

EXT NEAR A MOON OF SATURN SPACE

It's war in space the way it's really fought
silent, flameless. When a ship is hit,
there's a brief flash of light and debris
sprays in all directions, but that's all.

Earth's ships are blocky, a ragtag thrown-
together jerry-built fleet that was assembled
in a panic after the brutal first encounter.
The aliens did not try to communicate one
of their ships showed up and started scouring
the surface of the Earth. When it was
finally brought down, the aliens were found
to be about a meter in height, bodies antlike
in structure, but covered in fur to retain
body heat. The scientists called them
"Formicines," the military calls them
"Formics," and everybody else calls them
"Woolly Ants" or "Ants" or "Woollies" or any
number of other names in other languages.
They all mean the same thing: The ones who
want to kill us; the ones we have to kill.

EXT FLAGSHIP SPACE

One of the few new, sleek Earth ships.

INT ADMIRAL'S BRIDGE

The busy headquarters of a computer-age war.
Officers scurry on urgent errands, most
wearing headsets with heads-up displays and
small one-handed computer keypads on their
belts like drive-up-window workers at
McDonald's.

The center of the room is the Simulator, a
three-dimensional representation of all the
ships that the computer is tracking. Earth
ships are in bright green; Formic ships are
in bright red. Missiles and lasers are
represented in white dots and streaks.
Admiral SAKATA (50), a Japanese-American,
with several aides and subordinates,
including Commodore O'CASEY (35), stands
watching as the battle progresses.

EXT "NZF WAITANGI" SPACE

A large contingent of retrofitted cargo ships
is hidden behind a moon of Saturn, absolutely
still, taking no part in the battle. Then a

small port in the "Waitangi" opens and a single missile fires.

INT ADMIRAL'S BRIDGE

The Simulator shows a single white missile coming from the group of reserve cargo ships. Sakata immediately notices it, points.

SAKATA
Who fired that missile!

An AIDE punches something on his keyboard and responds in only a second.

AIDE
The Waitangi, sir. Captain Mazer Rackham.

SAKATA
I want his executive officer to take command of the Waitangi and put Rackham under arrest immediately.

O'CASEY
I had Rackham in training. He told me once that a soldier should obey, not the words, but the purpose of the order.

SAKATA
My purpose was to keep my reserves concealed, and he just revealed their position!

AIDE
His exec reports that as soon as he fired that missile, Rackham placed himself under arrest.

O'CASEY
That's Rackham.

SAKATA
We're in combat. There'll be no trial. He is to be executed as soon as he can be transferred to another ship.

INTERCUT between simulator and actual ships and missiles. The single missile erupts into

twenty, differently targeted.

SAKATA (V.O.)

No! He used a multi-warhead! Why didn't he just put up a neon sign?

The warheads disperse. We follow one, which goes for a while, then suddenly changes course and heads straight for a small, insignificant-looking Formic ship.

The Formic ship continues to fire toward the main Earth fleet, never responding in any way to the warhead coming up from behind. The warhead goes up the rocket nozzle.

The Formic ship is silently obliterated. One moment it's there, the next it's just sparkling dust.

All firing from all Formic ships stops immediately.

INT ADMIRAL'S BRIDGE

Admiral Sakata is the first to realize what is happening. He holds up one hand to silence the buzz of conversation, and points at the display with the other.

AIDE

They've stopped firing.

O'CASEY

They're not retreating, either.

undefended now, several more Formic ships blow up.

SAKATA (cont.)

Cease firing! Everybody!

Several aides speak into their mouthpieces and punch keys. All firing stops from the Earth fleet.

SAKATA (cont.)

I want a boarding party on one Formic ship. If it's a trap, be prepared to blow the thing up.

EXT FORMIC BATTLE CRUISER SPACE

A dozen Remora-class landing pods whirl around the Formic cruiser and attach to it.

INT REMORA LANDING POD

A dozen marines in space suits watch as a big laser carves through the surface of the Formic ship like butter. When it's completely severed from the hull, the disc that was cut out flies up to attach to a magnet on the drill. The marines dive headfirst through the hole, weapons ready.

INT FORMIC BATTLE CRUISER

The marines fire at the first few Formics that they see, but none of them fire back. A marine walks up to one sitting at a console and shakes him. The Formic topples over.

INT ADMIRAL'S BRIDGE

Dr. IMANUJAM, in civilian clothes, is reporting to Admiral Sakata, O'Casey, and other top officers. Aides watch nervously, occasionally responding softly to chatter on their headsets.

IMANUJAM

Some Formics were still alive, but they did not respond in any way. They all died within hours.

SAKATA

What was it, chicken pox?

IMANUJAM

Our best guess is that the entire hive was controlled by the will of a queen. When she was killed, the whole hive died.

O'CASEY

Dr. Imanujam, do you know when the hive queen was killed?

Imanujam leads them to the Simulator display, then turns to an assistant, also in civilian clothes.

IMANUJAM

Play it back for them.

We replay Rackham's missile killing the Formic ship. All Formic firing stops. An AIDE listens intently to headset.

O'CASEY

Looks like we've identified the hero of our great victory, sir. Unless he's already been shot.

SAKATA

I don't care who plays the hero. We have to know how he figured out which ship was the hive queen.

AIDE

They want to know if Rackham is still under arrest, sir.

SAKATA

Bring him here immediately.

Sakata strides away from the group. O'Casey follows, talks privately to him.

O'CASEY

So. What do you want to bet Mazer Rackham is in command when the Formics launch their next invasion?

SAKATA

The nearest Formic planet is thirty-five lightyears away. The commander of the human fleet in the next invasion probably hasn't been born yet.

TITLE: "Fifty years later."

