you, Friedrich, count of Telramund!  
 Do you agree to a fight to the death,  
 to defend your honor in an ordeal by battle?

FRIEDRICH

Yes!

THE KING

And now I ask you, Elsa of Brabant!  
 Do you agree to let a fight to the death  
 take place here,  
 to let a champion represent you in an ordeal by  
 battle?

ELSA

*(without looking up.)*  
 Yes!

THE KING

Whom do you choose to be your champion?

FRIEDRICH

Learn now  
 the name of her lover!

BRABANTIANS

Pay heed!

ELSA

*(She still looks enraptured;  
 everyone watches her  
 in expectation.)*

I will wait for the knight,  
 he shall be my champion!  
*(without looking round.)*  
 Hear what reward I offer  
 the one sent by God:  
 in my father's lands  
 he shall wear the crown.  
 I shall consider myself happy  
 if he takes my possessions -  
 if he wishes to call me spouse,  
 I shall give him all that I am!

ALL THE MEN

*(to themselves.)*

A wondrous prize, where it God's to give!  
 He who fights for it would be wagering a great  
 deal!

THE KING

It is already midday, the sun stands at its zenith:  
 it is time, let the call go forth!  
*(The herald comes forward with the four  
 trumpeters; he orders them to the four points of  
 the compass, they proceed to the edge of the  
 Judgement Circle and sound the call.)*

HERALD

Let him who has come to fight  
 in the trial by combat  
 for Elsa of Brabant come forward!  
*(There is a long silence.)*  
*(Elsa, who has hitherto been completely calm,  
 now begins to look worried as she waits  
 expectantly.)*

ALL THE MEN

The calls have died away unanswered!  
Things do not bode well for her!

FRIEDRICH

*(pointing to Elsa.)*

Behold, did I accuse her falsely?  
I have right on my side!

ELSA

*(moving towards the king.)*

I beseech you, beloved King,  
one more call to my knight!  
He is surely a long way off and could not hear!

THE KING *(to the herald.)*

Send out one more call to the trial!  
*(The herald gives a signal and the trumpeters  
once again turn to the four points of the  
compass.)*

HERALD

Let him who has come to fight  
in the trial by combat  
for Elsa of Brabant come forward!  
*(Once again there is a long, tense silence.)*

ALL THE MEN

In dismal silence God passes judgement!  
*(Elsa sinks to her knees, praying fervently. The  
women, worried for their mistress, move slightly  
further into the foreground.)*

ELSA

You carried my lament to him,  
he came to me at your command:  
O Lord, tell my knight now  
to help me in my need!  
Let me see him now as I saw him then,  
*(with an expression of joyful transfiguration.)*  
as I saw him then, let him be near me!

WOMEN

*(sinking to their knees.)*  
Lord! Send her help!  
Lord God! Hear us!

*(The men standing on the higher ground near the  
river are the first to witness the arrival of  
Lohengrin, who is seen in the distance in a barge*

*pulled by a swan. The men in the foreground  
furthest away from the river bank turn round,  
initially without leaving their places; their  
curiosity grows as they look questioningly at  
those standing on the bank and soon they move  
from the foreground over to the river to look for  
themselves.)*

MEN

Behold! Behold!  
What strange and wondrous things is this?  
A swan?  
A swan is pulling a barge towards us!  
A knight is standing upright in it!  
How his armor shines!  
The eye is dazzled  
by such splendor!  
Behold, he is coming ever closer!  
The swan is pulling on a golden chain!

*(The last few men hurry over to the background;  
the foreground is occupied only by the king, Elsa,  
Friedrich, Ortrud and the women.). (From his  
raised seat the king can see everything; Friedrich  
and Ortrud are overcome with shock and  
astonishment; Elsa, who has been listening to the  
men's cries with increasing rapture, remains in  
the middle of the stage; she dares not even look  
round.)*

MEN

*(return to the foreground in a state of great  
agitation.)*  
A miracle! A miracle! A miracle has happened,  
a miracle never before seen or heard!

WOMEN

We thank you, Lord our God,  
for protecting this weak woman!

### Scene Three

*(Elsa has turned round and cries out when she  
sees Lohengrin.)*

ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN

Greetings, God-sent man!

*(The barge, drawn by the swan, reaches the bank  
in the middle of the background; Lohengrin,*

*dressed in gleaming silver armor, a helmet on his head, a shield on his back and a small golden horn by his side is standing in the boat leaning on his sword. Friedrich looks at Lohengrin in speechless horror. Ortrud, who has hitherto maintained a cold and arrogant posture, is gripped with terror when she sees the swan. As soon as Lohengrin makes a move to leave the boat, an expectant silence descends on the assembled throng.)*

LOHENGRIN

*(bending down to the swan.)*

I thank you, my dear swan!  
Go back across the waters  
to whence your boat brought me,  
return again only to bring us happiness!  
Thus will you have carried out your duty  
faithfully!  
Farewell, farewell, my dear swan!

*(The swan slowly turns the barge around and swims back up the river. Lohengrin gazes at it wistfully for a while.)*

MEN AND WOMEN

What sweet and blissful trembling  
comes over us!  
What blessed power holds us spellbound!  
How fair and noble to behold is he  
whom such a miracle brought ashore!

