

I Transmigrated Then Switched Parents With the Villain chapter 1- Prologue

“Take it off.”

From the moment he stepped into the study, he couldn't move a single finger.

He was completely subdued by a chilling voice that felt like a howling blizzard.

Bowing his head low, he let out a sound that seemed on the verge of tears.

“Brother, Elder Brother. Why are you doing this?”

“Shushu, that's your name, isn't it?”

“No, it's not. That's just a pet name that my nanny and you used to call me because you found me cute. My name is Damian.”

Shushu meant “something lovely.”

Therefore, it was usually used when calling young children, lovers, or pets.

It was an inappropriate title to use for a twenty-year-old noble youth.

Nevertheless, Callix, who had returned from the battlefield, used to call his fake younger brother that.

He didn't know since when Callix had started suspecting him, but if he was caught for impersonating a noble, not only himself but even his mother would face the death penalty.

Shushu desperately fought back the urge to drop to his knees, beg for his life, and plead that his only crime was being blackmailed by Lady Meiyu.

However, Callix gave the order once more to Shushu, who was barely standing on trembling legs.

“Take it off, Shushu. If you don't take your clothes off yourself, I'll call the servants to strip you.”

Imagining the horrific scene of having his clothes stripped away by attendants, Shushu finally burst into tears.

With shaking hands, he unbuttoned the pearl buttons, took off his silk shirt, and removed his crisply ironed navy wool trousers.

As he sobbed with his arms covering his chest, the man sitting at the mahogany desk shifted his weight, making a loud scraping sound as his chair dragged across the floor.

“What are you doing? I told you to take everything off until not a single thread is left on your body!”

At the sound of a fist slamming down hard on the desk, Shushu’s frail shoulders jerked up.

After removing his socks and underwear completely, the man walked over to him.

His flawless, pristine skin glowed pure white, like a snowy path that had never once been touched by human footsteps.

With pink hair and golden-shining eyes, Shushu had the appearance of a beautiful spring fairy, completely unsuited for the harsh northern region.

The calloused hand of a man, hardened by rigorous swordsmanship training, slowly stroked down Shushu’s body.

He looked at the front, turned him around, and checked thoroughly to make sure he hadn’t missed anything. He even pushed away Shushu’s hands, which were covering his chest, and closely inspected his bare white chest.

While silently enduring the man’s sharp gaze and rough touch, Shushu could not hide his anxiety.

Knowing that a day would eventually come when his true identity would be discovered by Callix Vesper, the very first thing he did every morning was cover his “name” with makeup.

This was because he had possessed a minor supporting character in a 19th-rated, dark and ruined web novel titled ‘The Black-Haired Healer’, only to be executed after acting as a stand-in for a disabled villain.

Unlike the original novel, Callix—having failed to discover the name—had let Shushu go.

At the exact moment he was secretly letting out a sigh of relief, the man pulled a handkerchief from his jacket and rubbed Shushu’s shoulder blades.

The name hidden by makeup was finally revealed.

Callix Vesper.

It was the ultimate brand, proving that he had been born as his brother’s mate.

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With the Villain chapter 2

“Kyaaaah! Aaah! This is so annoying! Fix it! Fix it right now!”

A sharp, cat-eyed beauty wearing a dress that revealed her voluptuous chest threw a vase across the tower room.

With her bright red hair, she was Meiyou, the Grand Duke’s concubine whose fiery temper matched her flame magic.

“I-I am truly sorry, Lady Meiyou. I have no excuse.”

Bow-ing deeply, the doctor rolled his eyes nervously to check on Damian, who sat with his mouth hanging open and drool trickling down his chin.

The second young master had tumbled down the stairs and become an idiot.

Since there was no way Damian, locked away at the top of the tower, could have walked out of the room on his own, the doctor figured she must have pushed the child down the stairs once again.

“Shut up! What kind of doctor are you if you can’t even fix something like that?!”

It had already been five years since the Northern Grand Duke and his heir had departed for the battlefield.

While giving birth to the second son, Damian, the Duchess had died of excessive blood loss, and Meiyou, the daughter of a count, had come to the North to fill that empty place.

As it was, she was furious about marrying a man much older than herself, let alone being a mere concubine rather than the legal wife.

To make matters worse, overnight she had been saddled with an infant born to the rightful wife.

While her husband was away from the castle, Meiyou had indulged in all sorts of hysterics, locking the baby in the tower and abusing him.

