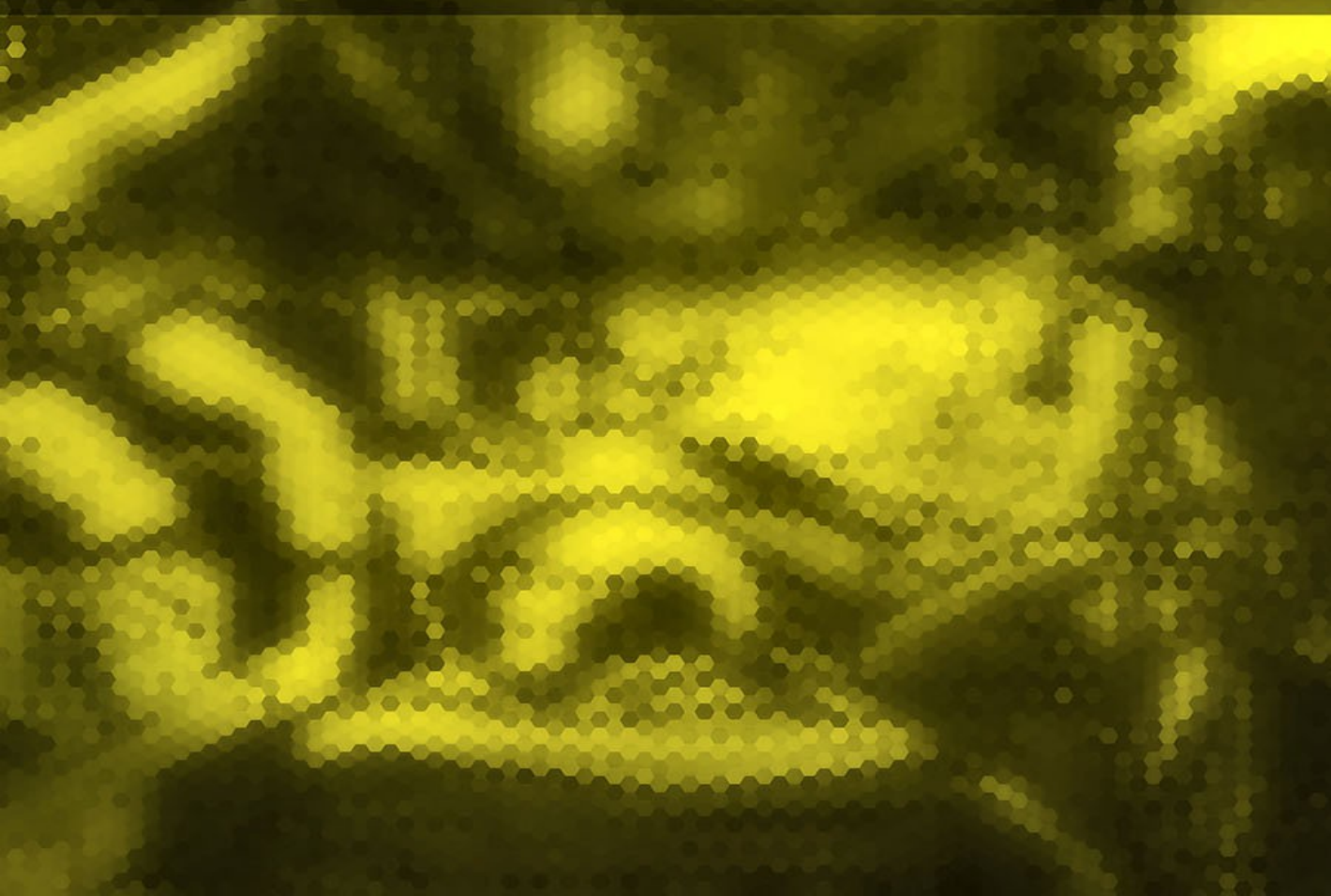


**RICHARD WAGNER**

**THE RING  
OF THE  
NIBELUNG**



**Richard Wagner**

# **The Ring of the Nibelung**

Published by

**MUSAICUM**

Books

- Advanced Digital Solutions & High-Quality eBook  
Formatting -

[musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info](mailto:musaicumbooks@okpublishing.info)

2021 OK Publishing

EAN 4066338112767

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**"Nothung! Nothung!  
Conquering sword!"**

# SIEGFRIED

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## CHARACTERS

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MIME  
THE WANDERER  
ALBERICH  
FAFNER  
ERDA  
BRÜNNHILDE

## SCENES OF ACTION

I. A CAVE IN A WOOD  
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# THE FIRST ACT

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*A rocky cavern in a wood, in which stands a naturally formed smith's forge, with big bellows. Mime sits in front of the anvil, busily hammering at a sword.*

### **MIME**

*[Who has been hammering with a small hammer, stops working.]*

Slavery! worry!  
Labour all lost!  
The strongest sword  
That ever I forged,  
That the hands of giants  
Fitly might wield,  
This insolent urchin  
For whom it is fashioned  
Can snap in two at one stroke,  
As if the thing were a toy!

