

Das Rheingold
Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner

*The bottom of the Rhine River.
Steep rocks rise up from the river bed.
The three Rhinemaidens are frolicking in the water.*

Weia! Waga! Waves crash, and rock the cradle!

– Woglinde, just you on watch? – I'm not alone, Wellgunde's here.
– Let's see how you keep watch. – Better than you!

Foolish sisters!
Swim, Floßhilde, Woglinde's getting away!
Help me catch her!
You're being careless with the sleeping gold!
Be more vigilant with the sleeper's bed,
or you'll both pay for your rashness!

Hey, beauties, how graceful you are!
I greet you from night's shadow, look kindly on me!
– Hey, who goes there? – Who dares to spy on us?

Ugh, what a disgusting creature!
Guard the gold! Father warned us of men like this!

– You up there! – What do you want down there?
Would it spoil your fun if I just silently marveled?
If you dive down here, I'll tease you and play with you!
– He wants to play with us? – Is he mocking us?
You shine so beautifully in the glimmering light!
I'd love to embrace one of you slim beauties, if she'd come down!
This foe is a joke! He's actually in love!
– That lustful, little gnome! – Let's teach him a lesson!
– She's coming down! – Come a little closer!

The rock is so slippery, I keep sliding!

I can't hold on to anything in this water!
This chilly water is filling my nostrils.

Damned sneezing!

My glorious, sputtering suitor is coming!
Be my sweetheart, beautiful child!
If you want to woo me, come over here!

Damn! Are you evading me? Come back!
You're so nimble, I can't go that fast.
Climb down here and you'll get me for sure.
It's certainly better down there.
Now we're up here! Ha ha!
How can I catch these slippery, little fish?
Wait, you're cheating!

Hey there, my sweetheart, can't you hear me?
– Are you talking to me? – Here's my advice:
You're better off with me, stay away from Woglinde!
You're much prettier than she is,
she's not as radiant as you and she's much too coy.
Come down deeper if you'd like to please me.
– Is this too close? – Not close enough!

Put your slender arms around me,
so I can playfully stroke your neck,
and press myself against your ample bosom!
If you're in love and looking for love's delights,
let's see, handsome, what do you look like?

Oh! You're hairy and you have a hunchback!
A smarmy, smelly little dwarf!

Find yourself a sweetheart who looks like you!
Maybe you don't like me, but now I've got you!

Hold tight, or I'll slip through your hands!

Deceitful child! Cold-blooded, bony fish!
If I'm not handsome enough for you, playful or witty enough for you,
then go find an eel to have your way with!

Why so angry, little elf? Do you give up so easily?
You were wooing two of us, try your luck with the third,
surely, she's your sweet prize of love!
Why, that's music to my ears!
How lucky that there are more, maybe one will like me,
if it were just you, no one would choose me!
If you want me to believe you, come down!

You're foolish, my dim-witted sisters,
if you don't find him good-looking.
They are foolish and dim-witted,
now that I see that you are the loveliest!
Oh, go on singing so sweetly and gently;

your song deliciously seduces me!
My heart quakes and trembles with desire,
with such flattering praise.
Your charm has swept me off my feet,
your tender smile refreshes my spirit!
– My dear man! – Sweet girl!
– If only you loved me! – I'll hold you forever!
Your piercing looks, your scruffy beard,
oh, to look at you and hold you forever!
May your hair's shaggy locks
tickle Floßhilde forever!
Your toad-like shape, your raspy voice,
In wondering silence might I see and hear them!

Are you laughing at me, wicked women?
It's perfect for the end of this song!

Woe is me!
How painful!
Has the third one, so true, deceived me as well?

You worthless, cunning, underhanded wretches!
Are your words nothing but lies?

Shame on you, goblin! Don't scold us from down there!
Listen to what we bid you to do!
Why, coward, did you fail to hold on to the girl you loved?
We are honest and true to the seducer who can trap us.
Grab one of us, don't be afraid,
we won't escape in the water!

In my every limb, a searing flame burns!
Powerful rage and lust provoke my soul to madness!

While you make fun of me, I'm consumed with lust,
and one of you must yield to me!

*He begins to chase, climbing the rocks trying to catch the maidens.
They elude him and mock him with laughter.*

He staggers and falls into the abyss, but gets up to renew the chase.

They let themselves sink and he almost reaches them, but fails.

*Enraged by their mockery, he shakes a fist at them.
Might this fist grasp just one!*

Suddenly a bright gleam strikes the waters from above.

Look, sisters! The sun awakens.

Through the green swells, she greets the sleeping gold.

She gently kisses its eyes that they may open.

See how it smiles in the sunshine.

Glittering rays flow through the waves!

Rhinegold!

Gleaming joy, your laugh is so bright and glorious!

Glowing brightly, you glisten in the water!

Wake up, friend. Wake up with joy!

We'll play delightful games together.

When the river glows and the water is aflame,

we'll swim around your bed happily dancing and singing!

Rhinegold!

The water gleams with golden light.

Alberich, strongly attracted by the gleam, has eyes fixed on the gold.

What is it, maidens, that gleams and glitters there?

Where are you from, barbarian,

that you've never heard of the Rhinegold?

The elf knows nothing of the gold that awakens and sleeps?

