Burning Bright, Burning Out
by DoomsDaisy

Summary

Ratchet is captured, and is at the mercy of Tarn and Pharma.
He was awoken by a shock that sizzled through his mainframe, making every inch of his body alight with a pain so intense that it was nearly numbing.

“Good morning, Ratchet.”

He could feel his hands behind his back, could feel the grit of the floor beneath him, but his body was unresponsive. Stasis handcuffs, if he had to take a guess.

“You’re not looking so good, Ratchet.”

His optics took a moment to focus, but when they did a familiar face crowded his vision.

“Pharma.” He said the name with disdain, noting that because he could say it and not much else, he was definitely bound with stasis handcuffs.

“You sound happy to see me.” Pharma’s optics seemed to flash just a little brighter as he straightened up to look down smugly at him. “I figured you would be. It’s been so long since we’ve gotten to catch up.”

“I don’t have time for your nonsense.” Ratchet couldn’t move his head, so he took in what little surroundings he could. They were in a medibay by the looks of it, but the tools and contraptions that lined the walls seemed equally in league with dismantling a transformer as it was with fixing one. “Just get to the point.”

“There’s no need to rush things, old friend.” Pharma’s joints whizzed and clicked as he stepped back, seemingly to take in the full sight of him on his knees. “We’ve got all the time in the galaxy.”

“Maybe a hack job like you has time to dawdle, but I don’t.” Ratchet bit back, his gears whirring loudly in his chest as he felt his anger flare. “And don’t call me old friend.”
“Oh, of course.” Pharma smiled, but the blue of his eyes seemed to darken like a storming sea. “That’s what Optimus Prime likes to call you, right? I suppose it wouldn’t be appreciated, having some scum like me say the pet name.”

Even with his body still buzzing and aching from the electric shock, that was enough to make him crack a smile. “I’m glad you’re at least self aware.”

“That’s all fine.” Pharma turned, but not before Ratchet saw icy anger fall over his face. He walked along the wall, perusing the assortment of chips and devices. He stopped to run his hand along a mounted endoscopic claw. Even with the big game Ratchet was talking, the implied threat of the touch was certainly not lost on him, and made his jaw clench. “How long do you think it will take Optimus to save you?” He danced a finger over one of the sharp ends of the staff, the light sound of metal scraping against metal loud in the otherwise silent room. “Trying to keep the peace is a lot of work, after all. With his busy schedule, do you even think he realizes you’ve gone missing?”

“Careful, Pharma, your jealousy is showing.”

“Jealousy?” Pharma let out a hollow laugh as he turned, his finger zipping across the end of the claw with a small spark. “I wouldn’t necessarily call it that. Betrayal seems too strong a word, too.” He looked thoughtful as he rubbed his fingers together, as if touching the instrument on the wall had left them greasy. “Maybe annoyance?”

“Figure out your repressed feelings some other time.” Ratchet huffed. “Are you going to tell me why I’m here, or are you going to keep prattling on?”

Pharma tutted and crouched down, his head tilted to the side and far too close to Ratchet’s face. “You sure are impatient today.” A knowing smile slowly stretched his mouth. “Compared to what you have coming, you should be thanking me for this meaningless prattling.”

As if on queue, the door to the room gave a hum and a heavy lock thunked as it disengaged. Unable to turn his head, Ratchet could only look at the distorted reflection in the white wings above the bot’s eyes.

The figure was dark and hulking— he could see that the new arrival very nearly filled the entire doorway.

“Thank you for waiting with our guest, Pharma.” The voice was low, so low it made his chest
plates hum with its frequency.

“Of course.” Pharma stood, taking the daunting reflection with him as he walked to the other side. “I was just warming him up for you.”

Ratchet didn’t need the reflection now, though, because with the hiss of heavy pistons pumping, the decepticon came around his side to stand in front of him.

He knew his situation wasn’t good with Pharma being here, but his chances of survival dropped to nearly zero with the appearance of this bot. Ratchet had seen pictures-- some of the decepticon, but most of the carnage he wreaked. Even as a medic bot, Ratchet found those images of tortured, twisted husks damn near unbearable.

“Well if it isn’t Tarn himself.” A cold dread settled in his core, but despite that-- maybe even because of it-- he let out a tired laugh. “Quite the welcoming committee I’ve got here.”