ESTABLISHING SHOT: FUTURE GREENSBORO, DAY

A swanlike shuttle glides high over the green surface of Earth. We drop down, see a city amid dense forest and patches of rolling farmland, a few high spires rising above transparent domes. We zoom close to a glass bubble projecting from the tallest spire.

INT CONFERENCE BUBBLE DAY

MR. WIGGIN (27) and MRS. WIGGIN (25) are seated across a small table from Dr. DELOGER and two men in International Fleet (I.F.) uniforms, with no insignia of rank. On the other side of a glass partition, CHILD PETER (5) and CHILD VALENTINE (3) are playing.

DELOGER

Peter and Valentine scored among

the ten most talented children
we've ever seen.

MR. WIGGIN

So why did you reject them for
Battle School?

DELOGER

Valentine is too compassionate for
command. We don't believe she
could ever send men to die.

MR. WIGGIN (dryly)

Why do I suspect that isn't Peter's
problem?

DELOGER

It isn't bad that Peter's
aggressive. But he's also impatient
and ruthlessly ambitious. He would
endanger the lives of his men.

MR. WIGGIN

He's too naughty, she's too nice.

MRS. WIGGIN

So you'll leave us alone to raise
our family in peace?

DELOGER

We want to give you a waiver to
have a third child.

(Beat)

If you sign in advance that we get
him if he tests positive for us.

MRS. WIGGIN

But what if he turns out as ...
unsuitable as the other two?

DELOGER

You raise three children in peace.

The Wiggins turn to look at Child Peter and
Child Valentine, just as Peter pushes
Valentine and knocks her down. She doesn't
fight, she just sits up and turns her back on
him. He gives her another shove with his
foot, then settles down to play with the toys
she had been playing with.

DELOGER

Or at least as much peace as they
let you have.

DeLoger pulls out various papers and puts
them in front of the Wiggins to sign.

TITLE: "10 years later"

ESTABLISHING SHOT: FUTURE GREENSBORO, DAY

New domes and towers appear; the city has grown.

INT CLASSROOM DAY

ENDER WIGGIN (9) sits at a desk in a traditional classroom traditional except that the teacher, MISS PUMPHREY (30), is demonstrating a point about the pyramids by "peeling" layers from a large hologram at the front of the room. Ender is the youngest and smallest in the class by a couple of years.

CLOSE on the back of Ender's neck. A tiny red-blinking machine, the monitor, sits under the hairline, just to the right of the spine.

A tiny folded note lands on Ender's desk. He unfolds it.

NOTE: "Hey, Third. Let me copy."

Ender glances back at STILSON (11), who threw the note. Stilson looks as innocent as can be.

Miss Pumphrey suddenly touches her ear, listens, and walks to Ender's desk, where she retrieves the note, looks at it.

PUMPHREY
Mr. Stilson ...

Pumphrey is about to lecture him, but something in her earpiece interrupts her. She hands a hall pass to Ender.

PUMPHREY
To the school doctor. Apparently, Mr. Wiggin, you're having a medical emergency.

Ender gets up, leaves.

EXT BREEZEWAY DAY

All the classrooms open into a garden-like breezeway. As Ender passes, GRAFF [male] and ANDERSON [female], officers responsible for

Battle School, are heard in voiceover.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
What are you doing?

GRAFF (V.O.)
Ender Wiggin is ready.

INT SCHOOL MEDICAL CENTER DAY

THE MONITOR LADY (50) greets Ender with a phony medical smile as he enters.

MONITOR LADY
Andrew, I suppose by now you're just absolutely sick of having that horrid monitor. Well, I have good news. It's coming out today.

Ender reaches up to touch the monitor.

MONITOR LADY (cont.)
It won't hurt a bit.

THE DOCTOR (40) enters, all bustle and cheer.

DOCTOR
Climb up and lie on your tummy.

Ender climbs up on the examining table.

DOCTOR (cont.)
For a few days, you'll have a feeling of something missing. But that feeling will quickly pass.

He attaches the extractor, a machine as big as Ender's head, and flips it on. It whirrs as tiny metal arms and tentacles go out and probe under the skin, inside the bone. Suddenly Ender's back arches, his mouth agape in agony. Convulsions.

DOCTOR
Get me the muscle relaxant!

The monitor lady dives for a blackjack-like injector already waiting on the counter. The doctor whacks it against Ender's bare arm. In moments, Ender goes still. The doctor affixes a bandaid to the back of his neck as Ender wakes.

MONITOR LADY
There now, Andrew. Are we all right?

Ender sits, touches the bandaid at the back of his neck.

ENDER

Does this mean I failed?

INT CLASSROOM DAY

Ender comes back into class. Everyone is taking a test at their desks. Stilson notices the bandaid, the lack of a monitor. In a mock sports announcer voice he intones:

STILSON

Third-boy strikes out.

Ender doesn't turn around. But everyone else looks.

EXT BREEZEWAY DAY

School's out. Kids pour out of the door, Ender among them.

ANDERSON (V.O)

He'll be younger than the other students. He'll have a hard time adjusting.

EXT WIGGIN FRONT YARD DAY

In a row of smallish but well-kept-up houses, a large tree has scrap lumber nailed to it: a ladder up to a treehouse. Ender, carrying a nearly-empty backpack, trots along the sidewalk and up the front walk toward the door.

ANDERSON (V.O., cont.)

Colonel Graff, it never works to advance a child ahead of schedule.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Have you ever tried it with Ender Wiggin?

ANDERSON (V.O.)

Battle School has been functioning for more than forty years. You've been in command less than a month.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Is there a trial period?

ANDERSON (V.O.)
No, but there's a learning curve.

Ender pauses at the corner of the house, peels the bandaid off his neck. He walks along the side of the house to the door and goes inside.

GRAFF (V.O.)
Do you know what orders I received when I was made commander?

ANDERSON (V.O.)
No, sir.