LOHENGRIN

*(leaves the river bank and proceeds to the foreground slowly and solemnly bowing before the king.)*

Hail, King Heinrich! May God's blessing  
be with your sword!  
May your great and glorious name  
never vanish from this earth!

THE KING

I thank you! Do I rightly recognize the power  
that brought you to this land,  
do you come to us as one sent by God?

LOHENGRIN

To stand in combat for a maiden  
accused of a great crime

is why I have been sent. Now let me see  
whether I am right in coming to her.

*(He moves slightly closer to Elsa.)*

Speak then, Elsa of Brabant:

If I am appointed as your champion  
will you without fear or trepidation  
entrust yourself to my protection?

ELSA

*(All the time she has been looking at Lohengrin, she has been unable to move, as if spellbound; but as soon as he addresses her she seems to wake up and falls down at his feet, overcome with joy.)*

My knight, my savior! Take me to you;  
I give to you all that I am!

LOHENGRIN

If I win this fight for you,  
do you wish me to become your husband?

ELSA

As surely as I lie at your feet,  
so will I freely give you my body and soul.

LOHENGRIN

Elsa, if I am to become your husband,  
if I am to protect country and people for you,  
if nothing is ever to take me from you,  
then you must promise me one thing:  
never shall you ask me,  
nor trouble yourself to know,  
whence I journeyed,  
what my name is, or what my origin!

ELSA

*(almost unconscious.)*

Never, my Lord, shall the question come to me!

LOHENGRIN

Elsa! Do you understand what I am saying?  
Never shall you ask me  
nor trouble yourself to know,  
whence I journeyed,  
what my name is, or what my origin!

ELSA

*(looking up at him with great emotion.)*

My protector! My angel! My redeemer,  
who firmly believes in my innocence!

What crime or doubt could be greater  
than that which would rob you of credence?  
As truly as you protect me in my need,  
so shall I faithfully honor your command!

LOHENGRIN

*(deeply moved, he lifts her to his breast  
in a transport of joy.)*

Elsa! I love you!

*(Both remain awhile in the same position.)*

MEN AND WOMEN

What wondrous thing do I see?

Has a spell been cast over me?

I feel my heart fail

at the sight of this noble, blessed man!

*(Lohengrin leads Elsa to the king and assigns  
her to his care before moving solemnly to the  
middle of the circle.)*

LOHENGRIN

Hear ye! To all of you, people and nobles alike,  
I now proclaim:

Elsa of Brabant is free of all guilt!

That your charge was false,

Count of Telramund,

will now be shown to you through God's  
judgement!

BRABANTIAN NOBLES

*(first a few, then an increasing number, whisper  
to Friedrich.)*

Stand down from the fight!

If you risk it,

you will never win!

He is protected by the highest power,

so of what use is your brave sword?

Stand down!

We your loyal friends beseech you!

Defeat, bitter remorse awaits you!

FRIEDRICH

*(who has hitherto kept his eye unwaveringly on  
Lohengrin, is gripped with passionate  
indecision but finally makes his mind up.)*

Sooner dead than a coward!

I know not what magic brought you here,

stranger who stands so bold before me,

but your arrogant threats will never stir me,

for I am not wont to lie.

Thus I will take up the fight with you  
and hope for rightful victory!

LOHENGRIN

Command the fight, O King!

*(Everyone resumes their previous positions.)*

THE KING

Come forward, three men for each combatant,  
and measure off the battle ring!

*(Three Saxons nobles come forward for  
Lohengrin, three Brabantians for Friedrich;  
they solemnly pace out the fighting area,  
marking off a full circle with their spears.)*

HERALD

*(standing in the middle of the circle.)*

Hear me, listen carefully:

let no man disturb this fight!

Keep away from the battle ring,

for if anyone disrespects the law of peace,

if freeman, he shall pay with his hand,

if serf, he shall pay with his head!

ALL THE MEN

If freeman, he shall pay with his hand,

if serf, he shall pay with his head!

HERALD

*(to Lohengrin and Friedrich.)*

Hear ye likewise, combatants to be judged!

Faithfully respect the law of battle!

Let not the deceit and cunning of magic

spoil the nature of the ordeal!

God will pass rightful judgement,

so trust in Him, not in your own strength!

LOHENGRIN AND FRIEDRICH

*(standing opposite each other, outside the  
circle.)*

God will pass rightful judgement on me,

so I shall trust in Him, not in my own strength!

THE KING

*(proceeding to the middle  
with great ceremony.)*

My Lord and God, I call upon you

*(Everyone bares their head in deepest  
reverence.)*

to be present at this fight!

Proclaim through the sword's victory a verdict  
that clearly shows what is deceit  
and what is truth!  
May he who is innocent fight with the arm of a  
hero,  
and may he who is false be sapped of strength!  
So help us God in this hour,  
for our wisdom is but folly!

ELSA AND LOHENGRIN

You will now make known your true judgement,  
my Lord and God, thus far I not hesitate!

FRIEDRICH

I faithfully come before you to receive  
judgement!  
Dear Lord, abandon not my honor!

ORTRUD

I rely on his strength,  
wherever he fights, it brings him victory!

ALL THE MEN

Give to the innocent's arm the hero's strength,  
and take away the strength from the liar:  
Make known your true judgement,  
O Lord our God, do not hesitate!

