

Act III: Story

A Mountain Top

Scene 1

The Valkyries are on their way from the battlefield to Walhall. Riding through the air, they meet on a summit, fallen heroes slung over their saddles. Brünnhilde is the last to arrive, carrying Sieglinde and the splinters of Siegmund's sword. She begs her sisters for help, since Wotan is pursuing her, about to exact punishment for her disobedience. She pleads in vain. None of the Valkyries is prepared to incur Wotan's displeasure. Sieglinde has no will to survive without Siegmund until Brünnhilde informs her that she is to give birth to Siegfried, Siegmund's son. Brünnhilde hands the splintered sword to the ecstatic Sieglinde and directs her to a forest shelter, where she will be safe from Wotan's wrath and where Siegfried shall be born.

Scene 2

The enraged Wotan arrives. Brünnhilde, who at first hides behind her sisters, steps forward to face her father. Wotan pronounces her punishment: she is to lose her status as a Valkyrie and is to become a mortal woman instead:

Here on this rock lodged shall you be;
defenceless, in sleep locked by my spell.
One man shall conquer the maid,
when he wakes her and makes her his own.

The other Valkyries plead with Wotan, but are unable to move him. The god commands them to abandon their disobedient sister.

Scene 3

Wotan and Brünnhilde are alone. Brünnhilde tries to convince her father that in aiding Siegmund she had been acting in Wotan's own interest. The god does not agree. Yielding to Fricka's irrefutable arguments, he had commanded Siegmund's death, and Brünnhilde had flouted his injunction. Wotan the law-giver is obliged to abide by the law. In sorrow he sentences Brünnhilde. The former Valkyrie begs her father to modify the

punishment by protecting her chaste slumber with an impenetrable wall of fire. Wotan consents. He takes her godhead away with a kiss, then gently lowers her to a rock beneath a pine tree. He covers her with her shield and summons Loge to ring the rock with a circle of flames. He grips his spear and proclaims:

No man who fears my sacred spear-point,
shall fare through this fiery sea!

Sadly the god strides away. His one remaining hope is for a free hero who may eventually shoulder his, Wotan's, burden and make amends for his wrongdoings.



Wotan puts Brünnhilde to sleep; postcard by an unknown artist