*[Mime throws the sword on the anvil ill-humouredly, and with his arms akimbo gazes thoughtfully on the ground.]*

There is one sword  
That he could not shatter:  
Nothung's splinters  
Would baffle his strength,  
Could I but forge  
Those doughty fragments  
That all my skill  
Cannot weld anew.  
Could I but forge the weapon,  
Shame and toil would win their reward!

*[He sinks further back his head bowed in thought.]*

Fafner, the dragon grim,  
Dwells in the gloomy wood;  
With his gruesome and grisly bulk  
The Nibelung hoard  
Yonder he guards.  
Siegfried, lusty and young,  
Would slay him without ado;  
The Nibelung's ring  
Would then become mine.  
The only sword for the deed  
Were Nothung, if it were swung  
By Siegfried's conquering arm;  
And I cannot fashion  
Nothung, the sword!

*[He lays the sword in position again, and goes on hammering in deep dejection.]*

Slavery! worry!  
Labour all lost!  
The strongest sword

That ever I forged  
Will never serve  
For that difficult deed.  
I beat and I hammer  
Only to humour the boy;  
He snaps in two what I make,  
And scolds if I cease from work.

*[He drops his hammer.]*

### **SIEGFRIED**

*[In rough forester's dress, with a silver horn hung by a chain, bursts in boisterously from the wood. He is leading a big bear by a rope of bast, and urges him towards Mime in wanton fun.]*

Hoiho! Hoiho!

*[Entering.]*

Come on! Come on!  
Tear him! Tear him!  
The silly smith!

*[Mime drops the sword in terror, and takes refuge behind the forge; while Siegfried, shouting with laughter, keeps driving the bear after him.]*

---





**Mime at the anvil.**

---

**MIME**

Hence with the beast!  
I want not the bear!

**SIEGFRIED**

I come thus paired  
The better to pinch thee;  
Bruin, ask for the sword!

**MIME**

Hey! Let him go!  
There lies the weapon;  
It was finished to-day.

**SIEGFRIED**

Then thou art safe for to-day!

*[He lets the bear loose and strikes him on the back with the rope.]*

Off, Bruin!  
I need thee no more.

*[The bear runs back into the wood.]*

**MIME** *[Comes trembling from behind the forge.]*

Slay all the bears  
Thou canst, and welcome;  
But why thus bring the beasts  
Home alive?

**SIEGFRIED**

*[Sits down to recover from his laughter.]*

For better companions seeking  
Than the one who sits at home,  
I blew my horn in the wood,  
Till the forest glades resounded.

What I asked with the note  
Was if some good friend  
My glad companion would be.  
From the covert came a bear  
Who listened to me with growls,  
And I liked him better than thee,  
Though better friends I shall find.  
With a trusty rope  
I bridled the beast,  
To ask thee, rogue, for the weapon.

*[He jumps up and goes towards the anvil.]*

#### **MIME**

*[Takes up the sword to hand it to Siegfried.]*

I made the sword keen-edged;  
In its sharpness thou wilt rejoice.

*[He holds the sword anxiously in his hand; Siegfried snatches it from him.]*

What matters an edge keen sharpened,  
Unless hard and true the steel?

*[Testing the sword.]*

Hei! What an idle,  
Foolish toy!  
Wouldst have this pin  
Pass for a sword?

*[He strikes it on the anvil, so that the splinters fly about. Mime shrinks back in terror.]*

There, take back the pieces,  
Pitiful bungler!  
'Tis on thy skull  
It should have been broken!  
Shall such a braggart  
Still go on boasting,  
Telling of giants  
And prowess in battle,  
Of deeds of valour,  
And dauntless defence?—  
A sword true and trusty  
Try to forge me,  
Praising the skill  
He does not possess?  
When I take hold  
Of what he has hammered,  
The rubbish crumbles  
At a mere touch!  
Were not the wretch  
Too mean for my wrath,  
I would break him in bits  
As well as his work—  
The dotting fool of a gnome!—  
And end the annoyance at once!

