

ENDER'S GAME

by

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Based on the novels *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow* by Orson Scott Card; and the screenplays by Orson Scott Card, and Michael Dougherty and Dan Harris.

7/7/05

WGAw registered

The screen is BLACK and silent, until the silence is broken by a FRIGHTENED VOICE too quiet to make out.

But the voice grows louder, and is joined by other VOICES in over a dozen languages. We recognize a variety of sources: News broadcasts, military transmissions, people in the street:

VOICES (V.O.)

...again, two thousand craft of unknown origin have entered the atmosphere and... the way they move, the technology is amazing...have taken to calling them "Formics," after the Latin for...swarming over New York and...oh my God...

The voices increase in number and volume, and fear shades into outright panic. ALARMS, SCREAMS, EXPLOSIONS and a HUNDRED OTHER ELEMENTS join the pandemonium chorus:

VOICES (V.O.)

Antiaircraft batteries 3 through 8 are down...destruction estimate for Shanghai stands at 85%... no no no no...

Soon, it all blends into an unintelligible, polyglot wash of despair. This is how the end of the world sounds.

But one voice emerges from the chaos, grim but collected, searching for a reply:

MAZER RACKHAM (V.O.)

This is Captain Mazer Rackham of the 115th Squadron, come in, over. Is anybody out there, over? This is Captain Mazer Rackham of the 115th...

(beat; audible breath)

All right. If anybody's listening, I'm heading into the heart of em, playing a hunch.. Looks like we've got nothing to lose. God have mercy on us all.

As he speaks, all other sounds FADE; when he finishes, the BLACK screen is SILENT once again. Until

A faint BUZZ comes in over the black and gets louder, and louder, and deafeningly LOUDER as we FADE IN ON

A tremendous, compound INSECT EYE. In each of its facets: The tiny image of a MAN. And we PULL OUT ON

EXT. MAZER RACKHAM JUNIOR HIGH - INDIANA, USA - DAY

A BEE, buzzing around the base of

A STATUE OF MAZER RACKHAM, standing in a heroic pose on the front lawn of the SCHOOL that bears his name. Rolling plains in the b.g. tell us we're in the Midwest.

Ten yards from the statue, a group of STUDENTS is assembling a large PAPIER-MACHE FIGURE of some kind. Over the school's front doors, a BANNER hangs: **HAPPY V-DAY! 30 YEARS FORMIC-FREE!**

In a corner WINDOW, we briefly see a BEARDED MAN, before the window polarizes and goes black.

INT. MAZER RACKHAM JUNIOR HIGH - TESTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bearded man is COLONEL GRAFF (40s).

[In the b.g. behind him, a PROPAGANDA POSTER: An iconic MAZER RACKHAM stands against an INTERNATIONAL FLEET (I.F.) INSIGNIA: "WHEN THEY COME BACK...WE'LL BE READY!"]

Graff turns from the darkened window to face

ENDER WIGGIN (11), seated at a metal desk with an empty glass HOLOGLOBE (2') resting on it.

Ender is small and serious for his age. Around his left wrist is a seamless metal MONITOR BRACELET. He seems none-too-sure of himself, eyeing the desk with apprehension.

GRAFF

All right, Ender...

Graff hands Ender a pair of HAPTIC FEEDBACK GLOVES. As Ender puts them on, Graff sits down opposite him and puts his hand on a SENSOR.

GRAFF

Initiate Tangram 427.

A HOLOGRAM appears in Graff's side of the globe: A simple, featureless CUBE, hovering in midair.

GRAFF

(businesslike)

Shapes appear on your end, you arrange them to match the larger shape on my end. It's a test of your facility with spatial relationships.

ENDER

Got it.

GRAFF

Ready?

(off Ender's nod)

Begin Tangram 427.

On Ender's side of the globe, four smaller HOLOGRAM CUBES appear. Ender reaches out for them with the gloves.

When his proxy "hands" in the globe close around the shapes, his GLOVES LOCK UP as though they were tangible.

Ender immediately assembles the smaller cubes into a larger cube matching the one on Graff's side.

A bright, approving beep sounds, and both Ender's and Graff's cubes glow and disappear. A moment later, a THREE-POINTED STAR appears on Graff's side. A moment after that, three TRIANGLES appear in front of Ender.

Again, Ender arranges his shapes to match the shapes on Graff's side in about two seconds. Beep.

As the test proceeds, the shapes on Graff's end get progressively more complex. The pieces on Ender's end grow more numerous.

And each time, Ender puts his pieces together in seconds: Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Both his hands and the shapes in the globe are a haze of motion as we PAN TO

The BLUE SURVEILLANCE "EYE" on the wall.

CUT TO:

A SURVEILLANCE MONITOR IMAGE of Ender in action. Someone far away is watching him.

BACK TO SCENE

When Ender assembles a large SWAN from 18 simple geometric solids in 4 seconds, the test ends.

Graff impassively jots down a few notes on a thin COMPUTER TABLET in his lap.

ENDER

How'd I do?

GRAFF

Just fine.

ENDER

I mean, compared with everybody else...

GRAFF

That's not public information.

Graff steps around and passes a key over Ender's arm. A seam opens in his MONITOR BRACELET, and Graff removes it.

ENDER

But- I thought you said I did fine-

GRAFF

You did. But you're done.

ENDER

"Done" done? Finished?

GRAFF

Yes. You can go back to class now.

Ender is crestfallen, but not particularly surprised. He leaves the room, rubbing his empty wrist.

INT. MAZER RACKHAM JUNIOR HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

On the wall, a PROPAGANDA POSTER: A handsome, GOATEED 30-YEAR-OLD in an I.F. UNIFORM fixes us with a challenging look. Behind him, the BATTLE SCHOOL SPACE STATION orbiting Earth. Below him: "PROTECT YOUR HOME - APPLY FOR BATTLE SCHOOL!" And his signature: Andrei Karpov.

Ender stands before the poster, still rubbing his wrist where the monitor bracelet used to be, thinking about what could have been -

- when the BELL signals the end of the school day. Students pour from classrooms, quickly opening their thumbscan lockers, flowing toward the door to

STUDENTS

(chanting)

Burn the Queen! Burn the Queen!

Ender snaps back to reality and heads for the door.

As mentioned, he is small for his age, smaller than most of the girls. Most students travel in groups, talking, flirting, shoving... but Ender walks alone, head down, beneath their radar -

- until three kids in PRAYING MANTIS MASKS jump in front of him before he reaches the door.

MANTIS MASK 1

Bugger attack!

Mantis Mask grabs Ender, but before he can do anything, a HAND roughly RIPS THE MASK from his face.

An angry TEACHER rips the masks off the other kids. His voice carries an undertone of terrible personal loss:

TEACHER

The Formics aren't funny. Not at all.