Yet, of all things, Damian had turned out to be a cripple and a fool, and now the Grand Duke was returning to the North.

If her past atrocities were discovered, not only she but the entire Bastion family would face annihilation.

Annoyed by how tangled the situation had become, she flared flames in her hands to vent her anger.

Just as she was about to kill the useless doctor who couldn't heal Damian, he cried out in a loud voice.

"I have a good idea."

"What is it? If it's any nonsense, I won't let you off."

"Doesn't the Grand Duke not know what the young master Damian looks like, having parted ways with him when he was an infant? Besides, only a handful of people working inside the castle have cared for the young master. So, how about we find a child with the exact same pink hair and golden eyes and pass him off as young master Damian?"

"Hmm..."

For now, it was the best possible solution.

However, everyone in the North had dark hair.

On top of that, pink hair was extremely rare even in the Adamantia Empire, and golden eyes were just as scarce.

Even in the South, where hair colors were lighter, such a combination was hard to find—how on earth could they suddenly find a child in the North with all those conditions?

"Fine. If you bring me a stand-in for Damian before the Grand Duke returns, I'll spare your life. If you fail, I will tell the Grand Duke that you made the young master crippled because you failed to take proper care of him!"

The doctor, who had been keeping his head bowed, barely managed to swallow down the curses threatening to burst out.

She was telling him to clean up the mess she herself had made.

But since Meiyou was a wicked woman more than capable of killing him, the doctor had no choice but to comply obediently.

"Yes, I will do my absolute best to find him."

Stepping out of the room where Damian was imprisoned, the doctor let out the breath he had been holding.

His body shivered as his sweat-drenched back cooled down.

No matter how much he cursed her inwardly as a monster deserving of divine punishment, all he could do was find a stand-in for Damian.

Because he hadn't reported Meiyou's tyranny to the Grand Duke while keeping her company through her heat cycles, the doctor was a complete accomplice who could never fully escape responsibility for Damian's accident.

There was once the most beautiful emperor in the world.

He possessed hair that looked like melted gold and emerald-shining green eyes, and was called the sun of the empire: Helios Adamantia.

The gods, marveling at Helios's beauty, had bestowed divine power upon him.

However, an emperor who held numerous divine powers within a human body suffered from excruciating agony.

In response, Helios shared his divine power with the nobles of the twelve great families.

Even so, these noble beings who could use magic could not escape a chronic illness: mana overload.

The method to prevent mana overload had been discovered by chance.

When physical contact was made with a specific kind of being, the rampaging mana would calm down.

The mages called this act "divine blessing" and widely searched for individuals with "this constitution."

They called them "Gem," meaning a precious jewel.

If a Gem happened to be an omega or an alpha, they might get dragged off by the imperial family and nobility to bear children and live as concubines, but the vast majority of humanity was beta.

How many such chosen genotypes could there possibly be?

And the notion that alphas and omegas possessed noble status was common knowledge here, too.

Yet Shushu, despite being a commoner, had been born as a "Gem."

Presumably, the reason he was being dragged away right now was because of that very fact.

The carriage door flew open, and multiple arms reached out, pulling both him and his mother inside in one go.

In broad daylight, right in the middle of the market, he had been kidnapped.

His mother held him tightly, trembling all over.

There were four men inside the carriage.

Since they weren't ordinary betas, they all had handsome appearances and bulky frames that exuded an overwhelming sense of intimidation.

"Why did you have to bring the woman along?" the spectacled man scolded his companions.

"What do you expect me to do when she wouldn't let go of the kid?"

"Let's just ditch the woman right now."

"This is driving me crazy. What should we do?"

"Let's just take her along to Lady Meiyong for now," a blue-haired man said in a gloomy atmosphere.

"Anyway, it looks like we did a pretty good job finding someone similar to young master Damian."

"A misfortune within our fortune."

At the names "Meiyong" and "Damian," Shushu tilted his head in confusion before opening his eyes wide in shock.

He had thought he was simply kidnapped for being a Gem, but that wasn't it.

As if someone had struck his head with a hammer to knock some sense into him, the memories of being an ordinary high school student on Earth rushed back in an instant.

He hadn't been reincarnated; he had possessed a body in the dark, ruined web novel 'The Black-Haired Healer'.

And judging by how things were unfolding, Shushu seemed to have possessed a minor supporting character who died so early he hadn't even been mentioned by name in 'The Black-Haired Healer'.

