

**A Jocund Company, By Durai Arun Pannir Selvam**

**Summary:** *On a remote planet settlement, a radiographer and an engineer are kidnapped by a rebel group and forced to solve an imaging scanner software issue. The engineer double-crosses the rebels, and the captives return to safety.*

**Characters:**

**JIM (m), 30s, a radiographer.**

**MAX (m), late 20s or early 30s, an engineer.**

**REBEL ONE (-), a paramilitary.**

**REBEL TWO (-), a paramilitary.**

---

**Outside: Rain. A military truck riding on a muddy road on a dusky evening**  
**Ambient noise panning from outside to the truck's inside.**  
**Engine noise, rain pattering on the roof, and sounds of things thrown around inside the truck.**

**REBEL ONE:** Something troubles me. They should be dead. They are alive because of the Doctor. I don't know why she persuaded our leader not to finish them off. Why should our leader listen to her?

**REBEL TWO (on a chuckle):** Don't we all listen to our *partners*? Let's just do the job. If you feel unsettled, just bleed them more to take the edge off.

**REBEL ONE:** Maybe I should.

**Muffled voices of restrained men.**

**REBEL TWO:** What now?

**REBEL ONE:** I don't like this. Should we take it off?

**REBEL TWO:** What could go wrong?

**A tape gag being peeled off.**

**MAX:** Ah. That's better. Bolting iron chairs to a vehicle floor. Who thought of it?

**REBEL TWO (sarcastic):** Why? Do you feel uncomfortable?

**MAX:** It breaks my back, you dumb idiots.

**Both rebels hit Max in his face.**

***The truck stops. MAX and JIM are thrown to the ground.***

**REBEL ONE:** Enjoy the *rain*. *(Laughs)*.

**REBEL TWO:** Here's your watch.

***Throws the watch on the ground and continues to laugh. The truck has turned around and left them.***

**MAX:** Come on Jim, we have to go. *(Lifting Jim up)* Get up. Can you walk?

**JIM:** I can and I must.

**MAX:** When will this rain turn radioactive?

**JIM:** Usually the first shower after dark is the worst. And we have roughly twenty minutes for that.

***The two men walk in the woods, while it rains. Undergrowth is so dense and thick that the ground is not even visible or felt. Suddenly:***

**JIM** Oh, my foot is stuck!

**MAX:** Hold on, I can get you free!

***While struggling to free his foot JIM's thoughts race as he fights his panic.***

**JIM:** Who in their right mind chose this planet as a remote settlement? Oh, indeed this is a god-forsaken place.

Can't these rebels sort out their problems by themselves?

They failed to understand the new cancer until it was too late – they didn't help their cadres – yet they proclaim they are the saviours of Earth Federation.

They are indeed a mess.

Once they found out that they could not alter their medical scanner's software, they kidnapped me – a radiographer – to change the source code.

Just because their only radiographer had been doing everything by himself, it doesn't mean that it's a one-person job. Why would it be?

Healthcare is nothing like a movie.

He did not understand how a group of engineers from different fields work together with radiographers and oncologists to build cancer-detecting software.

It takes a team to do this job.

His poor contrast CBCT scanner needed an algorithm like the one that was used in multi-modal image registration to detect cancerous tissue.

No matter the advancements, their fundamentals remain the same.

When I told them that I can't do this by myself, they beat me half to death and kept me for weeks.

***Sounds of a beating echoing in his memory..***

...Finally making me talk - about Max's skills.

Of all the radiographers on this planet, I don't know why I was picked, but definitely it was me who brought him into this.

It was I who told them to kidnap Max.

How could I ever live with myself after doing this terrible thing?

But I had no choice. They threatened to kill my wife, my kids.

Poor Max, he was so scared that he went to the extent of doing more than required.

It was very unlike him. He usually stands up to bullies, but he was timid, jumping at shadows.

I'm sure I lost my pal.

Bloody rebels!

But the Doctor was lovely, charming and kind. She even tended our wounds before we were left in this awful spot.

Why is she with the rebel leader?

A chat with Dr Hannibal would be a charm comparing a talk with the leader. At least he heeded her requests to keep us alive and let us go.

Even though I don't want the Doctor to be harmed, I will be more than glad if all those rebels were caught.

**MAX:** Got it!

***JIM'S foot is freed. JIM and MAX get up and walk in the woods. The rain has stopped.***

**MAX (cont'd):** Good, the rain has stopped.

**JIM:** I am sorry Max, I pulled you into this.

**MAX:** Don't be. Have I ever run from anything? We are in this together. I was glad that you brought me into this rather than facing them alone.

**JIM:** The fact that they got away with this gets on my nerves.

**MAX:** Nah. I've taken care of that. While, I was altering the image registration code, I patched in a location tracing program, anytime they use their scanner they will have given away their location. The whole thing was activated five days ago. By now, the rebel leader will have been caught.

So, *no* - they didn't get away with anything.

**JIM:** Aha, he deserves it.

**MAX:** Oh, Jim as usual, not reading the room at all.

While I was fooling everybody - including you, I found that the *Doctor* was the leader.

The guy is just a proxy, and everybody, including the other rebels, thought they are in a relationship.

She was trying to be more elusive than the Scarlet Pimpernel. At least Sir Percy's mates knew who he was.

**JIM:** She deserves what she gets. But still... she is the reason that we are alive.

**MAX:** You might think that. But she was counting on the radioactive rain to kill us. Speaking of which, where are we? Do we have the time?

**JIM:** Quite nearby. I can see the sentry tower. It might rain very soon.  
Max, I am sorry again.

**MAX:** Oh come on Jim. The chance to play James Bond does not come by every day.  
**Let me jot down here** - kidnapping, - espionage, - getting beaten - guns pointed at you – all items checked!

What more could I ask for?

Never ever assume that this is on you mate.

We will – and should be – in any mess together.

Surely, all these scars and bloody noses will remind us of our friendship in our old days.

**JIM (Laughing):** Can't disagree my friend, I cannot disagree.

**MAX:** Ah there is the gate. Drinks on the loser.

**MAX laughs and starts to run.**

***Both of them start to run towards the settlement, while a raining cloud follows them.***

**END**