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# Niflgap

SERIES PITCH OF THE MONTH





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# Niflgap

—Raven Daegmorgan

## Nutshell

As the universe dies, the fractious Norse gods set forth in starships from lonesome Midgaard. They sail the black tides of the cosmos, hoping to find salvation in the void where armies of the hungry dead writhe endless beneath black suns.

**Do the gods live together on one spacecraft?  
A few vessels? Each their own?**

## Characters

The players take the roles of the immortal gods of the ancient Norse myths. While the Norse were in large part farmers and traders, these are the gods of the Vikings—adventurers, explorers, warriors, raiders, and reavers—fierce, bound to honor, boastful, and ready to avenge any slight.

The gods cannot die of age or natural causes, and are hale and difficult to injure, due not only to supernatural provenance, but also to their embrace of super-technology and future sciences. Yet still they cling tightly to traditional art-forms, dress, and decoration. No matter how fantastic and improved their weaponry, its outward appearance remains archaic.

**What physical aspects of the gods or their powers derive from futuristic technology?**

**What aspects defy mortal explanation, if any?**

However they may have changed on the surface, their passions, desires, and problems remain those of mortal men and mortal families.

- Odin, the All-father, ruler of the gods, who seeks some way to prevent or forestall the death of the universe. He will go to any lengths to do so. His lone eye sees everywhere.
- Tyr, the One-handed, once-leader of the gods, maimed and scarred in battle by a wolf in the void. He held the line so others might escape, and now oversees ship-discipline and the court.
- Thor, the Giant-slayer, son of Odin, and greatest warrior of the gods. Hot-headed and easily baited, he sees all as a chance for glory, and is the first to strike with or without orders.
- Loki, the Jotun-son, sly-tongued, quick-witted, greatest engineer of the gods, and second only to Odin in magic. He sometimes thinks the giants whisper to him. Sometimes he whispers back.
- Baldur, the Fair, another son of Odin, a peerless warrior and poet who is loved by all, to the great jealousy of some. Thought to be Odin's heir-apparent, but acts the child and jester.
- Heimdall, the Guardian, a stern seer who watches and listens to the void, guarding the gods from threats within and without, and seeking anomalies of a nature only he and Odin discuss.
- Freyr, the Fair-faced, prosperous and much beloved by women, overseer and guardian of the gods' stores, keeper of the keys to the treasuries of artifacts and weapons.
- Freya, the Battle-maid, sister of Freyr. Chief among the Valkyries. Said by some to be a witch, and by others merely bewitching, for her sexual exploits are as legendary as her battle-skill.
- Sif, the Golden, the oft-desired wife of Thor, an agriculturalist afflicted with strange moods of prophecy, who commands the Disir that serve the gods. Her son Ullr is not of Thor's loins.
- Frigga, the Lady, wife of Odin and his second-in-command, said to see as much as he. She tolerates much, but is not committed to the unending sacrifices of



her husband.

- Idunn, the Healer, whose medical ministrations can repair even the most grievous of wounds. Alone among the gods, a pacifist—she will not lift hand to kill, and weeps at death and blood.
- Hel, daughter of Loki, her beauty half-burned away, master shipwright and chief of those damned to repair the hull or work in the bleakest bowels of the ship. She seethes at Idunn's failure to restore her beauty.

There are many other gods, some recorded in Earth-lore and many not, who have also ventured forth.

The players might choose instead to play one of the Einherjar or Valkyries, the cadres of elite warriors serving Odin and Freyja respectively, wielding top-line equipment, their bodies flooded with healing nanites making them resistant, though not impervious, to injury. Or one of the Norns, the technicians, pilots, and astrologers whose rituals repair the machines.

**Is it true only the gods can make the ships go between the stars and guide them through the void? Or is it the work of great engines powered by nuclear forces?**

Or perhaps even one of the Disir, who serve the gods their food and drink, and care for their many needs.