That joy-giving star that shines from the deep,

illuminating the waves with its virtuous light?

See how merrily we glide through its glow!

If you can summon the courage,

come swim and revel in it with us!

Does the gold only serve for your diving games?

That's worth nothing to me!

He wouldn't mock the gold's beauty,

if he knew all of its wonders.

He would inherit the world,

for whoever fashions a ring out of the gold

is bestowed power without limit.

Father said it, and it is our charge

to wisely guard the shining treasure,

that no thief should take it from the water.

Be silent, then, you chattering mope!

My prudent sister, why make accusations?

Don't you know to whom alone

is given to forge the gold?
Only he who forswears love's power,
only he who renounces love's pleasure,
only he can master the magic
to turn the gold into a ring.

We are confident and free from worry,
because every living person must love,
no one would willingly forego its delights.
Least of all this pathetic, little dwarf,
wasting away in lustful desire!
I'm not afraid of him, whom we found here.
The flames of his lust nearly scorched me.
A sulfurous brand in the waves:
hissing loudly in love's frenzy!

Darling elf, won't you laugh with us?
In the gold's gleam, even you are handsome!
Come on, laugh with us!

They swim, laughing, to and fro in the light.

Alberich, eyes fixed on the gold, has listened well to their chatter.
I might inherit the world through you?
Though I can't gain love by force,
maybe I can win with cunning.

Laugh all you want; the Nibelung draws near your gold!

Flee with your lives! The dwarf is crazed!
Water splashes wherever he flails!
Love has driven him mad!

Still not afraid?
Go frolic in the darkness then, watery creatures!

I'll put your light out,
wrench the gold away,
for I will forge the ring.
Let the waters mark my words:
I do henceforth curse love!

He tears the gold from the rock and plunges into the depths.
The maidens dive down after him.
– Stop the thief! – Save the gold!
Help, help! Alas!

Alberich's mocking laughter is heard from the depths.

An open space on a mountaintop.

Daybreak gradually reveals a castle with gleaming battlements.

Wotan and his wife Fricka lie asleep on a flowery meadow.

Wotan, husband, wake up!

The sacred Hall of Bliss is guarded by door and gate.
Humanity's honor might now rise to endless renown!

Snap out of your blissful dreams of deception!
Wake up, husband, and think!

Wotan raises a little. His eyes are fixed on the castle.

The everlasting work is ended!

On the mountaintop stands the abode of the gods,
a shining, new structure!
As I conceived of it in my dreams,
just as my will decreed,
it is strong and beautiful, it stands for all to see,
a magnificent building!

You feel only joy at what fills me with dread?
The castle delights you and I fear for Freia!
Ignorant husband! Don't you recall what was agreed upon?
The castle is completed, the forfeit is due:
Have you forgotten what you owe?
I well remember what they demanded,
those who built the stronghold there;
I tamed them by treaty, defiant giants,
bidding them to build the splendid hall;
it is finished, - thanks to them -
as for the payment, give it no thought.
What laughable folly! Such heartless cheerfulness!
Had I known about such a contract,
I would have opposed such deceit;
but you men kept us women out of the way,
so that, deaf to us and in peace,
you could negotiate alone with the giants.
So, without shame, you brazenly bargained with Freia,
my beautiful sister. Well done on your shabby deal!
Is there anything sacred or precious
to you men besides greed and power?

Did Fricka no nothing of greed,

when she begged me for the castle?

Concerned for my husband's faithfulness,
I must now sadly ponder
ways to bind him fast,
whenever he feels drawn away:
a magnificent dwelling, domestic bliss,
were meant to entice you to peaceful repose.
But, as you had it built, you thought only of war and weapons.
It is meant to increase your dominion and power;
that towering structure exists only to whip up greater unrest.

If your wish, my wife, was to trap me in the fortress,
you must also grant me, as a god,
while confined to the stronghold,
might win for myself the world outside it.
All who live love variety and excitement:
That pleasure I cannot forego!
Heartless, unloving husband!
For the power and dominion, with ungodly scorn,
you would gamble away love and women's worth?

In order to win as my bride, I forfeited one of my eyes;
how foolish you are to chide me now!
I honor women more than would you have!

And I'll never give up on Freia;
I've never considered it.

Then protect her now.
She's helpless, scared and racing here for help.

Help me, sister! Protect me, kinsman!

Fasolt has threatened me down by those rocks!
He's coming to claim me as his own!
Let him threaten! Did you see Loge?
So, you still trust that cunning creature?
He has done great harm already,
yet he continues to ensnare you.
Where freedom of mind is called for,
I need help from no one.
But how to turn a foe's grudge into an advantage
is taught by the kind of cunning and craft Loge employs.

He advised me in the matters of the contract,
promised to ransom Freia,

and so, I must rely on him now.
And he leaves you in the lurch!

Here come the giants, marching swiftly here:
Where is your crafty accomplice now?

Where are my brothers, who should be helping me now,
since my kinsman is abandoning the weak!

Help, Donner!
This way! Come save Freia!
Those who betrayed you in evil alliance
are all hiding themselves now!

The giants Fasolt and Fafner enter, armed with clubs.