“But of course.” Tarn’s voice seemed to melt into his brain, as if it were leaking into his module. “We wanted to give our very special guest a very special welcome.”

Red optics looked down at him with what seemed to be polite interest, but Ratchet knew the ferocity those eyes had looked upon. That amicable red glow was probably the last thing many victims had seen. Not to mention the atrocities that deep, melodic voice had carried out.

“I would say I’m honored, but I’m really not.”

Pharma seemed to start at the snarky comment (a small victory, in his books) but Tarn was completely unfazed, his voice still that low, vibrating crawl.

“I can see why Pharma has taken such a liking to you. You’ve got spirit.”

“Is that why you didn’t just finish me off?” Ratchet would have squared his shoulders if he could, so instead he kept his voice haughty and even. “So Pharma can keep me as some sort of plaything?”
“An interesting theory, and not completely incorrect.” Tarn lowered down into a comfortable squat, the ends of his heavy tank treads folding on the floor like a stiff garment. Like this, Ratchet could see the decepticon mask that hid his face, a true testament to his near fanatical devotion. “You see, as the leader of the DJD, it’s my duty to get my hands on any information that will be useful to our cause, and to Megatron.” His voice was cordial as he spoke, which only added a dizzying contrast to his words. “I don’t want to hurt you, Ratchet. If I had my way, I would have already put you out of your misery.” His head tilted to the side, as if he were talking to a fussy child. “I could have Pharma or one of my other workers interrogate you, but I had a feeling that their methods wouldn’t be enough to crack you. From what I’ve observed so far, I was right in that assumption.”

A hand came up to Ratchet’s face, as big as his entire head yet indescribably delicate as it slowly raised his chin.

“I have a feeling even I won’t be able to crack you, though.”

If Ratchet were any less dignified, he would have spat in the bot’s face right then. “Damn right.”

“A shame.” A thick finger slid under his chin before trailing down his neck, the touch so gentle that the scraping of their metal together was nothing more than a whisper. “A real shame that I still have to try.”

“Wait--” Pharma has been leaning against the wall as the exchange went on, but he straightened up at that. “I thought you said I could handle him.”

Tarn moved Ratchet’s head to the side as if examining an interesting specimen. “I’m sorry if I wasn’t clear before. I’ll be taking over the interrogation. You can have him when I’m finished.” A finger brushed curiously over his lips. “If he survives, of course.”

“I can handle it, though.” Pharma took a step towards them, and Ratchet saw something flash across his face before it was gone in a mask of nonchalance. “I know him better than anyone. I bet I can make him talk.”

“At this point, it’s not about making him talk,” Tarn said patiently. “It’s about sending a message.”

“Hearing you two squawk is worse than any torture I can think of.” Ratchet grumbled to himself, but it caught Tarn’s attention.
The decepticon faced him, his eyes seeming to glow just a little brighter. “I’m sorry you had to hear that, Ratchet. Very unprofessional on my part.” He snapped his fingers with a thick metal clunk. “Pharma, why don’t we make him a little more comfortable? I’m sure the floor isn’t kind on old knees.”

There was no mistaking it this time-- there was that expression again, and it lingered long enough for Ratchet to grasp hold of it’s slippery complexity. Desperation, anger, fear, jealousy. They all crossed Pharma’s face in that silent moment. Ratchet watched with his breath held, expecting some sort of altercation, but Pharma’s expression slackened into calculated disinterest once again.

With footsteps that were just a little too heavy, and maybe a little reluctant, Pharma went around behind Ratchet’s back. The handcuffs opened with a loud whir before thunking onto the ground. Ratchet fell forward, but he was able to regain enough control of his limbs to catch himself before he face-planted.

"Come on, buddy."

An arm snaked around his waist and he was hefted up onto his unsteady legs. It felt all too much like he had had too much energon and was being lugged home by a friend-- which, he supposed, really could have been the case if things had turned out differently for Pharma.

"Put him in the variable voltage harness."

The hand at his waist tightened so minutely that he almost didn't feel it. "Are you sure that's what we should start with?"

"Pharma." The voice dripped like honey as it lowered an octave.

The name was all the decepticon had to say to make Pharma obey. Ratchet was helpless, his feet dragging with a high screech against the floor as he was practically carried to the harness. He wanted to fight, but his body still hadn't rebooted from the handcuffs, and the most he could do was dig his numb, clumsy fingers into Pharma's shoulder.