WOMEN

Lord my God, give him your blessing!

*(Everyone returns to their places, rapt in solemn attention. The six witnesses remain by their spears at the edge of the ring, the rest of the men standing slightly further back. Elsa and the women in the foreground under the oak tree beside the king. At a signal given by the herald, the trumpeters sound the call to battle. Lohengrin and Friedrich finish their preparations for the fight. The king draws his sword and strikes it three times on the shield-hanging on the oak. At the sound of the first stroke, Lohengrin and Friedrich take up their respective positions; at the second they draw their swords and adopt the guard position; at the third they begin the fight. After several violent bouts he floors his opponent with one mighty blow. Friedrich tries to stand up again, stumbles back a few steps and falls to the ground.)*

*(As Friedrich does so, the Saxons and Thuringians pull their swords from the ground and the Brabantians likewise seize hold of theirs. The king takes his shield from the oak.)*

LOHENGRIN

*(his sword at Friedrich's throat.)*  
Through God's victory your life is now mine:  
*(letting him go.)*

I will spare it you, may you devote it to  
repentance!

*(All the men thrust their swords back into the scabbards. The witness pull their swords from the ground. The nobles and other men joyfully break into what was the fighting area until it is filled with a mass of people.)*

THE KING

*(likewise returning his sword to its scabbard.)*  
Victory! Victory!

MEN AND WOMEN

Victory! Victory! Victory!  
All hail to you, hero!  
*(The king leads Elsa to Lohengrin.)*

ELSA

Would that I could find tunes of jubilation  
equal to your glory,  
worthily to laud you,  
tunes rich in the highest praise!  
In you I must melt away,  
before you I fade into nothingness;  
that I may be blissfully happy,  
take all that I am!  
*(She falls upon Lohengrin's breast.)*

LOHENGRIN

*(lifting Elsa from his breast.)*  
I gained victory  
through your innocence alone;  
now you shall be richly rewarded  
for all that you have suffered!

FRIEDRICH

*(writhing in anguish on the ground.)*  
Woe, I was beaten by God,  
through him has victory eluded me!  
I must despair of salvation,  
my glory, my honor is no more!



ORTRUD

*(furious at seeing Friedrich defeated, and keeping her sinister eyes fixed on Lohengrin.)*

Who is it that beat him  
and over whom I am powerless?  
Will this man reduce me to despair,  
are all my hopes no more?

THE KING AND THE MEN

Ring out, tune of victory,  
greet the hero with the highest praise!  
Glory be to your journey!  
Praise be to your coming!  
Hail to your origin,  
Protector of the meek!

You have defended  
the right of the meek,  
praise be to your coming,  
all hail to your origin!

We sing the praises of you alone,  
our songs ring out to you!  
Never again will a knight of your stature  
return to these lands!

WOMEN

Would that I could find tunes of jubilation  
equal to his glory,  
worthily to praise him,  
tunes rich in the highest praise!  
You have defended  
the right of the meek,  
praise be to your coming,  
all hail to your origin!

*(Young Saxon men lift Lohengrin up on his shields and Brabantians lift up Elsa on the king's shield, having first spread it with several cloaks; both are carried off amidst cheers of jubilation. Friedrich falls unconscious at Ortrud's feet.)*

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## ACT TWO

### Scene One

*(The fortress at Antwerp. Middle background the Palas [knights' quarters], left foreground the Kemenate [ladies' chambers], right foreground*

*the portal of the minister, exactly behind it the castle gate. It is night. The windows of the Palas are brightly lit; from the building can be heard the sound of triumphal music, horns and trumpets playing merrily into the night. Friedrich and Ortrud are sitting on the steps leading up to the minister portal. Both are dressed in dark, shabby clothes. Ortrud, resting her head in her hands, is staring at the brightly lit windows of the Palas; Friedrich is looking sullenly at the ground. Long, gloomy silence.)*

FRIEDRICH

*(suddenly standing up.)*  
Arise, companion of my shame!  
Daybreak must not find us here.

ORTRUD

*(without changing position.)*  
I cannot go, I am bound here as if by a spell.  
From the splendor of this our enemy's feast  
let me suck a terrible, deadly poison  
that will end our shame and their joy!

FRIEDRICH

*(moving over to Ortrud, darkly.)*  
O fearful woman, what spell binds me  
to you still?  
Why do I not leave you be  
and run away, away  
to where my conscience might find peace again!

Through you I lost  
my honor, all my glory;  
never again shall praise adorn me,  
my knighthood is but shame!  
I am condemned as an outlaw,  
my sword lies smashed,  
my coat of arms broken,  
and cursed is the house of my fathers!  
Wherever I turn  
I am shunned, condemned;  
lest he be defiled by my countenance,  
even the robber flees me!  
Would that I had chosen death,  
for I am so wretched!  
I have lost my honor,  
my honor, my honor is no more!

*(He falls to the ground, overcome with grief.  
Music is heard from Palas.)*

ORTRUD

*(still in her first position; as Friedrich is getting up.)*

What drives you to such wild lament?

FRIEDRICH

The fact that I have been robbed  
of the very weapon  
*(violently gesturing towards Ortrud.)*  
with which I would strike you down!

ORTRUD

Peace-loving Count of Telramund!  
Why do you mistrust me?