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‘The Black-Haired Healer’ begins when Tang Miyuan, hailing from the Sichuan Tang clan, sustains heavy injuries in a battle with the leader of the Demonic Cult and falls off a cliff.

Awakening in this world, she utilizes her knowledge of poisons to work as a healer, and by chance ends up treating Damian, who has been reduced to a cripple and a fool.

Regaining his sanity, Damian awakens as a grand archmage fitting an apex alpha, and kills his abusive stepmother, Meiyou.

He goes on to live as the legitimate second young master of the Vesper family, but because his temperament has become severely warped, he fails to get along with his family.

Furthermore, consumed by resentment over what happened to him and hatred for the world, he dabbles in dark magic and founds a dark organization dedicated to resurrecting the Demon King.

Anyway, Damian wasn’t the point.

The point was that he was being dragged away as a stand-in for the idiotic Damian.

In the novel, the explanation for this role consisted of nothing more than a brief conversation between the villain’s brother, Callix, and Damian.

When Damian, having returned to the North, poured out his grievances asking why he hadn’t been looked for all this time, Callix had replied:

[Meiyou set up a stand-in for you. Since I and Father had to leave for the battlefield when you were an infant, we didn’t know what you looked like, so we had no choice but to be fooled.]

[Then where is that stand-in right now?]

[I killed them. The fake’s name appeared on me. My name, on a mere beta.]

His stomach churned as if he had indigestion, and cold sweat broke out.

Thinking he was just scared, his mother wiped the sweat pooling on his forehead and continuously patted his back, whispering that everything would be okay.

A “name” was both a blessing and a curse to a mage.

Not all Gems could suppress mana overload to the same degree.

A “matching rate” existed between a mage and a Gem, and if that matched by over 90%, a name would manifest.

Therefore, mages considered it their lifelong wish to find their name.

Meeting such a person meant being forever liberated from the cursed shackles of mana overload.

However, there was a major catch to this.

The name manifested regardless of the genders of the two people.

Since mages were limited to those of imperial and noble birth, they were born as alphas or omegas.

Yet because Gems were born among non-mages, betas made up a large proportion of them.

Alphas and omegas could not have children with betas—not even between an alpha man and a beta woman.

And once a name appeared, no matter how much intimacy one shared with anyone other than that name, children could never be conceived.

In short, if the name turned out to be a beta, the family line would be severed.

In such cases, the best solution was to kill one’s name.

That way, the partner’s name naturally vanished from the body, making it possible to conceive children with someone else.

From a noble’s perspective, no matter how high the compatibility with a Gem bearing their name, continuing the family line was paramount, and a new Gem could always be found, so whenever they found a beta name, they killed them on sight.

The naming phenomenon occurred extremely rarely, yet he had breached those astronomical odds to become an extraordinarily unlucky supporting character stumbling straight into a death flag.

His vision went dark.

The world was utterly plotting against him.

With every revolution of the carriage wheels, it felt like he was drawing closer to the scaffold.

His young body must have been far too frail to withstand such extreme stress, as a sudden wave of nausea surged up.

Vomiting retches onto the carriage floor, Shushu passed out with foam bubbling at his lips.

In his dream, Shushu was being kicked by someone.

It hurt so much that it felt entirely like reality.

Covered in dust after rolling on the bare ground, he curled his body up as tightly as possible to endure the violence, which felt as merciless as an iron flail.

Just as his consciousness grew hazy from the horrific pain and he thought he was about to die, the rainstorm of kicks finally stopped.

As if still not venting his fury, the man heaved his thick chest like a bull, exhaling ragged breaths.

[I never thought an inferior thing who couldn't even manifest as an alpha would be my younger brother. But as expected, it's true. You know what happens when you impersonate a noble, don't you?]

[Brother, Elder Brother, please save me.]

Shushu reached out and grabbed the hem of Callix's trousers.

Even when stretched to their absolute limit, a seven-year-old child's hands were smaller than maple leaves, yet the hands gripping those trousers were as large as a grown adult's, making him instantly realize this was not reality.

[Who is your brother? Do you look like a commoner to me like you?]

He trampled Shushu's hand beneath his shiny polished leather boots.

[Aaaah!]

Callix grabbed Shushu's hair and jerked his head upward. His face, soaked in tears, was both poignant and beautiful.

[The crime of impersonating my younger brother will be punished at the guillotine!]

Shaking him by the hair, Callix flung Shushu's head aside as if discarding filthy trash.

Sobbing and weeping, Shushu woke up from the dream as he felt his mother's lips softly pressing against his cheek.

