

Fated to the cursed Lycan Prince

## Chapter 1270

Chapter 1270 Exhumation (Crystal's POV)

"What's the matter, Crystal? You don't look so good." Rufus eyed me worriedly.

"Don't you think that the forbidden forest is too... Peaceful?" As I spoke, I cautiously headed towards the forbidden forest's entrance. "Five years ago, I used a trick to kill the witch, Noreen. But because her bones couldn't be destroyed, I asked Laura to bury them in the forbidden forest to keep her magic at bay."

"Yes, and from then on, the forbidden forest has been shrouded in dark mist all year round, as though something evil lurked within." Only then did Rufus suddenly realize that something was wrong.

"You're right. The dark mist is gone!" I peered into the depths of the forbidden forest and added,

"Ordinary people might not be able to feel it, but because I'm also a black witch, I can sense that something's off. Every time I got too close to the forbidden forest, I could feel that gloomy, ominous aura. Besides, I specifically reinforced the seal just some time ago, but now, the aura has disappeared..."

The more I analyzed the situation, the more anxious I felt. If I couldn't feel the ominous aura, it only meant that there was something wrong with Noreen's burial place.

Rufus's expression darkened. "How about we check it out?"

I nodded in agreement.

Rufus then sent a group of soldiers to go inside the forbidden forest with us.

I followed Rufus to the big tree that was supposed to suppress Noreen's powers. The dark mist in the sky was no longer there, but the burial place seemed completely intact. There was no sign of the soil being loosened or dug up.

I squatted down to inspect the sand on top. It was untouched. It seemed that no one else had passed by this place since I last saw it.

Then I secretly manipulated my power as a black witch to scan the surrounding area for changes. Miraculously, the seal that I reinforced some time ago was still there.

If that was the case, then there shouldn't have been a problem with Noreen's remains.

The surrounding areas were lit by the soldiers' lamps. I walked around the seal twice. Everything was normal except for the lack of an ominous aura.

This made things even weirder.

"Could Noreen's bones have eroded into the soil?" Rufus wondered.

I frowned and mulled over the possibility. "Unlikely. Noreen's bones couldn't be destroyed by fire, let alone soil."

"What if we exhume her body? We have to see it with our own eyes to rest assured," Rufus suggested, worry written all over her face.

I looked up at the sky and saw that it wasn't that late, so I agreed.

"Okay, let's exhume her body. I'd like to see if Noreen can come back to life after being dead for so long."

Rufus also sent for reinforcements in case something bad happened.

When reinforcements came, the whole forbidden forest was lit up by their lamps.

I took the shovel and started to dig up Noreen's grave. I didn't want to risk anyone else getting close, so I did it alone. The deeper I dug, the more pungent the air became. At last, it gave off the unpleasant metallic smell of blood.

I couldn't help but vomit. Rufus refused to let me continue digging and took the shovel from me. Two other soldiers helped him dig.

I sat aside and watched as the hole got deeper and bigger. At that time, Laura and I were so cautious that we deliberately buried Noreen's remains very deep into the earth.

At some point, Rufus' shovel connected with something hard, and gradually, the top of the white coffin was exposed. Then its entirety was revealed.

The rectangular coffin appeared in front of everyone. Around the coffin, there were mysterious runes that were specially used to suppress evil things.

I had also used some runes to prevent others from getting to the coffin. Once someone touched the coffin, he or she would instantly fall ill and be overwhelmed with pain.

I walked over and told everyone to step back. Then I chanted a spell in my heart to remove the seal on the coffin.

## **Chapter 1271**

Chapter 1271 Disintegrated Remains (Rufus' POV)

As soon as Crystal opened the coffin, Noreen's dried-up skeleton came into sight. The greyish-white bones stood out sharply against the coffin's black velvet interior.

It looked as though Noreen had died holding a crystal ball, because her skeletal hand remained outstretched.

I was confused. Didn't it take a long time for rigor mortis to set in after death? Why did Noreen's body stiffen immediately after she died?

Was this what happened to black witches when they died? With a grim expression, Crystal walked around the white coffin.

Suddenly, a strong gust of wind blew, and the crows lurking on the tree branches took off.

Only then did I realize what Crystal meant when she mentioned that things were looking ominous.

Anything related to Noreen was ominous.

Using my flashlight, I studied Noreen's skeleton carefully from afar. It was no different from a skeleton of a human being. But one thing stood out to me—the hair.