FRIEDRICH

You dare ask me?  
Was it not your evidence, your word  
that lured me into accusing the innocent one?  
Did you not lie to me, saying that  
from your wild castle your own eyes bore  
witness to the crime being carried out  
in the dark wood around you,  
that you saw Elsa herself drown her brother  
in the pond there? Did you not ensnare  
my proud heart by prophesying  
that the ancient House of Radbod  
would blossom anew and rule in Brabant?  
Did you not induce me to renounce the  
hand of Elsa, the innocent one, and to take you  
for my wife, because you are the last in the  
Radbod line?

ORTRUD

*(softly, but grimly.)*

Ah, your words cut me to the quick!  
*(aloud.)*

Yes, I said and testified all this to you!

FRIEDRICH

And did you not make me, whose name was  
esteemed,  
a man of the very highest virtue,  
the shameful companion of your lies?

ORTRUD

Who lied?

FRIEDRICH

You! Did God not pass judgement  
and punish me for having done so?

ORTRUD

God?

FRIEDRICH

O horror!  
How dreadful his name sounds from your lips!

ORTRUD

Ah, do you call your cowardice God?

FRIEDRICH

Ortrud!

ORTRUD

Do you mean to threaten me? Me, a woman?  
O you coward!  
Had you but addressed such grim  
threats to him who now sends you into the  
misery of exile,  
you would have bought victory for ignominy!  
Ha! He who knew how to match him would find  
him weaker than a child!

FRIEDRICH

The weaker he was,  
the greater the might of God in battle!

ORTRUD

The might of God? Ha, ha!  
Give me the power and I will surely show you  
what a weak god it is that protects him.

FRIEDRICH

*(shuddering with fear.)*

O wild seer, do you mean  
by secret means to enchant my reason anew?

ORTRUD

*(pointing to the Palas, in which the lights have  
been extinguished.)*

The revelers have lain down to sumptuous rest.  
Sit down beside me! The hour has come  
for my prophetic eye to enlighten you!  
*(During the following, Friedrich moves ever  
closer to Ortrud, as if drawn by a mysterious  
power; he listens to her attentively.)*

Do you know who this knight is  
who was brought ashore by a swan?

FRIEDRICH  
No!

ORTRUD  
What would you give to find out  
if I told you that, were he forced  
to reveal his name and origin,  
that strength would vanish  
that is granted him by magic alone?

FRIEDRICH  
Ah! Now I understand his interdict!

ORTRUD  
Listen! Nobody here has the power  
to draw that secret from him  
save she whom he so strongly forbade  
ever to ask him the question.

FRIEDRICH  
So Elsa must be brought to the point  
where she asks him the question?

ORTRUD  
Ha, how quickly, how well you take my  
meaning!

FRIEDRICH  
But how can that be done?

ORTRUD  
Listen!  
The most important thing is not  
to flee this place; so use your wit!  
To arouse just suspicion in her,  
come forward and accuse him  
of having used magic  
to confound the trial!

FRIEDRICH  
Ha! Deception and the cunning of magic!

ORTRUD  
Should this fail,  
there is always the possibility of using force!

FRIEDRICH  
Force?

ORTRUD  
Not for nothing am I  
versed in the darkest of arts;  
so heed what I say to you!  
Every creature that is made strong by magic,  
should but the smallest part of its body  
be torn off, it will immediately  
show itself to be powerless as it really is.

FRIEDRICH  
Ha, were that true!

ORTRUD  
Had you but  
cut off a finger during the fight,  
even just the joint of a finger,  
the knight would have been in your power!

FRIEDRICH  
O horror! Ha, what is this that I hear?  
I imagined myself to have been beaten by God;  
but the trial was confounded by deception,  
through magic's cunning I lost my honor!  
But I could avenge my shame,  
I could prove my honesty?  
I could smash the lover's deception  
and win back my honor?  
O woman, whom I see before me in the night,  
if you are deceiving me again,  
woe betide you! Woe!

ORTRUD  
Ha, how you rave! Be calm and collected!  
I will teach you the sweet delights of revenge!  
*(Friedrich slowly sits down beside Ortrud on  
the steps.)*

ORTRUD AND FRIEDRICH  
May the work of revenge be conjured up  
from the wild night of my breast!  
You who are lost in sweet sleep,  
know that disaster awaits you!

## Scene Two

*(Elsa appears on the balcony, dressed in white; she goes over to the balustrade and leans her head on her hand.)*

ELSA

Ye heavens, so oft filled  
with my sad laments,  
now I must gratefully tell you  
of the happiness that is mine!  
He came through you,  
you smiled on his journey,  
on wild ocean waves  
you faithfully preserved him.  
To dry my tears  
I have oft implored you;  
cool now my cheek  
which burns with love!

ORTRUD

It is she!

FRIEDRICH

Elsa!

ORTRUD

She shall curse the hour  
in which I now behold her face! Away!  
Leave this place awhile!

FRIEDRICH

Why?

ORTRUD

She is for me — her knight is yours!  
*(Friedrich moves off and disappears into the background.)*

ORTRUD

*(still in the same position.)*

Elsa!

ELSA

Who calls? How terrible and plaintive  
is the sound of my name as it rings out  
through the night!

ORTRUD

Elsa!