*[Siegfried throws himself on to a stone seat in a rage. Mime all the time has been cautiously keeping out of his way.]*

**MIME**

Again thou ravest like mad,  
Ungrateful and perverse.  
If what for him I forge

Is not perfect on the spot,  
Too soon the boy forgets  
The good things I have made!  
Wilt never learn the lesson  
Of gratitude, I wonder?  
Thou shouldst be glad to obey him  
Who always treated thee well.

*[Siegfried turns his back on Mime in a bad temper, and sits with his face to the wall.]*

Thou dost not like to be told that!

*[He stands perplexed, then goes to the hearth in the kitchen.]*

But thou wouldst fain be fed.  
Wilt eat the meat I have roasted,  
Or wouldst thou prefer the broth?  
'Twas boiled solely for thee.

*[He brings food to Siegfried, who, without turning round, knocks both bowl and meat out of his hand.]*

**SIEGFRIED**

Meat I roast for myself;  
Sup thy filthy broth alone!

**MIME** *[In a wailing voice, as if hurt.]*

This is the reward  
Of all my love!  
All my care  
Is paid for with scorn.  
When thou wert a babe

I was thy nurse,  
Made the mite clothing  
To keep him warm,  
Brought thee thy food,  
Gave thee to drink,  
Kept thee as safe  
As I keep my skin;  
And when thou wert grown  
I waited on thee,  
And made a bed  
For thy slumber soft.  
I fashioned thee toys  
And a sounding horn,  
Grudging no pains,  
Wert thou but pleased.  
With counsel wise  
I guided thee well,  
With mellow wisdom  
Training thy mind.  
Sitting at home,  
I toil and moil;  
To heart's desire  
Wander thy feet.  
Through thee alone worried,  
And working for thee,  
I wear myself out,  
A poor old dwarf!

*[Sobbing.]*

And for my trouble  
The sole reward is  
By a hot-tempered boy

*[Sobbing.*

To be hated and plagued!

---



**Mime and the infant Siegfried.**

---

## **SIEGFRIED**

*[Has turned round again and has quietly watched Mime's face, while the latter, meeting the look, tries timidly to hide his own.*

Thou hast taught me much, Mime,  
And many things I have learned;  
But what thou most gladly hadst taught me  
A lesson too hard has proved—  
How to endure thy sight.  
When with my food  
Or drink thou dost come,  
I sup off loathing alone;  
When thou dost softly  
Make me a bed,  
My sleep is broken and bad;  
When thou wouldst teach me  
How to be wise,  
Fain were I deaf and dumb.  
If my eyes happen  
To fall on thee,  
I find all thou doest  
Amis and ill-done;  
When thou dost stand,  
Waddle and walk,  
Shamble and shuffle,  
With thine eyelids blinking,  
By the neck I want  
To take the nodder,  
And choke the life  
From the hateful twitcher.  
So much, O Mime, I love thee!  
Hast thou such wisdom,  
Explain, I pray thee,  
A thing I have wondered at:  
Though I go roaming  
Just to avoid thee,  
Why do I always return?



Though I love the beasts  
All better than thee—  
Tree and bird  
And the fish in the brook,  
One and all  
They are dearer than thou—  
How is it I always return?  
Of thy wisdom tell me that.

**MIME**

*[Tries to approach him affectionately.]*

My child, that ought to show thee  
That Mime is dear to thy heart.

**SIEGFRIED**

I said I could not bear thee;  
Forget not that so soon.

**MIME**

*[Recoils, and sits down again apart, opposite Siegfried.]*

The wildness that thou shouldst tame  
Is the cause, bad boy, of that.  
Young ones are always longing  
After their parents' nest;  
What we love we all long for,  
And so thou dost yearn for me;  
'Tis plain thou lovest thy Mime,  
And always must love him.  
What the old bird is to the young one,  
Feeding it in its nest

Ere the fledgling can flutter,  
That is what careful, clever Mime  
To thy young life is,  
And always must be.