While gentle slumber closed your eyes,
the two of us, unsleeping, built your fortress.
Never tiring of might labor, we stacked up the massive stones,
built a great tower, door and gate,
to guard and lock the hall in lordly keep.

There it stands, what we built,
shining brightly in the light of day.

Move in now and pay us our due.

Name your price, good people. What is your due?
The price is fixed, as what seems fit for us.
is your memory of it so faint?
Freia, the beautiful,
also called Holda, the free,
it's agreed: we're taking her home.
Have you lost your minds with this contract?
Think of some other price; Freia isn't for sale!

What's that you say? You're plotting betrayal!
Betray the contract?

The runes carved on your spear,
our agreed upon contract mere sport for you?
My trusting brother, do you see their deception now?
Son of light, light of honor!
Hear us and take heed!
Honor your contracts!
What you are, you are through your contracts alone!

Your power is bound by sworn upon agreements.
Your wisdom far surpasses our cleverness,
we are free men bound to you in peace,
but cursed be all of your wisdom,
and to hell with your peace,
if you cannot honestly comply with the terms of your contracts!
That is the counsel from a simpleminded giant.
Learn from him, oh wise one!

How cunning! The deal wasn't serious, it was made in jest!
The lovely goddess, so splendid and radiant,
what use are her charms to you ruffians?

Do you mock us? Ah, how unjust!
You, who rule by beauty,
you hallowed, radiant race, foolishly striving for majestic towers,
trading a woman's delights for the sake of castle and hall!
We are idiots for toiling on, sweating with blistered hands,
to win a wife,
beautiful and kind, to live among us poor creatures.

And you say that we contracted in jest?

Stop your idle chatter. We're not looking for a prize.
We gain little by possessing Freia,
but gain much more by wresting her from the gods.
Golden apples grow in her garden,
and she alone knows how to tend them.
Partaking of the fruit bestows on her kinsmen
eternal youth.
But without it, they will wither,
they'll waste away, old and weak,
if they were to lose Freia.

So, let's steal her away from them!

Loge is taking too long!
Give us a straight forward answer!
Demand some other payment!
No, it must be Freia!

You there, come with us!

Help! Save me from these beasts!

Come to me, Freia!
Leave her alone, you bully!

Froh will protect the fair Freia.

Fasolt and Fafner, have you ever felt my hammer's heavy blow?
– Are you threatening us? – Why are you meddling here?

We were not looking for a fight,
we only want our payment.

I've paid the giants their due many times:
Come here, I'll measure out your payment out in plentiful measure!

Stop being rash! Put down your hammer!

My spear safeguards our contract.

Spare your hammer's heft.

Alas, Wotan is giving me up!
Have I heard you correctly, hard-hearted man?

Loge, at last!

Did you come so quickly to help me fix this bad bargain you struck?

What? Which bargain am I supposed to have struck?

The one you discussed with the giants in council?

I am a wanderer, traveling high and low;

I do not delight in house or hearth;

Donner and Froh think only of the joys of home.
Should they wish to wed, a home must gladden them.
A stately hall, a sturdy castle,
that was Wotan's wish.
House and court, hall and castle,
the blessed fortress now stands, strongly built.
I inspected the proud standing walls myself,
I looked to see everything was solid.
I have found Fasolt and Fafner to be trustworthy.
There's not a single stone loose in the masonry. 467a.
I've not been idle, like so many here,
to call me lazy would be a lie!
Slyly you're trying to elude me.

Think carefully before trying to deceive me!

Of all the gods, I am your only friend,
I was the only one who took you in.

So, speak and advise me with cleverness!

When the castle's builders demanded Freia as payment,

you know that I only agreed
because you promised to find some other way to pay them.

All I promised was to ponder how to get around that pledge,
nothing else.

That I did promise,
but how could I promise to find the unfindable?

How could that be promised?

See what a deceitful reprobate you've trusted!
Loge is your name, but I call you Liar!
Cursed flame, I'll snuff you out!
Fools revile me to cover up their own shame!

Leave my friend in peace!
You don't know Loge's art,
and I value his advice even more
when he delays in paying it out.

– No more delays! Pay up now! – The payment is long overdue!

Now listen, you stubborn creature! Keep your word!
Where have you been roaming?
Lack of gratitude is always Loge's reward!
For your sake alone, I looked everywhere,
tempestuously scouring the corners of the world:

seeking a replacement for Freia
that would properly satisfy the giants.

I searched in vain and now I know the truth:
in the entire world,
nothing is precious enough to be a satisfying substitute
for a man than the delight and worth of a woman.

Wherever there's life and breath, in water, land or air,
I asked a good deal, enquired of all,
where the life force moves and seeds stir,

what does man believe is more powerful
than a woman's delight and worth?

But no matter where life stirs,
my questioning was only met with derision.
In water, land, or air,
nothing will relinquish love or woman.

I only saw one who forswore love's delights.
For the sake of Rhinegold, he gave up woman's favor.

The Rhine maidens told me their plight:
The Nibelung, Alberich, tried to win their favor in vain.
Rejected, he stole the Rhinegold for his revenge.
Now, he believes it is the most precious possession,
more sublime than woman's grace.

For the glittering toy that was wrested from the water,
the maidens' lament rang in my ears.
To you, Wotan, they now appeal,
that you make the thief accountable,
and give back the gold to the waters,
to remain their own forever.