GRAFF (V.O.)
Then you don't know everything yet.

PETER (15) drops from the treehouse, goes to the bandaid, picks it up, grins. Then he drops the bandaid to the ground again and grinds it savagely under the heel of his shoe.

INT WIGGIN KITCHEN DAY

VALENTINE (13) is making cookies. Ender comes in and dips a finger into the batter. Valentine slaps at his hand, but he gets a taste into his mouth. Then he grimaces.

VALENTINE
Yeah, well, if you'd asked I would have told you it's nothing but sugar and shortening and eggs.

Ender dips again, methodically, and this time makes a show of savoring the dough.

VALENTINE
I'm going to puke.

ENDER
It's a boy thing.

VALENTINE
It's a perverted wacko circus geek thing.

Ender takes a bow to imaginary applause. She sees the back of his neck. Touches the spot.

ENDER
Oh, yeah. They bounced me today.

She hugs him, delighted.

VALENTINE

Oh, Ender! Mom and Dad have been so worried, they were afraid they were going to lose you!

ENDER

(Bitterly)

So it's a good thing I failed?

VALENTINE

Let some other kid go up into space and play army!

PETER (O.S.)

So everybody guessed wrong about Ender.

Peter enters, carrying a fearsome Formic mask. He smiles benignly.

PETER (cont.)

Now we can play together all the time!

Peter holds up the mask. Ender tries to hide his dread of what's coming.

PETER (cont.)

Let's play astronauts and formics! Since you're never going to be an astronaut, you have to be the woolly ant!

VALENTINE

Leave him alone.

Peter sweeps the mixing bowl from the counter, spilling the dough out onto the floor.

PETER (mock friendly)

Valentine, you silly goof, you better clean that up before Mom gets home.

Valentine tries to pretend it's all a joke.

VALENTINE

Just for that, Peter, no cookies for you.

PETER (savagely)

They're all for widdo Endo, so him doesn't feel so baddums about getting bounced from the pwogwam.

He grabs Ender by the hair and puts the mask over his face.

PETER (cont.)

Look! He's so scary! The monster!

Ender tries to shove the mask away.

ENDER

I don't want to play.

Peter shoves him brutally across the room. Ender falls against the wall.

PETER

You play whenever I say. You got no angels watching over you now.

VALENTINE (yelling)

The whole time he wore that thing you hated him because he still had a chance. Now he's out, a loser, just like me. Just like you.

Peter bends down, scoops up a double handful of batter.

PETER

And they said you were the nice one.

He smears it all over the front of Valentine's clothing.

PETER (cont.)

If he's not better than us, he's got no reason to exist.

He turns to Ender, pulls him to his feet and drags him toward the stairs.

INT ENDER'S AND PETER'S BEDROOM DAY

Peter shoves Ender into the room. Ender rips the mask off.

PETER

Put it on.

Ender frisbies the mask across the room.

PETER (cont.)

Just how stupid are you?

He grabs Ender and drags him to the mask.

PETER (cont.)
Put it on.

Valentine appears in the doorway as Ender struggles to get free.

VALENTINE
I'm calling Mom.

PETER
Tell her that Ender's being a disobedient little brat.

Peter flips Ender onto his back, presses a knee into his belly. Ender gasps, struggles like a bug on a pin.

VALENTINE
I'll call Father!

PETER
He's never in.

Peter presses harder. Ender breathes in short little gasps that don't get enough air.

PETER (cont.)
I could kill you like this.

VALENTINE
You're not a murderer.

PETER
No, I'm an exterminator. The law is two children per family. We never needed him.

VALENTINE
This isn't funny.

PETER
You can't stop me from killing him.

VALENTINE
You'd never get away with it.

Ender's hand reaches a softball lying on the floor. He smacks Peter's head with it. Peter shrugs off the blow.

PETER
I'll tell them I didn't mean to do it. I'll cry.

Tears come to his eyes. While still pressing on Ender's stomach, he sobs, absolutely believably:

PETER (cont.)

I didn't know it would hurt him.
He was laughing. It was part of
the game. I would never hurt
Ender. I ... loved him so much.

It's terrifying to Valentine how believable
he is.

PETER (cont.)

They were sure right about you.
You wouldn't fight even to save
your baby brother's life.

In reply, Valentine kicks at Peter's face.
He lets go of Ender's shoulders and catches
her foot, twists her leg, knocks her off her
feet.

PETER (cont.)

You are both so stupid!

With his arms free, Ender punches Peter
solidly in the groin. Peter swings at Ender;
Ender dodges. As Peter writhes on the floor
in pain, Ender grabs a baseball bat from the
floor and prepares to hit Peter in the head.

ENDER

Don't make threats, Peter. It
gives the other guy a chance to
strike first.

Valentine catches the end of the bat,
stopping him.

VALENTINE

No, Ender!

PETER

Do it, Ender! Beat me till my
brains splash out!

Ender tugs at the bat.

ENDER

It's him or me!

VALENTINE

He's your brother, Ender.

A voice from downstairs.

MRS. WIGGIN (O.S.)

We're home! Is Ender here?

Valentine rushes to the door.

VALENTINE

We're upstairs! In the boys' room!

Footsteps on the stairs. Peter speaks rapidly, softly.

PETER

I'm going to kill him one day, Valentine. When you've forgotten all about this. There'll be an accident and we'll all cry, me loudest of all, and then at the grave you'll remember today, and you'll wonder for a minute, and then you'll say, No, not Peter! He's not a murderer.

VALENTINE

If you hurt him, I'll kill you.

PETER

You? My gentle sister Valentine?

ENDER

Bullies like him are all cowards.

Ender and Peter gaze steadily at each other. Both are expressionless. Master chess players, assessing each other.

