Our Souls Worn Down into Shadows
by Writing_in_SIN

Summary

In an AR World, the Bugster virus were the first attempt of many for the Noumu.

Notes

Here with my first BNHA fic, which just so happens to be a crossover with Kamen Rider Ex-Aid. It kinda confuses me that considering the nature of heroes in BNHA, there aren't many fics that touch upon a crossover with the Kamen Rider or Sentai franchise—especially since the two have a long history of heroes in Japan for decades now. Ah well.

Anyway, this fic is more about me indulging the desire to see the Kamen Riders in the BNHA world. I'm choosing Ex-Aid because the VA for Aizawa/Eraserhead (Suwabe Junichi) was the narrator for the series along with voicing one of the characters too (who has the exact opposite personality to Aizawa). That, and I kinda see a bit of a connection between the Noumu and Busgters along with some other creatures within the KR universe.

Title comes from the BNHA opening 'Long Hope Philia' sung by Suda Masaki (who played Philip/Sonozaki Raito from Kamen Rider W/Double)

Enough of my rambling. Hope you'll enjoy! And if you'd like to see more of this AU, please tell me!
OUR SOULS WORN DOWN INTO SHADOWS

The whole USJ incident leaves a horrible taste in Aizawa Shouta's mouth.

As he lies prone on his hospital bed and glaring balefully up at the ceiling, Shouta curses at the fact that he can barely move. He's counted the tiles and tried to rest but the worry churning in his stomach for his class is relentless and too much for him to stay put. So just when he's contemplating on tearing out his IV so that he can check on his brats, the door to his room slides opened to reveal the familiar face of his younger brother; Houjou Emu.

Relief washes over him at the sight of one of the few people he trusts without question.

Noticing that he's awake, Emu hastily closes the door and rushes to him. His too kind brother looks like death warmed over and Shouta feels a twinge of guilt when he realises that he's probably the caused of it.

Carefully adjusting the bed to allow Shouta to sit up, Emu helps him swallow down some water. Once done, the paediatrician leans over to squeeze his hand in a trembling grip; voice heavy with worry. "How are you, Nii-san?"

"A lot better than my injuries should indicate," he answers, squeezing Emu's hand back in reassurance. "The principal called CR, didn't he?"

"He did," his brother confirms, straightening up and shoves his hands in the pockets of his doctor's coat. It's a tell since they were kids; showing that Emu is a lot more shaken than he lets on. "Parad was the one who teleported you here."

He nods, unsurprised since Shouta has the faint memory of being engulfed by a flurry of red and blue pixels before he finally passed out.

"Thought so," Shouta mutters after a moment, before giving Emu a curious look when he recalls seeing a fanged snarl on Parad's face. "How pissed was he?"

"More worried than angry," Emu reassures, mouth twitching into a rueful smile. "You're his favourite brother-in-law after all."

Shouta snorts, smirking as he points out. "I'm his only brother-in-law."

Breathing out a tired laugh, Emu drops down onto the chair beside his bed and plays with the wedding band on his finger with a fond smile.

Considering the messy, turbulent past Emu and Parad share, those who don't know the pair doubted that a marriage between two former enemies will last; especially since Parad is a reformed villain. But those in CR and Shouta himself have always known that the two idiots were inevitable and are meant to be. Hell, he's lost count on how many times the two had compromised themselves for each other in ways that they wouldn't have done for anyone else. And that's not adding to the
fact that Emu and Parad's relationship had literally forced society to create a new official, legal
definition for them since 'partners' or 'husbands' or 'spouses' can't even begin to explain the depth
of their relationship.

Because seriously. How the hell do you explain a relationship where two souls (or psyches for the
non-spiritual) that are now merged into one? It goes beyond marriage even.

So they settled on 'bondmates'.

(Personally, even that seems like an understatement for the two morons but what can you do?)

"Considering how bad my injuries were, I'm guessing I've got Brave and Grace to thank for?"
Shouta gestures to the array of bandages wrapped around him and gives Emu a curious look. "Since
everything; my vision especially, are still intact?"