The "Burn the Queen!" CHANTS carry over to

EXT. MAZER RACKHAM JUNIOR HIGH - FRONT - DAY

To the left of the statue, the STUDENTS have assembled their giant papier-mache MOCK-UP OF THE FORMIC QUEEN: A gruesome bug of indeterminate species, wearing a crown.

Still CHANTING, the students SET FIRE TO THE "QUEEN." A CHEER erupts, and they all watch it burn.

Ender takes note of this, but heads away from the group, to the right of the Mazer Rackham statue.

EXT. MAZER RACKHAM JUNIOR HIGH - SIDE - DAY

We follow Ender down the sidewalk as he turns the corner and heads for home. The houses in the area are old-fashioned, meaning they look very similar to our own; Ender's town was spared the ravages of the Invasion.

In the unfocused b.g. behind him, a figure turns the corner and follows him.

Hearing the footsteps that have joined his own, Ender stops. When he hears the voice, he winces:

PETER

So it's true. You crapped out.

PETER (15) is much bigger than Ender. He approaches with a tight, nasty grin, and Ender turns to face him.

PETER

No Battle School for you. Probably for the best. You never would have cut it.

ENDER

Yeah... I guess I'll just have to be satisfied with making it farther than anyone else in the Wiggin family.

This touches a nerve in Peter. He draws closer to Ender, and indicates Ender's naked wrist.

PETER

No more monitor bracelet. So now, if your heart starts to beat faster-

Without warning, Peter SMACKS Ender across the face. It smarts, but Ender stands his ground.

PETER

-because of some injury-

(SMACK)

-or trauma-

(SMACK)

-the I.F. won't come to the rescue?

ENDER

I'm not going to hit you, Peter.

PETER

Why not?

(SMACK)

How were you planning on fighting the Buggers if you can't even fight me?

ENDER

I'm not going to hit you because that's what you want. So beating on me won't make you feel weak.

Ender steps forward to stand face-to-face with Peter.

ENDER

But you are weak. All you have on me is a few years and a few inches. And somehow, someday, I'm going to get you back for everything.

Ender stares at him bravely, unflinchingly. Peter is silent for a moment.

Then Peter WALLOPS Ender in the stomach, doubling him over, knocking the wind out of him.

PETER

See you at dinner, little brother.

Peter walks away. We PULL AWAY FROM ENDER as he struggles to breathe -

- and eventually come upon a HAND holding a tiny SURVEILLANCE CAMERA out a car window.

CUT TO:

A SURVEILLANCE MONITOR IMAGE of Ender catching his breath. As we slowly PULL BACK from the monitor:

MAN 1 (O.S.)

It makes sense - his empathy test scores are way too high.

We keep PULLING BACK until we can see a MAN'S HEAD peeking up from behind a high-backed chair directly in front of the monitor. This man now speaks:

MAN 2

You need to empathize with your enemy to beat him.

The man stands, revealing cropped gray hair and military epaulets. As he speaks to the other man beside him, his eyes remain on the monitor; we do not see his face.

MAN 2

Come on. We can be there by dinnertime.

INT. WIGGIN HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

The home is modest by our standards, except for the 8' FLATSCREEN on the wall.

ON THE FLATSCREEN, several windows of animated SCIENCE STUDY AIDS, and one window of NOTES labelled "Valentine Wiggin, Molecular Bio Notes, 5/4/78."

Ender's sister VALENTINE (20) takes notes and cycles through reams of extremely dense visual information. She is pretty in a simple, unadorned way - a girl who spends more time studying than primping.

Ender enters. She turns to look at him:

VALENTINE

Hey...

On the flatscreen, a HUGE WINDOW POPS UP over the others, covering the entire screen. A NOISY V-DAY "PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT," featuring the face of MAZER RACKHAM:

NARRATOR (ON SCREEN)

...and it was that brilliant intuition - that the Formics were a hive species - that led Rackham to...

VALENTINE

Ugh. Pop ups.

Ender trudges right past her, up the stairs.

INT. WIGGIN HOUSE - ENDER'S ROOM

Ender is sitting on his bed, reading an old COMIC BOOK taken from a long-box full of them. He turns the page gingerly, careful not to damage it. Valentine enters.

VALENTINE

Tell me you're not sulking into those comic books again...

But when she sees his monitor bracelet missing, her tone softens. She sits on the edge of bed and takes his hand.

VALENTINE

Oh Ender... I'm sorry.

ENDER

It's okay. I always knew I'd never make it all the way. Peter's right: I'm not good enough.

VALENTINE

Peter's an ass. You're better than he is, and he hates it. What else is new?

ENDER

It's just that... I don't know anything about Battle School, but it's got to be better than Mazer Rackham Junior High.

VALENTINE

I'm so proud of you for making it this far. Mom is proud. Dad would be proud. You did good.

She hugs her little brother, but he remains unconvinced.

EXT. WESTMINSTER RUINS - NIGHT

Illuminated by floodlights, the blistered, pockmarked ruins would be indistinguishable from the harsh landscape of an alien planet, were it not for the recognizable fragments protruding from them:

Bits of intact NEO-GOTHIC MASONRY. A jagged segment of BIG BEN'S CLOCKFACE, rising from the ruins as though surfacing from muddy water.

As we move back through the wrought-iron fence to the sidewalk, we see why Westminster has been left in ruins: A PLAQUE commemorates the victims of the Formic Invasion, and consecrates the site as a memorial.

Along the fence, the detritus of the past day's V-Day remembrances abound: Mounds of FLOWERS piled waist-high on the sidewalk, PHOTOS of lost loved ones taped to the wrought iron. Even at this hour, a few MOURNERS remain.

But we keep moving, down Whitehall Road, to

EXT. FOOD DISTRIBUTION CENTER - NIGHT

A huge, stark, automated food distribution center, where Trafalgar Square used to be. The place is nearly deserted, but in front of one of the AUTOMATED TELLERS, a MAN presses his THUMB to the SCANNER.

From the shadows, a boy watches: BEAN (11). He is even smaller than Ender, and his homelessness is obvious. His HAT is newer and cleaner than the rest of him; he wears it with pride.

At the teller, the TOUCHSCREEN brings up the man's name, photo, International ID#, and his RATION POINTS: 45. The man frowns, hits a few buttons on the screen, takes his bread and eggs, and leaves.

Bean makes sure the coast is clear and approaches the teller. He reaches out with a GLOVED HAND -

- and presses a FAKE ELECTRIC "THUMB" to the scanner. WIRES run out the bottom of his glove into his sleeve, and around his back to his pocket, in which his other hand can be heard CLACKING on a KEYPAD of some kind.

On the SCREEN, a name comes up: John Doe. And a picture: A crude SMILEY FACE. And his RATION POINTS: 10,000.

CUT TO:

Bean walks away with more CHOCOLATE BARS than he can carry, but he does his best to carry them anyway. He smiles, pleased with himself -

- and an ELECTRICITY ARC hits him from behind, short-circuiting his nervous system. BEAN DROPS TO THE GROUND, and his chocolate scatters on the pavement around him.

