

# Forces

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Volume 2020

Article 6

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5-1-2020

## A Space Opera

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### Recommended Citation

Achomuma, John (2020) "A Space Opera," *Forces*: Vol. 2020 , Article 6.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2020/iss1/6>

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## A Space Opera

John Achomuma

FADE IN:

INT. SPACESHIP - NIGHT

THE DANCE OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky is playing from a vinyl record player.

There is a spaceship constructed entirely of cardboard boxes, with childlike drawings of constellations. At the center of the ship is the main control system, right above a study table and chair. A fake window to the left has been drawn on a wall displaying the "exterior."

A man in a bio-suit (complete with tinted helmet) is sitting on a bed, playing with a tennis ball with the wall across him. He is surrounded by objects reminiscent of a child's bedroom. There are notably chalk drawings of the *Iron Giant* and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, among other space related references on the wall.

POET (V.O.) (bouncing tennis ball)

2's a team, 3's a crowd. Any number over 3 is too many people for me... and any number over 3 digits is too much math for me. I'm not a scientist. I'm not an astronaut . . . I write stories. I write stories for children. I couldn't write for adults because I never had perspective. The only adult I knew was my late mother. I couldn't write for teenage girls because I've never had romance. I'm honestly not sure if I even write for myself. In any case, it worked out. My first and only collection of short stories garnered enough acclaim to earn a fortune. Enough to pay for this trip to space. My editor worries I'm taking too long to write my next work. The isolation is supposed to help me concentrate. My psychiatrist trusted me to take this trip as my panic attacks have lessened and I'm generally doing better. I did get a few tips just in case.

I'm not a

scientist.

I'm not an

astronaut. . .

I write stories.

I write stories

for children.

I couldn't write

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### INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT

A PSYCHIATRIST is seated.

**PSYCHIATRIST** (handing out ball)

Play with this. It should train you to fixate on one thing.

### INT. SPACESHIP - NIGHT

POET puts ball away and walks towards window.

**POET (V.O.)**

(looking out the window) Sometimes I miss the little things I neglected. For instance, even if it was possible for this spaceship to approach the sun, it would be nothing compared to watching the sunrise or sunset. I miss the seasons, too. The only thing that comes close is winter, but who wants that?! The higher you are, the colder it becomes and the more depressing things can be. On occasion suicide seems like an option.

He turns around and faces the whole room.

**POET (V.O.) (CONT'D)**

To feel more at home, I decorated the interior to look like my childhood bedroom.

Music stops.

### INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT

**PSYCHIATRIST**

Well, your childhood is an important time in your life. It's where you begin to shape your first ideas about everything. Life, love, everything. That's why those memories are so clear. Or maybe subconsciously you're forcing yourself to stay a child so you don't lose your imagination.

### INT. SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Poet changes the vinyl; Vivaldi's *THE FOUR SEASONS*.  
Poet walks away from the vinyl with a bounce in his step.

**POET (V.O.)**

I don't agree with either. I think people remember events  
where they were vulnerable. And like the way danger makes  
one vulnerable, so does being a small child in a big world.

Music suddenly stops. A cold female voice:

**MOTHER** (sternly)

What did I say about the music? (beat)

**MOTHER** (CONT'D)

Did you hear me?!

(beat)

Take off that thing on your head and face me.

Taking a few deep breaths, he slowly takes off his helmet and turns  
around. He has a bald cut and a clean shave.

**MOTHER** (CONT'D)

What did I say about eye contact? Look at me.

Eerie silence.

**MOTHER** (CONT'D)

No food, no water, no break, no music. You do not leave this  
room until your writing quota is completed for the day.

(beat)

Do you understand?

The son nods.

**POET (V.O.)** (tense, heading to the main control system)

I've heard stories of parents who force their kids into music.  
About how their parents will play classical music for them in  
the womb and hand them an instrument right after birth. The  
intense classes, the crazy hours... All so they can end up third  
seat violinist for the national orchestra.

A shelf filled with classic literature.

**POET (V.O.)** (CONT'D)

I'm no different. Forced to appreciate art at a young age.  
Sometimes she comes out of her hole to check on me.

Staring at the pen, he starts panting slowly.

**POET (V.O.) (CONT'D)**

Third best selling children's author of all time...  
so much for the effort.

Taking off his right glove, he reveals his knuckles are filled with bruises  
apparently dating from a few years. Pen in hand, he still can't seem to write  
without shaking.

Tearing up a little:

**POET (regarding bruises)**

Once in awhile, the pain returns.