Emu nods, smile widening at the mention of his friends and colleagues. "They're not the best
surgeon couple for nothing after all."

"Heh." Eyeing his brother, Shouta allows his worry to resurface. "How are the kids?"

Immediately, a mask of professionalism falls onto Emu's features as he straightens up. "Rattled.
Exhausted." Pausing, the doctor gives him a slight smile. "Determined."

Shouta huffs, smiling behind his bandages.

"But overall, they're alright and will recover without any trouble." With a fond glint in his eyes,
Emu leans back into his seat. "You've got a good batch this year, Nii-san."

Snorting, he shrugs. "They've still got a long way to go."

Emu hums noncommittally, a knowing smile on his face.

"Thank you," he says into the comfortable silence and gives Emu a grateful look; knowing that the
doctor had gone to personally check on each of his students because Houjou Emu is nothing if not
a dedicated paediatrician. "I wouldn't trust anyone else with their health but you; physically,
mentally or emotionally."

Predictably, his brother turns away with a blush and mumbles. "Chiyo-baasan would be insulted if
she heard that, Nii-san."

"Recovery Girl agrees with me and you know it," Shouta retorts sternly because it's true. Many,
heroes included, flock to his brother when it comes to their children's growth and health. Shouta
has always been fiercely proud of that and damn if he'd let anyone, Emu included, undermine that.
"You've earned your title as the best paediatrican in the country, Emu, so don't sell yourself short."

Sliding deeper into his seat, Emu huffs and gives him a grateful smile. "Thank you."

Shouta nods before turning grim. "You didn't just come here to check on me, did you?"

While his brother has an incredible poker face and is a pretty good manipulator when he needs to
be, it doesn't change the fact that they're blood— they've known each other for years and grown up
together. Hell, he practically raised his brother himself, so Shouta can always tell that something's
up the moment Emu stepped into the room.

(Shouta still takes great pleasure in embarrassing his brother for being the first one to figure out
that Emu was in love with Parad. The memory still makes him cackle even after all these years)

"No," Emu confirms, pulling him out of his thoughts and Shouta feels a shiver of alarm when he spots how pale Emu has become. "We just got reports about that creature you and the others fought against—the Noumu." Taking a deep breath, Emu looks at him in the eyes and drops the bomb. "Both Kiriya-san and Taiga-san confirmed that the DNA sequence is the same as the Bugsters."

White noise is all he hears for the next few moments as his blood turns to ice.

The Bugsters are a race of viruses not unlike the homunculus from alchemic lore. However instead of alchemy, they are made out of data, RNA and DNA. From what they know, a group of mad scientists wanted to create an army of bio-weapons and abducted many people to accomplished that.

His brother included.

Even after two decades have passed, Shouta still remembers the paralysing terror when Emu had been taken. From reports that he snuck out from the archives, he knew that the Bugster Project started around half a decade before the abduction and he knew that the only reason why Emu survived and escaped his captors is because he caught the interest of the confined Progenitor of the Bugsters.

...which just so happens to be his brother-in-law; Houjou Parad.

"What." His voice is hoarse and flat when he can finally work his vocal cords, staring at his brother in horror. "Goddamn it, how?"

"They're not sure yet." Musing up his hair, Emu slumps forward in his seat. "We just managed to get Saiko-san on board about it so the three of them are brainstorming right now."

Hearing that the three most capable doctors within the biomedical committee are working together eases some of the fear in his chest.

"That's a terrifying combo," he comments, trying to lighten his tone.

Emu sends him a wan smile. "It is."

"...How are you and Parad?"

With Emu and Parad being Patient Zero and Progenitor respectively, Shouta has no doubt that the news regarding the Noumu is something that would've caused much turmoil for them.

"Processing," Emu says, weary. "Parad decimated one of the training grounds after Kyoutarou-sensei told us."

"And what about you?" Shouta asks, making sure that his voice breaks no argument because one of the things he and his brother share is that they're both very stubborn. If he doesn't force the answer out, he knows Emu will just go on and pretend that he's fine when he's certainly not. "What happened after you were told?"