I promised the maidens I'd tell you,

and now I have kept my word.

You're foolish, if not spiteful!
You see that I am the one in need.
How, then, can I begin to help others?
I begrudge the elf his gold,
the Nibelung has caused us much distress,
but he has always slyly slipped out of our grasp.
He'll think up new ways to harm us
if the gold gives him power...

You there, Loge. Tell us without lying:
What is the gold's great value
that the Nibelung wants nothing more?

It's but a trinket in the water's depths,
for laughing children's enjoyment,

but, if forged into a rounded ring,
it bestows upon him supreme power,
and he would be the master of the world.

I've heard whispers of the gold in the Rhine,
hidden in its luster, runes describing great riches,
the ring would give inconceivable power and treasure.

Might the golden trinket's glitter
be for a woman as fair adornment?
A wife might force her husband to be true,
if she wore the bright and gleaming jewel,
with runes that dwarves busily forge under the ring's spell.

Could my husband win the gold for himself?

I think it seems wise to wield the ring.

But, Loge, how might I learn the skill?
How might I forge the ring?
A magic rune forces the gold into a ring,
no one knows it;
but the spell can be easily cast
by he who renounces love.

You'd rather not, but in any case, you're too late.
Alberich did not hesitate.
Brazenly, he won the magic's power:
He has succeeded in forging the ring!

The dwarf would enslave us all
if the ring weren't wrested from him.
I must have the ring!
Now it's easily won, there's no need to renounce love.
Ridiculously easy, like child's play!
– Then advise how. – By theft.

What a thief has stolen, you steal from the thief.
Has there ever been anything easier?

But Alberich guards himself with cunning defense,
you must proceed cleverly and shrewdly
when you bring the thief to justice,
and make him give the gold back to the maidens,
who are imploring you to do so.

Rhine maidens? Why should I do as they ask?

I don't want to know anything from those watery creatures!
For many men, to my disgrace,

have been lewdly lured under the water by them.

Believe me, the glittering gold is worth far more than Freia,
because whoever possesses its magic can attain eternal youth!

Hear, Wotan, the words of those who have waited!
Freia may live in peace with you.
I've found a suitable reward for payment:
The Nibelung's gold will suffice for us uncouth giants.
Are you in your right mind?
What I do not own, I'm to give to you shameless creatures?

The castle was built with incredible toil.
It will be easy for you with your cunning and strength,
to do what we have never been able to:
to catch the Nibelung and bind him fast.

I should trouble myself with the dwarf for you?
I should capture your foe?
My indebtedness to you is making you brazen and greedy!

Come here, maid! You are ours!
As our hostage you'll come with us, until we've received payment!
Alas! Woe is me!
Let her be led away!

Until this evening, mark my words,
we'll take good care of our hostage,
we will return, but if we come back,
and the Rhinegold is not here as ransom...
the term will have ended, Freia will be forfeit,
and be ours forever!

Sisters! Brothers! Save me! Help!
– Up, after them! – Kill them all!

Help me!

They're marching over hedge and ditch into the valley.

They giants now wade through the Rhine's rushing waters.

Freia is hanging unhappily over the ruffian's shoulders.

How they are clumsily stumbling along!
They're already going through the valley.

They won't stop to rest until Reisenheim's border!

Why is Wotan so furiously thoughtful?

How are the blessed immortals now?

Is some mist playing tricks on me?
Does a dream delude me?

How anxious and pale you wither so soon!

The light in your cheeks is fading,
the light has gone from your eyes.

Don't be afraid, Froh. It's early yet!
Donner, your hammer is sinking from your grasp!

What's wrong with Fricka?
Is she unhappy with his sullen grayness,
making him appear old?

Alas! What is happening?

I can't lift my hand!

My heartbeat falters!

Now I understand. Hear what you are lacking!
You haven't partaken of Freia's fruit today.
The golden apples from her garden
kept you vigorous and young
when you ate them every day.
The garden's keeper is now held hostage,
and now the fruit dries and withers on the branch.
Soon it will rot and fall to the ground.

It doesn't matter to me,
Freia was always stingy with her precious fruit to me.

For I am only a half-god, not like you, the immortals!

But you staked all on the youth-giving fruit,
and the giants knew that very well,
and thus, have threatened your very lives.
Now, consider how to save yourselves!

Without the apples, old and gray, senile and sullen,

withered and scorned by the whole world,
the godly race will die out.

Wotan, my husband! Unhappy man!
See how your folly has laughingly brought you nothing
but shame and disgrace!

Get up, Loge! Come down with me!
Go with me to Nibelheim to get that gold!
The Rhine maidens cried out for help:
may they hope to be heard?
Silence, chatterer!
Freia, the good. Freia must be rescued!
As you command, I will gladly lead.
Shall we descend straight through the Rhine?
Not through the Rhine!
Then let's swing through the sulphur cleft,
come, come with me!

Everyone else, wait here until evening,
I go in search of the redeeming gold,
to regain our lost youth!
Fare well, Wotan!
Good luck!
Come back again soon to your anxious wife!
Wotan and Loge descend into the cleft.

Nibelheim

Hey! Come here, you crafty dwarf!
You'll be properly whipped if you don't finish
making the fine ornament on time as I ordered!