He drops the pen. He puts his right hand away and stares at the wall.  
An "I" shaped cursor appears on the wall. The poet's thoughts are typed  
up on the wall; "Once upon a time..." The poet is stuck.

TITLE CARD: SPRING, SUMMER, AUTUMN...

His breathing becomes faster. TITLE CARD: WINTER

He gasps heavily.



**INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT**

**PSYCHIATRIST**

If you start panicking, don't forget to name 5 objects in a room.  
The poet scans the room: A poster of Pam Grier from Jet Magazine.

**POET (V.O.)**

My girlfriend.

A crumbled piece of paper.

**POET (V.O.) (CONT'D)**

My passion.

A trashcan.

My talent.

He stops in his tracks.

**POET (V.O.) (CONT'D)**

(sighs heavily)

I don't think I can do this.

Scattered dialogue:

**MOTHER**

No food, no water, no break, no music.

**MOTHER (CONT'D)**

No food, no water, no break, no music.

No food, no water, no break, no music.

**MOTHER (CONT'D)**

No food, no water, no break, no music.

The voices become more and more distorted.

**POET (V.O.)**

(panicking heavily)

I want to leave this room. I want to leave this spaceship.

I want to give it all up.

**POET**

STOP!

In a fit of rage, he runs off.

**FADE TO BLACK.**



**FADE IN:**

**INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - DAY**

The psychiatrist is seated and facing the camera. Dead silence. Finally:

**PSYCHIATRIST**

Go ahead.

The poet (casual outfit) is sitting across the table. Beat.

**POET**

I... I... Uh It wasn't really a panic attack. I was so caught up with work I... I started talking to myself...

(MORE)

**POET (CONT'D)**

I forgot to refill the oxygen tank. (Chuckles awkwardly, beat)

I actually tried to kill myself. I tried to jump out. The most predictable thing that could happen, right? (hand gestures)

But before I could open the thing, I fell. (fearful)  
 I couldn't breathe; It was so scary. Then and there I realized  
 I didn't wanna die. I... I barely made it to the tank. (sigh of relief)  
 But I'm fine now. (laughs awkwardly)  
 After that, I'm definitely ready to write again.

**PSYCHIATRIST**

Are you sure?  
 The poet is confused.

**PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)**

Are you saying you wanna write because of your near death  
 experience, or because you love it?

**POET** (reflects)

This is all I've ever done.  
 Beat. Psychiatrist flips pages from notebook.

**POET (CONT'D)**

(excitedly)  
 Do you wanna hear one of them?  
 Psychiatrist pays attention to him.

**POET (CONT'D)**

I would like feedback for some of the stories before  
 I send them to my editor.

**PSYCHIATRIST** (perks up)

Tell me your favorite one.

**CHILDLIKE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FOLLOWING STORY:**

**POET**

(beat)

One snowy night, a wolf pack has to go hunting. Unlike other  
 nights, the mother of the wolf pack decides it is time for the  
 youngest to join them. To please his mother, the youngest accepts.  
 Hunting for prey, the snow blends perfectly with the white  
 wolves. Unfortunately, the youngest trips on a branch wounding  
 himself. Later that night, a human hunter spots the wolves and  
 chases after them. The red of the cub's wound has betrayed  
 their camouflage. The cub runs too fast and slides down a slope,

holding on to its edge. Struggling to climb up, he is relieved to see his mother. (sad)

She grabs her cub by the neck with her teeth. Unfortunately, she bites too hard and hurts the cub. In pain, the cub pushes her away and falls off. The cub wakes up a day later in a pool of mud. Injured and hungry, he is saved by a wolf pack of brown wolves who mistake him for one of them. He is still angry at his mother. He doesn't understand that his mother was trying to save him the only way she knew how. "If and only if she didn't rush me into hunting," he also said to himself. The cub joins the brown wolves. A few days later, he learns from one of the brown wolves that the leader of a wolf pack was shot by a hunter and died a few days later. That night, the cub sneaks out to visit the spot where the wolf was buried. The cub follows the sounds of wolves howling and finds his brothers who don't recognize him. Looking over the grave of his mother, he starts crying... The cub cries so much that the tears wash off the mud on his skin.

## INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - DAY

The psychiatrist had been illustrating the tale in her notebook.

### PSYCHIATRIST

That's interesting. What are children supposed to get out of this?

### POET

It's a kids story. They are not going to think too much about it. Psychiatrist thinks.

### PSYCHIATRIST

That's not what I meant... What was your intention behind this story?

The poet ponders for a long time. No answer.

The psychiatrist takes out pen and starts taking notes.

### PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)

Tell me another one.

**FADE TO BLACK.**

**THE END.**