

A person in a blue space suit with a gold helmet stands on a dark, rocky, cratered surface. In the background, a large, wide waterfall flows over a rocky ledge. The scene is set against a dark, starry sky. The title "Space Sucks Too!" is overlaid in a light blue, stylized font.

*Space  
Sucks  
Too!*

*Christina Engela*

# **Space Sucks Too! by Christina Engela**

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## Introduction

I've always enjoyed reading and writing short stories, especially science fiction short stories. Without further ado, I'm proud to present the long-awaited second installment of my short stories: "Space Sucks Too!"

"Little Green Men" is a story I wrote in 2014 about a diplomatic mission to recover the bodies of some passing clowns who crashed there on the way to a convention. The diplomats receive a rather sharp welcome on the small planet inhabited by strange little green men who don't like to be laughed at by tall aliens with exposed shins.

"Good Evening, Mr. Gleeb" – Things take a turn for the surreal when one of the guest speakers on a midnight talk radio show about "those mysterious crop circles" turns out to be an alien wearing a disguise (2018).

"The Storming Of Area 51" was inspired by current events in which the much-publicized social media event actually takes place, and – well, read for yourself!

"Midnight Station" (2014) is an unusual take on the vampire genre.

"The Broken-tipped Sword" is a 2020 tale about the start of the Gimp War, when Earth is attacked by the Ruminarii – and which sets the scene for the Galaxii Series.

"The Ghost And The Machine" (2019) examines the technology of the matter transmitter – and its effects on the human psyche.

I really hope you enjoy these stories, at least as much as I did writing them!

Sincerely,

## Little Green Men

“Excuse me.” Said the message, “One of our space ships crashed on your planet. Would you mind returning the wreckage and bodies of the crew to us at your soonest convenience?”

Much to the shock and dismay of the collective governments of Flort, a small planet inhabited by humanoids at about the same level of development as Earth in the 1950s, came the Flort-shattering revelation that they were not alone in the universe after all!

The ‘gods’ they had been brought up to believe in for generations and generations – why, as far back as the age of the Great White Blanket, turned out to be nothing like their reputations, and – to add insult to injury, were not quite as tall – or fierce, as they imagined!

To the Terrans, the Flortians looked exactly like the ‘*little green men*’ they knew from old fashioned cartoons, and this made any dealings with them extremely complicated – because the Flortians were unbelievably bad-tempered, warlike little beings who didn’t like being laughed at after every other sentence.

To make matters even worse, the two largest tribes on Flort – the *Idet* and the *Soluut*, were almost always in a state of war with each other. Mainly, the causes of these wars were fairly simple to explain – neither tribe liked the other. They simply didn’t get on at all. The *Idet* were known – erm, Flort-wide – as proud, fearsome warriors, while the *Soluut* had a reputation as cattle-stealing, back-stabbing cowards who would make you run your legs off chasing them, then turn back and gut you when you had run out of steam. A state of genocidal all-out war had existed between them for centuries... And now, before the two delegates of each tribe, on the big field of blue grass on the open plains of *Arrr’g*, stood a tall pale alien that called itself *Kuhmunda Grrregri Katah*, who seemed to be trying hard not to fall over laughing.

The tall alien in question was a human male who had all but given up trying to correct the Flortian pronunciation of his name – *Commander Gregory Carter*. He was a diplomatic representative of the Terran Empire who had just walked nearly two hundred meters uphill, along a narrow strip of red carpet laid down over thick blue grass, to a small military-style podium that was surrounded by two armies who happened to not actually be at war with each other this week. And yes, the strip of carpet actually stretched all the way from the ship to here. That alone seemed impressive, if not a little surreal and perhaps even a little “over the top” to Carter. The bit that went over the rickety wood and rope suspension bridge over what he’d been told was *Ermagerd Gorge*, had been... quite breathtaking.

At the other end of the carpet, and two hundred meters behind, stood the shuttle from which he and his aide, Lieutenant James Browne, had disembarked. In the tense silence, Carter recalled telling the pilot to ‘*Keep the engines running and hold the Flort!*’ The pilot, a man with a healthy sense of humor – depending on which planet you happened to be standing on at the time (and probably not this one), replied with a grin,

“Very fucking funny, sir!”

Commander Gregory Carter only needed to look at the extremely sharp axes being carried by the thousands of diminutive Flortian soldiers to value his ankles – and to find inspiration to try even harder to keep a straight face. Perspiring slightly with the effort, he turned to his left and pointed at another man in Space Fleet uniform, who was squinting because the bright maroon sky made his eyes hurt.

“This is my aide, Lieutenant James Browne!” Carter said, pronouncing the words slowly and clearly so that the Flortians could get the correct message. After all, the Terran Empire didn’t need to be at war with the *Idet* or the *Soluut* – or both, over a misplaced comma. This was a diplomatic exercise, to open relations between the Flortians and the Terran Empire, but more importantly, to retrieve the aforementioned Terran bodies and the wrecked ship they had arrived in.

