

Thalos 261

Chapter 261: The Temptation of Prophecy

Thalos gazed at the god-king-tier Crystal Skull with an indescribable feeling.

It raised a fundamental question: were all Crystal Skulls forged from True Gods, or even God-Kings?

When one drew on the Crystal Skull to overspend from the future, was the price always to feed the "present"—their own body and surroundings—into the exchange?

It sounded like a fair trade on paper, but was it really worth it?

Perhaps these questions would never have definitive answers.

Or maybe... those strewn and twisted corpses were the answer.

Behind Thalos, his three accompanying gods reacted differently.

Thor was purely curious, not thinking too deeply about it. Gilgamesh, on the other hand, showed intense revulsion at such a filthy object. Freyr, as the radiant sun god, felt outright hatred—this blood-soaked, cruel, evil artifact was everything he stood against.

Freyr, especially, grew concerned that his king might fall prey to the Skull's formidable targeting and divination capabilities. Sure, it was powerful, but its corruption was real.

Just as Freyr was about to speak up, he saw Thalos glance back and smile.

Instantly, his worries vanished.

Freyr bowed. "As expected of Your Majesty."

Thalos waved lightly. "I never planned to use it. But I also won't let anyone else use it."

As he stepped closer, a faint, hazy sound entered his ears.

It was an elusive sound, like a distant bell tolling from a fog-shrouded mountain at dawn.

Clearly, the Crystal Skull had sensed Thalos's presence—and his intent.

Born atop the corpse of a god-king, Kumú Kamempus, this Crystal Skull had long transcended the realm of ordinary evil artifacts.

Created to destroy a world, it had instead devoured its own god-king master.

Such a ludicrous origin meant that it no longer saw ordinary gods as suitable hosts.

Only someone like Thalos—overwhelmingly powerful—could trigger its instinctive seductive urges.

The haunting sound twisted through the dry air of the ruined hall, subtly slowing Thalos's steps.

The bell tones gradually transformed into the soft melody of a violin—elegant, enticing.

Whether Thalos welcomed it or not, the mental contact hit him full force, drawing his consciousness into a dreamlike mire.

He "saw" a future in which countless worlds knelt at his feet.

He "saw" himself seated upon a god-king's throne, as a celestial river arched across the sky. Down its golden stream flowed majestic boats—gilded in every divine style—carrying a retinue of graceful celestial maidens.

At the center of each vessel, a radiant goddess danced with ethereal charm, her ruby lips parting to release lilting moans, seductive even to the most steadfast heart.

Even someone as seasoned as Thalos couldn't help but let his eyes linger.

No single phrase captured the goddess's beauty quite like "exotic splendor."

She smiled with longing and passion. The chimes and drums around her heightened her allure, making her even more enchanting.

Even one such goddess could ensnare a god.

But this wasn't one. Or two.

There were twelve.

Even knowing it was all an illusion conjured by the Crystal Skull, Thalos couldn't stop his heart from rippling. His divine form subtly relaxed, the inner conflict creeping in.

In this "prophetic" dream of ultimate beauty, even his core convictions began to dull.

He was certain—if it had been any other god—they'd already be lost in doubt and hesitation.

Unfortunately for the Skull...

As the three gods around him began to grow uneasy, a roar like thousands of warriors clashing in battle suddenly burst forth—sharp and deafening.

This sound did not come from the Crystal Skull.

It came from Thalos.

The three gods turned—only to meet Thalos's gaze, his eyes clearer than obsidian crystal.

"Father,"

"Your Majesty?"

Thalos grinned. "This newly born world-class evil artifact is still too green. It actually thought it could bribe me—with promises of beautiful goddesses and more territory."

The moment he finished, two of his "sons" couldn't hold back.

"Pfft." Thor laughed shamelessly.

Gilgamesh sneered and looked away with a smirk.

Freyr offered a knowing smile.

Of course the Crystal Skull would use temptation. When it couldn't penetrate Thalos's mental defenses, it had conjured a "future" filled with everything a mortal—or even a god—could desire.

But it didn't understand Thalos.

Wealth, goddesses, status—even the future itself—meant nothing to him.

As the Crystal Skull emitted a frantic, pleading hum, Thalos merely chuckled coldly and extended his hand.

With a distant grasping motion, cracks split across the Skull's surface.

The hypnotic melody shattered instantly, and the illusionary dreamscape collapsed. The air returned to its dead stillness.

A second later, the Crystal Skull—still stained with bloody sinews—exploded, scattering into glittering shards like ice.

To Gilgamesh, Thalos's triumph over the Skull's corruption came as no surprise.

What he did wonder, however, was why it took so long.

Thalos turned to him with a bright smile. "Surprised it took that long?"

Gilgamesh hesitated, then nodded.

"Destroying a world-class evil artifact isn't that hard. But I wasn't just destroying one Skull—I was destroying two, and extracting something from them."

At that exact moment, far away in the chaotic void—

Odin stood silently, holding his Crystal Skull, deep in thought.

He knew the artifact was cursed, but the utility it offered was undeniable. He hadn't used it yet because he was still calculating: how to use it efficiently, without alienating the still-loyal veteran gods in his camp.

The best move, obviously, was to find a new world, sacrifice its mortals, and activate the Skull's prophecy feature.

Then—

Suddenly, Odin felt a surge of connection with the Skull in his hands.

Not from himself—but from the Skull itself, begging for help.

\[Save me, Odin!]

Right as the message reached his divine mind, an immense divine pressure descended across time and space—

A massive phantom hand reached for the Skull.

Odin recognized it immediately.

His bastard big brother, Thalos.

That colossal, divine hand—immense, unstoppable—appeared from nowhere and casually crushed the Crystal Skull, like cracking a cookie between two fingers.

Silence.

Absolute, deathly silence.

All around, gods stared at the scene—at the Skull's obliterated remains—too shocked to speak.

Finally, Death God Apuché gathered his courage and asked:

"Your Majesty... what was that just now?"

Odin—face stiff, pride intact—refused to admit it was his brother's doing.

Instead, he lied with a straight face.

"The Crystal Skull failed to curse a great world. It suffered backlash."