“I’m sure a battle medic as seasoned as yourself has seen what one of these can do.” Tarn said conversationally, following behind them slowly, as if on a stroll.
Pharma was gentle laying him down in the softly reclined chair, his hands steady as he lifted Ratchet's arm and fastened it in place with a metal shackle. He wasn't sure if the tenderness was residual from his medic days, or if it was from old fondness. Either way, Ratchet hated it. That softness, more than anything, made him feel sick.

He looked up at the bland ceiling as his other arm was secured, then his legs. In this position, he was completely open-- the perfect position for plates to be removed, the perfect position for 'cracking', as Tarn put it.

"Would you mind if I played some music?" He could see Tarn approaching in his periphery, his hulking frame like a dark, impending shadow. "It helps me work."

Ratchet could only bark a laugh. "I think at this point, it doesn't matter what I want or not."

"That's true." Tarn regarded him briefly. "But it’s only polite to ask. The illusion of choice is still important to uphold."

"Fuck your illusion of choice." Ratchet spat, "And fuck you."

"Such crude language." Tarn tutted, grabbing his face between two thick fingers. "I thought your side was above such obscenities."

The grip slackened before traveling down to his neck, where Tarn tapped a fingertip against the metal. "Maybe your voice box should be removed, what do you think?"

"See if I care." Ratchet could feel his body warming as his system came back alive, but it did him no good now. He flexed his fingers, only to have them clack against the metal restraints. "While you're at it, remove my audio receptor so I don't have to listen to you, or your shitty music."

"Ah, you see, that was another case of 'illusion of choice'." Tarn pulled back and met Pharma's eyes before nodding toward the wall. "Would you mind turning the harness on?" He turned back to Ratchet. "I want to warn you, such lively outbursts like that will be a little harder as this progresses. I would save your energy, if I were you. We wouldn't want your spark dying out too soon."

Ratchet held his tongue, as much as he wanted to sling more curses at the bot it wasn’t going to help. Tarn was right, after all. The variable voltage harness would suck him dry if he wasn’t
“Okay, I’m gonna turn it on now.” It seemed to him that Pharma was saying it more for Ratchet’s own benefit, rather than talking to Tarn. It was clear to him what Pharma meant.

*Be prepared. It's about to start.*

Ratchet closed his eyes, his gears turning just a little too fast as he braced himself, then hiccuping into a hectic rhythm as the pain blasted through him.

Despite himself, Ratchet tugged against his shackles, his hands clenching and scraping against them as he writhed. It was a feeling like no other, the seep of electricity making all of his circuitry sizzle and the lubricant in his lines bubble and boil. It seemed unbearable at first, but the electricity didn’t raise in intensity, and after the initial shock of it he felt the pain reach a crescendo before plateauing. It hurt like hell, but he could take it. A newly forged transformer might have already cracked, and surely after a prolonged time in the harness would go downright crazy, but Ratchet could handle this much. At least for the time being.

"Nice and cozy, I trust?"

Ratchet had been so consumed by the sudden assault that he had temporarily forgotten the bot’s presence. He had to focus his optics to see Tarn, who glanced up at him briefly before turning his attention back to his arm, it’s black panel open and displaying an array of knobs and buttons.

"I think something a little mellow would be nice, don't you Pharma?"

No response came, but Tarn seemed to be talking for the sake of talking rather than for conversation. He hovered a finger contemplatively over a button before choosing the one next to it, and the music began, a somber march of strings that pulled on an occasional wavering note.

"Ahhh..." Tarn sighed and twisted a knob, the music rising and filling the room. "It's quite lovely, isn't it, Ratchet?"

The words vibrated in Ratchet's chest like a warm blossom, making the pain that crashed around it so much more notable.
"Now, let's see..." Cool fingers came to his chest and began feeling along it's seams. "If I recall correctly, your model has sliding plates..."

"He does." Pharma had left his spot by the wall and stood behind Tarn, his arms crossed and an inscrutable look on his face.

Tarn's fingers were too big to fit in the gap between his neck and chest, but that certainly didn't stop him. He hooked them and forced them under the plate, the pressure almost enough to make Ratchet gasp in pain. He looked down as the metal groaned and raised with the intrusion.

"Here it is."