"My baby, it's okay. Mommy will protect you. Mommy will protect you."

Emissary in the warmth of his mother, who was frantically kissing him to soothe him, Shushu silently resolved that he would never die like he did in the original novel.

Outside the carriage window, the scenery was flashing by at high speed.

If he jumped out here, he'd either end up crippled or dead.

Therefore, he needed to devise another method.

The kidnappers wanted him, so the right thing to do was at least send his mother back home.

If it were discovered that he was a fake, his mother would be dragged to the guillotine alongside him.

"Mom, get off."

"Huh?"

"Mister, please drop my mom off at the nearest village."

The kidnappers, addressed as "mister," muttered to one another, "Did he just call you?" as each desperately pretended they weren't the one being called.

"What are you talking about? Shushu, stay quiet. Where do you think you're going alone? You have to come with Mom."

While the original novel mentioned that Callix killed Damian's stand-in, there was no mention that the stand-in's mother was killed as well.

That carried only one meaning: his mother had already died before Callix even disposed of her.

Meiyou would never leave alone a mother trying to protect her child.

She was a wicked woman who had abused even an infant.

She would undoubtedly slaughter his mother right before his eyes.

After all, to Meiyou, the mother was a threatening piece of evidence exposing her lie.

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Though the kidnappers muttered, “What’s wrong with this kid?”, they thankfully debated how to handle the kidnapped mother.

“Should we just let her off?”

“Of course not. Let’s just kill her here so there’s no loose ends.”

“Let’s not cross that line. Just let the woman go. What can she do all by herself? She doesn’t even know who we are.”

“That’s right. We’re not real kidnappers anyway. That poor, pitiful child will thank us later.”

The arrogant men must have thought that letting a commoner child live as the son of the Northern Grand Duke was some immense act of charity.

Listening to their conversation, the mother couldn’t suppress her anger and clenched her fists tightly.

Shushu wrapped his tiny hand around her clenched fist.

“I love you, Mom.”

“Shushu…….”

“Shushu is definitely going to come back home. So please wait for me, Mom.”

Fortunately, as soon as they reached the village, the men stopped the carriage and forcibly dragged his mother out.

She tried to climb back into the carriage, begging them to take her along, but was knocked backward by a rough kick from one of the men.

“You bastards, shut up!”

Unaccustomed to hearing a young child swear, the men froze and stammered, stuttering in confusion.

“Y-You! Wh-What did you just say, you little brat?”

“I was happy with my mom, but you guys ruined my life! Go rot in hell, you damned assholes!”

As Shushu glared and fumed, the men fell silent.

Fortunately, these bastards seemed to have a shred of conscience.

Wiping away his tears, Shushu looked out the carriage window.

This was no time to just sit around crying.

His primary plan was to gather funds and escape the castle before the Northern Grand Duke and Callix arrived.

Though it would be difficult for a lone child to make it back to Springfield all by himself, he figured he could rely on the assistance of adults along the way, given how everyone kept making a fuss over how cute he was.

If Plan A failed and he ended up coming face-to-face with the Northern Grand Duke and Callix, he would have to win them over to his side by turning on the charm.

If he managed to make them his personal lapdogs, he might be able to escape the guillotine when his “fake” identity was eventually discovered.

Of course, as long as he remained a beta, the moment a name manifested on Callix’s body, his life would be forfeit once again.

Therefore, he had to escape the castle no matter what before that happened, meet his mother in Springfield, and flee together to a foreign country.

Until then, he resolved never to let the Northern Grand Duke and Callix realize he was a fake Damian.

As expected, the destination of the carriage was Wintergarden, the capital of the North.

The carriage pulled into the Grand Duke’s castle and came to a halt right in front of the stables.

One of the men stuffed Shushu into a large burlap sack and hoisted him over his shoulder.

He could feel himself being carried somewhere, continuously ascending what felt like stairs.

Even knowing he wasn't going to die right this second, his entire body trembled like an aspen leaf.

At a certain moment, the sack opened, and Shushu squeezed his eyes shut against the sudden glare.

Feeling a sharp sting on his cheek, he opened his eyes to find long fingernails firmly pinching his plump cheek.

"Child, do you know where this is?"

"N-No."

"This is the castle of Maldini Vesper, who rules the North. From now on, you are going to live here as his second young master."

The red-haired woman gripped Shushu's cheek even harder.

Though his tender skin stung as her fingernails dug in, Shushu was frozen stiff and unable to move an inch.