A GANG OF KIDS starts to pick up Bean's chocolate. Their leader, ACHILLES(15) wields the TASER that stunned Bean.

As Bean shudders helplessly on the ground, Achilles kicks him in the ribs, because he can. Then he shoots the AUTOMATED TELLER with the taser, setting off an ALARM.

The gang disappears into the night. Slowly, Bean comes to, roused by the alarm and the APPROACHING POLICEMEN.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Bean lies sullenly on a decidedly public bed in an overcrowded ER, watching the doctors work. His right hand is CUFFED to the bedframe.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Into the O.R., now, he dug up a pocket of live Formic corrosive...

On a gurney, a man with HALF HIS ARM MELTED AWAY is rushed past Bean. Bean is troubled by this, but not the way we would be; he has already seen a lot in his life.

SISTER CARLOTTA (O.S.)

So...Julian? Julian Delphiki?

SISTER CARLOTTA (40s), the social worker assigned to Bean, stands next to his bed. She is a modern nun; only an understated BRADDRESS identifies her as such.

BEAN

My name's Bean.

SISTER CARLOTTA

Hello, Bean. I'm Carlotta. I'm a social worker, and I've been assigned your case.

Bean shrugs. She looks at her tablet.

SISTER CARLOTTA

Well, it says here that you hacked a food distribution center.

(beat; perturbed)

It also says that the encryption on food distribution centers is supposed to be unbreakable.

Bean cannot resist a prideful smirk:

BEAN

Not for me it ain't.

SISTER CARLOTTA
Where did you learn how to do this?
(nothing)
Where do you go to school?

BEAN
School? Psssh. Never. Not a day.

There is something about this child, something that prompts Carlotta to ask:

SISTER CARLOTTA
Bean, would you like to take some tests?

BEAN
What's in it for me?
(before she can answer)
I want food.

SISTER CARLOTTA
All right.

BEAN
A lot of food.

SISTER CARLOTTA
How much could you eat?

Bean looks deadly serious:

BEAN
How much have you got?

INT. WIGGIN HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

CLOSE ON ENDER'S PLATE of hardly-touched FOOD, as Ender eats dinner with his mother, sister and brother.

Peter smirks almost imperceptibly across the table at Ender. Ender tries not to look at him.

MRS. WIGGIN
Well... we always said we wouldn't get our hopes up, didn't we?

A glum nod from Ender.

MRS. WIGGIN
Anyway, everything I've heard about Battle School makes it sound just awful. And now you get to come with us this summer up to the cabin on the lake.

Ender manages a weak smile for this door prize.

PETER

Yeah. And when Valentine heads off to science camp-

ENDER

She's going to grad school. Three years early.

PETER

And that means you and I will get to spend plenty of quality time together..

He flashes Ender a tight-lipped, nasty grin.

VALENTINE

God you suck.

The DOORBELL. Still-grinning, Peter rises to answer it.

EXT. WIGGIN HOUSE - FRONT HALL

The UNIFORMED MAN we saw watching Ender on the surveillance monitor now stands at the front door (with his back to us) as Peter opens it. Peter's jaw drops:

PETER

Oh my God.

INT. WIGGIN HOUSE - KITCHEN

Mrs. Wiggin calls toward the kitchen door.

MRS. WIGGIN

Who is it, Peter?

The uniformed man walks into the kitchen with an I.F. CONTINGENT behind him.

We probably recognize him. The Wiggins *definitely* recognize him; they shoot to their feet, because

ADMIRAL MAZER RACKHAM (60), the man who saved humanity from the Formics, is standing in their kitchen.

Mrs. Wiggin isn't sure what to do with herself:

MRS. WIGGIN

I- wh- I don't- I'm sorry, we didn't know-

But Rackham is disarmingly casual and charming:

RACKHAM

Mrs. Wiggin, please. I should be the one apologizing for marching into your house unannounced.

(extends his hand)

Mazer Rackham, Director of the I.F. Military Educational system.

She hesitates, as if touching his hand might be dangerous. He takes the initiative and shakes her hand - and then his attention turns to the table:

RACKHAM

Is that walleye pike, by any chance?

MRS. WIGGIN

Yes, it is. Fresh from Lake Namakagon. Well, it was fresh a few months ago, when we froze it. Would you... like to sit?

RACKHAM

I'd love to, if it's not too much trouble. Never could resist walleye.

Rackham sits. Mrs. Wiggin goes to get Rackham a plate, and the rest of the family sits. Peter is at a loss, staring at the I.F. soldiers incongruously standing at ease in front of his refrigerator.

Ender cannot help but stare at Rackham, until his mother asks (while serving Rackham some walleye):

MRS. WIGGIN

What can we do for you, Admiral?

RACKHAM

Actually, I came to see Ender.

ENDER

Me?!

Rackham smiles wide at his surprise:

RACKHAM

Yes, you. I've been paying very close attention to you. You might even call me a fan.

(tastes fish; to Mrs. Wiggin)

Butter, wine... vinegar?

(off her nod)

Absolutely delicious.

ENDER

Wh- a fan? Of me? Why? I'm nobody.

RACKHAM

I disagree. You scored higher on the Battle School cognition battery than any applicant we've ever tested.

Ender's eyes widen; clearly, he had no idea. He smiles at Peter, but Rackham wipes the smile off his face with:

RACKHAM

Of course, there's some material in your file that suggests you're - shall we say, not much of a fighter.

(off Ender's embarrassment)

It's nothing to be ashamed of. Fighting's nothing to be proud of for its own sake.

Rackham throws a quick glance at Peter, who looks away.

ENDER

"The biggest difference between smart and stupid is knowing which fights are necessary and which ones aren't."

RACKHAM

Very true. You make that up?

ENDER

No, it's something my Dad said to me when I was little.

RACKHAM

I like it. But of course, your father enlisted in the I.F. Engineering Corps the day it was founded. Did two tours.

Ender nods, aware of this. The mention of Ender's father brings a melancholy half-smile to his mother's face. She seems resigned, as if she's been expecting this day to come for a long time.

Rackham savors one last bite of fish before his voice takes a serious turn:

RACKHAM

There's a fight coming, Ender. A necessary fight. We need a person like you at Battle School.

Valentine glows with pride; Peter burns with jealousy; Mrs. Wiggin is bittersweet and torn... but Ender's confidence flags:

ENDER

Admiral, it's a huge honor, but... I'm not sure I belong at Battle School,

RACKHAM

I say you do, as much as anybody who's ever been. Will you trust me on this one?

Rackham smiles warmly at Ender; the smile is contagious.

ENDER

Okay. I trust you.

Ender gives in to happiness. He has made it. He is going to Battle School.

SOUND ADVANCE ON

I.F. COUNCILWOMAN 1 (V.O.)