Is my voice so strange to you?

Will you completely disown the poor creature  
whom you are casting into the furthest reaches  
of exile?

ELSA

Ortrud! Is that you? What are you doing here,  
unfortunate woman?

ORTRUD

“Unfortunate woman”!

How right you are to call me that!  
In the distant solitude of the wood,  
where I was living quietly and peacefully,  
what did I do to you? What did I do to you?  
I was joyless, merely lamenting the misfortune  
that has long troubled my family.  
What did I do to you? What did I do to you?

ELSA

In God’s name, what are you accusing me of?  
Was it I who brought you suffering?

ORTRUD

However could you envy me  
the happiness of being chosen for the wife  
of the man you so gladly scorned?

ESA

Merciful God! What am I to make of this?

ORTRUD

He must have been beguiled  
by some unhappy madness  
to have accused you, the innocent one,  
of a crime -  
now his heart is torn by remorse,  
he is damned to grim repentance!

ELSA

God of justice!

ORTRUD

Oh, you are happy!  
After a brief, sweetly innocent period of  
suffering  
you now see life smiling upon you;  
you may gladly take leave of me,  
sending me down the road to death,  
lest the grim specter of my misery  
ever visit your feasts again!

ELSA

I would scarce be doing justice to your  
goodness,  
O mighty God who smiles upon me so,  
If I were to cast aside the misfortune  
that stoops before me now in the dust!  
Never! Ortrud! Wait for me!  
I will take you in myself!  
*(She hurries back into the Kemenate. — Ortrud  
springs up from the steps in wild delight.)*

ORTRUD

Ye gods profaned! Help me now in my revenge!  
Punish the ignominy that you have suffered  
here!  
Strengthen me in the service of your holy cause!  
Destroy the vile delusions of the apostate!  
Wodin! I call on you, O god of strength!  
Freyja! Hear me, O exalted one!  
Bless my deceit and hypocrisy,  
that I may be successful in my revenge!

ELSA

*(still offstage.)*  
Ortrud, where are you?  
*(Elsa and two maids appear from the lower  
door of the Kemenate carrying lights.)*

ORTRUD

*(humbly throwing herself before Elsa.)*  
Here at your feet.

ELSA

*(starting back in alarm at the sight of Ortrud.)*  
Dear God! Must I behold you thus,  
you whom I had but seen in pride and splendor!  
I choke with pity  
to see you humbled thus before me!  
Stand up! O spare me your supplications!  
If you bore me hate, I forgive you;  
and what you have already suffered through me  
I beg you to forgive me in turn!

ORTRUD

I thank you for showing me such goodness!

ELSA

He who tomorrow is to be called my husband  
I shall appeal to his loving nature,  
that he may show mercy to Friedrich too.

ORTRUD

You bind me in fetters of gratitude!

ELSA

At down let me see you ready -  
adorned in splendid garments  
you shall accompany me to the minster:  
there I shall await my knight,  
to become his wife before God!

ORTRUD

How can I ever repay such kindness,  
for I am powerless and wretched?  
If you allowed me to live with you,  
I would always be the beggar!  
*(drawing closer to Elsa.)*  
I am left but one power,  
no law robbed me of it;  
through it I could perhaps protect you,  
save you from the scourge of remorse!

ELSA

What do you mean?

ORTRUD

Let me warn you  
not to put too blind a trust in your happiness;  
lest you are ensnared by misfortune,  
let me look into the future for you.

ELSA

What misfortune?

ORTRUD

Could you but comprehend  
the wondrous origin of this man;  
may he never leave you  
as he came to you — by magic!

ELSA

*(Seized with horror, she turns away in  
indignation; then she turns back to Ortrud,  
filled with sadness and compassion.)*  
Piteous creature, can you not understand  
how a heart can love without harboring doubts?  
Have you never known the happiness  
that is given to us by faith alone?  
Enter here with me! Let me teach you  
to know the sweet bliss of true devotion!

Turn then to the belief that  
there is a happiness without regret!

ORTRUD

*(aside.)*

Ha! This pride shall help me  
fight her devotion!  
Against this I shall turn my weapons,  
her arrogance will cause her to repent!

*(Ortrud, led by Elsa, feigns hesitation as she enters the small door; the maids light the way and close the door once everybody is inside. — Dawn begins to break.)*

FRIEDRICH

*(emerging from the background.)*

Thus misfortune enters this house!  
Fulfil, O woman, what your cunning mind has  
devised;  
I feel powerless to stop your work!  
The misfortune began with my defeat,  
now shall she fall who brought me to it!  
Only one thing do I see before me,  
urging me on:  
he who robbed me of my honor shall die!

### Scene Three

*(Once he has spotted the palace that will best hide him from the view of the arriving people, Friedrich steps behind one of the minster buttresses.)*

*(Dawn gradually breaks. Two watches sound the morning fanfare from the tower; an answer is heard from a distant tower. As the watches descend from the tower and open the gate, castle servants emerge from several directions, greet one another and go quietly about their tasks etc. Some draw water from the well in metal vessels, knock on the portal of the Palas and are let in. The portal of the Palas opens again, the royal trumpeters emerge, sound the fanfare then go back into the building. The servants have left the stage. Brabantian soldiers and nobles arrive in increasing numbers, some crossing the courtyard, others coming in through the tower gate. They assemble in front of the minister and greet one another in cheerful excitement.)*

NOBLES AND SOLDIERS

The dawn fanfare bids us assemble,  
the day promises much!  
He who here performed such great miracles  
will perchance do many more wondrous deeds!