An indelicate fingertip mashed against his disengage latch, and with a hiss of air his chest split and spread, truly leaving him vulnerable. Steam bellowed out of him in a fat cloud before quickly dissipating above them.

"Are you overheating already?" Tarn mused, his eyes glowing merrily. "Poor thing. Though I must commend you for how well you hide your pain."

"This is nothing." Ratchet said through gritted teeth. His voice sounded far less distressed than he felt, which was a small victory.

"Of course." Tarn sounded amused at his stubbornness. "A bot like you has probably handled much worse, I imagine." His fingers roamed over Ratchet's open machinery as he spoke in that dripping, dulcet tone. He stopped at a piston and stroked it absently. "I think it will take more than pain to conquer you."

The touch as well as his words made Tarn's intentions clear, and Ratchet's gears betrayed his terror, kicking into a low roaring grind that nearly deafened the music.

"Pharma, where are his ports?"

"I--" Ratchet looked to Pharma, and saw as his ignorance to the situation melted into disbelief, then defeat. "I don't know."
"Oh?"

Tarn slid a finger under a thick line and lifted it until it resisted. Ratchet watched as his coolant rushed through the tube. Tarn pinched his fingers together slowly until the line narrowed, then collapsed. Immediately, Ratchet could feel the pressure of the liquid, desperate to be released. He had been overheating already...If Tarn kept this up, his system would begin malfunctioning and taking on extensive damage.

"I thought you two had connected before. Perhaps I misjudged the nature of your relationship."

He pulled his dangling hands against the shackles as his body lurched and heat rolled from his core. It felt like his coolant lines were going to burst. Part of him wanted them to-- the sweet release of pressure, his insides bathed in liquid that would pull this burning heat away from him...

Tarn's free hand roamed over his stomach, gliding along the thin separations of metal. "Somewhere here, perhaps..."

With his chest opened, it was easy for Tarn to slide a finger under the first metal plate. These ones didn't have a manual disengage, so the decepticon pried at them, the tear of metal like a thin scream as the hinges gave way under his immense strength. Ratchet's optic's clouded with steam as he fought to keep a cry of pain from bubbling past his lips.

"This wouldn't happen to be your spark case, would it?" Tarn tossed aside the scrap of metal before tapping on the box nestled below his engine. "Perhaps I'll just play with this, instead."

Ratchet had held his tongue up until this point, but the prospect of his delicate spark in the brute's hands finally had him gasp out.

"My...my port is..." He hated the sound of his voice, panted and pained.

At the very least, Tarn's exploring fingers stopped long enough for Ratchet to focus and unlock his stomach casing. There was a blare of pain as the broken hinge twitched and swung open along with the untouched one, revealing the panel beneath his navel.
"Ohhh," The fingers pinching his cooling line loosened just a bit as he looked over the newly exposed area. "How immaculate."

Ratchet could hardly register the words as a dizzying wave of relief gripped him with the sudden burst of coolant. He meant to let out a silent breath at the small comfort, but it dwindled into groan as his port was rubbed and prodded.

"I've always found the simplistic designs to be more arousing." Tarn slid his finger over his card slots, "Three in a nice, neat row, then--" He went back to the port and circled it, his eyes burning like fire as he looked up at Ratchet. "Then your hole, like punctuation at the end of a simple, elegant sentence."

Ratchet was glad he wasn't obligated to answer, because he had no clue what the hell he was supposed to say to that.

"Pharma." Tarn's optics didn't leave Ratchet's face as he addressed the bot behind him. "Would you be so kind as to plug me into him?"

Ratchet's eyes fell on Pharma as he approached them, the bot's jaw clenched pointedly and his head down.

Tarn kept his hand in place but stepped back enough to allow one of his panels at his side to hiss and unlatch. It took every ounce of Ratchet's self restraint not to flinch as Pharma dutifully pulled open the hatch and found his cord. It was like a thick, black snake, with a glinting head that tapered to a blunt, slick silver tip. It wasn't the plug of a normal transformer, certainly. No, this one was meant to dominate, to pour the robot's being into the other relentlessly, unflinchingly.

Similar thoughts seemed to flicker over Pharma's face, which finally turned up enough to catch Ratchet's gaze.

Why did he look so lost?

"Pharma," Ratchet didn't know why he said the name, but it made something deep inside of himself clench and shudder.