Let me go! It's ready, just as you ordered,
it was fitted together with sweat and toil,
now let go of my ear!
What are you waiting for, why won't you show me?
Poor wretch that I am, I was afraid something was amiss.
What's not yet ready?
Here... and there...
What here and there? Give me the trinket!

Look, you idiot! Everything is forged, just as I asked.
So, the simpleton wanted to trick me,
so he could keep the jewel all for himself?

After it was my cunning that taught to forge it?
Don't I know that my stupid brother is a thief?

The helm fits perfectly on my head,
Will the magic spell also work?
"Night and mist, seen by none!"
Alberich disappears.
Can you see me, brother?

Where are you? I can't see you.
So, feel me then, you lazy idiot!
Take that for your thieving greed!

My thanks, dimwit, your work has turned out well!

Nibelungs all, bow down now to Alberich!
He sees everything to watch you all,
there'll be no more rest or repose,
you must work for him even when you can't see him,
where you cannot see him, know he is there!
You are his slaves forever!
Hear him, he nears, the lord of the Nibelung!

Wotan and Loge arrive in Nibelheim.

We've arrived in Nibelheim.
But what are those fiery sparks flashing there?

Someone is moaning loudly; what's lying among the rocks?
What are you whimpering about, wondrous thing?

Hey, Mime, you merry dwarf, what is it that torments you so?

Leave me alone!
Of course, I'll do so, and even more! Listen!
I want to help you, Mime.

Who could help me?
I'm bound to obey my own brother,
he's made me his slave!
And what gave him the power to enslave you, Mime?

With wicked artifice, Alberich crafted a ring of gold from the Rhine.
We tremble in awe at its powerful magic.
For with it he bends us all to his will,
all the Nibelung's dark legion.

Carefree smiths, we used to make jewelry for our wives,
pretty ornaments, neat Nibelung trinkets.
We laughed happily at our toil.

Now, the criminal forces us to slither into crevices,
ever toiling for him alone.
Through the power of his ring, his greed can divine
where more and more shimmering gold is buried.
Then we have to search, trace, and dig,
smelting the spoils and forging the molten ore,
and without any rest,
pile up the gold for our master.

So, lazy dwarf, did his anger just now strike you for being idle?

Me, most of all!
He forced on me the hardest task:
He bade me weld a magic helm,

he specified exactly how it should be fashioned.

I cleverly noted what powerful magic resided in the piece,
that I had forged from the ore.
So, I wanted to keep the helm for myself,
by means of its magic to be freed from Alberich's yoke.
And perhaps... yes, perhaps outwit the tyrant,
and have him be in my power,
wrest the ring away from him, so that,
as I am a slave now to the bully,
when freed of his power, may have him enslaved to me!

If you're so clever, why did you fail?
Alas, though it was I who fashioned the work,
I failed to correctly guess its magic that charmed it!
He who commissioned the work snatched it away,
and has taught me now, too late, alas,
what cunning powers lay in the helm.
He vanished from sight;
but his unseen arm dealt painful whelps to me!

And that's the thanks I got, fool that I am!

Admit it, his capture will not be easy.
But he will fall with the help of your cunning!

Who are you strangers, then, with all your questions?
Friends of yours,

we will free the Nibelung people from their plight!

Beware! Alberich is coming!

We'll wait for him here.

This way! Hihi! Hoho!
Lazy slaves! Pile the hoard there in a heap!

You there, get up! Keep going!
Contemptible creatures! Put down the treasure!
Should I help you? Everything over here!

Hey, who's that there?
Who's broken in here? Mime, come here, you wretch!
Have you been blabbing to this pair of vagrants?
Away with your lazy self! Back to smelting and smithying!

Hey, back to work! All of you, be off! Double your efforts!

Get me the gold out of the new shafts!
My scourge will find you if you don't dig fast enough!

Mime will make sure that no one is idle,
or he will feel the sting of my whip!

For I am lying in wait everywhere, though unseen.
He knows this, I think, very well!

Are you still lingering?
Do you dare to delay?

Tremble with fear, you downtrodden herd!
Quickly obey the ring's lord!

What do you want here?

We've heard rumors of Nibelheim's night-shrouded land:
Mighty wonders are worked here by Alberich;
the urge to see them has brought us here to visit.
Envy brings you here to Nibelheim!
Believe me, I'm familiar with such bold guests!
Do you know me well, foolish goblin?
Then say who I am, that you howl like that?
In a frozen cave, where you lay cowering,
who'd have given you light and fire if Loge hadn't smiled on you?
What good would your forgings be if I hadn't heated your forge?

I am your kinsman, and once was your friend,
and your thanks seem far from fitting!
So, the spineless Loge is now hobnobbing with the gods?
If, false traitor, you're now their friend, as you once were a friend to me,
Haha! I'm glad! For I have nothing to fear from them.
I agree, you can trust me.
I trust your dishonesty, not your honesty!

