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## THE MEDICS STRIKE BACK

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As Han Solo limped down the corridor, cradling his cast-encased arm, he wondered morosely what the Head Medical Officer wanted this time. Hadn't he just been cleared to leave the hospital? Couldn't they leave him alone for once? He sighed heavily as he stopped in front of the door, hearing the sounds of a computer printing madly away inside the office. If they found some new reason to confine him to bed, he was going to shoot someone.

There was a loud rustling of paper as he pushed open the door and a voice yelled, "Don't screw up my printout!" Solo looked down at his feet only to find them buried beneath a veritable snowbank of paper. He glanced up at the Medical Officer, Dr I V Lyons, who sat behind the desk looking none too happy as he leafed through even more papers, scowling as he added them to the mountain on the floor. Solo heard him mutter, "this is incredible."

"You want me to stand over here then?"

The pudgy faced Medical Officer's head lifted to reveal blood shot eyes. He blinked and squinted as he tried to focus on Han then sighed as he saw evidence of further injury. "This is going to take some time, Solo. I think you'd better sit down."

"Do you want to clear a path for me or do you want my bootprints all over this stuff?"

"Might be as good as your signature," the man muttered. Solo cocked a questioning eyebrow at him and he added more loudly, "grab an armful and dump them on the desk."

Solo shifted uncomfortably, "I don't think that'd be a good idea. I'm having trouble with my balance."

That set the Lyons' teeth on edge. "Tell me Solo, do you make a habit of this?"

"Of what?" Solo asked as he waded through the papers and lowered himself awkwardly into the chair.

"Making yourself almost a permanent resident of Sick Bay?"

"It's not my fault! You want to take that up with your gung-ho bosses who like to see people get shot up."

Giving up, the M.O. shook his head. "I don't think you can blame everything on them. Let's take this case as an example." And he picked up one of the pages.

Solo's jaw dropped a little and he waved the sheaf of papers he held. "You're not telling me that ALL this stuff's about me?"

"Oh, yes," the Doctor sighed heavily, "and more. I haven't finished the printout yet but I thought I should stop there before I was buried alive." His eyes locked with Solo's, his expression amazed. "According to these, you should have been dead long ago."

Solo smirked and leaned back in his chair. "We Corellians are practically indestructible."

"And expensive," Lyons muttered. "We have a lot of active combat personnel, Solo, but not one of them comes near to equalling your record. I was hoping to uncover some kind of pattern that would explain," he paused, "how should I put this? Your predisposition to attract calamity. You're driving us into bankruptcy."

"Your gratitude overwhelms me. I put my life on the line, heroically go where no one else would dare and what does it get me, a ....."

"No one's questioning your courage, Solo," the Doctor interrupted then exclaimed suddenly, "ah ha," and snapped his fingers and began to grin and chuckle to himself.

Solo's eyes narrowed suspiciously and he leaned a little closer. "Are you sure you're okay, Doc? Don't you think you've been working too hard lately? Maybe you need some fresh air." He began laboriously getting to his feet, "get some rest, I'll come back later." Under his breath he added, "maybe."

"Sit down, Captain," the M.O. was suddenly all business again. "You're not going to escape so easily."

Defeatedly Solo slumped back into the chair. "Why me?" he mumbled. "You were right, Jake."

"Jake," Lyons' eyes glinted. "Would that be Captain Jake Kellahen?"

"Yeah," Solo nodded. "He's a very good friend of mine."

"That figures," the Doctor muttered.

"Why is that?"

"He seems to be doing his best to equal your record. Thanks so much for bringing him to us."

"A dying art," Solo muttered.

"What's that?"

"Sympathy, compassion, kindness," Solo smiled fondly. "Jake reckons it's a dying art." He cocked his head hopefully. "You wouldn't like to prove him wrong on that? You know, ask me how I'm feeling? If there's something you can get for me? Is all this talk making me tired? Tell me how much you appreciate all the suffering I go through ..."

"Alright, alright," the Doctor protested. "Enough! Let's just get this over with shall we? As I was saying, your medical bills are bringing us to the brink of bankruptcy and the underlying cause seems to be you have more courage than any legion of men." He looked down at the papers, scanned a few lines then added, "No, not courage, foolhardiness."

Solo's jaw dropped in outrage. "Now wait just one minute here. I ain't no fool. I don't invent these missions. I swear it's all a plot. Every time I talk about leaving, Her Royalness comes up with another doozy of a mission and I wind up flat on my back." Again Solo leaned across the desk, his expression smug as he added in a conspiratorial whisper, "It ain't my courage that's the problem, Doc, it's my stunning good looks."

