



“TWILIGHT OF THE GODS”

Someday – whenever the **Norns**, those inscrutable spinners of fate, decree it – there shall come a Great Winter unlike any other the world has yet seen. The biting winds will blow snows from all directions, and the warmth of the sun will fail, plunging the earth into unprecedented cold. This winter shall last for the length of three normal winters, with no summers in between. Mankind will become so desperate for food and other necessities of life that all laws and morals will fall away, leaving only the bare struggle for survival. It will be an age of swords and axes; brother will slay brother, father will slay son, and son will slay father.

The wolves **Skoll** and **Hati**, who have hunted the sun and the moon through the skies since the beginning of time, will at last catch their prey. The stars, too, will disappear, leaving nothing but a black void in the heavens. **Yggdrasil**, the great tree that holds the cosmos together, will tremble, and all the trees and even the mountains will fall to the ground. The chain that has been holding back the monstrous wolf **Fenrir** will snap, and the beast will run free. **Jormungand**, the mighty serpent who dwells at the bottom of the ocean and encircles the land, will rise from the depths, spilling the seas over all the earth as he makes landfall.

These convulsions will shake the ship **Naglfar** free from its moorings. This ship, which is made from the fingernails and toenails of dead men and women, will sail easily over the flooded earth. Its crew will be an army of giants, the forces of chaos and destruction. And its captain will be none other than **Loki**, the traitor to the gods, who will have broken free of the chains in which the gods have bound him.

Fenrir, with fire blazing from his eyes and nostrils, will run across the earth, with his lower jaw on the ground and his upper jaw against the top of the sky, devouring everything in his path. Jormungand will spit his venom over all the world, poisoning land, water, and air alike. **Hel** will assemble an army of the dead to assist her brothers and father in the final battle.

The dome of the sky will be split, and from the crack shall emerge the fire-giants from **Muspelheim**. Their leader shall be **Surt**, with a flaming sword brighter than the sun in his hand. As they march across **Bifrost**, the rainbow bridge to Asgard, the home of the gods, the bridge will break and fall behind them. An ominous horn blast will ring out; this will be **Heimdall**, the divine sentry, blowing the **Gjallarhorn** to announce the arrival of the moment the gods have feared. **Odin** will anxiously consult the head of **Mimir**, the wisest of all beings, for counsel.

The gods will decide to go to battle, even though they know their time is coming to an end. The Twilight of the Gods begins, Ragnarök is here. They will arm themselves and meet their enemies on a battlefield called **Vigrid**.

Odin will fight Fenrir, and by his side will be the **einherjar**, the host of his chosen human warriors whom he has kept in Valhalla for just this moment. Odin and the champions of men will fight more valiantly than anyone has ever fought before. But it will not be enough. Fenrir will swallow Odin and his men. Then one of Odin's sons, **Vidar**, burning with rage, will charge the beast to avenge his father. On one of his feet will be the shoe that has been crafted for this very purpose; it has been made from all the scraps of leather that human shoemakers have ever discarded, and with it Vidar will hold open the monster's mouth. Then he will stab his sword through the wolf's throat, killing him.

Another wolf, **Garm**, and the god **Tyr** will slay each other. Heimdall and Loki will do the same, putting a final end to the trickster's treachery, but costing the gods one of their best in the process.

The god **Freyr** and the giant **Surt** will also be the end of each other. However, their fight will prove costly for the world as during the battle **The Sword of Surt** will burn the remaining land reducing it to ashes.

Thor and Jormungand, those age-old foes, will both finally have their chance to kill the other. **Thor** will succeed in felling the great snake with the blows of his hammer. But the serpent will have covered him in so much venom that he will not be able to stand for much longer; he will take nine paces before falling dead himself and adding his blood to the already-saturated soil of Vigrid.

Then the remains of the world will sink into the sea, and there will be nothing left but the void. Creation and all that has occurred since will be completely undone, as if it had never happened.



Some say that that is the end of the tale – and of all tales, for that matter. But others hold that a new world, green and beautiful, will arise out of the waters. Vidar and a few other gods – Vali, Baldur, Hodr, and Thor’s sons Modi and Magni – will survive the downfall of the old world, and will live joyously in the new one. A man and a woman, Lif and Lifthrasir, will have hidden themselves from the cataclysm in a place called the “Wood of Hoddmimir”, and will now come out and populate the lush land in which they will find themselves. A new sun, the daughter of the previous one, will rise in the sky. And all of this will be presided over by a new, almighty ruler.