"You should know as well as anyone, begging won't help you." Tarn kept his two fingers around
his port and let the others smooth out over his exposed insides, drawing a small, involuntary grunt from Ratchet.

He had no intentions of begging when he spoke the name. Pharma seemed to understand that as well.

"I'm sorry." Pharma leaned over, the head of the plug hovering over the port.

Just as the name held some weighted meaning, so did the apology. It wasn't a sorry for this. Not just this.

The complicated feelings that gripped him zapped from his limbs as Tarn was inserted into him with a heavy, metal click. The sudden assault of arousal churned against his pain and fear like a consuming tidal wave, washing every thought from his mind in a thundering crash.

"Ah--!"

His knees wanted to come up, but they only groaned as the restraints held him firmly. Tarn was inside him, insidiously surging through his circuitry and filling him until it felt that his very self would be snuffed out by the impending presence.

"Oh, that's lovely." Tarn sighed inside his mask and tilted his head onto his shoulder in lazy pleasure.

"Ff-- ahh, ahh..." Ratchet couldn't find the power to form a word, nor the power to stop the pitiful noises from falling from him.

"What's the matter, Ratchet?" Tarn grabbed his plug and grinded it into the port, "Silver tongue turned to lead?"

"I--"

His optics flickered for a brief moment, his system threatening to overload with the electricity of Tarn and the harness flooding through him. His gears were wheezing and thin tendrils of steam
rose from his chest and curled around Tarn's mask, causing precipitation to collect and bead around his glimmering eyes.

"Ahhhhh." Tarn moaned as he spun his port between his fingers as Ratchet jerked and writhed, his machinery hiccuping and burning. "It's been a while since I've gotten to fill someone up like this."

"Tarn," Pharma's voice was like a life boat in the black sea of the decepticon, a single shining point that Ratchet scrambled to. With monumental effort, he forced his eyes to Pharma, still by his side. He looked scared, but there was something else burning in his eyes. "You're... going to short circuit him."

"Then so be it." Tarn rumbled, his breath heavy with leisure.

Pharma looked desperately over to Ratchet, his mouth open as if to say something. But after a mental grapple that played out along his features, his lips closed. Ratchet felt as if he had lost everything, but then a hand touched his side. Gentle, reassuring. It was all Pharma could offer, but it was enough.

"Mmph--" Tarn let his body drape over Ratchet, his tank treads screeching against the bottom of the chair. "What was that about, Ratchet?" Tarn's voice was thick and drenched over him, "That burst of affection that just coursed through you?"

Ratchet couldn't answer. He wouldn't have, even if he could. Tarn was clever though, and cast a look at Pharma, who immediately withdrew his hand in shame.

"I see," Though Ratchet couldn't see the bot's mouth, it was clear from the brightening of his eyes that he was smiling. Something had clicked in the decepticon's mind, and that, more than anything, terrified Ratchet.

The fingers that had been steadfastly holding his line finally released, and all at once, euphoria like no other flooded him, just as his coolant flooded his system. He cried out, but the sound glitched and faltered as his pleasure receptors crowded with his relief. A thick finger shoved into his mouth and pressed against his tongue, but it seemed to be happening on another plane of existence, the feeling wasn't as immediate and demanding as the coursing fluid that rushed to fill his dry lines.

Tarn groaned and his body curled inward as the both shared in the pleasure, his eye's dimming and brightening in a pulsing revelry. "Ratchet," He jerked weakly, his hips sparking against the chair.
"How exquisite."

His system was still burning, but he could feel himself slowly reaching an equilibrium, strained and teetering though it may be. Tarn seemed to realize this as well, and picked himself up before carefully removing his plug, then his finger from Ratchet's mouth.

The sudden loss of connection made Ratchet twitch at the emptiness, and the pain of the harness was back at him, wreaking havoc on his over sensitive frame. The last dregs of pleasure that tingled in him were quickly sizzled away and he was left fighting to keep himself from shutting down.

"I've gotten what I needed." Tarn turned to Pharma, his optics leveled with purpose. "Come, we need to speak."

Tarn's cord retracted back into his side panel and he fastened it into place as he stepped back and made his way to the door. Pharma lingered, though, his eyes dragging over Ratchet's tired body.

"Are you holding up?" He finally asked, voice low.