"Your what?" Lyons spluttered. He began coughing and choking and Solo poured him a glass of water.

Watching as the man recovered, Solo leaned back again, shook his head and advised, "it ain't easy to face the truth, is it?"

Dr I V Lyons gave him a glare that would have done Leia Organa proud, "Very well, Solo, let's test this theory of yours, case by case. Make yourself comfortable. It could take some time." He picked up the uppermost page and began reading aloud. "Let's see. Acid burns."

Solo frowned. "Acid burns," he repeated nonplussed. "Me? I don't remember that."

"Hoth, it happened at the Hoth base during the period code-named MARKS OF HONOR."

Solo's eyes widened. "Geez, Doc, that's ancient history."

"No, it's our first listing of medical expenses incurred on your behalf."

"Oh, yeah," Solo snapped his fingers, "I remember now. See I told you it's all her fault. You should throw all this stuff at her." He waved an arm at the papers spread across the floor.

"Oh, really," Lyons drawled sarcastically. "Exactly how could the Princess Organa have been responsible for your receiving acid burns to your back?"

"She kicked me in the shins and I fell." Snickering to himself, he added, "I think she just wanted to see me without my shirt on. She even chased me into the shower."

The Doctor's mouth hung open. He seemed at a loss for words but finally said grudgingly, "Maybe I'll give you that one, but I don't see

how you could blame her for the exorbitant cost of growing a muscle transplant for your shoulder."

"Hmmm," Solo frowned. "Now that one I can't forget. Vader got me good."

"I thought the whole thing was an accident. Didn't Chewbacca hit you in the head?"

Solo shrugged. "Yeah, but it was Vader who did the real damage. I'm surprised the Imperials didn't bill you for the time I spent in their infirmary."

Lyons hunted through the papers on his desk, pulled one from the pile and thrust it at Solo. "They did! Mission code name HIDDEN PERILS, see!"

Solo was incensed, "Of all the nerve! They slice me open, use me as a walking bomb, beat me to a pulp, give me blood poisoning then add insult to injury with this," he waved the paper in the Doctor's face.

"Oh, you don't know the half of it," the Doctor said miserably. "We hear from them regularly and from others as well."

Solo could only shake his head. "Yeah, well, getting back to my theory. This one was all Leia's idea too. She just had to have those new guns and I told her I was ready to leave to pay Jabba." He raised his voice in a poor imitation of Leia's tone, "we need you, Han. Just one more mission, Han. This'll be the last, I promise."

Lyons picked up the glass of water, took a sip then made a disgusted face and muttered, "I need something stronger." He opened the drawer and pulled out a bottle of brandas. "Want some?" he looked up at Solo.

"You bet." Solo agreed "If we're gonna relive all of these fun times, you'll have to order in another bottle."

They sat fortifying themselves for a few minutes then bravely the Doctor picked up another page. "Oh, you'll like this one," he smirked, making Solo wonder at the mellowing effects of the brandas. "Do you remember your visit to THE PEOPLE OF THE LIGHT?"

Solo swallowed heavily and poured himself another swig. "Nope, actually I don't remember much of that one, but I have seen the pictures."

"A hole in the chest that size would have dropped a bantha in its tracks." The M.O. sighed, "that would have been the end of the story"

right there if not for Skywalker. At least he didn't charge us for his services."

"He didn't?" Solo asked disappointedly. "I thought I taught him better than that," he shook his head disgustedly. "Jedi ethics! The kid's gonna be a pauper forever if he don't learn to listen to me."

Dismissing the comment, Lyons continued, "I'm sure you'll remember the extensive therapy necessary after your carbon hibernation."

"Oh, yeah," Solo scowled. "A high point in my life! But wait, back up here. I need to point out that it was Leia who insisted, despite all my protests and ignoring all my advice, overlooking my superior wisdom ..."

"Please," the Doctor pleaded. "Don't make this any more painful than it has to be."

"Hey, Doc, don't use that word around me."

"Which word is that?"

"Painful. There ain't no one on this entire base knows more about pain than me. Just trust me when I tell you that I would never have gone back to Ord Mandell nor wound up on Beshpin if it hadn't been for her Royalnesses' bright ideas."

"Beshpin," Lyons repeated. "Ah, yes, we have an entire volume on the expenses incurred by you on Beshpin. Take a look at this."

Solo took the offered pages and began scanning through them, his expression more outraged with every word. "Why that low down, conniving, mealy-mouthed son of a bitch."

"You mean Calrissian?"