Mr. & Mrs. Wiggin enter the room. Mrs. Wiggin goes straight to Ender, kneels, scoops him into a vast embrace. Mr. Wiggin lifts the hair on the back of Ender's neck, looks at the tiny mark.

MR. WIGGIN

We're so happy it's over.

MRS. WIGGIN

Now we'll always be together!

MR. WIGGIN

(Playfully)

Family hug! Family hug!

The DOORBELL rings. Ignoring it, the kids gather around Mrs. Wiggin, hugging each other. Mr. Wiggin bends to embrace them all. The DOORBELL rings again.

ENDER

I'll get it.

He pulls out of the hug and runs from the room.

INT WIGGIN FRONT ROOM DAY

Ender gets to the door as the bell rings again. He pulls it open. Standing there is GRAFF (35) in full dress uniform a recruiting poster with a Mona Lisa smile.

GRAFF
Hello, Ender.

FADE TO:
Mr. and Mrs. Wiggin sit on the sofa with Ender between them. There are tears on her cheeks.

MRS. WIGGIN
We thought it was all over.

GRAFF
Only the waiting is over.

Mrs. Wiggin turns her face away, weeping silently.

MR. WIGGIN
But he's barely nine years old!

GRAFF
You agreed before he was born.

ENDER
I didn't.

GRAFF
Mr. and Mrs. Wiggin, will you excuse us, please?

It takes a moment to realize that he expects them to go. They rise and comfort each other out the door.

ENDER
Why did you let me think I failed?

Graff ignores his question.

GRAFF
Would you really have smashed in your brother's head with that bat?

ENDER
What answer will get me out of Battle School?

Graff leans close to him.

GRAFF

Who stopped the formics when they
invaded fifty years ago?

ENDER

Mazer Rackham.

GRAFF

Where is he now?

ENDER

Dead, I guess.

GRAFF

So who'll stop them next time?

Ender's defiance fades into serious thought.

GRAFF (cont.)

I hope we have the greatest
military commander the world has
ever known, to outthink them,
outfight them, destroy them before
they scour humanity off the face of
the Earth.

ENDER

I'm just a kid.

GRAFF

What's inside you, Ender? What can
you become? What if you're the
only hope?

Ender studies Graff's face.

ENDER

Do you say this to all the kids you
recruit?

GRAFF

No. I tell them not to come.
Because there's no turning back.
We take your childhood. You might
never see your family again.

(cont.)

GRAFF (cont.)

But if you come to Battle School,
maybe you'll have something to do
with keeping them alive.

ENDER

I guess it's what I was born for.

Graff studies him a moment longer, then
stands up.

GRAFF

On your feet ... soldier.

Ender stands up. They face each other in silence.

EXT WIGGIN FRONT YARD DAY

The family all but Peter are kissing and hugging Ender good-bye. Graff stands beside a limo at the curb, watching.

ANDERSON (O.S.)

After growing up in that family,
how stable is he going to be?

Graff talks softly into a tiny palm-held mouthpiece. The other half of the phone is worn like a hearing aid.

GRAFF

Therapy is your job.

Ender pulls away from his family, heads down the walk. Graff holds out his hand. Ender reaches out, at first like a child, to hold on; then like an adult, to shake hands. Graff clasps Ender's hand when Valentine bursts from the family group and runs partway down the walk.

VALENTINE

I love you forever, Ender!

Graff ushers Ender into the back seat of the car and closes the door. As Graff walks around the car, Peter drops down from the treehouse and runs to the car window.

ENDER'S POV

Peter leans close to the glass, staring at Ender. Ender stares back. The car pulls away. Peter is left behind.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: SPACEPORT, NIGHT

Several heavy cargo rockets and two passenger shuttles on the tarmac. The ground opens up and spits out a hoverbus.

EXT SHUTTLE NIGHT

The hoverbus rises thirty feet, up to where the horizontal-takeoff shuttle sits like a plane on the tarmac. A bridge appears in the air between the doors of both a force field you can stand on. Children ages 11-13 file across the bridge. Ender crosses early clearly the smallest of the children. Soon after him come SEBASTIAN (French, 11) and ALAI (Senegalese-French, 11). (Though some have accents, all the children speak fluent English.)

ALAI
Just like on television.

SEBASTIAN
Look, they're letting babies in.

ALAI
No, he's our instructor.

They laugh.

INT SHUTTLE CABIN NIGHT

Ender is coming up the center aisle. Their laughter rings in his ears. Graff points to his seat. As Ender slides into place ...

ENDER
You're coming with us?

GRAFF
I have to or I'll lose my job.

ENDER
What is your job?

GRAFF
Commander of the Battle School.
Think of me as the principal, with
the power to shoot deserters.

Graff goes back to pointing out seats to students. Ender identifies which harness straps are his and fastens himself in. Sebastian and Alai end up in the next row back.

SEBASTIAN
Look! Our instructor!

He raps Ender on the head with his knuckle. Ender winces, tries to duck away but the harness won't let him.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)
Did you hear that? Empty!

He raps Ender again.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)
A church bell? An empty bottle?

Several other kids laugh nervously.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)
I know! A septic tank!

He raps again. The laughter is more open. But Alai reaches out a hand as if to restrain Sebastian. The joke has gone on long enough. Sebastian shrugs him off.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)
I'm only trying to get knowledge out of the head of our instructor!

GRAFF
Eyes front!

At once the kids face Graff at the front of the shuttle.

GRAFF (cont.)
I thought you were told to enter the shuttle, take the seat you were given, and strap in. Why is it that only Ender Wiggin, the youngest of all, knows how to obey an order?

SEBASTIAN
(defensive)
I didn't think it was an order.

Other kids nod, murmur their agreement.

GRAFF
What did you think it was?

SEBASTIAN
An ... instruction.