Golden hair flowed from Noreen's skull, but I noticed that the ends were charred and black from the attempted burning. I could only imagine how much effort was put into destroying Noreen's corpse.

I took a pair of tweezers from one of my men and plucked up a strand of hair. However, when the hair was exposed to the air outside the coffin, it suddenly disintegrated to ashes.

"Is it possible that Noreen's actually completely gone?"

Naturally, I preferred the idea that Noreen's existence was completely eliminated from this world over the possibility that she had been reborn.

After all, even her hair—which refused to burn when she was buried five years ago—disintegrated as soon as it came into contact with a gust of wind. Didn't that mean that Noreen was really gone?

Crystal walked up to me and looked at the skeleton worriedly. "I still don't feel good about this. I can't shake off the feeling that things aren't as simple as they seem. But I can't tell what's really wrong."

I put my arm around her shoulder and k\*issed her on the forehead in an effort to comfort her. "Don't worry. We'll figure it out. Trust me. Even if Noreen has been reborn, she can't possibly be as powerful as she was before. You killed her once, so you can kill her again."

Crystal's expression finally softened. She rubbed her head against my chest and whispered, "I know. I'm just afraid that you and the kids will get hurt..."

I flicked her forehead with my fingers and pretended to scold her. "You underestimate me! I'm the king of the werewolves. What can a rotten witch like her do to me?"

Amused, Crystal finally cracked a small smile.

I felt relieved to see her smile. After giving her hand a reassuring squeeze, I turned around and ordered the soldiers to re-seal the coffin.

But just as the lid of the coffin was about to be closed, Crystal suddenly stopped them. She bit her lower lip and looked at me. "Can I have a closer look first?"

I nodded and followed her to the coffin again.

Crystal reached out to t\*ouch the skeleton, but I quickly stopped her. "It's dirty," I protested.

"I just want to get a closer look." Crystal shook off my hand and insisted on t\*ouching Noreen's bones.

The trees swayed and the wind picked up again. The whole forbidden forest fell into darkness, and only the area surrounding the coffin was illuminated by our lamps. I

held the flashlight high. Crystal's slender fingers slowly stretched out towards the skeleton.

The second she t\*ouched it, the skeleton turned to ashes and scattered with the wind. I immediately pulled Crystal into my arms, afraid that she'd inhale the black ash.

But the ash simply drifted away with the wind until it disappeared completely.

I still felt a little uneasy, but I sighed in relief.

The fact that the skeleton disintegrated must've meant that Noreen was gone, right?

While I was deep in thought, I suddenly realized that the woman in my arms was trembling like a leaf.

I looked at her in surprise, only to meet Crystal's fear-filled eyes. "I thought that it was just a coincidence that her hair turned to ashes just now, but now even her bones disintegrated. Could it be... Is it because Noreen's soul is no longer in this corpse?" Crystal paused for a moment and then her eyes went wide. "Could her soul be in..."

Her voice trailed off, but I knew exactly what she was going to say.

Beryl!

## **Chapter 1272**

Chapter 1272 Beryl's Soul (Crystal's POV)

My own guess scared the crap out of me. I was so anxious that my heart pounded wildly in my chest and I had a headache. My body was shaking uncontrollably.

Rufus hugged me tightly and tried to comfort me. "Shh, everything's going to be okay."

“But if my guess is right, I don’t know what we’ll do…” My teeth chattered from my uncontrollable trembling. Five years ago, Noreen had managed to cause us a big trouble.

If she was really using my daughter as a bargaining chip now, I really didn’t know what I’d do.

Beryl was still so young. How could she stand the pain of being possessed?

Just then, I recalled Noreen’s grand plan to cultivate a combination of werewolf and black witch bloodlines…

I clenched my fists and made up my mind. Beryl could not be used as a guinea pig for Noreen’s sick plans.

Rufus sent the soldiers around a kilometer away to give us some privacy.

“Beryl’s strange behaviors can’t be a coincidence. I’m afraid we really need to consider the possibility that Noreen’s soul might be occupying Beryl’s body,” Rufus mused, his expression dark with worry.

I took a few deep breaths to calm myself down and told him what Beryl had said to me after the bedtime story.