"Hell, yes," Solo exploded. "I mean Calrissian. My ex-friend. The man who doesn't have long to live. He hands me over to Vader, stands outside the door and listens while I scream my lungs out, then gives me a medical check-up, gets me carbon frozen, hands me over to Boba Fett, probably gets a commission on the bounty then sends all my medical bills to you. I'm gonna kill him, slowly and painfully. Look what the smart mouth has listed these things as - BESHPIN DELUSION - 100,000 credits for power supply to the scangrid. He even claims the power drain blacked out half of Cloud City. My head just bleeds. And this one - BESHPIN PLEDGE. He insisted on having his own doctor examine me!" His face flushed with

fury, Solo locked eyes with the MO. "Can I borrow one of your life-support machines, Doc? I want to kill him more than once. This is it, he's even charged us for the clean shirt he gave me in the cell at Jabba's and he calls it A DEBT PAID." Solo's eyes narrowed in evil anticipation. "Can you teach me how to give enemas, Doc? Got any blunt needles lying around you don't want anymore? I'll show Calrissian a real handy place to store his paperwork."

"Fine by me," the doctor agreed. "Anything you want. Just do it a long way from here." He poured them both another drink then picked up another page. "Are you ready for it?"

"You're the one who says I've got guts. Fire away. I've got a reason to live now."

"This one is listed under WELCOME. You know, when we got you back from Jabba."

"Right," Solo said sourly. "I never slept for weeks. Come to think of it, neither did Chewie. He came running every time I had a nightmare."

"Yes, months of psychotherapy are very expensive."

"You should call in Luke on these cases. Tell him he could make a fortune out of it."

Lyons nodded. "The problem with him is, there's only one of him. But he couldn't do much to prevent the onset of your blindness and that turned out to be the most long term expense of all, a real JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS."

"Well," Solo pointed out, "he did teach me how to get around without a cyber implant." Solo took a swig of his brandas. "Saved you a fistful of credits there, Doc. Lucky thing for me, I found a permanent cure."

"True." He shuffled through the papers. "Oh, here's an interesting one ... VICTORY SCARS."

"Wait," Solo exclaimed. "I just remembered it was one of Calrissian's guards who sent me blind in the first place." His fingers tightened around the glass so that the knuckles showed white. "He's a low down swindler but I didn't think even he would stoop so low as to bill us."

"I think you need to get off that subject before you slice your hand open on that glass and I have more paperwork to fill out," the Doctor advised morosely. "Let's keep it moving here. Arrow wounds. Trying for a little variety, were we? And if you think Calrissian's low, here," and

he passed over another sheet to Solo, then wondered if it was the Corellian's jaw he should be worrying about. It looked set to dislocate.

"They're all out to get me! Even those pint-sized furry cannibals! What is this? They shoot me, then set their witch-doctor on me and send his bill to you. Pickings must be real lean down there these days. They can't catch their own food anymore so they're sending for take-out and they need the cash to pay for it."

"What gets me, you weren't even safe on your honeymoon! There were some interesting rumours about Leia Organa going around Base when you came back bruised, broken and limping. So tell me, did you give us a cover story or does the Princess have some unusual tastes?"

Solo leaned back in his chair, smiling fondly. "I'm not giving anything away about that, but the truth is I did fall off a cliff."

"Whatever happened it must have been memorable because the name given to the case report is REMEMBRANCE."

"Those were the good old days."

"Then things really took a turn for the worse," Lyons said grimly as he leafed through the stack of papers. "And our costs went through the roof."

Solo stiffened. "Hagren," he spat. "That mongrel even put Leia in the hospital."

And you were PRESUMED GUILTY."

"But only until I tracked him down and wound up with his knife in my shoulder."

"Nasty."

"It could have been worse. A lot worse. At first he wanted to cut lower, a lot lower. That would have ruined any plans Leia and I had for children."

The Doctor choked on his brandas. "But it was the mission named GATHERING DARKNESS that had you needing medical attention for months."

Solo sighed. "Do you have any idea how damned uncomfortable it is not to even be able to roll over in bed because you're wearing so many casts?"

I didn't think I'd ever use my hand again and it took forever for my leg to heal."

"They say there's a bright side to everything. At least you gave my staff experience in treating every form of trauma known to mankind - burns for example."

"My hands sure were a mess after I pulled Boba Fett out of that fire. He says it took us FULL CIRCLE. I suppose you got a bill from him too."

Lyons nodded, picked up the appropriate file. "He claims you emptied out his entire medical kit."

"Gratitude," Solo shook his head. "I don't know why I bothered to save him from those pirates."

"Then you were in a coma on life support for weeks after you discovered those REAWAKENING crystals. And if that wasn't enough, as soon as you recovered, you charged back into the depths of danger on a mission code named ABOVE ALL SHADOWS."

Solo's expression darkened. "That was only the second time in my life I'd ever been whipped."