GRAFF
If you're really that dumb I wonder how you find your butt to wipe it.

Sebastian's face reddens, but he doesn't look away.

GRAFF (cont.)

You're in the I.F., now, children.
The International Fleet. All
instructions are orders. All
suggestions are orders. All hints
and wishes and secret yearnings of
a superior are orders!

SEBASTIAN
How do we know who's our superior?

GRAFF
Every human being in the I.F.
uniform is superior to you.

SEBASTIAN
Even if they

Graff's fingertips press against Sebastian's
lips.

GRAFF
The only appropriate answer when a
superior vilifies you is "Yes sir."
Or, if you're really pissed off,
you can add, "Thank you, sir."

He removes his fingers from Sebastian's lips.

SEBASTIAN
Yes sir. Thank you, sir.

GRAFF
You can dish it out, can't you,
Sebastian? But you can't take it.

SEBASTIAN
I thank you, sir.

GRAFF
Little Ender Wiggin, he can take it
without complaint. Guess who looks
more like a soldier to me.

Ender glances at Graff, then looks straight
ahead, furious.

ENDER
(Quietly)
Thank you, sir.

Everyone is rocked backward as the shuttle
starts to move.

EXT SHUTTLE NIGHT

The shuttle is towed to its starting place at

the end of the runway. The engines are fired.

INT SHUTTLE NIGHT

The acceleration presses them back into their seats.

EXT SHUTTLE CHANGEOVER

The shuttle rises past the knife edge of the Earth's shadow, and suddenly it is in bright sunlight. A huge fuel tank section peels off the bottom of the shuttle. Small rockets maneuver the shuttle toward a high orbit.

INT SHUTTLE SPACE

Graff walks down the aisle. Some of the kids are nauseated by weightlessness. One starts vomiting. Graff helps him.

The moment Graff is behind them, Sebastian tries to smack Ender's head again. The harness restrains him. He unfastens it, grips the back of Ender's seat, and raps the top of his head but hard this time, all his anger and humiliation in it. Ender recoils in real pain.

SEBASTIAN

I still say it's empty.

Alai grabs at Sebastian's clothes as Sebastian makes a fist and prepares to hammer it into Ender's face.

Ender reaches upward, grabs the hand that is holding Sebastian in place, and yanks forward and down. Propelled by Ender's pull and his own hammering motion, Sebastian at once spins upward, ass-over-teakettle, and yells in pain as he bounces off the "ceiling," breaking his arm.

Graff arrives quickly, snatches him deftly out of the air.

GRAFF

You unfastened your harness,
soldier.

Sebastian's only answer is to yell again in pain.

GRAFF (cont.)

Furthermore, you attacked an enemy without taking into account the possibility that he might defend himself. Do you know what we call commanders who do that?

A Japanese kid nearby pipes up.

SHEN

Stupid!

GRAFF

We call them heroes. On the monuments over their graves.

Graff lifts Sebastian's writhing body up by the good arm like a captured toad being shown to a science class.

GRAFF (cont.)

Don't you get it yet? Everybody on this shuttle qualified as one of the thirty or forty smartest kids on Earth, out of three hundred million kids your age. And who do you think tested highest of all? Could it be the one who's entering Battle School a year ahead of his age group? Could it be the one that this bully decided to pick on?

With his free hand, Graff is pointing at Ender. Everyone looks at Ender with varying degrees of loathing, resentment, jealousy, or awe. Ender has no friends in this launch group now, and he knows it. He looks away, lonely and afraid.

EXT BATTLE SCHOOL STATION SPACE

Earth is moon-sized in the distance. When the shuttle spins in synch with the station, it is drawn inside.

INT CORRIDOR "DAY"

In bright artificial light the kids jog along behind Graff. Graff stops at a door and the kids file in.

INT LAUNCHIE BARRACKS "DAY"

A long, narrow room sloping up at the back, lined with triple bunks. Each bunk has a locker. A lot of the kids goof around or quarrel over who gets bottom. Everyone ignores Ender, who has taken a bottom bunk near the door.

Ender turns to his locker. Inside it is a "desq" a flat computer with a holographic display on its top surface. When Ender touches it, words appear in the air above it.

ENDER'S DESQ

COMPUTER TEXT: "Enter name"

ENDER TEXT: "EnderWiggin"

COMPUTER TEXT: "EnderWiggin is this correct? Y or N"

Ender types N, and reenters his name as "Ewiggin" [with a space before E]. Again the computer echoes his name.

WIDE

Graff stands at the door with boyish officer DAP (23).

GRAFF

This is Lieutenant Dap. As long as you're in launchie barracks, Dap is your mother.

Some laughter. Graff notices that Ender is ignoring him.

ENDER'S DESQ

A long list of names now forms a column on the display: Forms of Ender's own name. Other people's names.

GRAFF (V.O., cont.)

Dap is also your father, your trainer, your nursemaid, and your worst nightmare. Obey him the way you'd obey God, or you're iced.

WIDE

A few kids titter at that. Dap looks at them with terrifying blankness. They fall silent. Graff exits.

DAP

The bunk you are on right now is yours. If you're not on a bunk, the closest one is yours. No trading, no arguing, that's it.

SHEN'S BUNK

Sebastian tries to drag Shen off the bottom bunk. Alai is on the bunk above.

SHEN
No trading.

SEBASTIAN
You knew that was my bunk.

Dap is on them instantly.

DAP
Top bunk, Sebastian.

Sebastian holds up his broken arm.

DAP (cont.)
There are lower bunks at the back of the room.

ALAI
I'll go back there with you.

DAP
I said no trading!

Sebastian walks toward the back. Dap walks toward the door.

DAP (cont.)
Sign on to your desqs. Explore the system. You've got an hour.

ENDER'S BUNK

Ender looks down at his computer.