Ratchet met his gaze, but couldn't find any words to say to the bot.

Pharma waited as long as he could before clenching his jaw and nodding, accepting the silence.

He hesitated for one more moment before finally following Tarn out of the room, leaving Ratchet to his muddled thoughts and agony.

Chapter End Notes

i've never read or watched a transformers, all knowledge used here is from my friends, wikipedia, and me saying "fuck it, that seems about right".

i actually do plan on reading mtmte before i start writing the next chapter, so i can really indulge in the robot fuckery :> in the meantime, keep in mind that a total transformers virgin wrote this and don't stare at the inconsistencies or canon discrepancies too hard lol

im @d00msdaisy on twitter <3
Tarn feels a heavy burden from his time with Ratchet, and takes his anger out on the bot.

The feeling haunted him. It was nothing but a small buzz of warmth in his circuits and lasted for only one moment, but Tarn couldn't shake it. Did other beings really live with that feeling? To have it warm and ever present in their cores—that feeling of fondness.

How had they not all gone mad?

That same night, Tarn has seen Pharma go into the room on the sly. Tarn didn't reprimand the action, more curious than anything. What were they doing in there? Pharma wasn't stupid enough to release Ratchet, but turning the chair off for a small reprieve was certainly plausible.

Pharma was in there for awhile. He wondered what the two bots talked about in that time. Were apologies issued? Were feelings confessed? Was the time filled with heavy silence, the weight of their actions and the subsequent consequences too much to speak aloud?

What was it like to have someone to share those regrets with?

Tarn returned back to the helm of the ship with these thoughts heavy on his mind. The other bots only spared him a glance that quickly turned away. They feared him, and rightfully so.

None of them would ever share such a fondness with him, nor he with them. But that was what made him the leader he was.

He looked out the curved window, but his optics weren't focused. That small warmth he had felt from Ratchet had left him cold, empty. He hadn't been aware of the absence until he had the chance to taste it, to really feel what it was like to care for another, and to have that care returned-- and then, inevitably, to have it taken away.
The pondering twisted though, into a black, lashing hatred. He wasn't one for torture, but he wanted to punish Ratchet. It wasn't rational, but the bot still holding fondness for Pharma wasn't rational, either. And Pharma...Despite everything he had done, despite everything he was willing to betray, still had the capacity for compassion. That, more than anything, filled Tarn with...something. He wasn't sure what it was, but it was burrowing and gnawing into his mainframe and made him feel sick.

Tarn decided that he needed to crush Ratchet. Not in the traditional sense, no. It was clear from the last session that it would take more than just physical pain to tear him apart.

He had an inkling of an idea. It was twisted even by his standards, but it was the only retaliation he felt to be suitable for that small spark of warmth he was forced to feel.

Ratchet wasn't awake. After being on the variable voltage harness for over a week, going into a sleeping state was a viable tactic to prevent one's spark from sputtering out. Tarn fistred the chain in his hands tighter as he walked into the room, his scuttling pet eagerly tugging against it's collar to get closer to the unconscious bot.

"Calm down, boy. You'll have your chance." Metal hands screeched against the floor in protest as Tarn walked past Ratchet to turn the chair off.

He stood at the foot of the chair and waited patiently, the bot at his heels insistently yanking against the leash and letting out needy snarls. After a few moments he could hear the whirring machinery in Ratchet start to move, and the faint glow of his blue optics flashed on.

"Good morning." Tarn said politely, his hand tightening against the chain with his anticipation.

Ratchet sighed, obviously from relief at the end of the electrified onslaught, but didn't bother to look away from the ceiling. "You turned off the harness. That's a shame, I was just starting to enjoy it."

He still had not only the strength, but the gall to continue with his snarky sarcasm. That was fine. He could pretend he had some sort of control of the situation for the time being. All of that was
"I'm sorry to disappoint. I thought we could try something new for the time being." Tarn yanked the chain, making it clink and drawing an aggravated whine from the bot at the other end of it. "But rest assured, I'll turn it back on when I'm finished playing."

As he had hoped, the noises had drawn Ratchet's attention. When he lifted his head, Tarn watched his face closely, delighting in the confusion that drew his brow tight, then the realization that loosened it.

"No..." Ratchet's voice was small as raised his head and his shackles clattered.