“Beryl’s an innocent free spirit. She’s outspoken and doesn’t know how to hide her true feelings. She never would’ve said something like that. She’s too young to know about philosophy and dark fairy tales. No matter how smart she is, she couldn’t have said something so profound on her own volition.”

The more I thought about it, the more desperate I felt. If Noreen really was in Beryl’s body, then would Beryl’s soul gradually weaken? And in the end, Beryl’s soul could completely vanish…

“Crystal, calm down and listen to me first.” Rufus hurriedly placed his hands on my shoulders and forced me to look him in the eye. “Fortunately, we were able to find

out the problem. It's not too late. Our top priority now should be to find a way to test Beryl and make the witch reveal herself. After all, we're just guessing right now. We need to confirm it before we start to panic."

"But how can we test her?" I looked at Rufus worriedly. My mind was an absolute mess, and I couldn't think straight.

Rufus lowered his head and thought for a while. Then he looked at me and said, "For now, we can't afford to alert the enemy. If we're right and Noreen really is living in Beryl's body, then I doubt Noreen would admit it. She'll probably trick us into thinking otherwise. We need to find the perfect way to make Noreen give herself away. So we have to go back and pretend nothing happened in front of Beryl. We can't arouse Noreen's suspicion."

I ran my fingers through my hair in distress. "Fine, but..."

Rufus reached out to smooth my knitted brows and comforted me gently, "Beryl's my daughter, too. I swear I won't let anything bad happen to her. And Crystal, I'm also hoping that no matter what happens next, you won't leave me again. I'll only be able to deal with the enemy if I know that you're safe with me."

I slowly nodded in a daze. Looking down, I reached out to hold his left index finger. "I know. I won't act rashly. Don't worry."

Rufus finally smiled. "Come on. Let's go back and check up on Beryl."

"Okay."

It was already one o'clock in the morning by the time we returned to Rufus' palace.

As soon as we entered, Jennie, Beryl's personal maid, rushed out, pale-faced.

I had a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. "What happened?"

"Beryl... She's missing!" the maid answered in a trembling voice.



Rufus's expression darkened. When he was about to lose his temper and scold Jennie, the head maid hurried forward and admitted, "I'm sorry, Your Majesty. Jennie was sent to the kitchen earlier tonight, so she has no idea what happened. Beryl woke up an hour ago and wanted to see her brother, so your mother took her there."

## Chapter 1273

Chapter 1273 Putting On An Act (Crystal's POV)

Without a moment to lose, Rufus and I rushed to Laura's palace.

Since Ethan's death, Laura had been living alone in a smaller structure in a secluded corner of the garden.

Only a few lanterns were on, and there were no guards patrolling the palace. It looked oddly quiet from a distance.

I couldn't shake off the bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. I couldn't imagine what kinds of horrible things Noreen would do to Arron.

If Laura wasn't on her guard, Noreen could easily fool her.

I stopped in front of the door nervously and reached for the door handle, but Rufus quickly grabbed my wrist and pulled me behind him protectively. "Let me do it."

Then with a cold, dark expression, he decisively pushed the door open.

The faint sound of a child's laughter came from the end of the corridor. It was undoubtedly Arron laughing.

There was a small garden at the end of the corridor. Arron liked to hide there whenever they played hide-and-seek.

Rufus and I exchanged glances and simultaneously sighed in relief.

Fortunately, Arron was okay.

But all of a sudden, we heard him scream. My heart skipped a beat. I rushed to the end of the corridor and yanked the curtains out of the way. A delicate garden came into view.

I looked around and found that Beryl was approaching Arron with a strange-looking bug in the palm of her hand.

“What are you doing?!”

I shrieked and rushed to my son. Without hesitation, I grabbed him and pulled him away from Beryl, checking to see if he was hurt.

Laura, who was drinking tea at a small round table nearby, stood up in surprise.

“Crystal, what’re you doing here?”

I had no time to explain. I turned to glare at Beryl vigilantly.

Beryl was still holding up the bug in her hand. She pursed her lips and stared at me with her big eyes, tears welling up in them. At the thought that there might be an evil soul living in this child’s body, any semblance of tenderness in me was destroyed, leaving only a mother’s instinct to protect her child.

“What kind of bug are you holding? What were you going to do to Arron?” I demanded.

Beryl trembled in fear. She held up the bug in her palm and burst into tears, crying, “It’s a cricket! I just wanted to play with my brother. That’s all! Mommy, why are you so mad at me?”

