

Act II: Story

The Depth of the Forest

Scene 1

Alberich is keeping watch near the entrance to Fafner's cave. Wotan arrives, again as the Wanderer, and acquaints Alberich with Mime's designs on the ring. He wakes Fafner, so that Alberich may ask the monster to grant him the ring in exchange for being warned of Siegfried's approach. Fafner declines, and the Wanderer disappears, laughing.

Scene 2

Mime arrives with Siegfried. The dwarf tries, once again, to teach the lad fear, by describing the monster's fearsome aspect and habits. Siegfried, still unafraid, decides to pit his wits and his strength against the dragon, and sends Mime away. He reclines in the shade of a tree and listens to the birds above him. He muses about his dead parents. Trying to imitate the song of one of the birds, he fashions a reed pipe. Its sound fails to establish the desired contact, but when he blows his horn, the dragon (Fafner) comes out of his lair. Siegfried pierces the heart of the monster, who, with his dying breath, warns Siegfried that Mime intends to kill him. Licking the dragon's blood off his fingers causes Siegfried to understand the language of the birds. One of them advises him to take possession of the ring and the Tarnhelm.

Scene 3

While Siegfried is inside the monster's cave, Mime is intercepted by Alberich. Both brothers claim to be legitimate heirs to Fafner's hoard. Siegfried emerges, holding both Tarnhelm and ring, while Alberich and Mime hide and watch. The Wood-bird warns Siegfried to beware of Mime, who now comes out of his hiding place and offers Siegfried a drink. As a consequence of having tasted the dragon's blood, Siegfried not only understands the birds' language, but also Mime's treacherous thoughts: Mime intends to poison Siegfried, in order to gain ring, Tarnhelm and the golden treasure. To prevent this, Siegfried kills him. The bird now advises him to make his way through the wall of fire which surrounds the slumbering Brünnhilde (the destined bride of the fearless Siegfried). The bird flutters ahead, and Siegfried follows.



Mime and Alberich quarrel
over Fafner's hoard; illustration
by Arthur Rackham (1911)