*(The herald appears from the Palas and moves onto the terrace in front of it, the four trumpeters preceding him. The royal fanfare is sounded once again and everyone turns towards the background in animated expectation.)*

HERALD

I hereby make known to you  
the King's word and wish:  
so pay heed to what he bids me tell you!  
Friedrich Telramund has been outlawed  
for daring to enter the trial by combat untrue.  
Whosoever shall harbor him or join him  
shall himself be outlawed in accordance with  
the law of the realm.

MEN

A curse on him who was untrue,  
who was judged by God!  
May the innocent shun him,  
may peace and sleep flee him!  
*(The trumpeters' call once again brings the people to attention.)*

HERALD

And further the king proclaims  
that the God-sent stranger  
whom Elsa wishes to take as her husband,  
to the land and crown of Brabant.  
But the knight does not wish to be called Duke -  
you shall call him Protector of Brabant!

MEN

Great is the long-awaited man!  
Hail to him who was sent by God!  
We will faithfully serve  
the Protector of Brabant!  
*(another call from the trumpeters.)*

HERALD

How hear what he bids me tell you:  
today he celebrates his wedding feast with you,  
but tomorrow you shall come here  
prepared for battle,

to serve the king as soldiers;  
 he himself spurns the sweet pleasures of rest,  
 he will lead you on to enjoy the noble fruits of  
 glory!\

*(He goes back into the Palas with the four trumpeters.)*

MEN

Do not delay in going to battle,  
 the noble one leads you on!  
 He who fights courageously with the knight  
 shall see the road to glory smile upon him!  
 From God is he sent  
 to make Brabant great!

*(As the people surge forward with joy, four nobles, Friedrich's former liegemen, appear in the foreground.)*

FIRST NOBLE

Now hear, he means to take us from this land!

SECOND NOBLE

Against an enemy who has never yet threatened  
 us!

THIRD NOBLE

Such bold beginnings should not be granted  
 him!

FOURTH NOBLE

Who shall stop him, since he has given the order  
 to leave?

FRIEDRICH

*(who has come amongst them unnoticed.)*

I!

*(He bares his head; they recoil in horror.)*

THE FOUR NOBLES

Ha! Who are you? — Friedrich!  
 Do my eyes deceive me?  
 You dare show yourself here,  
 the pray of every serf?

FRIEDRICH

I will soon dare even more,  
 the truth will dawn radiant before your eyes!  
 He who so boldly commanded you to go to war,  
 him will I accuse of deceiving God!

THE FOUR NOBLES

What is this I hear? You rave!  
 What is your intent?  
 Woe unto you!  
 You are lost if the people hear you!

*(They push him towards the minster, where they try to hide him from the view of the people. — Four pages proceed from the door of the Kemenate onto the balcony, descend the stairs and take their positions on the terrace in front of the Palas. The assembled throng notices the youths and presses forward.)*

PAGES

Make way for Elsa, our lady!  
 She is going in faith to the minister.  
*(They press forwards, clearing a broad passage through the retreating nobles, to the minster steps, where they take up their positions. Four other pages proceed solemnly from the Kemenate door onto the balcony and line up to await the procession of ladies whom they are to accompany.)*

### Scene Four

*(A long procession of ladies dressed in splendid garments slowly emerges from the door and moves onto the balcony; the procession turns left past the Palas before moving forwards again towards the minster. The ladies take up their positions on the minster steps as they arrive.)*

NOBLES AND SOLDIERS

*(during the procession.)*  
 May she be blessed as she proceeds,  
 she who suffered long in humility!  
 May God guide her,  
 may God protect her step!

*(The nobles have unwittingly pressed forwards again, but they move back once more as the pages approach, clearing the way for the procession which has arrived in front of the Palas. Elsa, in a sumptuous wedding dress, has appeared in the procession and arrived on the terrace in front of the Palas; a passage been*

*cleared once again and everyone can see Elsa, who lingers awhile.)*

NOBLES AND SOLDIERS

She approaches, the angelic one,  
consumed in a chaste glow!

*(Elsa slowly moves into the foreground through the avenue of people.)*

Hail to you, O virtuous one!

Hail, Elsa of Brabant!

*(The pages and foremost women have arrived at the minster steps and taken up their positions to watch Elsa enter the church; amongst the women behind her and closing the procession is Ortrud, also sumptuously dressed. The women nearest her are afraid and clearly cannot conceal their indignation. They keep their distance from her, such that she appears to be isolated; the expression on her face is one of increasing wrath. Just as Elsa, hailed loudly by the people, is about to tread on the first step, Ortrud rushes forward. She strides up to the bride and positions herself in front of her on the same step, thus forcing her to move back.)*

ORTRUD

Back, Elsa! No longer will I suffer  
to follow you like a maid!  
You shall give me precedence everywhere,  
you shall humbly bow down before me!

PAGES AND MEN

What is the woman doing? Back!

ELSA

In God's name! What is this that I see?  
What sudden change has come over you?