**Which gods or groups of men are instead artificial intelligences or machines? What of other mythic beings such as the giants and dwarves?**

## Setting

In a dark cosmic joke, in all of creation there is only one planet that bears life, the jewel of Midgaard. None else has been discovered in all the fathomless infinity of space. Now the universe is dying. The stars are going out. The wolves of entropy are devouring all things.

**What is the shape of the universe? Is it like our own? Is it a comic-book version of outer space, where stars are not light-years apart and planets crowd together mere hours or days from one another? One vast solar system filled with endless rocky spheres?**

Fenrir prowls the Abyss above, stealing the minds and souls of men; the devourers Skoll and

Hati seek to consume all light and matter; while the shades of murderers risen from Niflhel seek blood and life. There lurk darker things, too, undreamt by man except in his nightmares.

Before this age of Ragnarok, many men and lesser gods set forth into the void. Yet no ship launched can now return to Midgaard, lest the wolves follow. Then all life would end, leaving the universe an empty, cold cinder without point or purpose, the struggles and triumphs of men and gods all for naught.

Broken ships float abandoned in the void, becoming Naglfar, their hulls haunted by demons and crewed by corpses. On worlds below, beneath dimming suns, impossible armies of alien corpses march, reality fading behind them across fae and phantom lands.

Upon barren planets, moons, asteroids, and within nebulae, the ruins of alien cultures that never were appear, then fade, choked by vine-and-brush that are but hollow dust, populated by the hungry dead and weeping ghosts of civilizations that never lived.

Yet there remain occasional outposts in the void, on barely livable planets whose failed terraforming plants vainly spew the noxious fumes of life into poisonous atmospheres, and gleaming stations that orbit distant suns, spartan homes to miners and rune-seekers. Some few of these still cling stubbornly against madness and supernatural onslaught, yet most of these have failed or been devoured.

**What shape and expression does technology take? Glowing runes in flesh and metal? Subtle and unremarkable? Clouds of light and holographic-neon flashes when activated? Are the gods melded with it, or is it merely carried by them?**

## Themes

- Loyalty and Betrayal
- Lies
- The Price of Honor
- Surrounded
- Despair
- The Weight of Immortality
- The Value of a Name
- Seduction
- Tyranny
- Greed

- Destiny
- The Hammer of the Gods
- The Apples of Immortality
- The Serpent in the Roots
- A Game of Whispers
- Arrogance
- Walking Hidden among Men
- Sacrifice
- Returning from Beyond
- Hospitality
- My Word Once Given...
- Secrets
- The Walls are Breached
- Giants of Fire
- Giants of Ice
- A Sun Consumed
- Hunger
- The Oath
- An Unanswerable Question
- Across the Rainbow Bridge
- Lost
- Climbing Yggdrasil
- Stranded

### Tightening the Screws

The main action takes place on the surface of planets, on haunted star-vessels, and in the cramped quarters of space stations and planetary facilities, as the gods seek out anomalies and search for things that have meaning only to Odin, or as they go a-raiding for needed supplies. These missions provide many chances for the gods to prove their wit and strength as they protect their mortal charges against environmental dangers or the hungry dead.

- Furious cosmic storms, unpredicted supernovas, meteor fields, event horizons, and newly discovered spatial disturbances drain supplies and good will. Resource shortages provoke conflicts, as the favored escape the brunt of sacrifice.
- Knowledge, power, and status are always at a premium, and Odin claims many of these for himself. Much of what he finds, he locks away or hides, despite the desires or arguments of the other gods, for he claims to know best. Not all of the gods agree. Loki often seeks other ways to gain access to what Odin has kept.