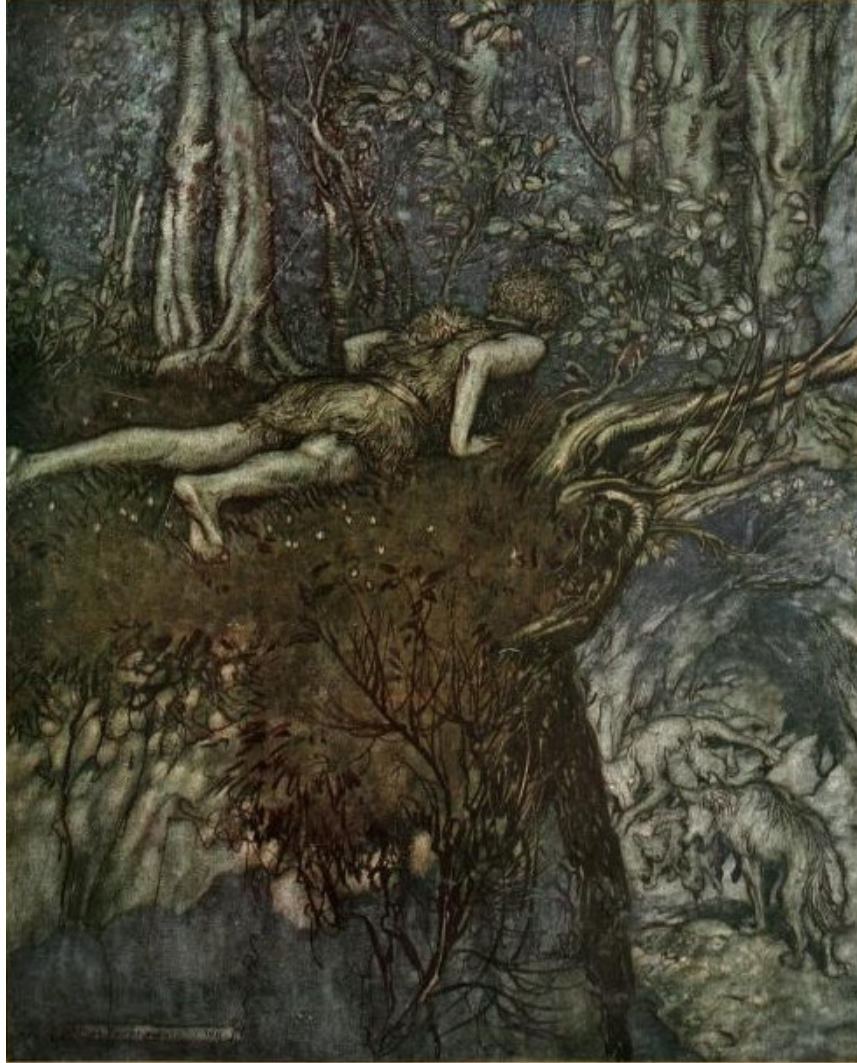
**SIEGFRIED**

Well, Mime, being so clever,  
This one thing more also tell me:

*[Simply.*

The birds sang together  
So gaily in spring,

---



**"And there I learned  
What love was like"**

---

[*Tenderly.*

The one alluring the other;  
And thou didst say,  
When I asked thee why,  
That they were wives with their husbands.  
They chattered so sweetly,  
Were never apart;

They builded a nest  
In which they might brood;  
The fluttering young ones  
Came flying out,  
And both took care of the young.  
The roes in the woods, too,  
Rested in pairs,  
The wild wolves even, and foxes.  
Food was found them and brought  
By the father,  
The mother suckled the young ones.  
And there I learned  
What love was like;  
A whelp from its mother  
I never took.  
But where hast thou, Mime,  
A wife dear and loving,  
That I may call her mother?

**MIME** [*Angrily.*

What dost thou mean?  
Fool, thou art mad!  
Art thou then a bird or a fox?

**SIEGFRIED**

When I was a babe  
Thou wert my nurse,  
Made the mite clothing  
To keep him warm;  
But tell me, whence  
Did the tiny mite come?  
Could babe without mother  
Be born to thee?

**MIME** [*Greatly embarrassed.*]

Thou must always  
Trust what I tell thee.  
I am thy father  
And mother in one.

**SIEGFRIED**

Thou liest, filthy old fright!  
The resemblance 'twixt child and parent  
I often have seen for myself.  
I came to the limpid brook,  
And the beasts and the trees  
I saw reflected;  
Sun and clouds too,  
Just as they are,  
Were mirrored quite plain in the stream.  
I also could spy  
This face of mine,  
And quite unlike thine  
Seemed it to me;  
As little alike  
As a fish to a toad:  
And when had fish toad for its father?

**MIME** [*Very angrily.*]

How canst thou talk  
Such terrible stuff?

**SIEGFRIED** [*With increasing animation.*]

Listen! At last  
I understand  
What in vain I pondered so long:  
Why I roam the woods

And run to escape thee,  
Yet return home in the end.