Is this another one of your "hunches"?

INT. RACKHAM'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Rackham sits in a high-backed chair, illuminated by odd, FLICKERING LIGHTS on either side. His aide, MAJOR ANDERSON, stands beside him. Rackham is agitated:

RACKHAM

No. Andrei Karpov was my student-

Turning away from Rackham, we see the other I.F. COUNCILPEOPLE participating in this High Council Meeting- all HOLOGRAMS beamed up from HOLOPRESENCE "CHAIRS."

I.F. COUNCILWOMAN 1

Your best student. Ever.

The Councilwoman calls up a ANDREI KARPOV'S FILE CUBE in the HOLOGLOBE on Rackham's table: A spinning, 3-D cube with ANDREI KARPOV'S HEAD in the middle, and reams of information about him on all the cube's faces.

RACKHAM

Yeah, he never met a textbook he didn't like. But textbooks don't win battles. It's too soon to give Karpov the stripes.

Rackham pushes a button and disappears the file cube. HIGH COMMANDER PACE (60s) Interjects brusquely:

HIGH COMMANDER

Vega approaches, Admiral. Too soon? I hope it's not too late.

RACKHAM

You're making a terrible mistake. We have to do better. Hell, put me on a damn battle sim with him for five minutes and-

HIGH COMMANDER

Your objections have been noted. We'll reconvene at 07:00 on Monday.

The High Commander reaches for a switch in front of him, and the COUNCIL DISAPPEARS. Rackham frowns.

EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - DAY

The huge VEHICLE ASSEMBLY BUILDING is unchanged, except for the I.F. LOGO where the NASA logo used to be. A semicircle of BARRICADES encloses it.

Outside the barricades, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE have gathered to wish the new cadets well. They CHEER and wave SIGNS: "KILL THE BUGGERS!" "THANK YOU!" "NEVER AGAIN!"

Inside the barricades, FAMILIES from around the world see their gifted children off to Battle School. (We may notice Bean in the b.g., with Sister Carlotta.)

Standing next to his suitcase, Ender seems smaller than ever. He looks to the LAUNCH PAD SCAFFOLDING in the distance as if it were a gallows. Then his mother takes his hands. Her eyes are red from crying.

MRS. WIGGIN

We all love you so much, baby.

She SOBS and hugs her son. Valentine hugs him in turn.

VALENTINE

I'm gonna miss you at the lake.

ENDER

Me too. You're gonna be a star in California.

VALENTINE

There are no "stars" in a metabolic biology lab. The place for stars-
(points at Ender)
-is in the sky.

She points to the LAUNCH SEATTLE and kisses Ender on the forehead. Then he steps away from her, and he and Peter look at each other in silence.

But Peter's indifference seems to melt away. A sheepish smile blooms on his face, and he opens his arms to invite Ender to hug him for what has to be the first time ever.

Ender smiles with relief, and hugs his older brother.

ENDER

Bye, Peter.

CLOSE ON PETER, his mouth near Ender's ear, as his true self returns with a vengeance:

PETER

You'll never make it up there. They'll break you.

He leans away, gives his brother a "pat" on the cheek, and flashes him a familiar tight-lipped, nasty grin that neither Valentine nor their mother can see.

A TRANSPORT CART pulls up behind them. Mazer Rackham steps out from the front seat.

Parents and children alike stand at attention. Rackham takes them all in with a slow sweep of his head:

RACKHAM

Mothers and fathers of the best of the best: Humanity salutes you.

Rackham SALUTES THE PARENTS - and makes eye contact with Ender. For a split second, he shares a private smile with Ender that raises Ender's spirits after Peter's taunting.

RACKHAM

Cadets: On the transport! Move out!

The children walk toward the transport; without being pulled, their SUITCASES automatically follow them.

EXT. TRANSPORT CARD - DAY

In the back of the transport cart, Ender watches -

- HIS FAMILY, waving among all the other families, disappearing into the distance along the runway.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - DAY

A steel mesh ELEVATOR carries the children up to -
- the BATTLE SCHOOL LAUNCH SHUTTLE. A stand-alone vehicle, bigger and sleeker than the current space shuttle, without external rocket boosters.

INT. SHUTTLE CABIN - DAY

The children find their seats. Most of the kids have started talking to each other in many different flavors of English, laughing, boasting, playing it tough -

- and Ender is on the outside, taking in his surroundings, alone. He starts to sit down.

BEAN (O.S.)

Find your own seat. That's mine.

Ender turns to see the only kid smaller than he is standing behind him.

BEAN

That's my hat on it there.

Indeed, Ender was about to sit on Bean's HAT.

ENDER

Oh, I didn't see... Sorry about that.

Ender flashes a conciliatory smile, but Bean's face stays flat, and he sits down without responding.

Ender finds a seat in a different row, and fastens both his chest belts and his waist belt.

The entry hatch closes. Two I.F. CREW MEMBERS walk down the aisles to make sure each kid is properly fastened in.

I.F. CREW MEMBER

Remain in your seats.

A deep ENGINE HUM builds. All talking and joking around cease. The kids are startled by an unexpected JOLT -

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - CONTINUOUS

- as the HOLDING CLAMPS detach from the shuttle's hull. The engines RUMBLE. SMOKE starts to billow from them.

AUTOMATED VOICE

T-Minus ten seconds. Nine. Eight...

EXT. OBSERVATION PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

The families watch the launch from nearby.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Seven. Six. Five...

Valentine cries as she watches the shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

The engine hum grows to a ROAR. Many of the "tough" kids are visibly scared witless.

In his seat, Ender removes something from his pocket.

A PHOTOGRAPH OF ENDER AND VALENTINE on the porch of their family's lakeside cabin. A reminder of a simpler time.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Four. Three. Two...

Ender clutches the photo with both hands, closes his eyes and draws a deep BREATHE.

AUTOMATED VOICE

One.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - CONTINUOUS

The SHUTTLE'S ENGINES FIRE, engulfing the craft in BLACK PLUMES OF SMOKE. A GUST OF WIND blasts from the pad -

EXT. OBSERVATION PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

- strong enough to blow back the hair of the observers: Valentine; Mrs. Wiggin; Peter; Carlotta.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - CONTINUOUS

The SHUTTLE RAPIDLY RISES INTO THE AIR, SHOOTING from the black smoke on twin COLUMNS OF FIRE.

INT. SHUTTLE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Amidst the engines' DEAFENING ROAR, the cabin SHAKES powerfully. Many of the kids clamp their eyes shut and clutch the arms of their seats.

Bean, however, is loving the ride. So is a kid named DINK, who makes himself heard over the roar:

DINK

Woooooooooooo!!!

Ender gives Dink a look, then turns to his VIEW PORTAL to watch FLORIDA shrink away.

In the whites of Ender's eyes, we see the BLUE sky give way to the BLACK of space.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle banks away from the Earth, leaving it behind. The engines reduce their thrust.