- Tension breaks out between the gods as the powerful gods demand tribute from the weak.
- A corpse-crewed battleship spewing devouring flame arrives to launch a relentless attack. The flagship of a silent, implacable enemy, its destruction of something or someone key to the series so far signals the coming of a terrible new foe.
- Stronger than ever, the foe returns to chase the ensemble across the stars in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse.
- The mad jarl of a shattered colony is brought aboard, thought to have important information.
- Refugees fleeing the wolves beg both the gods' protection and food from their stores.
- Odin believes he has found true life not of Midgaard, but is it another illusion, or a trap?
- There is a rebellion by the damned in the ship's bowels, at the worst possible moment.
- Something unseen breaches the hull, forcing desperate repairs. But did something get in?
- The ship's engines fail in a great cosmic Sargasso; was the course somehow sabotaged?
- Loki is accused of murdering one of Odin's many sons, but he protests his innocence.

### Additional Elements

Imagine an ancient Viking long-ship crewed by battle-ready warriors seeking the edge of the world, for the sun has gone out and they seek both the reason and a solution, which lands on the mist-shrouded shores of unknown isles full of ghosts and worse.

There, perhaps, they find a ragged survivor of a previous expedition, who tells them of a mystic treasure and the dark sorcery that claimed their own companions. Or they land seeking materials to repair their vessels or weapons, or to replenish food and stores for their journey, and are confronted by disturbing events of subtly supernatural character. Often times while sailing they wonder if land will ever be found again, and sometimes strange distant ships appear that



do not respond to hails and other signals. Or unseen things grind against the hull.

Now imagine the same, but with spaceships and planets, the vessels crewed by gods.

Familiarity with the Norse myths and the various individuals and creatures of the mythos, and with Viking culture, adds depth to your characters. Kevin Crossley-Holland's

*The Norse Myths* is an engaging introduction to the basic myth-cycle and many of the gods, though a direct translation of the *Poetic Edda* is available from any number of publishers. The DramaSystem dynamic will ensure that your retellings of existing myths take on their own distinct shapes, unique to your series.

## Names

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|             |            |              |              |
|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Agnar       | Fjosnir    | Lofar        | Skrymir      |
| Alsvith     | Fulnir     | Lofnheith    | Skuld        |
| Andhrim     | Geirvimul  | Lyfjaberg    | Solheimar    |
| Andvaranaut | Glaumvor   | Lyngheith    | Svafnir      |
| Arngrim     | Grimhild   | Mjothvinir   | Thegn        |
| Asathor     | Guthrun    | Mogthrasir   | Thjothmar    |
| Aurvang     | Halfdan    | Moinsheimar  | Thrael       |
| Bari        | Hannar     | Mornaland    | Thrym        |
| Bergelmir   | Hataford   | Mundilferi   | Tyrfing      |
| Bleik       | Helreith   | Myrkheirn    | Ulfrun       |
| Bothvild    | Hild       | Nain         | Unavagar     |
| Bragalund   | Hjalmar    | Nali         | Uth          |
| Breith      | Hilfthrasa | Nithi        | Vafthruthnir |
| Brimir      | Hoddrofnir | Ofnir        | Valbjorg     |
| Bur         | Hosvir     | Orkning      | Valgrind     |
| Dag         | Hraesvelg  | Orvar        | Vali         |
| Dain        | Hrimgerth  | Reifnir      | Var          |
| Dagling     | Hundland   | Rin          | Veratyr      |
| Duneyr      | Ifing      | Rithil       | Vindheim     |
| Durin       | Imth       | Rothulfsjoll | Vingskornir  |
| Dyrathror   | Iri        | Saemorn      | Virfir       |
| Egil        | Isolf      | Saevarstath  | Vithga       |
| Eikinskjald | Ithavoll   | Salgofnir    | Vofuth       |
| Eldhrimnir  | Jafnhor    | Saxi         | Ydalir       |
| Elivagar    | Jarnsaxa   | Sigeir       | Yngling      |
| Embla       | Kjalar     | Sigrdrifa    | Yngvi        |
| Falhofnir   | Kon        | Sigurth      | Ysja         |
| Farmatyr    | Kund       | Skafith      |              |
| Fensalir    | Leif       | Skjold       |              |