“*Aiiide!*” Said Delegate *Blaaah*, of the *Idet* tribe in a high-pitched voice, then pronouncing Browne’s rank “*Looo-ten ’nt!*” in such a way as to make it sound like he was someone occupying a privy for rent. Carter instantly turned almost purple with the effort of trying not to laugh, causing him to nearly blend into the maroon sky and turn invisible. Browne didn’t even flinch.

*Blaaah* was slightly large and bulky by Flortian standards, and whenever he moved or spoke, his entire little green body vibrated slightly inside his bronze armor so that it seemed to Commander Carter that the words were being spoken by a rather large lime pudding, in a shallow bowl, holding a spear.

The other Flortian delegate, Headman *Fart* of the *Soluut* tribe was a *ma-um*, Flortian deeply respected by Carter. Not because of anything the *ma-er*, Flortian had done, or said – but more because a name like that was liable to get him – Carter, killed prematurely in the line of duty in the Diplomatic Corps.

If *Blaaah* was the bulky one, then *Fart* was the skinny one, tall and thin – by Flortian standards, and every bit as green as his traditional mortal enemy standing not two feet to his left, except for the bits of him that were covered by a dark and light blue camouflage uniform. The two kept eyeing each other askance, as though expecting something to happen. In that case, Carter mused, steeling his side muscles, again, both delegates should swap names.

Two vast masses of short green soldiers stood in geometric formations all across the expanse of short blue grass. A very feint wind was sending ripples through it, making waves that swept around the unmoving mass of green-skinned troops. Both sides were facing each other on opposite sides of the field, and seemed to be trying to look meaner than the other, short of actually pulling faces – which Carter was grateful they weren’t doing, since it might have had consequences too dreadful to contemplate! Carter was pretty much at the center of it all, standing on a rather low podium which was probably knee-high to a Flortian, with the *Soluut* Defense

Forces to his left, standing in circular formations – and the *Idet* Army to his right, standing in triangular ones.

The *Idet* all seemed to be shorter and dumpier, and the *Soluut* all seemed to look – well, like *Fart*. There were clear differences between them, and not just in physical build and appearance, but also in terms of technology. The warlike *Idet* carried shields, swords, axes, spears and armor, while the allegedly peaceful *Soluut* wore no armor and seemed to be using some kind of technology involving muskets, compressed air and metal projectiles.

Wishing his briefing had been a little more thorough – and included, among other things, an exit clause – Carter glanced back to see if the shuttle was still parked at the other end of the strip of red carpet that led to the back of the podium. It was. Laughter was understood by the *Flortians* as an intended insult, which made humor on *Flort* to be something of a risky enterprise altogether. Almost as bad as the risk of uncontrollable laughter, and the very real danger of dying on stage – was the detail that this was the largest and strangest audience he'd ever had! He cleared his throat nervously. It was speech time. He looked out over the assembled soldiers of *Flort*, as seriously as he could manage.

“Soldiers and people of the planet *Flort*.” Carter began. “Delegate *Blaag* and Headman *Fraaa...*” No, that wasn't right. He cleared his throat, to try again, completely oblivious to the condition of his aide, who was swaying slightly from side to side, his face pointed at the blue grass, and changing color from bright red to deep purple.

“Soldiers and planets of the people of *Flort...*” Damn! “Excuse me!” He quavered. All Carter could think about in the awkward, tense silence was the sea of eyes on little stalks that seemed to be watching his every move. And how about those axes?

“Delegate *Blirt* and Headman – *Oh, for fucks sakes!*”

Carter clamped his hand over his mouth – but it was too late! A sound like someone standing on bagpipes was already coming from behind him!

Lieutenant James Browne was completely doubled over, still standing – convulsing – and had completely lost all hope of regaining his composure. The audience, all 24,000 Flortian shock troops from both armies, seemed spellbound.

*Blaaah eyed Fart. Fart eyed Blaaah.* Then they nodded to one another. Almost in unison, the two little green Flortians raised their weapons and screamed shrilly. Carter noticed there were an awful lot of little sharp, white teeth in a Flortian’s mouth. Both armies began an open charge towards Carter and Browne, waving shields, spears and muskets in the air. There was no coming back from this! Clearly, the parade – and the time for speeches and diplomacy, were over!

“*Oh, fuck it!*” Carter said, and started running along the red carpet, with a wheezing Lieutenant Browne in tow, holding his sides as he tried to keep up.

Arranging the return of the Terran bodies and wreckage was going to have to wait a little longer. The relatives of the twenty deceased clowns who had stopped here last year while on route to the annual Clown Convention on nearby Salus, would probably understand.

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