INT. SHUTTLE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Ender rises an inch above his seat.

The other kids feel it as well, and see it in their hair and shoelaces: No more gravity. They are WEIGHTLESS.

Through the port-side view portals, the EARTH gets smaller and smaller.

For a silent moment, everyone shares in the mix of wonder, exhilaration and extreme loneliness felt by children as the lives they know recede into nothingness against a FIELD OF STARS.

Then, in a Texas drawl:

DINK

Hey! Check this out!

Dink launches a GOB OF SPIT into the zero-G.

Ender smiles, and most of the other kids LAUGH - all except SHEN, who happens to be sitting on the tail end of the spit gob's slow trajectory. He SHOUTS, and strains against his seat belts to get out of the way.

When it becomes clear that the belts won't let him move far enough, Shen unbuckles himself and FLOATS FREE of his seat just in time to dodge the spit, which hits the view portal with a SPLAT.

Everyone is LAUGHING now, flailing Shen included -

- until the CLANG of a MAG-BOOT sounds in the aisle, and Rackham emerges into the cabin from the cockpit.

Even as Shen drifts through the cabin, he SALUTES Rackham so hard he almost dents his forehead. Everyone else follows suit. Rackham is stern:

RACKHAM

Why aren't you in your seat?

SHEN

I- I'm sorry, Sir, there was-

Rackham plucks Shen from the air and returns him firmly to his seat. Then he addresses them all:

RACKHAM

The recess that used to be your lives is over. The Formics are coming back. Their technology is far superior to ours; our only chance lies in superior tactics. Humanity does not ask us to be happy; it merely asks us to be brilliant on its behalf.

Rackham proceeds down the aisle with foreboding CLANGS. As he speaks, intercut several dismayed "What have I done?" looks on the children's faces.

RACKHAM

You all think you're brilliant already. You're wrong. Less than half of you will advance to the Tactical Academy, and one in ten of those will move on to Central Command. I hope against hope that one of you will be strong enough, smart enough, good enough to be of some real use.

He stops right next to Ender.

RACKHAM

But honestly, in my opinion, the only one of you worth the fuel it takes to lift you into orbit is Ender Wiggin.

He pats a mortified Ender on the shoulder and gives him the same "private smile" he gave him on the ground. He returns to the cockpit. Ender looks at his fellow cadets.

They're all staring at him. He has been set apart, and he is not happy about it.

EXT. SPACE

The I.F. SHUTTLE is nearing its destination:

The BATTLE SCHOOL SPACE STATION, orbiting the Earth between the Earth and moon. It consists of two CONCENTRIC RINGS connected by various TUNNELS. Six huge SPHERES lie inside the inner ring, almost touching each other.

INT. SHUTTLE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The new cadets are all pressed against the windows on the space station side of the cabin, staring with awe.

CADET 1

It's as big as a Flagship!

EXT. BATTLE SCHOOL SPACE STATION - CONTINUOUS

A DOCKING DOOR opens in the outer ring. The SHUTTLE FIRES ITS THRUSTERS to bring it to a standstill relative to the space station, and glides to within an inch of the wall.

Its LANDING GEAR hooks into the space station. A LOADING TUNNEL extends from the station and fastens to the shuttle with an airtight *thhhp!*.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL ENTRY BAY - A MOMENT LATER

The new cadets emerge into a huge room lined with electronics and ductwork. Space-suited TECHNICIANS exit through airlocks to perform post-flight checks on the shuttle. Other CREW do their jobs, ignoring the cadets.

The cadets look around, gawking, smiling. Many run over to a VIEW WINDOW, where they see the DISTANT EARTH SLOWLY PASSING BY as the space station spins.

One CADET voice the group's sentiments - in Japanese:

CADET 2

[Coolest. Place. Ever.]

But two UPPERCLASSMEN start to grab their suitcases from them and dump them into a BIN.

DINK

Hey...

UPPERCLASSMAN 1

Shut up, launchie.

(to all of them)

What're you waiting for? Follow the yellow line!

He points at a YELLOW LINE that appears on the floor and grows, leading out of the entry bay into the hall.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - TEN SECONDS LATER

The LAUNCHIES push forward on a disorienting FAST MARCH down the corridor, the YELLOW LINE their only guide.

From around the corner, a RED LINE advances toward them, on their left, the guide-line for:

A group of UNIFORMED UPPER-CLASSMEN, marching their way in perfect lockstep, big, tough and military. The upperclassmen TAUNT the launchies as they pass:

UPPERCLASSMAN 2

(re: Ender)

Look, they're letting in midgets now!

UPPERCLASSMAN 3

(re: Bean)

Check it out, this one's even smaller!

The upperclassman gives Bean a light SMACK upside the head as he goes. Enraged, Bean turns to go after him, but Ender stops him with a hand on the shoulder.

ENDER

It's not worth it now. We'll get them later.

BEAN

(throwing off Ender's hand)

There ain't no "we." There's only "me."

Bean waits for Ender to walk on ahead before rejoining the launchie march at the end of the line.

As the launchies turn left, Bean's eyes are everywhere except in front of him, searching for an opportunity -

- which he finds, in the form of another group of UPPERCLASSMEN heading his way. We turn to FOLLOW them-

- and see that Bean has left the launchies to tag along unnoticed behind the upperclassmen. They turn right, into

INT. DIFFERENT BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The upperclassmen pass us, one at a time. When we get to the end of their line, Bean is gone. The only sign of him: His HAT, lying next to a floor-level AIR-DUCT GRATE.

The grate slides open a few inches. Bean's small HAND shoots out, grabs his hat, slides back. The grate closes.

INT. OBSERVATION RING

The launchies' yellow line terminates in the huge, ring-shaped observation gallery at the center of the Battle School. Long BLACK GLASS PANELS line the rounded walls.

The gruff CAPTAIN MCGANN(40) waits for them impatiently:

MCGANN

Toe that line!

(after they line up)

Ten-HUT!

The cadets stand at attention. Dink whispers to a bespectacled female launchie (MOLO):

DINK

Where's Mazer Rackham?

MCGANN

(overhearing Dink)

Admiral Rackham has better things to do than wipe the noses of a bunch of launchie pukes! I am Captain McGann. For the next 4 months, you belong to me. I will teach you how to survive in...

McGann clicks a remote. Behind him, the BLACK GLASS PANEL DEPOLARIZES, turning it into an observation WINDOW. The launchies all gape at

MCGANN

...the Battle Room.

The BATTLE ROOM: A black-walled spherical space, 100m in diameter, where the GRAVITY HAS BEEN TURNED OFF. A LARGE GEOMETRIC OBSTACLE floats fixedly in the center of the room. SMALLER OBSTACLES are spread throughout.

In the Battle Room, two 13-man CADET ARMIES clash in a ZERO-G WAR GAME. They wear hydraulics-reinforced FLASH-SUITS and HELMETS, and control their movement with slim PROPULSION DEVICES on their backs.