I can safely defy all of you!
Your power has made you very bold.
Your strength has grown fearsomely mighty!
Do you see the hoard that my legion has piled up for me?
I've never seen a more enviable sight.
This is only today's, a pitiful, little pile!
Daunting and mighty shall it grow hereafter.
What use is the hoard to you,
since there is no joy in Nibelheim,
and there is nothing to be bought?
To create more wealth and hide away wealth,
Nibelheim's darkness is useful to me.
But with the hoard piled up in the cave,
I shall then accomplish wonders:
I shall win the entirety of the world as my own!

And how, my good man, will you set about to do that?

You who live, laugh, and love up there amongst gentle breezes:

I will capture all you gods in my golden fist!

As I have renounced love,
all living creatures must renounce it as well!

Lured by gold, you'll lust for gold alone!

You lull yourselves on blissful heights;
you who live in eternal luxury scorn the black elf!

Beware!
For when your people yield to my power,
your pretty women, who spurned my wooing,
shall forcibly sate the dwarf's lust,
though love smiles on him no longer!

Haha! Do you hear?
Beware!

Beware of my dark legion,
when the Nibelung's hoard rises from dark depths to daylight!

– Out of my sight, you fool! – What did he say?
Keep your wits about you!

Who'd not be struck with wonder on encountering Alberich's work?
If your brilliant guile can achieve what you claim with the hoard,
then I must hail you as the most powerful man;
for the moon and stars, and the radiant sun,
they too have no choice but to serve you.

Yet, I think it important above all else,
is that the Nibelung legion should bow before you without envy.
You boldly flourished the ring:
Trembling, your people shrank back before it.

But, if a thief crept upon you asleep,
and slyly snatched the ring from you,
how would you defend yourself in your wisdom?

Loge thinks himself the smartest of all;
he thinks all others are stupid;
that I might need him to help advise me and earn his thanks,
the thief would indeed be glad to hear!
The concealing helm I devised all by myself;
But Mime, the most careful of all smiths
had to forge it for me.
to quickly change my shape at will,
serves the helm.
No one can see me, though he may seek me;
Yet I am everywhere, hidden from sight.
And so, free from worry, I'm safe from you, too,
my fond and caring friend!

I have seen so much,
and found so many strange things,
but I've never beheld such a wonder.
I can scarcely believe in such a matchless work.
Were such a thing possible, your power would be unending!
Do you think I'm lying and boasting like Loge?
Until I see it myself, dwarf, I doubt your word.
The fool's so filled with his own cleverness he'll burst!
(Let your jealousy torment you, then!)
Decide, what shape should I stand before you now?
Whichever you want,
only make me speechless with amazement!

“Giant dragon, wind in coils.”

Alberich changes into a monstrous serpent.

It rears up and stretches its jaws towards Wotan and Loge.

– Oh, serpent, don’t swallow me up! – Haha, that’s good, Alberich!

Spare Loge’s life!

How quickly the dwarf grew into a gigantic serpent!

Alberich reappears in his own form.

Hehe, know-it-alls, do you believe me now?

My shaking should prove it to you!

You transformed into a great serpent so quickly,

I saw it with my own eyes,

I have to believe the wonder.

But just as you increased in size,

can you also make yourself small and tiny?

That seems like the most artful way to flee danger.

But that, perhaps, is too difficult.

Too difficult for you because you are too stupid!

How small should I make myself?

So small that the tiniest crack holds you,

where a frightened toad might hide.

Ha! Nothing simpler!

Look here!

“Crooked and gray, creep, toad!”

Alberich changes into a small toad.

There, the toad! Grab it quickly!

Wotan puts his foot on the toad. Loge grabs the golden helm.

Oh, curses! I’m caught!

Hold him fast until I bind him!

Now, quickly upwards, there he’ll be ours!

An open space on the mountaintop.

Wotan and Loge, carrying Alberich, come out of the sulfur cleft.

There, cousin, sit tight!

Look, dear fellow, there lies the world

that you long to win for yourself:

Which spot, say, have you settled upon as my sty?

Despicable robber! You wretch! You scoundrel!

Loosen the rope, set me free,
or you'll pay for this outrage!
You're captured and tightly bound by me,
just as you would have had the world, and all that lives in your power,
you lie before me in shackles, you cannot deny it!
To set you free a ransom is needed.
I'm an idiot, a dreaming fool!
How stupid to trust in their thievish deceit!
May a fearful revenge atone for my blunder!
If you wish for revenge, you must first set yourself free.
No free man atones for a bound man's crimes.
If you're plotting revenge, be quick and don't delay,
provide the ransom first thing!

Then state what you demand!
The hoard and all of your gold.
You greedy bunch of swindlers!
(But if I can keep the ring for myself,
(I can easily manage without the hoard.)
(For with the power of the ring, it could soon be won again.)
(It would serve as a warning that makes me wise,
(I don't consider the lesson too dearly bought,
(if all I give up is the golden hoard.)
Will you give up the hoard?
Untie my hand and I will call for it.
Loge unties Alberich's right hand.
Alberich touches the ring to his lips and utters a command.

Well then, I've summoned the Nibelungs here.

Obeying their lord, I hear them bringing the hoard from the depths.
Now, free me from these bothersome bonds!
Not before everything is paid.

The Nibelungs climb out of the cleft with the treasure.

Oh, shameful disgrace!
That my slaves should see me shackled myself!