“Honey, you’re scaring her.” Giving me a warning look, Rufus stopped me from questioning Beryl further.

I held Arron tightly, while still eyeing Beryl warily.

Rufus scooped her up and patted her back to comfort her while she sobbed. My heart ached, but my mind kept telling me that this could all be an act created by Noreen. "Mommy, what's wrong? Why'd you get so mad at Beryl?" Arron wrapped his arms around my neck and looked at me in confusion.

"Beryl was just playing. Besides, I'm not afraid of bugs. I wanted to make the crickets fight."

Laura didn't say anything, but she did cast me a reproachful glance.

Only then did I come to my senses, instantly regretting my impulsive actions. If my guess was wrong and Noreen wasn't in Beryl's body, then I would've hurt the child for no reason.

I set Arron down on the ground and walked up to Beryl, trying to apologize.

"Baby Beryl, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have yelled at you just now. I just..." Beryl's face had turned red from crying. She lowered her head, unwilling to look at me.

Rufus gave me a sympathetic look, telling me with his eyes that I had to calm down first.

I felt terrible. Just as I opened my mouth to say something more, I suddenly saw a weird smile on Beryl's face. Then I saw that she was about to place the strange-looking bug onto Rufus' chest...

## **Chapter 1274**

Chapter 1274 She Was Not My Daughter (Crystal's POV)

I was so scared that I couldn't help but shout, "Rufus, get away from Beryl!"

Rufus' eyes darted from Beryl, who was in his arms, and then at me. With a serious look on his face, he asked grimly, "What's wrong?"

Then I looked at Beryl again. The devious smile from earlier was completely gone, and her childish face was full of grievance and sadness. She wrapped her arms around Rufus' neck and looked at me in fear, as if what I saw just now was just an illusion.

This was ridiculous!

I stepped back in a trance, not knowing how to explain.

Even if Rufus believed me, Laura was here and she didn't know what was going on. Naturally, in her eyes, I was being unnecessarily harsh with Beryl.

Neither Laura nor Arron noticed Beryl's abnormality, which meant that Noreen's disguise was flawless.

If I didn't notice the weird smile just now, I too would've fallen for her little act.

Noreen was so damn cunning!

Rufus seemed to sense that I was in a terrible mood, so he put Beryl down and pulled me into a warm embrace. He k\*issed my forehead and whispered in a voice only I could hear, "Calm down. We'll talk about this later."

I took a deep breath and nodded slightly.

Sniffing, Beryl wiped her tears with the back of her hand and looked at me pitifully. I returned her gaze and said nothing.

But my silence only served to make Beryl even sadder. Tears streamed down her chubby cheeks, and her nose turned red. She squatted down and buried her face in her hands, sobbing, "Mommy, you don't love me anymore! Why are you so mean to

me? Is it because I forgot you were my mommy once? I'm sorry, Mommy! Please don't hate me!"

Her pitiful cries continued, which made everyone present feel sorry for her.

I clenched my fists and felt a sting in my eye and a lump in my throat. For a moment, I almost believed that the girl in front of me was the real Beryl.

But I knew I couldn't believe her. Noreen was a master at deceiving people. She knew how to use one's weakness against them, so I had to be extremely careful.

She was not my daughter.

"Don't cry," I said coldly, looking at her expressionlessly.

Beryl was stunned for a moment, but then she started crying even harder. "You really don't love me anymore! You used to comfort me!"

Enduring the unpleasant feeling in the pit of my stomach, I turned my head away.

"Baby Beryl, don't cry. I'm here for you." Laura picked up Beryl and rubbed her back comfortingly.

Beryl gradually stopped crying under Laura's coaxing. Laura then took Beryl to the small round table and gave her a slice of cake. Arron also followed them to help cheer up his sister.

While Beryl was distracted, I whispered to Rufus, "When you were holding Beryl just now, I saw her trying to attack you with the bug, so I stopped her."

"I understand," Rufus said gently, but then he gestured for me to stay quiet, shooting a glance over at Beryl. After cooling down, we also walked to the table.

Beryl was busy gobbling up the cake. When we approached, Laura couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong with you today? What you did was out of line."

“Crystal hasn’t fully recovered yet, so her mental health is still in the rut,” Rufus explained, covering for me flawlessly.