Their movement is fast and expert as they jet among the obstacles, using them as cover while they defend their GATE - a fixed, FLOATING RING 4' in diameter - and attack the enemy's.

MOLO

Y-you're going to put us in there?

MCGANN

"In there" is where you will let the I.F. know if you have the strategic sense of a chum bucket, which most of you will not.

IN THE BATTLE ROOM, the army in RED FLASH-SUITS is methodically destroying the BLUE-SUITED ARMY.

A RED-SUITED CADET points his arm and shoots from a GAUNTLET on the back of his wrist - a pulse of SLO-LIGHT, slowed to the speed of a bullet -

- that HITS a BLUE-SUITED CADET in his gun arm. The cadet's ARM GLOWS and FREEZES as his suit's hydraulics lock. Powerless to fight, the blue cadet tries to flee -

But the red cadet shoots him square in the chest. Immediately, the blue cadet's entire FLASH-SUIT GLOWS BLUE and GOES RIGID. The blue cadet is out of the game.

Other FROZEN CADETS (mostly blue ones) float helplessly through the Battle Room like so much glowing space junk.

MCGANN'S AIDE starts to call out names from his tablet:

MCGANN'S AIDE

Meeker, Dink! Novice Barracks 1.

The aide points to an illuminated "1" that appears on the floor, and Dink tears his attention away from the battle for long enough to run over to the "1."

MCGANN

You will each be assigned to launchie barracks, until such time as I deem you fit to join an Army under the leadership of an accomplished upperclassman.

As the launchies are assigned barracks, Rackham watches surreptitiously from the shadows in a side doorway.

MCGANN

Your Army's fate will be your fate. You will succeed together, or fail together.

IN THE BATTLE ROOM, the near-victorious red-suited army moves through the space in two tight, disciplined formations, wiping up the remaining opponents.

A frozen blue cadet floats past one of the formations; the RED LEADER roughly elbows him out of the way.

MCGANN'S AIDE
Delphiki, Julian?

No one steps forward.

MCGANN'S AIDE
Delphiki, Julian!

A moment of confused silence, until the aide moves on:

MCGANN'S AIDE
Molo, Bharti! Novice Barracks 2.

Ender knows who "Julian Delphiki" is; he's probably the only person who noticed Bean. He looks around for him -

- and sees RACKHAM, standing in the shadows.

IN THE BATTLE ROOM, there is not a single blue-suited cadet left in play.

MCGANN'S AIDE
Wiggin, Ender! Salamander Army Barracks.

Disapproval flits across McGann's face. As for Ender, his confusion is extreme:

ENDER
But I thought we only got assigned to an Army after we-

MCGANN
You heard the man, Wiggin! You've been assigned to Salamander Army now! Report to Commander Madrid!

Again, Ender is being singled out. All the other launchies stare at him, most with skeptical disdain.

ENDER
Commander Madrid...

McGann nods over to the Battle Room.

IN THE BATTLE ROOM, as if on cue: The RED LEADER KICKS A FROZEN OPPONENT out of the way and passes triumphantly through the enemy's GATE.

Game over. The Red Leader flies to the CONTROL PANEL on the wall and unfreezes all frozen flash-suits. Everyone removes their helmets.

The Red Leader - COMMANDER MADRID(15) - is dark-haired and handsome, but his face is unforgiving. His victorious Army assembles itself into a floating line, and follows Madrid in a warlike chant:

SALAMANDER ARMY
Sa-la-man-der! Sa-la-man-der!

Ender is in shock. He looks imploringly to Rackham -
- but Rackham is already walking away.

INT. SALAMANDER BARRACKS - MINUTES LATER

Commander Madrid is SHAVING, trying to shape his peach fuzz into a goatee matching the one sported by ANDREI KARPOV in the PROPAGANDA POSTER hanging next to Madrid's shaving mirror. He glances at Ender in the mirror as he speaks with a slight Spanish accent:

MADRID
That's impossible. No launchie has ever been assigned to an Army before he finished Battle Room training.

Once again, Ender faces cold stares - only this time they're coming from older kids, most of whom are nearly twice his size: The SALAMANDER ARMY.

ENDER
They told me to report to Commander Madrid.

MADRID
Alai, get on a tablet and-

But ALAI (15), the biggest kid in Salamander and Madrid's right-hand man, is already on a wireless tablet:

ALAI
Joke's on us, Madrid. "Ender Wiggin" has replaced Kano on our active duty roster.

Ender tries to stay calm, as Madrid wipes his face and comes to deal with him:

ENDER
This wasn't my choice. But if you'll just give me a chance, I promise I'll-

Madrid SLAMS ENDER AGAINST HIS LOCKER.

MADRID

Listen close: Since I took command, Salamander is 25 and 0 in the Battle Room. You know the last Battle School commander with that kind of record?

(points at his poster)

Andrei Karpov. By the end of this semester, we're all headed for the Tactical Academy - and you're not going to get in our way.

Madrid stares Ender down, waiting for him to flinch, cry or cower. But Ender gives him none of these things:

ENDER

Which one's my bunk?

Madrid points him to the empty bunk next to the bathroom.

MADRID

Right next to the toilet, so it'll be easy to flush you down.

The Salamanders all LAUGH at Ender and taunt him as he makes his way to his bunk -

- all except PETRA ARKANIAN (15), lying on her own bunk reading an actual, paper comic book.

With her buzz-cut and permanent scowl, it might take us a while to recognize that Petra is pretty. She doesn't join her fellow Salamanders in tormenting Ender. She looks at Madrid with disdain, then returns to her reading.

Ender opens his closet, and finds standard issue jumpsuits, underclothes, toiletries, and a FLASH-SUIT.

ENDER

Where's my suitcase?

BERNARD (15), the thickest of the Salamanders, LAUGHS as though Ender just asked for his teddy bear:

BERNARD

He wants his suitcase!

INT. SALAMANDER BARRACKS - LIGHTS OUT

Ender lies awake in his bunk while everyone else sleeps. By the faint bathroom light, he looks at the only remnant of his past life that he's been able to salvage:

The PHOTO OF HIM AND VALENTINE on the porch of his family's lakeside cabin.

He fights to keep his CRYING silent, so no one will hear.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - NEXT DAY

Madrid marches along a red line, and the rest of the Salamanders march behind him. All wear their FLASH-SUITS and carry their HELMETS under their left arms.

At the end of the line, Ender concentrates on keeping up, keeping in step, and not dropping his helmet.

INT. BATTLE ROOM ENTRYWAY - A MINUTE LATER

The Salamander Army stands in front of a closed door.

BERNARD

Twenty minutes to showtime.

MADRID

We'll practice flanking maneuvers. I'll lead alpha platoon, Alai'll take beta.

ALAI

(re: Ender)

Who gets him?