ORTRUD

Just because I forgot my worth  
for one single hour,  
do you think that I must only crawl before you?  
I dare now to revenge my suffering,  
I mean to redeem what is due to me!  
*(General astonishment; the crowd stirs.)*

ELSA

Woe, did I let myself be led astray  
by your hypocrisy,

you who stole to me moaning in the night?  
How can you arrogantly claim precedence  
over me,  
you, spouse of a man condemned by God?

ORTRUD

*(feigning an expression of deep pain.)*

False judgement may have banished my  
husband,  
but his name was honored throughout the land;  
he was called the One of highest virtue,  
his brave sword was known and feared.  
But your husband, pray, who here knows him?  
You yourself are unable to utter his name!

MEN, WOMEN AND PAGES

What does she say?  
Ha, what does she proclaim?  
She blasphemes! Silence her tongue!

ORTRUD

Can you utter it, can you tell us  
whether he is of worthy and noble descent?  
Or whence the waters brought him to you,  
when he shall leave you again, and whither he  
shall go?  
No, you cannot!  
For to do so would cause him great anguish -  
thus did the guileful knight  
forbid the question!

MEN, WOMEN AND PAGES

Ha, does she speak the truth?  
What terrible charges!  
She slanders him! How dare she?

ELSA

*(after the initial shock, she has regained her composure.)*

You blasphemer! Dastardly woman!  
Hear the answer that I venture to give you!  
So pure and noble is his being,  
so virtuous is the distinguished man,  
that he shall be smitten with eternal misfortune  
who dares to doubt his sending!

MEN

Indeed! Indeed!



ELSA

Did not my worthy champion,  
with the help of God,  
beat your husband in battle?

*(to the people.)*

Pray tell, all ye who are here present,  
which of the two is innocent?

MEN, WOMEN AND PAGES

Only he! Only he! Your champion alone!

ORTRUD

Ha, the innocence of you champion  
would soon be tarnished  
if he had to tell of the magic  
that gives him such power!  
If you do not dare ask him,  
we will all rightfully believe  
that you yourself are torn with worry,  
that his innocence is not what it seems!

WOMEN

*(supporting Elsa.)*

Help her against the loathsome woman's hatred!  
*(The Palas doors open, the four trumpeters  
emerge and sound the fanfare.)*

MEN

*(looking towards the background.)*

Make way! Make way! The King approaches!

### Scene Five

*(The king, Lohengrin and the Saxon counts and nobles have emerged from the Palas with great ceremony; the procession is broken up by the disturbance in the foreground. The king and Lohengrin force their way through the confusion in the foreground.)*

BRABANTIANS

Hail! Hail to the King!  
Hail to the Protector of Brabant!

THE KING

What is this dispute?

ELSA

*(She rushes over to Lohengrin in a state of great*

*agitation.)*

My Lord! O my Master!

LOHENGRIN

What is it?

THE KING

Who, this procession to the church  
dares disturb?

THE KING'S RETINUE

What is this dispute that we have heard?

LOHENGRIN

*(noticing Ortrud.)*

What do I see? That unholy woman near you?

ELSA

My deliverer! Protect me from this woman!  
Chide me if I have been disobedient to you!  
I saw her grieving in front of this portal,  
and took her in that she might forget her misery.  
Now see what dreadful recompense  
she pays my goodness:  
she chides me for trusting you too much!

LOHENGRIN

*(giving Ortrud a steadfast, damning look; she is  
unable to move.)*

You fearful woman, depart from her side!  
You will never be victorious here!

*(turning tenderly to Elsa.)*

Tell me, Elsa,

did she manage to poison your heart?

*(Weeping, Elsa hides her face in his breast.)*

LOHENGRIN

*(lifts her head and points to the minster.)*

Come, shed these tears there in joy!

*(He turns back to Elsa and the king, and leads  
the procession towards the minster; everybody  
prepares to follow in an orderly fashion.)*

*(Friedrich appears on the minster steps; the  
women and pages withdraw in horror when they  
recognize him.)*

FRIEDRICH

O King! Princes beguiled by deception! Stop!

THE KING

What does he want here?

MEN

What does he want here? Cursed one!  
Leave this place!

FRIEDRICH

Listen to me!

THE KING

Back! Leave this place!

MEN

Away! Or you will surely die!

FRIEDRICH

Listen to me, for you have done me a dreadful  
wrong!

THE KING

Away!

MEN

Away! Leave this place!

FRIEDRICH

The trial by combat was defamed, deceived!  
You are beguiled by the cunning of magic!

MEN

Seize the wretch!

THE KING

Seize the wretch!

MEN

Listen! He blasphemes!  
*(They rush upon him from all sides.)*

FRIEDRICH

*(making a desperate effort to be heard, he keeps  
his eyes fixed on Lohengrin and ignores the  
people pressing towards him.)*

He whom I see in splendor before me,  
him do I accuse of magic!

*(Those pressing forwards are startled by his  
words and finally pay attention.)*

May the power he won through cunning  
be scattered as dust before God's breath!  
How carelessly you proceeded with the trial

that yet robbed me of my honor,  
for you spared him one question  
when he came to do battle!

You shall not prevent that question now,  
for I shall put it to him:

*(assuming a domineering mien.)*

His name, station and honor  
I ask him to reveal before all here present!