Laura’s expression softened. “Crystal, you should focus on your recovery. Don’t worry about the kids. Rufus and I will take care of them.”

I didn’t object. She was right. I wasn’t fit to take care of my children now.

It was getting late, so Rufus and I decided to stay the night in Laura’s palace. After all, if anything happened, at least we were already in the area.

The following morning, I woke up to an empty bed.

Rufus had already gotten up and left.

Sunlight flooded in through the window. If it weren’t for what happened last night, I might’ve just gone back to sleep.

But now, I was too anxious to enjoy the thought of sleeping in.

Wrapping myself up with the quilt, I climbed out of bed. Then I gathered the clothes on the floor and got dressed.

I could hear Arron and Beryl playing outside.

When I opened the door, the two children ran up to me. Arron smiled as usual and clung to my leg, while Beryl looked at me timidly.

I tried not to show any emotion on my face and simply scooped up Arron. Rubbing the top of Beryl’s head, I said gently, “Let’s have breakfast.”

In the dining room, Laura was ordering the servants to serve the food while Rufus was leisurely drinking coffee on the sofa. When he heard me approach, he stood up and walked over to give me a good-morning k\*iss. In a voice that no one else could hear, he whispered, “Don’t worry. I’m watching her.”

I nodded and gently squeezed his hand.

Breakfast was ready. The servants took Arron and Beryl away to wash their hands. I wanted to follow them, but Laura stopped me.

“Let the kids go by themselves. They can’t always have their mother hovering over them,” Laura chastised.

I frowned and thought for a while. Then I gave her a meaningful look and said slowly, “Try not to let Beryl and Arron be alone together. After all, Beryl’s been acting strange.”

But to my surprise, Laura seemed to have misunderstood what I meant. She frowned at me and said, “Crystal, what’s that supposed to mean? Are you saying Beryl will try to hurt Arron? What’s gotten into you? You’ve been cruel to Beryl since last night!”

## **Chapter 1275**

Chapter 1275 A Comeback (Crystal's POV)

Laura was confused. She glanced at the children to make sure they couldn’t hear us. Then she turned to face me and said in a low voice, “Crystal, is it because Beryl had forgot about you once that you’ve been treating her strangely? If you’ve got something against her, let her stay with me. I don’t want Beryl to get hurt.”

I felt terrible and tried to explain helplessly, “How could I have anything against my own daughter? Beryl’s my baby, my dearest sweetheart. I love her so much.”

“Then why are you so mean to her?” Laura looked even more confused. She pulled me into the other room to make sure the little ones couldn’t eavesdrop.

“I know you’re a reasonable person, Crystal. You must have your own reasons for treating Beryl like that. By the way, I wanted to ask why you and Rufus came so late

last night. I wanted to ask you about it last night, but I didn't because the children were also there."

I was choked with sobs and couldn't say anything. I was afraid that Laura wouldn't be able to accept the possibility that Noreen was in Beryl's body, and that she'd end up treating Beryl like a monster. After all, she hated Noreen so much.

Just then, a light cough interrupted our conversation.

We both turned to look in the direction of the sound, only to find Rufus walking towards us. He sighed and said to his mother, "Last night, Crystal and I went to the forbidden forest. Noreen's corpse had turned to ashes."

Laura's jaw went slack. "How can that be? Noreen's remains were indestructible!"

"Yeah, they were—but not anymore. Rufus and I think that her soul has found shelter elsewhere," I said grimly.

"What do you mean? Are you saying Noreen's soul found a host?" Laura asked anxiously. Suddenly, it dawned on her. She looked at me in horror and asked in disbelief, "Are you saying she's in Beryl's body?!"

"Yes, that's what we think," Rufus nodded solemnly.

"That's impossible. How on earth could she do that? I didn't feel anything unusual with Beryl..." Laura seemed to find it hard to accept. In a daze, she looked at me and asked softly, "Is that why you treated Beryl like that last night?"

"Yes. I was so worried that Beryl would try to hurt Arron, so I acted on impulse," I explained with a heavy sigh, feeling powerless. Fortunately, after getting some rest, I felt calmer and more collected than last night.

"Just now, I thought of something. When Lucy kidnapped Beryl and took her to the forbidden forest, Beryl was wounded and bleeding. I think her blood happened to



seep into the ground where Noreen was buried, so Noreen used that as an opportunity to possess Beryl.”