ENDER'S DESQ

A one-inch-high, 3-D fullcolor holographic boy in a SAILOR suit appears above the desq. The desq simulates his speech using "shaped sound," so only Ender can hear him.

SAILOR BOY
When you play the fantasy game,
I'll be you and you'll be me. If
you don't want to be a sailor boy,
press the arrow keys.

Ender cycles through: A knight. A dog. A dragon. A samurai warrior. Ender chooses a bear. Not a teddy bear, not a slaving grizzly, just your ordinary brown bear.

SEBASTIAN'S BUNK

Sebastian sits on the very last bunk in the room, deeply pissed off. Alai is leaning on the back wall. Shen comes walking up to them.

SEBASTIAN

What do you want, thief?

SHEN

Just that I'm sorry. I knew it was your bunk, I only sat there to tie my shoe.

SEBASTIAN

Go take your butt somewhere else.

Alai gives Shen a nod and a little salute. Shen walks away.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)

(Loudly)

Look! Shen wiggles his butt like a girl when he walks!

Utterly mortified, Shen hurries down the aisle, which only makes things worse. Everybody is looking at his butt.

CLOSE ON ENDER

Ender sees what's happening, then starts typing on his desq.

CLOSE ON SHEN

Shen reaches his bunk, sits on it, then slides in, keeping his butt out of view.

WIDE

Every kid who's using his desq gets a text message at the same time. They start laughing, calling others' attention to the message.

SEBASTIAN'S BUNK

Sebastian pulls his desq onto his lap.

SEBASTIAN
What are they laughing at?

SEBASTIAN'S DESQ

COMPUTER TEXT: Message from: God
Cover your butt.
Sebastian is watching.
God

Sebastian leaps to his feet, livid.

SEBASTIAN
Coward! Sign your real name!

The other kids stifle laughter.

SHEN'S BUNK

Shen looks down at his desq, hoots with
laughter.

SEBASTIAN'S BUNK

Sebastian and Alai both look at the new
message.

SEBASTIAN'S DESQ

COMPUTER TEXT: "Message from: Sebastian
North, south, east, west,
I like butts best.
Sebastian"

[Note extra space before " Sebastian"
in both places]

SEBASTIAN
I did not write that! I can't even
type with my arm like this!

Alai is struggling not to laugh as he
deadpans:

ALAI
It's your name, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN
Get away from my bunk, Alai.

ALAI
It's a joke, man. Just grin.

SEBASTIAN
Some friend you are.

Sebastian walks away from him, down the
aisle, looking at each kid he passes, daring

them to meet his gaze. Most look away, like junior chimps submitting to the alpha male. But Ender meets his gaze without expression.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)

It wasn't enough you broke my arm?

Sebastian shoves Ender, rocking him back on the bunk.

SEBASTIAN (cont.)

The most brilliant kid on Earth.

Sebastian prepares throw a punch. Alai arrives in time to catch his arm.

ALAI

You already got Graff and Dap on your case!

Sebastian lets Alai drag him back to his own bunk. Shen comes to Ender's bunk, sits beside him.

SHEN

If it was you, thanks. He's such an eemo.*

*eemo: hick, dolt [Japanese 'potato']

INT OBSERVATION DECK "DAY"

Graff, wearing an undershirt, is seated at a table cluttered with communications devices, papers, his desq, and whatever parts of his uniform he's not wearing at the moment including his shirt. He is watching his desq, which is showing a brown bear standing on a table before an evil-looking giant.

INT LAUNCHIE BARRACKS "DAY"

Ender is playing the fantasy game on his desq, which shows the same scene.

ENDER'S DESQ

Ender-Bear is offered two drinks by the giant.

GIANT

Choose right, and you won't die.

Ender-Bear chooses the one that looks like milk in a glass, drinks it. At once he turns to powder and collapses in a pile as the

giant laughs.

INT OBSERVATION DECK "DAY"

Graff shakes his head. Ender-Bear arrives again before the Giant, who presents two different drinks.

GRAFF'S DESQ

Ender-Bear chooses the steaming teacup and drinks. He bursts into flame as the giant laughs. A BUZZER sounds.

WIDE

Graff looks up, sees a light blinking beside the door. He puts a finger on an unmarked spot on the table and the door opens. ANDERSON, 30, a woman in a major's uniform, enters.

GRAFF

What have I done now?

She glances down at Graff's desq. Ender-Bear drinks from a loving cup, inflates like a balloon, and pops.

ANDERSON

Ender went straight to the giant's drink, didn't he?

At once the giant offers another choice. Ender-Bear drinks a green liquid and turns to stone. The giant picks him up and crushes him to gravel in his fist.

GRAFF

It took him maybe five minutes.

ANDERSON

Has he done anything else?

GRAFF

How many ways can one bear die?

ANDERSON

It's a sign of despair. Loneliness. Self-destructive tendencies. The giant's drink is a marker for attempted suicide.

GRAFF

You don't make a great commander by coddling him.

ANDERSON

Is there some scientific basis for this special training program you're creating for Ender? Or are you just ... pulling wings off flies to see what they do?

Annoyed, Graff looks back down at his desk. Ender-Bear has turned into a fly and is swatted by a giant flyswatter.

ANDERSON (cont.)

Ouch.

Graff drums his fingers on the table. She leaves.

INT LAUNCHIE BARRACKS FLASH SUIT MONTAGE

A cart filled with flash suits bursts through the door.

Flash suits are tossed into the arms of the kids.

Straps are tightened around arms, legs, torsos. Helmets go on heads, boots on feet, gloves on hands.

The dao* or lightgun does not look like an assault weapon. It slides onto the back of the hand, with a cord running into the control unit that nests in the fingers. We see daos being slid into their slots, fingers closing over the controls, and test shots being fired, only faintly visible in the bright light of the barracks.