"If you play the role of Damian Vesper's stand-in well, I will send your mother 10 gold coins every month. Ten gold coins is a fortune a commoner can't even begin to imagine. Let me explain it in a way you can easily understand. Ten gold coins is such a huge sum that you could eat a bowl of meat soup every day, hire five maids, and still have enough left over to save."

To a genuinely impoverished commoner child, it would undoubtedly sound like an offer too good to pass up.

Yet Shushu did not naively believe she would keep her word.

It was just a lie to make him easy to manipulate.

"However, if the fact that you're a fake is discovered, you and your mother will both be dragged to the guillotine and have your heads chopped off. Answer me if you understand."

".....Yes."

He tried not to show any sign of fear, but his young body shook violently against his will.

Shushu could barely force out a reply through his constricted throat.

Finally releasing his cheek, she stepped back.

Only then did Shushu take in his surroundings.

It was a room furnished with nothing more than a dilapidated bed.

The floor was covered in thick layers of uncleaned dust, and old food was rotting in a dish placed on the floor like a dog's bowl.

He gasped, drawing in a sharp breath.

Damian grew up in an environment like this?

It suddenly made complete sense why, the moment he regained his sanity and awakened as a grand archmage, he came to kill Meiyu.

No matter how long he and his mother had spent wandering and living a nomadic life, they had never stayed in conditions this wretched.

A single thin sheet lay atop the bed.

Since they certainly wouldn't provide a cotton quilt just because winter arrived after locking Damian in a place like this, winters must have been unimaginably freezing here.

Swallowing hard with tension, he wondered if this was where he would be staying from now on.

Seeing this, Meiyu let out a high-pitched laugh.

"What? Are you worried you'll be staying here?"

She kicked hard at Shushu's rigid body.

Coming up only to her waist, Shushu tumbled over and over until he slammed hard against the wall and finally stopped.

"If you commit any wrongdoing, this is where you'll end up. I mean, if you dare utter any nonsense to the Duke that you aren't Damian, or if you talk behind my back. I am a very gentle and sweet mother to you, understand?"

"....."

"Are you not going to answer me at once?"

She looked ready to kick him again with her high-heeled foot.

Reflexively curling his body into a ball, Shushu hurried to answer.

"Yes."

“Damian, get up. Before your father and your brother arrive, I need to beat that vulgarity out of you.”

Clutching his aching stomach for fear of getting hit again, Shushu scrambled to his feet.

Tears welled up and spilled down his cheeks on their own accord, but seeing Meiyu raise her hand into the air, he cowered and squeezed his eyes shut.

“Ah, right. I mustn’t hit your face, should I?”

She chuckled lightly, as if she had just remembered something terribly important.

Wondering if it was safe now, he cautiously opened his eyes, and the instant he did—as if waiting for that very moment—a palm crashed down onto the back of his head.

“Ugh.”

“Don’t play the victim.”

She apparently had no idea how fragile a young child’s body truly was.

Feeling dizzy, Shushu leaned against the wall, vomited, and collapsed.

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In his dream, Shushu had gone into the forest with his mother to pick wild berries.

Because thick snow piled high caused his feet to sink deep and wobble with every step, he didn’t whine or ask his mother to carry him.

They finally reached the wild berry patch they had scouted out earlier.

Working with tiny, sparrow-like hands, he eagerly picked the berries and tossed them into the basket.

The biting wind chapped the tip of Shushu’s nose and cheeks, but he was actually grateful for the fierce northern cold because it meant he could roam freely outside the house.

Northern residents bundled up in thick coats, hats, scarves, and gloves to maintain their body heat—which meant that even if Shushu and his mother covered themselves up completely, nobody would find it the least bit suspicious.

[Let’s get going now, Shushu.]

[Mm-hm.]

Wearing his mittens, Shushu took his mother's hand.

Together with his mother, who carried the basket brimful of wild berries, they descended the snowy mountain.

Stopping by a fruit shop to sell the berries, she beamed broadly.

[Let's go buy something delicious to eat today!]

[Yay!]

At seven years old, Shushu was still not very fluent in speech.

Because they had been forced to keep running without ever staying in one place, he had never once received a proper education.

Even so, he wasn't such a fool that he didn't even know what his own name meant.

His mother had told him that "Shushu" was the name of a puppy raised by the young lady of the noble household where she used to work as a maid.

The maids had cared for the puppy Shushu very dearly, and its small, cute white fur had always gleamed with luster.