“How on earth is she that powerful?” Laura sounded scared and anxious, but she was still a little skeptical. “But Beryl has been acting normal—except when she just woke up. And Arron is her twin brother. If there was something wrong with her, he should’ve noticed.”

“Arron’s only five years old. Even if he sensed that something was wrong, he’d just think that his sister was still recovering from her coma,” I said softly.

Although soul parasitism sounded totally outrageous, it made sense if Noreen was the one doing it.

Noreen was a powerful black witch, so it was very likely that she had used some forbidden spell on her body before she died. She decided to make a comeback when the time was right.

Laura was speechless. She grimaced and pressed her fingers against her temples, as though she had a pounding headache.

“I didn’t want to believe it either. It wasn’t until I saw the weird smile on Beryl’s face that I was convinced that Noreen was in fact using Beryl’s body.” Speaking of this, I couldn’t help but feel a little pissed off. Noreen was really getting on my nerves.

Obviously, she had provoked me on purpose. She just wanted to see me suffer.

“Wait a second.” Laura suddenly raised her head and looked at us seriously.

“I remember that Beryl wasn’t wounded when Lucy kidnapped her. You and Rufus, on the other hand, were both injured. Could the blood that seeped into Noreen’s tomb be yours, not Beryl’s?”

## **Chapter 1276**

## Chapter 1276 Bugs Crawling Underneath My Skin (Crystal's POV)

Laura's guess made me pause. The day when Beryl was kidnapped, everything was so chaotic; perhaps I remembered it incorrectly.

If Beryl wasn't wounded that day, then it made sense if it was my blood that had triggered the reaction of Noreen's remains.

But this conjecture made me even more scared. Cold sweat broke out on my forehead.

"I'm Noreen's only target. She's always been good at bewitching people. Back then, she was the one who had Alina wrapped around her finger. Step by step, she lured Alina into her trap, until she finally killed Leonard. That was a tragedy that no one saw coming." The more I thought about it, the more scared I became. My hands started to tremble, and the gruesome scene that was Leonard's death flashed before my eyes.

I buried my face in my hands and said in a low voice, "What if I've also fallen into Noreen's trap? What if Beryl's abnormality is just an illusion? She could be trying to drive me insane. I might even kill my own daughter—"

"That's not going to happen." Before I could spiral out of control, Rufus interrupted me and pulled me into his arms, stroking my back comfortingly. "Baby, you're fine. Don't scare yourself. Alina sold her soul to the devil for her own selfish ambitions. She got what she deserved, But you're different. You love Beryl. There's no doubt about it. Noreen's just doing this to try to provoke you. Don't worry. We'll find a way to expel Noreen's soul from Beryl's body."

"He's right, Crystal. You're still on the road to recovery, and you're still very weak. Don't let Noreen take advantage of this opportunity," Laura added, trying to comfort me.

I didn't say anything and simply held Rufus's hand tightly. My mental health was in the gutter, and I couldn't calm down.

I recalled my life-and-death battle with Noreen five years ago. At that time, my only weakness was Rufus. Now that I had two children in addition to Rufus, I couldn't afford to gamble.

Five years had passed and everything had changed, but at the same time, it felt as though nothing had changed.

Noreen still haunted us.

Suddenly, we heard Arron's voice from outside. The two children were looking for us.

Laura stood up in a hurry and said, "We'll talk about this later. Let's have breakfast first. And don't say anything that might arouse Noreen's suspicion. Since she wants to play this game, let's play with her."

After saying that, Laura put on a big smile and went out to have breakfast with the children. I, on the other hand, stayed put. I couldn't face Beryl.

I couldn't pretend to be a loving mother when I knew that Noreen was a parasite in Beryl's body.

Rufus knew what I was thinking. He squatted in front of me, held my hand, and k\*issed it. "Even if you don't have an appetite, you still need to eat something. Let me deal with Beryl."

I nodded in a daze and allowed Rufus to pull me to the dining room.

All throughout breakfast, I only paid attention to Arron. I was afraid that if I so much as glanced at Beryl, I'd let my guard down.

After breakfast, Rufus and I sat in the garden and watched the two kids play in the sandbox. They laughed and giggled as they built a little sandcastle.

When I saw Beryl pour sand on Arron's face, I couldn't help but think of what happened in the forbidden forest last night. Noreen's ashes swirled all over me at that time. I pushed Rufus away immediately, as I felt that something was terribly wrong.