*dao: Vietnamese for weapon

All the launchies are lined up, daos on their favored hand (ten percent of them are on left hands instead of right). They break into a simultaneous jog.

INT CORRIDOR "DAY"

Dap stands beside the door. The line of armed launchies emerges. Ender is shorter than the others. Sebastian's arm is in a cast, the sleeve cut from his flashsuit.

INT LAUNCHIE BATTLEROOM ENTRANCE "DAY"

The launchie line reaches the end of a corridor. The end wall is a forcefield steely brown, but with continuous swirling and deforming of subtle colors in mandelbrot patterns. Then, when Dap presses a button on his "hook," the door dilates instantaneously. Inside is a large space, dimly lighted.

DAP
Welcome to the battleroom,
children.

INT BATTLEROOM "NIGHT"

The children enter gingerly, becoming weightless the moment they pass the threshold. They cling to handholds and move hand-over-hand along the wall, near the floor, trying to keep their body movements under control. Legs are useless.

DAP (V.O.)
The moment you enter the battleroom you're in freefall. There are handholds on all the walls including the floor and ceiling.

NEAR ENDER

Ender lets go with one hand. Still clinging to a handhold with the other, he pushes off with his feet. Immediately he flips around the fulcrum of the handhold and his body smacks into the wall. Shen is amused.

SHEN
What are you trying to do, kill yourself?

ENDER
Try it. The suit keeps you from hurting yourself, and you can control your bouncing with your legs, like this.

Ender flips himself over again, and again, with amazing rapidity. That annoys Shen, who immediately flips himself just like Ender but too hard. He bounces back, yelping.

Ender gets his legs under him and squats over a handhold as if he were trying to lift the wall he's standing on. Then he pushes off, launching himself across the room.

WIDE

Ender flies across the room. He tries to catch himself against the other wall, but there's no way he rebounds at an oblique angle. At the next wall he catches himself.

NEAR ALAI

Alai and Sebastian gather themselves for a leap.

NEAR SHEN

Shen, seeing them, launches first, but clumsily.

WIDE

Three more kids fly across the room, in three random directions.

DAP (V.O.)

Battle School is centered around the war games in the battleroom. When you graduate from launchie barracks, you will be assigned to an army.

During the voiceover, we see kids collide in midair, spinning off crazily. Some try gymnastic moves. One kid throws up. When they get flashed by a dao, their arms or legs or whole bodies freeze in awkward positions, the lights on the suits going dark in the area where they were shot.

DAP (V.O.)

Someday you might even command one.

NEAR ENDER

Ender glides quickly along the wall, handhold-to-handhold. Shen follows, till he sees that they're heading toward Alai and Sebastian.

SHEN

What are you doing? They hate us!

ENDER

The formics are the only enemy.

SEBASTIAN

Look. It's God and his favorite butt.

ENDER

What happens if four guys are out
in the middle and they push off
from each other?

ALAI
I don't know.

ENDER
(grinning)
Neither do I.

ALAI
Let's find out.

Alai grabs Sebastian's good arm, pulling him
away from his handhold. With his other hand
he grasps Ender, and Ender seizes Shen.

ALAI
(To Ender)
So we all put our feet together and
push off?

ENDER
One guy pushes off from the other
three. Sebastian.

ALAI
You're smallest. You'll go faster.

ENDER
Sebastian is strongest.

Sebastian gets foot-to-foot with the other
three, holding on to their feet with his good
hand. Then he pushes off. They move a
little, but he rockets away at nearly full
speed.

ALAI
Salaam, Ender.

INT CORRIDOR "DAY"

The launchies pour out of the battleroom,
running along the corridor. Ender, Alai,
Shen, and Sebastian come out as a foursome,
running down the corridor like Ben-Hur's
chariot horses. When Alai jumps up to touch
the ceiling, the others do it, too. Ender is
too short to touch it trying too hard, he
falls in a heap. The others laugh, but
Sebastian and Alai drag him to his feet and
bring him along.

FANTASY GAME

Ender-Bear stands before the giant. He drinks from an eyedropper. His fur falls off. Then his skin sloughs off, exposing bloody muscle.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Who programmed the game to do that?

ANDERSON (V.O.)

The game is self-altering.

The muscles peel off, revealing the skeleton. The organs spill out of the belly.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Why were those images in the game?

The bones separate and fall into a pile.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

A biology animation. The fantasy game can pull anything from the system.

Ender-Bear drinks from a demitasse. He turns into a fish and the giant guts and debones him.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Sick.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

The game? Or the child?

Ender-Bear stands before the giant again. But he does not drink. Instead, he kicks over one glass. Then the other. The giant starts pounding the table with his fists, trying to crush Ender-Bear.

ANDERSON (cont., V.O)

He's not trying anything that hasn't been done before.

Ender-Bear leaps up onto the giant's beard. For a moment, the giant's animation freezes, while Ender-Bear continues to climb up onto the giant's face.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Has anybody tried this?

ANDERSON (V.O.)

It won't work. That's what it's for. To see how soon they learn to

cut their losses and move on.

Ender-Bear plunges his paw into the giant's eye and burrows in, flinging out eye-stuff like cottage cheese. The giant waves its hands ineffectually, then opens its mouth in a silent scream and keels over backward.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

This violates the whole purpose of the giant's drink!

INT LAUNCHIE BARRACKS "NIGHT"

Ender is the only one awake in the darkness. He sits on his bunk, hunched over his desk. The giant is lying on its back. Ender is sweating, panting, as if he has just finished a race.

GRAFF (V.O.)

Surprise surprise. The game's supposed to break Ender, but Ender broke the game. What happens now?

ANDERSON (V.O.)

(shaken)

I have no idea.

In the game on Ender's lap, Ender-Bear climbs out of the giant's eye. He turns toward the giant's ruined face.