Her mother had always envied the puppy, watching it eat only good things and receive the master's affection, considering it the most enviable existence in the world.

That was why, when she had a child of her own, she named him "Shushu" so that unlike herself, he would grow up eating only good things and receiving precious care.

Shushu entered a restaurant with his mother.

As they stepped into the indoor space filled with the radiant heat of the hearth, his cold-numbed body felt as though it was melting away.

Guided by a waiter, they sat down at an empty table.

Shushu pointed his finger at the cheapest potato soup on the menu.

[One potato soup, please.]

[Aren't you ordering anything else?] the waiter asked, glaring with wide eyes after taking his mother's order.

[.....Yes.]

Looking apologetic, she bowed her head and replied in a voice so quiet it was barely a whisper.

Afterward, the waiter slammed the pre-meal soup roughly onto their table and walked off—all because they were two people sharing a single order of soup meant to be eaten before a meal.

Handing the spoon to Shushu, his mother told him to eat up quickly before it got cold.

[How about you, Mom?]

[Mom isn't hungry. Eat up lots, our Shushu.]

She stroked Shushu's head as she spoke.

Shushu took tiny, microscopic spoonfuls of the potato soup, then started whining that he was full and didn't want to eat anymore.

[Try eating just a little bit more, okay? You have to eat a lot to grow tall.]

Shushu's height was on the shorter side compared to other children.

Worried about her child, his mother scooped up soup with the spoon and urged him to eat quickly, but Shushu kept his lips tightly pressed together in stubborn refusal.

Inevitably, the potato soup left behind by the child became the mother's share.

Famished, she shoveled the potato soup into her mouth in a rush.

Though a single bowl of soup wasn't enough to banish true starvation, the warm food entering her stomach warmed her from the inside out.

Only after licking the bowl clean with her tongue did she regain her senses, paying hurriedly like a guilty criminal and leaving the restaurant.

Hand in hand, they headed toward the shelter where escaped Gems hid in secret.

Before entering the shelter, her mother dug under a large tree and slipped the daily wages she had earned today into a cloth pouch.

Then she covered the frozen ground back up with dirt and snow to conceal it.

Having been in the North for six full months, she had managed to save quite a bit of money.

[Mom, can Shushu buy a house?]

[Yes, we just need to save money for one more week. You've worked so hard all this time, our Shushu.]

Shushu beamed and hugged his mother tight.

[I love Mom.]

[Mom loves Shushu, too.]

Clutching her child tightly, she stepped into the shelter.

Today, too, the shelter was packed with strange men.

Terrified, Shushu clung tightly to his mother's back.

Kevin, who managed the place, scolded her, asking where she had been.

[I'm sorry. The child felt cooped up, so we went for a walk.]

[Just try running away. Catching you and your brat and selling you off as slaves is child's play.]

Trembling violently, Shushu clung desperately to his mother's legs.

Seeing this, Kevin clicked his tongue.

[Get ready quickly. You've got a customer coming, don't you?]

Her mother picked Shushu up, carried him into the room where the Gems gathered, and opened the wardrobe to put him inside.

[You must never come out. Not until Mom tells you to come out, absolutely. Promise?]

[Mm, I promise.]

Contrary to a mother's earnest wish that her child would remain entirely oblivious to the atrocities committed inside that space, Shushu knew all too well what went on inside the Gems' shelter.

Having come here solely on rumors that it protected Gems, his mother was now being subjected to sexual exploitation through blackmail and violence.

If not for him, his mother would never have come all the way to the North to suffer like this.

Pinkies linked in a promise, her mother had left to service a customer.

He cursed his powerless, childish body that could do nothing at all.

Sobbing softly, Shushu woke up from the dream.

Opening his eyes again, he saw the spectacled kidnapper.

Fortunately, he wasn't inside the tower that felt worse than a prison, but in a bedroom decorated so luxuriously that one could easily believe it belonged to an imperial prince.

"Are you feeling alright, young master?"

"....."

The man appeared to be a doctor.

Checking Shushu's condition with a stethoscope, he raised his voice toward Meiyu.

"Lady Meiyu, this is a stand-in we barely managed to find. Do you intend to turn him into an idiotic fool just like Damian by casually beating him?"

"I barely hit him, he's just playing the victim. Joseph, do you want to die? How dare you raise your voice at me?"

Seeing Meiyu conjure flames in the palm of her hand, Joseph immediately lowered his head into a deep bow of submission.