I scratched my shoulder, but it wasn't itchy. For some reason, the hair on the back of my neck stood on end, as though there were bugs crawling underneath my skin.

"What's the matter, Crystal?" Rufus asked, looking at me worriedly.

I shook my head. "I don't know. I just feel itchy all over. I'm going to take a shower first."

As I spoke, I stood up and left in a hurry without giving Rufus a chance to respond. Along the way, my heart started to race in my chest. I kept scratching my arm, until it turned red.

Memories of the past flashed through my mind. All the dead people Noreen had left in her wake, the ferocious look on her face right before she died...

I felt like my brain was about to explode like an overfilled balloon.

## **Chapter 1277**

Chapter 1277 Illusions (Crystal's POV)

By the time I returned to my residence, my emotions were completely out of control.

I had no idea how things had come to this. If everything had been premeditated, that meant that I had become a willing prey.

My thoughts were clouded by an indescribable pain. It felt as though thousands of ants were crawling all over my skin, gnawing at my flesh.

I stumbled into my room and burrowed under the covers of my bed.

I was shivering. I felt hot and cold at the same time.

My head was pounding, too, and all I could think about was the pain. Images of death flashed in my vision—Leonard's, Maya's, Rufus'.

I saw Rufus with a cut on his throat, caused by the black thorn that adorned his body...

And now... Now, it was Beryl's turn, wasn't it?

Noreen had once told me that I would only bring misfortune to the people around me.

She was right. One by one, the people I loved and the people who loved me were slowly disappearing.

I had done my best to fight against my destiny, but it was all in vain.

I could feel the sheets turning damp as I sobbed, hoping against hope that this was all just a huge and terrible prank.

But of course, it was all wishful thinking.

The last five years were simply a grace period, the calm before the storm. What was fated was bound to happen sooner or later.

Another wave of pain wracked my body, almost choking me to death. It seemed like the ants from hell had already penetrated my skin, and were now crawling around my brain.

I rushed to the bathroom and turned the cold water on. I couldn't even wait until it filled the bathtub, I just submerged my head into the water, praying that it would numb the pain, if only a little.

When I pulled myself back up, I caught sight of my reflection in the mirror. Through the haze, I could make out how red my cheeks were, and how my neck and arms were now decorated with scratch marks.

I blinked once, then twice, but my vision remained hazy. The feeling was not that different from when I got extremely drunk. But a voice inside my head told me that I wasn't drunk. If that wasn't it, then something else was wrong with my body. My mind was in a daze, and I was itching and burning all over.

I started scratching my arm again, but the itchiness only seemed to get worse. I scratched and scratched, until blood bloomed in my skin.

Just then, someone stormed into the room. I whipped around and stared helplessly at Rufus. Tears were streaming down my face as I held up my bleeding arm. "The itch won't stop," I whispered miserably. "What should I do?"

I raised my other hand, intending to scratch my arm again, but Rufus caught it in his grasp.

He pulled me into his arms and k\*issed my hair. "Calm down, Crystal," he rasped. "It's okay. Don't think about the itch. Everything will be fine if you stop thinking about it."

I choked on a sob and struggled in his embrace. "Stay away from me! I only bring death and misfortune to those around me. I don't want to see anyone die again."

"No one will die. Listen to me, we will be together forever. You and me, and Beryl and Arron." Rufus pulled me flush against his chest and tightened his arms around me, so much so that I could barely squirm. "If it weren't for me, Beryl wouldn't have ended up like this," I insisted through my tears. "It's all my fault. Everything is my fault. I don't deserve to be her mother."

“Don’t say that, Crystal. It’s not your fault. No one could have expected Noreen to come back to life.” Rufus took a deep breath, then pulled back a little to look me in the eye. His tone turned serious.

“Noreen is taking advantage of your weaknesses. That’s what she does. She wants you to break down and let your defenses fall. You said it yourself—Noreen is good at bewitching people and manipulating them into doing her will. This is going to be a tough battle, Crystal. You need to calm down and keep a firm hold of your wits. Now, clear your mind and forget all about your worries for a while.”

I did as he said, taking slow, deep breaths and grounding myself. As soon as I calmed down, the haze cleared, and the horrific sensation of ants eating at me vanished. My mind had never been clearer.

I realized then that everything I had just suffered were nothing more than illusions.