*[He springs up.]*

I cannot go till thou tell me  
What father and mother were mine.

**MIME**

What father? What mother?  
Meaningless questions!

**SIEGFRIED**

*[Springs upon Mime, and seizes him by the throat.]*

To answer a question  
Thou must be caught first;  
Willingly  
Thou never wilt speak;  
Thou givest nothing  
Unless forced to.  
How to talk  
I hardly had learned  
Had it not by force  
Been wrung from the wretch.  
Come, out with it,  
Mangy old scamp!  
Who are my father and mother?

---



**Siegfried sees himself in the stream.**

---

**MIME**

*[After making signs with his head and hands, is released by Siegfried.]*

Dost want to kill me outright!  
Hands off, and the facts thou shalt hear,  
As far as known to myself.  
O ungrateful  
And graceless child,  
Now learn the cause of thy hatred!  
Neither thy father  
Nor kinsman I,  
And yet thou dost owe me thy life!  
To me, thy one friend,  
A stranger wert thou;  
It was pity alone

Sheltered thee here;  
And this is all my reward.  
And I hoped for thanks like a fool!

A woman once I found  
Who wept in the forest wild;  
I helped her here to the cave,  
That by the fire I might warm her.  
The woman bore a child here;  
Sadly she gave it birth.  
She writhed about in pain;  
I helped her as I could.  
Bitter her plight; she died.  
But Siegfried lived and throve.

**SIEGFRIED** [*Slowly.*

My poor mother died, then, through me?

**MIME**

To my care she commended thee;  
'Twas willingly bestowed.  
The trouble Mime would take!  
The worry kind Mime endured!  
"When thou wert a babe  
I was thy nurse...."

**SIEGFRIED**

That story I often have heard.  
Now say, whence came the name  
Siegfried?

**MIME**



'Twas thus that thy mother  
Told me to name thee,  
That thou mightst grow  
To be strong and fair.  
"I made the mite clothing  
To keep it warm...."

**SIEGFRIED**

Now tell me, what name was my mother's?

**MIME**

In truth I hardly know.  
"Brought thee thy food,  
Gave thee to drink...."

**SIEGFRIED**

My mother's name thou must tell me.

**MIME**

Her name I forget. Yet wait!  
Sieglinde, that was the name borne  
By her who gave thee to me.  
"I kept thee as safe  
As I keep my skin...."

**SIEGFRIED**

*[With increasing urgency.]*

Next tell me, who was my father?

**MIME** *[Roughly.]*

Him I have never seen.

---



**Mime finds the mother of Siegfried in the forest.**

---

**SIEGFRIED**

But my mother told it thee, surely.

**MIME**

He fell in combat  
Was all that she said.  
She left the fatherless  
Babe to my care.  
"And when thou wert grown  
I waited on thee,  
And made a bed  
For thy slumber soft"...

**SIEGFRIED**

Still, with thy tiresome  
Starling song!  
That I may trust thy story,

Convinced thou art not lying,  
Thou must produce some proof.

**MIME**

But what proof will convince thee?

**SIEGFRIED**

I trust thee not with my ears,  
I trust thee but with mine eyes:  
What witness speaks for thee?

**MIME**

*[After some thought takes from the place where they  
are concealed the two pieces of a broken sword.]*

I got this from thy mother:  
For trouble, food, and service  
This was my sole reward.  
Behold, 'tis a splintered sword!  
She said 'twas borne by thy father  
In the fatal fight when he fell.

**SIEGFRIED** *[Enthusiastically.]*

And thou shalt forge  
These fragments together,  
And furnish my rightful sword!  
Up! Tarry not, Mime;  
Quick to thy task!  
If thou hast skill,  
Thy cunning display.  
Cheat me no more  
With worthless trash;  
These fragments alone

Henceforth I trust.  
Lounge o'er thy work,  
Weld it not true,  
Trickily patching  
The goodly steel,  
And thou shalt learn on thy limbs  
How metal best should be beat!  
I swear that this day  
The sword shall be mine;  
My weapon to-day I shall win!

**MIME** [*Alarmed.*

What wouldst thou to-day with the sword?

**SIEGFRIED**

Leave the forest  
For the wide world,  
Never more to return.  
Ah, how fair  
A thing is freedom!  
Nothing holds me or binds!  
No father have I here,  
And afar shall be my home;  
Thy hearth is not my house,  
Nor my covering thy roof.  
Like the fish  
Glad in the water,  
Like the finch  
Free in the heavens,  
Off I will float,  
Forth I will fly,  
Like the wind o'er the wood