Put it down there, just as I command you!
Pile the hoard up in a heap!
Are you lame? Don't look over here!
Quickly there, be quick!
Then get out of here and get back to work!
Off to the pits! And woe to you if I find you idle!
I'll be following hard on your heels!

Terrified, shrieking, the Nibelungs crowd to the cleft and disappear.

I've paid the ransom, now let me go.
And the helm that Loge is holding, give it back to me!

This is part of the ransom as well.
Accursed thief! (But, be patient.)
(He who made that one will make me another.)
(I still hold the power that Mime obeys.)
(Still, it is difficult to leave this crafty weapon with my foes!)

Well then, Alberich has left you everything, now undo my bonds!
Are you satisfied? Shall I let him go?
A golden ring gleams on your finger. Do you hear me, elf?
– It is part of the hoard, I think. – The ring?
You must leave it here as part of the ransom.
My life, but not the ring!
I demand the ring! You can do what you like with your life.
If I'm allowed to live, I must also have the ring.
Hand and head, eye and ear,
are no more my property than this gold ring!

You call the ring your own?
Are you mad, shameless elf?
Calmly tell me, who did you take the gold from
that you used to make the gleaming ring?
Was it yours, you wretch, when you stole it from the watery depths?
Ask the Rhine maidens
whether they gave you their gold for your own
to make yourself a ring!
Disgraceful trick!
Shameful deceit!
Do you, robber, blame me for what you so fondly desire?
How glad you'd have been to rob the Rhine's gold yourself,
were the skill to forge it so easily gained?
How lucky for you, hypocrite, that I, the Nibelung,
out of shameful need, driven on by anger,
won the fearful magic that now sweetly lures you?
Shall the unhappy, accursed creature's dreadful deed,
happily bring you the princely trinket?
Shall my misery become your joy?

Watch yourself, haughty god!
If I have sinned, I did so freely against myself.
You will be sinning against all that was, that is and that ever will be,
oh, eternal one,
if you brazenly wrest the ring from me!

Give the ring here!
With all your prattling you can't win any right to it.

Wotan wrenches the ring off Alberich's finger.

Ruined!

Crushed! The saddest of all sad slaves!
Now I hold that which exalts me,
the mightiest of mighty lords!

– Can he go free? – Unbind him!

Slip off home then. No binds hold you; you are free!

Am I now free?

Really free?

Then let my freedom's first greeting salute you!

As it came to me by a curse,
so shall the ring be cursed in turn!
If its gold gave me might without measure,
let its magic now deal death for the one who wears it!
It will gladden no glad man,
on no happy man will its gleam smile!

May he who owns it be consumed with worry,
and he who doesn't own it be consumed with envy!

Each will lust after its possession,
but none will delight in owning it!
Its lord will guard it with no profit,
and yet it will bring destruction to him!
Doomed to die, may the coward be fettered by fear,
As long as he lives may he waste away,
the lord of the ring, the ring's slave:

Until I hold once again the stolen ring!

In direst need the Nibelung blesses his ring!

Keep it then and guard it well!
For you will not escape my curse.

Did you hear his fond farewell?

Don't begrudge him his venomous pleasure.

Fasolt and Fafner approach from afar.
They're bringing Freia with them.

– They have come back! – Welcome, brother!
Do you bring good news?
With cunning and force we accomplished the task.
Their lies Freia's ransom.
The fair one is returning from the giants' custody.
What sweet-scented breezes waft around us again,
as blissful emotions fill our senses!
It would be sad for us all
to have been separated forever from her,
who brings to us eternal youth and rapturous joy.

Loveliest sister, sweetest joy!
How have you won her back for me?

Stop! Don't touch her! She still belongs to us.

We stopped to rest at the Reisenheim frontier.
With good faith we tended the pledge of our pact.

Much to my regret, I will give Freia back,
if you pay us brothers the ransom.

The ransom lies ready.
Let the quantity of gold be measured well.

To lose the woman, you know, grieves me deeply,
If I am to put her out of my mind,
then heap up the golden hoard,
so that it hides the radiant maiden from my sight!

Then set the measure to Freia's form!

The staves are planted according to Freia's measure;
now let us pile up the gold to fill it.
Hurry with your work! It repulses me!
Help me, Froh!
Let's hasten to put an end to Freia's shame.

Do not fit it together so lightly and loosely!

Pack the measure tight and dense!

Here I can still see through, close up the gaps!
– Stand back, you boor! – Here!
– Keep your hands to yourself! – Close up the crack!
Shame burns deep in my breast!
See how the goddess stands there, disgraced,
her suffering look begging for relief.
Wicked man! You're the one who brought this upon her!
There's more, there's more here!
I can scarcely control my anger!
That shameless creature arouses fury in me!
Over here, you dog! If you want to measure, measure yourself with me!
Calm down, Donner! Go roar somewhere else, it's no use here.
Not even to crush you, scoundrel?
Peace now! Freia seems to be hidden now.

The gold is all gone.

I can still see her hair.
There, throw that object onto the pile!
What? The helm as well?
– Quickly, here with it! – Let it go, then.

So, we seem to be finished. Are you content?
I can no longer see Freia, the fair.

Is she ransomed, then? Must I give her up?

Alas, her glance still flashes on me here.
I can still see the pupil of her eye through a crack.