"What's the matter, Ratchet?" He rolled the chain over his knuckles, forcing the bot to sit straighter. Tarn pressed a finger under the bot's chin and forced his head up to give Ratchet a good, long look. Oily saliva rolled down Pharma's chin and smeared against the white metal of his mouth. Blue optics usually sparkling with snappy personality were now glowing in long, animalistic pulses, and they were fixed on one thing; Ratchet's exposed spark casing.

"Pharma," Ratchet sounded in more pain than Tarn had heard from during his entire torture, "Pharma, what did he do to you?"

"I'm afraid that he's in no state to answer." Tarn pulled his finger away and Pharma began panting, his drool splattering against the floor as his hands clawed at the ground, trying to get closer to Ratchet. "But to save you from technicalities and long winded explanations--" He loosened the chain around his hand a bit and Pharma used the lax on his leash to lunge forward a few inches. "This isn't the Pharma you once knew."

It had been a lot of work, if he were telling the truth. Getting his hands on a Sparkeater gun had been a chore. And, of course, the fact that he had to sacrifice Pharma for this particular torture. It was a shame that Tarn had to lose such a useful subordinate, but with all victories came collateral damage.

Seeing the despair on Ratchet's face was victory enough to justify the means.

"Pharma." Ratchet's voice was stiff and severe, as if taking on a stricter tone would break through to him.
"Perhaps you are more of a hands-on learner." Tarn suggested, stepping closer. Pharma's hands could reach Ratchet's legs now, and began clawing madly at them, desperate to get closer to the bot's burning spark. "I'm more than happy to give you a demonstration."

Another step closer, and Pharma was scrambling to get into the chair.

Another step, and Pharma dragged himself up into Ratchet's lap, his breath a wheezing growl as his fingers clutched emptily at the air, only a few centimeters from Ratchet's spark casing, but stopped just short by the leash.

"Do you understand now?" Tarn said softly, careful to keep a good hold on the bot's leash.

Ratchet could only look up at Pharma, his face twisted with a pain so profound that Tarn couldn't grasp it's depth. Was that the face of someone who had lost all hope? Who had lost someone they loved?

For a moment, the smallest fraction of a moment, Tarn felt that something again... it couldn't be regret, though, could it? He forced it down before he could take hold of it, or it could take hold of him. It was better that way.

Pharma drooled uninhibitedly down his chin and oily globules fell into Ratchet's open chest, the warm fluid sizzling against his hot, exposed frame.

With his free hand, Tarn opened his panel and pulled his cord free once again. The action was completely lost on Ratchet, whose eyes were glued to the manic bot atop him, seeming in shock, but that was short-lived as Tarn shoved himself into the bot's port.

"D-don't--!"

Ah, it felt good to be back inside him. Ratchet felt so clean, his emotions laid out bare, so straight-cut, so pure. It was a particular sort of ecstasy to feel him like this, as if the murkiness of his own self was being cleansed, if only temporarily.

Ratchet's machinery hissed and chugged into a hectic rhythm as Tarn's hand accidentally loosened on the leash and Pharma finally closed the gap with his clawed fingers. He felt a blast of fear from Ratchet as hungry hands gripped the sides of his spark casing and began prying at it.
"Pharma!" Ratchet's back grinded against the chair as he tried to wiggle away, "Pharma, listen to me--!

He knew Pharma was running on fumes at this point and wouldn't be able to tear into the metal, but he still wanted to placate the bot to a degree, just to make him more manageable. Tarn yanked at the leash, forcing Pharma up, and fumbled around him to feel around Ratchet's exposed abdomen.

Another hot spike of fear coursed into Tarn as he found Ratchet's cord.

"You two wanted to be joined, didn't you?" Tarn asked, fingering the dull nub at the end of the cord before bringing it to Pharma. "Or perhaps you already did plug into each other during Pharma's visit."

"S-stop..." Ratchet sounded strained, and rightfully so. "Tarn, please stop..."

"How interesting." Tarn felt along Pharma's burning chest and opened his panel, Ratchet's cord trapped between his fingers all the while. "It seems I was right to assume that your weak spot is Pharma. Nothing but him would make you beg in such a way." He blindly groped around until he found the bot's port. "It's quite romantic."