"...I threw up," Emu confesses after a long stare down. Gaze sliding away, Emu hunches into himself. "Locked myself in the bathroom until I felt my stomach wasn't roiling anymore."

Sighing, he beckons his brother to come closer. "C'mere, Emu."
When the doctor slides his chair to be within reach, Shouta hugs his brother tight and holds him close as Emu trembles in his arms.

"I'm scared to let Parad out of my sight, Nii-san," Emu chokes out, gripping his sleeves with a white knuckled grip. "I'm terrified that the one responsible for Zero Day is going to hunt him down since he's the Progenitor of the Bugsters."

He nods, patting Emu's hair. "Where is he?"

"He's resting right now," Emu mumbles, pulling back and places a palm against his chest, right where his heart is. Ah, so they fused. "We actually just got back from...checking it for ourselves."

Tensing in alarm, he shoots a sharp glance at Emu. "Just the two of you alone?"

"Sento-san and Shinnosuke-san were with us," Emu reassures and Shouta lets out a sigh of relief at that. "Parad confirmed it himself. The sequence is exactly the same."

Shouta grits his teeth until his jaw aches. "Fuck."

"That's an understatement," a familiar voice pipes up above them.

Startling slightly, he glances up to find Parad floating near the ceiling, eyes a kaleidoscope of red and blue before fading into dark browns. The bugster lightly drops down to the floor and gives them a smirk.

"Parad," Emu greets his bondmate with a warm smile before his expression turns worried. "You should be resting, dearheart."

"I could say the same to you, sweetheart," Parad comments, dipping down to share a brief kiss with Emu before the bugster turns to Shouta with a raised brow. "Hey, Aniki. Still kicking?"

Shouta snorts, mouth twitching into an wry smirk. "Disappointed?"

"Very," Parad deadpans, sharing the same seat as Emu and arranges them until his brother is sitting comfortably on Parad's lap. It's a habit the two developed even long before they started a relationship that Shouta doesn't even blink at it. "Scared the shit out of us when we got the call, Aniki."

"Sorry," With Emu and Parad both being Kamen Riders, he knows how worrying it can be getting those kind of calls. Shouta nods at his brother-in-law. "Thanks for the lift."

Parad shrugs, giving him a toothy grin. "What's family for?"

Emu chuckles with a nod, leaning back against his bugster.

"With the Noumu as it is, you two really need to be careful," he warns, steering the conversation back as cold dread settles in his gut.

Emu gives him a confused look. "You're the hero, Nii-san. The Noumu is something the heroes and police will mainly handle wouldn't it?"

He nods. "True, but the two of you are Kamen Riders— if this gets worse, you two and the other Riders are going to be dragged to the forefront."

Parad frowns as he leans forward to hook his chin over Emu's shoulder. "Ya think this League of Villains is really that bad? That this is just the beginning?"
"They broke past the security in UA and combined with the Noumu? I've got no doubt about it." Sighing, he glares up at the ceiling as his clenches the sheets underneath him. "This is going to get much, much worse."

Parad lets out a slew of curses. "This nightmare is supposed to be over."

Silently agreeing, he turns to give his brother a stern look.

"Emu, I want you to be extra careful especially with you being Patient Zero."

Looking far older than he should be, Emu lets out a weary sigh. "I know."

"I'll tear anyone apart if they try to hurt him," Parad snarls out, voice low and dangerous as his fangs glint under the fluorescent lights. "I'll even invoke the kill order if I have to."

Shouta sits up in alarm and ignores the twinge of pain from his ribs.

Despite the fact that Parad's previous victims were eventually retrieved and revived along with having an official pardon from the court, Shouta vividly remembers the chaos and carnage Parad is capable of. There'd been teams of high level heroes and law enforcements dispatched to bring down the elusive Progenitor and most, if not all of them were sent back on gurneys. The only reason none of them died is because of Parad's skewed sense of honour at the time. And when villains were sent to stop Parad from defecting to their side...well, let's just say Parad left a trail of corpses in his wake.