MADRID

Nobody. You'll fight one man short.

Alai scowls, but he doesn't complain. Ender, however:

ENDER

So what do I do?

MADRID

You're gonna practice hiding behind an obstacle - because that's what you'll be doing in this battle, and every battle until they transfer you out of my army.

ENDER

Look, I know you don't want me. But I'm in your army, so I may as well help out.

MADRID

"Help out," huh?

Madrid gives a quick nod to Alai and Bernard; they pick up Ender by his arms and legs.

ENDER

Put me down! Put me down now!

Everyone LAUGHS as Madrid opens the door. A Salamander named SEBASTIAN (14) smacks Ender's helmet roughly onto his head, and Alai and Bernard carry him to the doorway. He looks over the threshold -

- into the cavernous, spherical Battle Room. It is A 150-FOOT DROP to the bottom.

Ender struggles, but his captors are much stronger than he is. They start to swing him toward the threshold.

ALAI

One... two...three!

ENDER

Noooooooooooo!

They THROW ENDER THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR. He travels on a typical gravity arc until he crosses the plane of the doorway into the Battle Room -

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- where GRAVITY DISAPPEARS. Ender drifts helplessly in a straight line, kicking and flailing.

INT. BATTLE ROOM ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

As the Salamanders continue to LAUGH -

- Madrid flips his PROPULSION CONTROL into his left hand. It is a thumbstick-and-trigger apparatus, which swings into his grasp on a wrist hinge as needed.

Madrid takes a fearless leap through the doorway -

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- and his PROPULSION KICKS IN the instant the gravity gives out. Whatever we think of his personality, Madrid's zero-G grace is impossible to deny; he SWOOPS and DIVES through the air like a sea lion through water.

The other Salamanders follow, ready for a good show.

MADRID

Come on, let's see how you're going to help out! Straighten yourself!

As Ender spins through space, he sees Madrid using his propulsion control, and tries to do the same. But he pulls the THROTTLE too hard -

- and SHOTS FORWARD. He RICOCHETS like a pinball off a FIXED OBSTACLE. Reflexively, he SQUEEZES THE THROTTLE.

Fresh from the first obstacle, he starts to accelerate again, toward a SECOND OBSTACLE with sharper corners.

Amidst the laughter, only one voice offers any help:

PETRA

Turn! With the thumbstick!

Madrid gives Petra a dirty look. She couldn't care less.

Heading for a bruising, Ender PUSHES THE THUMBSTICK LEFT-

- and does a WHIPLASH SWERVE away from the obstacle.

He lets go of the throttle, but without gravity, objects in motion remain in motion. Ender is flying head-first at an OBSERVATION WINDOW.

INT. OBSERVATION RING - CONTINUOUS

Two launchies (DINK and MOLO) watch Ender coming, wide-eyed... he's going to hit the window...

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender PULLS BACK ON THE STICK and SQUEEZES THE THROTTLE ALL THE WAY.

Almost instantaneously, he JERKS BACK in the other direction. Now he is hurtling through the air backwards.

Trying to rectify this situation, Ender proceeds to JERK BACK AND FORTH like a rag doll in the jaws of a giant, invisible dog. He's dizzy and shaken by the time he brings himself to rest near Madrid.

MADRID

Thanks, but I don't think we need that kind of help. They can force me to take you, but they can't force me to let you mess up our maneuvers.

Ender is embarrassed and angry - but abrasive as he is, Madrid has a point. Slowly, Ender flies toward a far OBSTACLE as the OPPOSING ARMY enters.

INT. MESS HALL

The kids are as noisy as we'd expect them to be during lunch - until they all HUSH each other and look up at-

THE SCOREBOARD displaying the standings of all the Battle School Armies: Condor, Viper, Jaguar, etc.. It goes BLANK-

Each of the dozen armies stares at the scoreboard from their respective table. At the Salamander table, Madrid has an alpha grin on his face:

MADRID

Here it comes...

ON THE SCOREBOARD, the new standings appear. At the top of the list is SALAMANDER: 26 wins, 0 losses.

At the Salamander table, Madrid crosses his arms and nods like Mussolini; he expected no less. The Salamander Army CHEERS and pounds on the table in rhythm:

SALAMANDER ARMY

Sa-La-Man-Der! Sa-La-Man-Der!

Ender sits at the end of the table, away from the others, looking up at the scoreboard, and the record of the victory in which he played no part.

He gets up and leaves the table. Only Petra notices.

We follow Ender out of the mess hall. As he leaves, we stay behind to watch what is happening at floor level, behind the mess counter:

An AIR DUCT GRATE pops off and slides to the side. BEAN'S HEAD pokes from the duct and looks left.

When the MESS HALL WORKER brings an empty tray back to the kitchen, Bean makes his move: He creeps from the duct, fills his shirt with ROLLS, and creeps back -

- to find a PAIR OF MILITARY BOOTS standing in front of the duct. Bean looks at the boots for a beat, then tries to scramble between them - but the I.F. OFFICER grabs him, sending the rolls falling to the floor.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE

On one wall, a STUFFED MUSKY hangs incongruously among military decorations and memorabilia. Two other walls are all ACTIVE MATRIX SCREEN, divided into dozens of SURVEILLANCE FEEDS covering the entire Battle School.

Ender stands by the door, looking at the musky's gruesome teeth, which add to his worry. Rackham sees him looking, but does not comment on the fish.

RACKHAM

What can I do for you, Wiggin?

ENDER

I want to be transferred from Salamander, Sir. I don't belong there.

RACKHAM

I'll decide where you belong.

The warmth he once displayed is gone. Ender pleads:

ENDER

Admiral, I can't fly, I can't shoot - I can't do Battle Room. Commander Madrid is right to not want me.

RACKHAM

Maybe if you weren't so busy crying over what you can't do, you'd figure out what you can do.

Rackham has never spoken to him like this before, but Ender keeps his composure:

ENDER

They all hate me, Sir. I'm not crying over it. I'm just requesting a transfer.

RACKHAM

All right. Request denied.

With this, Ender's anger rises to the surface:

ENDER

Why are you doing this to me?

Rackham's aide Anderson interrupts by DRAGGING BEAN INTO THE OFFICE - hands in his pockets, hat on, hangdog face.

ANDERSON

We found the AWOL launchie, Sir.

RACKHAM

You can leave him here, Major.

Anderson pulls Bean over to Rackham's side, grabs the HAT off his head and leaves.

Rackham gives Bean a look that would stop most 11-year-olds' hearts. When Bean appears suitably terrified, Rackham walks over to Ender -

- and as soon as Rackham turns away, the "terror" disappears from Bean's face. He takes his hands out of his pockets; they're covered by familiar RAGGEDY GLOVES.

RACKHAM

I'm "doing this to you" because I believe you have tremendous potential in areas crucial to our success.