So long as I can see her lovely eye,
I can't give up the woman!
I advise you, stop up the crack!
You're never satisfied! Can't you see the treasure is all used up?
By no means, friend. A ring of gold still shines on Wotan's finger.
– Give us that to fill the crack! – What? This ring?
Take my advice! This gold belongs to the Rhine maidens;
Wotan will return it to them.
What nonsense is that?
I captured this with great difficulty,
and I'll fearlessly keep it for myself!
Then things look bleak
for the promise I made to the Rhine maidens!
Your promise isn't binding on me,
the ring remains my reward!
You must hand it over as ransom.

Boldly demand whatever you like, I'll grant you anything else.
But I will not give up this ring for the world!
Then the deal is off. We're back where we started!
Now, Freia will be with us forever!
– Help me! – Hard-hearted god, give in to them!
– Don't save the gold! – Give them the ring!

Leave it alone! I won't give up the ring!

Erda, goddess of the earth, appears.

Yield, Wotan. Yield!
Flee the ring's curse!
It will bring you darkest ruin beyond salvation.
Who are you, to give such a warning?

I know how all once was;
I know how all is now, and I can clearly see how all will be.
I am the all-knowing Erda of the never-ending world,
bidding you beware.
At the dawn of time, my womb brought forth three daughters.

The Norns unfold nightly all that I see.

But gravest danger brings me here to you now.
Hear me!

All things that are will end!

A day of doom dawns for the gods:

I counsel you, shun the ring!

Your words resound with mystic awe.
Stay so that I may know more.

I've warned you. You know enough.
Reflect with care and with fear!
If I am to worry and fear, I must seize you to know everything!
– Are you mad, what would you do? – Wotan, hold back!
Fear the goddess and heed her words!

Listen, giants, come back and wait patiently!
The gold will be given to you.

Dare I hope so?
Do you really consider me worthy of such a ransom?

Come to me, Freia! You have been freed.
Now it is bought back, let our youth return!

Giants, have the ring!

Don't be so greedy! Leave some for me!
There will be equal shares for both of us.
You wanted the woman more than the gold, love-sick fool!
It was hard to make you exchange her;
you wouldn't have shared her with me if you had her.
If I share the treasure, it's only fair that I keep the bigger half!
How despicable! How dare you insult me!
I appeal to you as judges:
distribute the treasure to us in a fair way!
Let him snatch up the hoard, you hold on to the ring!
Get back! The ring is mine; I got it in place of Freia's eyes!
Get your hands off, the ring is mine!

I'm holding it so it belongs to me!
Then hold it tight so it doesn't fall!
With a blow from his staff, Fafner kills Fasolt, then snatches the ring.

Now gaze at Freia's eyes!
You won't lay hands on the ring again!

Now I understand the fearful power of the curse!

What can compare with your luck, Wotan?
Winning the ring has been fortuitous for you!
Now that it has been taken from you, even more!

Look, your enemies kill each other
over the gold you gave up.

And yet, a sense of ease constricts me!
Worry and fear fetter my thoughts.

Erda will teach me how to put them to rest.
I must go down to her!

Where are your thoughts, Wotan?

Doesn't the glorious castle beckon you in beauty,
waiting to afford its owner welcoming shelter?
Its construction was paid with an evil toll.

A sultry haze hangs in the air.
Its weight lies heavy on me!
I'll gather the clouds into thundering weather
to sweep the heavens clear!

Come to me, mists! Come to me, haze.
Donner, your master, summons you here!

At the sweep of my hammer, sweep to me here!

Foggy steam clouds, hazy mist!
Donner, your master, summons you here!
Brother, over here! The rainbow bridge will show us to the castle!

The bridge leads to the castle, light yet firm to the foot.
Tread boldly, its path is free of danger!

In the evening light, the sun's eye gleams,
in its glow, the fortress shines with gleam.

As it glittered in this morning's light, it stood empty,
lofty and inviting before me.

Between dawn and sunset, in toil and anguish,
it wasn't happily won!

Night is falling:
from all its woe, may it offer shelter now.

And so, I salute the stronghold,
safe from fear and dread!

Follow me, my wife! Come dwell with me in Valhalla.

What's the meaning of the name?
I don't think I've ever heard it before.
If what my courage has achieved triumphantly lives on,
it's meaning will become clear.
They are hastening to their end,
though they think they will last forever.

I'm almost ashamed to share in their dealings;
I'm tempted to turn myself back into a licking flame,
to burn the ones who once tamed me,
rather than follow blindly those godly gods.
It doesn't sound bad at all to me!
I'll think it over. Who knows what I'll do!

Rhinegold! Guileless gold!
How clear and bright you shone upon us so sweetly!
What is that wailing I hear?
For you, oh bright one, we are mourning. Give us our gold.
The Rhine maidens are lamenting the theft of their gold!
– Accursed mermaids! – Give us back our guileless gold!
Put an end to this teasing!
You there in the water. Why are you wailing to us?
Hear the wishes of Wotan:
If the gold no longer shines on you maidens,
you may now bask henceforth in the radiance of the gods!

Rhinegold! Guileless gold!
Oh, that your flawless treasure still shone in the depths!

It is only familiar and trustworthy here in the depths!
False and craven
is all that rejoices above!