It took them so long to ensure that his brother-in-law wouldn't be locked away, Shouta will be damned if he'll let anyone take advantage of Parad's bloodstained past.

Unsurprisingly, Emu beats him to it.

"I know it might be necessary in our line of work, but let that be the absolute last resort," Emu implores, shifting to cradle Parad's face. "You've worked so hard to get where you are, Parad. I don't want anyone to take all that you've gained and earned away from you."

The vicious rage on Parad's face recedes somewhat but the bugster still looks like he's seconds away from letting heads roll. "You're more important to me, Emu."

"As you are to me," Emu reassures. "But if you invoke it, someone might take advantage of that to take you away from me." A horrifyingly chilling look flits across his brother's face and Shouta knows that it's a look Emu picked up from him over the years. "And I think we all know what will happen if anyone tries."

The words are spoken softly but coming from someone who's usually nice and polite, and combined with the look, the impact is so much more terrifying.

Shouta is so proud.

"Emu's right," he adds, breaking the tension and as the pair turns to him, Shouta pins a stern glare to his brother-in-law. "Let that be our absolute last resort."

Heroes and Riders tend to abhor killing. But there are times when they honestly have no other choice so when it's absolutely necessary, they bury the villains with bloodstained hands. However, because of the weight of a life; even one as vile as some of the more sick minded villains, the decision to do so should never be taken lightly.
"Alright," Parad relents, relaxing into his seat. The bugster gives him and Emu a grateful look. "Thanks."

Shouta shrugs. "That's what family's for."

Emu and Parad snicker, causing him to smile and feels the tense atmosphere dispersing.

"So." Shouta eyes the pair, curious and worried in equal measure. "How much can you two tell me?"

Parad hums and shares a glance with Emu. "Pretty much everything."

"But we'll wait until you get some proper rest before we all stress out, okay?" Emu adds quickly, pinning him with a familiar looking glare; stern and unrelenting. Damn it. He taught his brother too well.

Shouta nods, carefully lying back against the raised bed.

"Good. Now, let's talk about something else for now." Pausing in thought, Emu then lights up. "I know!" Grinning wide, his brother all but demands. "Tell us more about your kids, Nii-san."

Mirroring Emu's expression, Parad leans forward as he singsongs. "Yeah! Emu and I got a whole class full of nieces and nephews, and we want details!"

"I'm their teacher," he corrects, deadpanned. "Not their father, you idiots."

"Sure, you're not~!" the terrible two crow back at him, shit-eating grins on their faces.

Huffing, he glares balefully at Parad. "You're a horrible influence on my brother, you know that?"

"Why, thank you!" Parad quips. "I corrupted him very well, huh? And in more ways than one too." Smirking in a way that has caused people so much stress, Parad snuggles against Emu. "In fact, just this morning we—"

Face turning beat red, Emu flails with a shrill. "Parad!"

"I do not need to know about your sex lives, you incorrigible gremlin—especially not when it involves my younger brother," Shouta spits out in disgust with a shudder. "Ugh, gross."

Parad bursts into cackles. "Then tell us about your new class, Aniki!"

At the identical looks of puppy dog eyes, Shouta relents with a sigh. Partly because he wants to get his mind off of the danger brewing underneath the surface for the moment. Mostly though, he just wants to spend time with his family before he'll get swept away by his hero duties again.

"...fine."

Ignoring the whoops of delight with practice ease, Shouta recounts all that's happened since the start of the year. From listing off the names of his students to describing them more personally—especially the more troublesome ones because he knows Emu and Parad will get a kick out of it. As he continues on, Shouta is also informed of what he might've missed out in the couple's lives in the past weeks.

Eventually, his words get more slurred the more Shouta talks and from that, he knows that exhaustion has finally caught up to him.
When it seems like staying awake is too much of a struggle, Emu reaches over to grip his hand. "Sleep, Nii-san."

"We'll watch over you," Parad reassures, following Emu's lead.

Breathing out a sigh, Shouta nods before his head lolls to the side and lets sleep claim him; secured in the knowledge that he's safe in the presence of two powerful Kamen Riders that is his family.

End Notes

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