*(The crowd stirs, deeply shocked.)*

Who is this who sailed ashore  
drawn by a wild swan?

He who avails himself

of such magical creatures,

his purity do I consider deception!

Now shall he answer the charge;

if he can, then I received just punishment -  
but if he cannot, you shall see

that his innocence is not what it seems!

*(Shocked and expectant, everyone looks at  
Lohengrin.)*

THE KING, MAN,

WOMEN AND PAGES

What serious charges! How will he answer  
them?

LOHENGRIN

I need not stand here and justify myself to you  
who so forgot his honor!

I can fend off the doubts of the wicked,  
never shall innocence succumb to them!

FRIEDRICH

Since he does not consider me worthy,  
I call upon you, your Majesty!

Will he say that you too are ignoble  
and refuse to answer your question?

LOHENGRIN

Yes, I can resist even the King,  
and the highest counsel of princes!

The burden of doubt will not trouble them,  
they saw my good deed!

Only one person must I answer:

Elsa —

*(Lohengrin stops in consternation as he turns to  
Elsa and notices that, with heaving breast, she  
is standing ahead of her, torn by an inward  
struggle.)*

LOHENGRIN

Elsa! How she trembles!  
I see her brooding wildly!  
Has the lying tongue of hatred beguiled her?  
O Heaven, protect her heart from danger!  
May the innocent one never be plagued with doubts!

FRIEDRICH AND ORTRUD

I see her brooding wildly,  
doubt is stirring within her breast!  
He who caused me distress by coming  
to this land,  
he is vanquished once the question  
is put to him!

THE KING AND ALL THE MEN

What secret must the knight harbor?  
If it causes him anguish, may his tongue guard  
the secret!  
We will protect him, the noble one, from  
danger;  
he proved his worth to us through his deed.

ELSA

*(oblivious to what is happening around her,  
staring ahead.)*  
The secret he conceals would bring him disaster  
if he revealed it here to all present;  
how woefully ungrateful I should be to betray  
my savior  
by forcing him to reveal it.  
If I knew his lot, I would keep it secret!  
Yet my breast is torn with doubt!

THE KING

Great hero, boldly answer the disloyal one!  
You are too noble to shy away from his  
accusations!

MEN

*(pressing towards Lohengrin.)*  
We stand with you, never shall we regret  
that we recognized you to be a true hero!  
Reach us your hand! We faithfully believe  
that your name is noble, even if it is never  
uttered!

LOHENGRIN

You knights shall not regret believing in me,  
even if my name and origin are never uttered!

*(The men form a circle round Lohengrin, who  
gives his hand to each one. As he moves into the  
background, Friedrich pushes through to Elsa.  
Overcome with worry, confusion and shame, she  
has not yet dared look at Lohengrin; and still  
struggling with herself, she is standing alone in  
the foreground.)*

FRIEDRICH

*(bending towards Elsa.)*  
Trust me! Allow me to tell of a way  
of being sure!

ELSA

*(shocked, but softly.)*  
Away from me!

FRIEDRICH

Let me take from him but the smallest part,  
the tip of his finger, and I swear to you  
that what he is keeping from you, you shall  
clearly see before you,  
and, faithful to you,  
he shall never leave your side!

ELSA

Ha! Never!

FRIEDRICH

I shall be near you tonight, —  
just call, and it will be done quickly and  
painlessly.

LOHENGRIN

*(quickly moving to the foreground.)*  
Elsa, who are you talking to?  
*(Elsa, with an expression of pained, desperate  
doubt, turns away from Friedrich and sinks at  
Lohengrin's feet, deeply shaken.)*

LOHENGRIN

*(to Friedrich and Ortrud.)*  
Away from her, cursed ones!  
May I never see  
either of you near her again!  
*(Friedrich make a gesture of bitter rage.)*

Elsa, arise! I your hand,  
 in your devotion lies the pledge of all happiness!  
 Does the force of doubt not leave in peace?  
 Do you wish to put the question to me?

ELSA

*(deeply agitated and in a state of confused  
 embarrassment.)*

My deliverer, who brought me salvation!  
 My knight, in whom I must melt away!  
 High above the force of all doubt  
 shall my love stand.

*(She sinks upon his breast.)*

*(Organ music is heard from the minster.)*

LOHENGRIN

Hail to you, Elsa! Let us now go before God!

MEN

Lo, he is sent from God!

WOMEN AND PAGES

Hail! Hail!

*(Lohengrin solemnly leads Elsa past the nobles  
 to the king. As they pass, the men respectfully  
 make way for them.)*

MEN

Hail to you! Hail, Elsa of Brabant!

*(Led by the king, Lohengrin and Elsa move  
 slowly towards the minster.)*

May you be blessed as you proceed!

May God be with you!

MEN, WOMEN AND PAGES

Hail to you, virtuous one!

Hail Elsa of Brabant!

*(As the king reaches the top step with the couple,  
 Elsa turns emotionally to Lohengrin, and he  
 takes her in his arms. As they embrace, Elsa  
 glances apprehensively down the right and side  
 of the steps and sees Ortrud, who has raised her  
 arm as if she were sure of victory; Elsa is  
 alarmed and looks away. Led by the king,  
 Lohengrin and Elsa walk towards the minster  
 door.)*

*Curtain*