ENDER

I'm sorry.

FANTASY GAME

Ender-Bear looks around. The giant's corpse lies on its back in a meadow, surrounded by forest.

ENDER (V.O.)

I didn't mean to kill you, I just ... you wouldn't let me by.

A bat flies up, lands on the giant's nose.

GAME BAT

How did you get here? Nobody comes here.

ENDER (V.O.)

I killed the giant.

The bat flies up and away.

GAME BAT
Welcome to Fairyland!

Ender-Bear comes upon a playground in the woods, with children swinging and sliding and climbing the monkey bars. Ender-Bear tries to join in the game. The children see him, point at him, start to shout.

GAME CHILDREN
A bear! A bear!

The children all run to the edge of the woods. Ender-Bear is left alone. Then, one by one, the children transform into huge wolves that slink around the edges of the playground. Ender-Bear tries to move off in another direction. But he is surrounded. The wolves leap on him.

INT LAUNCHIE BARRACKS "NIGHT"

Ender slams his hand down in the middle of the desq. The game goes away. He is trembling as he puts the desq away.

GRAFF (V.O.)
I thought this game was supposed to help the kids.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
It isn't therapeutic, it's diagnostic.

Ender throws himself back onto his pillow and lies there, staring at the ceiling, clenching and unclenching his fists.

INT ANDERSON'S QUARTERS "NIGHT"

Anderson's quarters are designed to do double duty as office and berth. She sits on her bed and Graff sits in the guest chair, both hunched over Anderson's desq on a small table between them, replaying the game.

GRAFF
So what's the diagnosis?

ANDERSON
There's no literature on this. It never happened before.

GRAFF
Something you don't understand?

ANDERSON
And that makes you happy?

GRAFF
You never understood. I'm happy
you finally realize it.

Anderson blows up.

ANDERSON
I have always understood more than
you! You're so busy training the
commander that you don't realize
what you're doing to the child!

GRAFF
He's smarter than any of the people
who made up this Battle School. He
sees right through your plans. The
only way to stay ahead of him is to
take blind leaps into the dark.

ANDERSON
That's not science.

GRAFF
That's right. Science deals with
laws, with generalities. We're
trying to create an exception.

ANDERSON
Why? Science works!

GRAFF
I hope you're wrong, because
science tells us we have no chance
of beating the formics in the end.

Anderson is stunned.

GRAFF (cont.)
Of course, that information is so
classified that if you even think
it in front of someone else you
could be shot.

(beat)
I wish you'd stop fighting me,
Major Anderson. I wish you'd help.

Graff leaves. Anderson hugs her knees,
thinking.

INT LAUNCHIE BARRACKS "NIGHT"

Ender is asleep, a child after all, one fist clenched up near his face.

Dap comes and stands by his bunk in the darkness. Wakes him gently. Hands him a uniform. Blinking, Ender gets up, looks at the uniform, realizes what it means.

ENDER

What about Alai? Shen? Sebastian?

Dap puts a finger to his lips.

DAP

Each in his own time.

Ender starts to dress, full of misgivings.

INT SALAMANDER BARRACKS "DAY"

The soldiers of Salamander army are just getting dressed. Some of them are still in bed. It's a sloppy barracks. And not a happy one. BONZO (12) sits on the first bunk by the door, surrounded by soldiers.

The door opens. Ender stands there in Salamander uniform.

BONZO

Por todos los santos.

PETRA ARKANIAN (11), a girl with close-cropped hair and no sign of puberty, steps in front of Ender.

PETRA

How did you get a Salamander Army uniform?

Ender holds up a piece of paper.

ENDER

Orders.

Petra reaches for them. Ender holds them back.

ENDER (cont.)

I'm supposed to give them to Bonzo Madrid.

The room falls silent.

PETRA
Not BAHN-zo. BONE-so. Aqui
hablamos español.

ENDER
Are you BONE-so?

Some nervous laughter from other kids.

PETRA
I'm Petra Arkanian. The only girl
in Salamander Army. With more
balls than any boy in the barracks.

This is greeted with hoots of derision.
Bonzo comes up behind Petra, pushes her
contemptuously out of the way, and reaches
for the order slip.

BONZO
What are they doing to me?
¿Grimas de Cristo! Mboto!

MBOTO, a lanky African kid, slides off his
upper bunk.

MBOTO
Sir?

BONZO
They've transferred you to Eagle
and this is your replacement!

Mboto tousles Ender's hair and chuckles.

MBOTO
Good luck.

Without a backward glance, Mboto leaves.

BONZO
How old are you?

ENDER
Nine.

BONZO
You're not even supposed to be in
Battle School.

PETRA
He must've got lost on his way to
ground school.

BONZO
Calla-te, Putra.

(To Ender)

I don't know what the teachers think they're doing, but I'm not going to keep you. I'm trading you as fast as I can, even though I'll probably have to trade away a good soldier to do it.

ENDER

What do I do in the meantime?

BONZO

Nothing. You understand me? Just stay out of the way.

ENDER

But I can train with you, right?

BONZO

I said nothing! Nada! Compreende?

ENDER

Yes sir.

BONZO

You sleep in the back! You stay out of my sight! I deserve more respect than to have them send me a soldier like you.

PETRA

Maybe it's an honor. Maybe they thought you were the best commander to train an underage kid.

BONZO

(to Petra)

I've already tried to trade you away but nobody wanted you!

PETRA

You couldn't train anybody.

Bonzo slaps her across the face. Petra glares at him.

BONZO

You going to report me?

She sullenly shakes her head. Bonzo turns to Ender.

BONZO

Last bunk on the left. You don't use your desq. You don't wear your flash suit. You don't exist.



Ender walks down the long aisle between
bunks. The soldiers stare at him or look
away.