"But it was the damage to your arm that caused the real problem. Blood poisoning is not to be taken lightly." The Doctor picked up the next page, shaking his head as he commented, "that arm has taken quite a beating over the years. You broke it again during THE SEARCH FOR ASTELLE."

"Sometimes it is a case of KILL OR BE KILLED. Those Imperial bastards even turned my best friend against me."

"Hmmm," Lyons grunted. "Chewbacca really pounded your ankle and ribs."

"Leia gave me a real good dressing down when I collapsed only minutes after she wnet into labor."

"It's not wise to overlook the symptoms of internal bleeding. You should have allowed the doctors to give you an examination."

Solo smiled. "That's the polite version of Leia's lecture. You see, Doc, even after we were married she was still looking for ways to keep me at home in bed. Even when she was running for President of the Allied

Worlds, she kept me on a short leash, hobbling around on a pair of crutches."

"So a MINDLINK wasn't good enough for her?"

"It's not my mind she's interested in, it's my body."

"It seems a lot of women would agree with her. This file code named A NIGHT IN THE LIFE OF HAN SOLO makes fascinating reading but, frankly, I find it hard to believe."

"Oh, it was hard alright!" Solo took a hefty slug of brandas then emptied the remainder of the bottle into the Doctor's glass, spilling some of it on the papers littering the desk. "Damn good thing I've trained even the most precious part of my body to duck for cover when necessary."

"I can see where your nights must be exhausting."

"Oh, hey, they're a barrel of laughs compared to A DAY IN MY LIFE. "I'm telling ya if Blobba Fatt spat on me one more time, I would have drowned." Solo leaned forward, looking through bleary eyes as he noted that the Doctor had dropped the last page onto the pile. "That's it, then? I can go now? I told you it was because of my gorgeous good looks. Every female in the galaxy wants to keep me for themselves and they bust me up so I can't run away."

Lyons hiccuped. "I can sssee where that'sss a dissstinct posssssibility."

"I knew you'd see the light! It ain't my fault. Send the bills to all the women in my life." He lurched unsteadily to his feet.

"Sssssorry, Solo," Lyons waved an arm at the papers still strewn over the floor. "Your theory may have some validity. But only in reference to your personal expenses. How do you explain these?" Shakily, he bent down, retrieved some papers and dropped them on Solo's lap.

"Kiren? The clone?" Solo gaped. "Why should I have to pay his bills?"

"You brought him here after venturing into ENEMY TERRITORY. You had the brilliant idea to rehabilitate him."

"Actually, I think that was Luke's idea. Anyway, he turned out good, didn't he? He's bringing on revenue hand over fist."

"He'd need to be," the M.O. muttered. "What about that stormtrooper you brought back with the smashed hand? The one who'd been tortured? We spent weeks fixing him up, then he gets to go home without paying us a single credit! Someone's gotta sign for all this treatment cost!"

"Rodell sends regular shipments of crates of wine from his vineyards. WHAT PRICE PEACE turned out to be a lifetime supply."

"Wine?" Lyons looked interested. "Not the Valleya?"

Solo winked. "The very same."

"It's the best!" Lyons hiccupped. "All right, I'll scratch that one. Lets see, what about that weird guy who looked just like you, we had him quartered in luxury for days."

"Indiana? Oh, yeah, you thought he was me, come to think of it he was using my body that one time, when we fell into THE BLACK SLEEP. After carbon freeze, right?" The M.O. nodded. "So," Solo grinned evilly, "anything from Bospin goes to Calrissian. I'll make sure he pays. Trust me."

"All right, that leaves your little venture on HIGH SEAS when you met Kellahen. He needed physiotherapy for weeks on that leg, and he insisted on a private nurse, one Anny McCarn."

Solo chuckled. "He would! Look, Jake got shot up protecting the Arans, send the bills to them."

"They sent them to us!"

"Send 'em back! Jake and me got the same problem ... we're both too damn good looking for safety."

"Sure, sure. Look, Solo, the Big Bosses asked me to call you in here and show you this stuff so you could see why they don't have the cash to buy weaponry and such."

Solo shrugged. "Things are tough all over."

"So," Lyons overrode him, "The Big Brass came up with a brilliant idea - they want you to sign on with the Imperials! You'll drain their treasury in no time!"

Solo sat in stunned silence then slowly began to smile, a sly wicked smile. He looked back at the M.O., winked, then said, "only if their officers have a lot of lonely wives."

End

AUTHOR'S NOTE : Words in capitals are story titles -- and yes, some of them are not on the Embassy yet -- but they will be --- soon! Also this story was written years ago-- Solo has suffered even more since then ---<VEG>

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