Realizing that Tarn wasn't going to listen, Ratchet turned his efforts back to Pharma, his voice wavering as he fought to keep his composure. "Pharma, I know you can hear me in there. It's okay, just--"

He was cut off on a high, pained wheeze as Tarn shoved his cord into Pharma's port. The clean coursing of energy he could feel from Ratchet was now being lapped at by a wild, feral electricity. It seemed to poke and prod curiously at Tarn before deciding to focus on pouring into Ratchet.

"Aghn-- hnnn ..." Pharma's tense body loosened and his chin fell to his chest, but his fingers still gently pried against the casing, like a human baby contently kneading against its mother's breast.

"Ph- Pharma --!" Ratchet's hips clanked against the chair and raised Pharma slightly as he jerked and writhed. Tarn could feel his despair rolling against Pharma's digging hunger, and how he was full to the brim, near the point of short-circuiting.
“Have you fantasized about this moment?” Tarn sighed hotly, running his hands over Pharma’s back. “I’m sure you have. Calling out Pharma’s name as he pulses into you, joining with him so intimately…” He fingered Ratchet’s cord before twirling it tightly around a knuckle, making the bot whimper. “I’m sure the reality doesn’t quite match your hopes, though.”

Sparks flew from his chest as he let out choked cries, lighting up the dim room in brilliant bursts before sizzling away into nothing. But those were nothing compared to the sparks that danced around the bot’s optics, leaking from the corners of his face plate and crackling in their intensity.

"Why do you cry?” Tarn found himself panting now, the emotions in Ratchet creeping into his circuits even as he was pushing his own energy deeper into the bot, "Is it because you're overwhelmed? Or is it because you can feel just how lost Pharma is?"

Ratchet shut his optics tightly as he let out a garbled yell, his voice modulator hiccupping and shorting out. Still, the sparks came.

"You can feel it, can't you? That's he's gone." Tarn preseed his chest against Pharma, forcing him to fall forward onto Ratchet. Immediately, the feral bot began licking at the spark casing, small growling whimpers leaving him. "Look what your weaknesses have sown."

Ratchet's optics flickered as Pharma's roaming hands found bundles or wires and tubes inside his chest and tugged at them as his teeth scraped needily against the casing.

"Ph--ma--" Ratchet's voice cut in and out on a waver as he grimaced in panicked pain. But it wasn't physical pain, though surely he was feeling plenty of that. "I'm sorr--"

That fondness again. There it was, on the edges of Pharma’s beastial hunger and Ratchet’s despair. But this time, there was sadness lacing it’s warmth. A black pit of anger seared Tarn’s wires and made his mind numb with it's intensity as he pushed against the warm blossom, consuming it’s frailty with his hatred. "You did this to him," He shoved Pharma's head against the spark casing roughly as he forced himself impossibly deeper into Ratchet, "This is what happens when you let feelings take ahold of you--!"

With one last violent push, Ratchet's energy hiccuped and began to recede. His optics flashed brightly and sparks flew from them before fading into darkness, and the chugging of his machinery came to a wheezing crawl.
"Damnit."

Tarn roughly pulled his plug from the bot and shoved Pharma to the floor. Ratchet's plug snagged in Pharma's port and with a small snap, the metal tip broke, making Pharma writhe into a ball as he groaned in pain.

“Damnit!”

Tarn panted over Ratchet. He was still alive, but they had overloaded him. He had let his emotions get the best of him and had cut their playtime short. Steam rose in thin tendrils around his face mask as he fought to collect himself, fought to maintain some semblance of control.

The loss of Ratchet's warm, clean energy left him profoundly empty.

He grabbed Pharma's leash and dragged the whining bot across the room, towards the door.

Tarn had learned to live with that emptiness, though. And there was petty solace knowing that he might have shared some of that emptiness with Ratchet, like passing on a curse.

Just as Ratchet had passed on his own curse to Tarn.

Chapter End Notes

ok so like, i DID start reading the IDW continuity and im balls fucking deep into it. im still on phase 1 so ive only met ratchet, but GOD im already so attached to everyone. to absolutely no one's surprise, im hard for megatron. i would def like to write more robot stuff when im farther in, but in the meantime, pls excuse any goofs with canon and whatnot with this story :’3

i really hope everyone who took the time to read this enjoyed! it was the most challenging thing ive worked on in awhile (considering im still very much a transformers noob, and LOTS of research and time was taken on this). thank u all for stopping by! <3

d00msdaisy on twitter
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!