Behind Rackham, Ender sees Bean SILENTLY PRESSING HIS "THUMB" TO THE SECURITY SENSOR for Rackham's terminal.

RACKHAM

Proving me right, however, will be your problem, not mine.

On the active matrix wall behind Rackham's back, all the surveillance feeds disappear, replaced by a huge screen on which the SECURITY CODE of "Rackham, Maser (Adm)" begins to reveal itself character by character.

But Rackham starts turning back. ENDER AND BEAN MAKE EYE CONTACT, wordlessly acknowledging what they both know: Bean is about to be caught hacking Rackham's logon code.

ENDER

Admiral Rackham...

Rackham turns back to face Ender. Behind him, the code is almost finished...

RACKHAM

Yes?

The last character of the code locks in. Bean holds his "thumb" up to the terminal screen and TAKES A PICTURE.

ENDER (O.S.)

I...

Bean hits a key. Rackham's code disappears and the feeds return. Bean shoves his hands back in his pockets.

Over Rackham's shoulder, Ender sees that Bean is done.

ENDER

Nothing.

Ender catches a grateful nod from Bean. When Rackham turns back around, the "terror" returns to Bean's face.

INT. SALAMANDER BARRACKS

Ender is alone in the barracks, on his bunk. He's reading a COMIC the only way he can: On his TABLET. This only adds to his unhappiness; the screen isn't big enough, and it catches a glare from the lights.

PETRA (O.S.)

Spiderman? You've gotta be kidding.

Petra is looking over his shoulder.

PETRA

Spiderman's a whiner. "Boo-hoo, the girls don't like me. Boo-hoo it's lonely being a hero." Now Superman...

She lays a Superman comic - an actual comic - on Ender's bunk, much to his surprise.

PETRA

Superman is bad-ass. When it comes to superpowers, he owns Spiderman. He saved the whole universe once. And does he ever complain? No way. He just does his job. Go ahead, borrow it, learn for yourself.

Ender lifts the comic carefully:

ENDER

Where'd you get this?

PETRA

You get your suitcase back - once you prove yourself worthy.
(grins)

If you don't bash your head open in the Battle Room first.

The dig at his performance makes Ender angry:

ENDER

You better hurry back. Madrid is probably wondering where you went.

PETRA

Pssh. Madrid is a jackass. But I'm not here to lose and get sent home to Daddy. I'm here to win. And Madrid wins.

ENDER

He could win better. He isn't using all his resources.

PETRA

Hate to bring it up, but you didn't look like much of a resource out there.

ENDER

He ought to make me into one. A real leader would.

PETRA

Maybe you're right. But you'll never get a chance to prove it if all you can do is spaz around the Battle Room like a tardon.

Ender knows she's right, but doesn't say anything until:

PETRA

Uh, I'm not going to ask for you.

ENDER

Teach me not to be a spaz in the Battle Room? Please?

Petra pretends to consider it for a moment.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - FREE PERIOD

In an empty Battle Room, Ender holds onto a HAND GRIP next to a CONTROL PANEL on the wall. Surrounding him on three sides, a "CAGE" OF LASER LIGHT, the "safe zone" for the training exercise taking place:

Petra floats in the middle of the room. A dozen softball-sized, GLOWING METAL "ASTEROIDS" WHIZ around her in high speed fits and starts, periodically plunging at her.

Petra SHOOTS an ASTEROID -

- it GOES DARK, PLUMMETS away from her toward the walls of the Battle Room and rolls back into a WALL PORTAL.

One ASTEROID collides with another and ricochets toward Ender's head - but when the projectile reaches the SAFE ZONE, it turns sharply away and heads back toward Petra.

DUCKING, SHOOTING, DODGING, ROLLING - Petra does not waste a single motion or moment, and clears the Battle Room of Asteroids in a matter of seconds.

INT. OBSERVATION RING - CONTINUOUS

DINK and MOLO watch with interest. Dink especially:

DINK
(re: Petra)
I'm in love.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Petra hits the "Command" button on the control panel:

PETRA
Terminate Asteroids 3C.

The safe zone cage disappears. Ender is impressed, but he's not looking forward to trying this himself. He tries to stall:

ENDER
What's the point of all this?

PETRA
You tend to have to shoot the enemy before he'll let you through his gate.

ENDER
The "enemy's gate"... it's just a glorified basketball hoop. What's it got to do with fighting the Formics, anyway?

PETRA
I wouldn't know. Maybe if you learn how to shoot the enemy and get through his gate, you'll make it to CentCom someday and learn all about the Formics. Then you can tell me. Now get out there.
(beat)
Don't worry. I'll go easy on you.

Flying cautiously, Ender takes the center of the room.

PETRA
Initiate Asteroids 1A.

The safe zone encloses Petra. A single LARGE ASTEROID comes from the wall, the size of a suitcase. Only one? Ender is confident. He nods.

PETRA
Begin Asteroids 1A.

The LARGE ASTEROID GLOWS and HEADS FOR ENDER, slowly.

Ender takes his time, aims, SHOOTS -

The ASTEROID BREAKS into two, faster-moving Asteroids that bend toward him in gravity parabolas -

Ender smiles at this success; one for one. Concentrating, he aims at one of the new mid-sized Asteroids, SHOTS -

And misses. He SHOTS again, and again. Finally, on his fourth shot, he HITS THE ASTEROID -

But the other Asteroid is still coming for him. He thinks for a second about how to turn toward it. Pull the thumbstick, tweak the throttle...

He's so focused on hitting the other mid-sized Asteroid, he forgets that TWO SMALL ASTEROIDS are coming his way, their movement more erratic than the mid-sized ones.

ONE SMALL ASTEROID HITS ENDER, hard enough to knock him out of the way of the second.

ENDER

Ow!

Petra winces:

PETRA

Cover your head, at least...

Ender has lost control of the situation. He fires a VOLLEY OF SHOTS, hitting the remaining mid-sized Asteroid, splitting it in two -

A SMALL ASTEROID HITS ENDER IN THE GUT.

ENDER

Ooof!

INT. OBSERVATION RING - CONTINUOUS

Dink LAUGHS at Ender:

DINK

Spaz.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender finally manages to SHOOT a SMALL ASTEROID. The softball-sized TINY ASTEROIDS that come from it don't move as fast as the ones Petra was shooting, and there are only two of them -

- but they're still way too much for Ender. They WHIZ around, SMASHING into him with what seems like malicious intent as he FIRES WILDLY in all directions.

On a BLUE SURVEILLANCE EYE in the wall, we see a distorted reflection of Ender getting pummelled.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ON A SURVEILLANCE FEED on Rackham's wall, we see what the blue surveillance eye sees: Ender in the Battle Room, fighting his losing battle against the Asteroids.

Rackham watches the feed, along with his aide Anderson, Battle Room instructor McGann, and other STAFF MEMBERS.

ANDERSON

Admiral, perhaps Cadet Wiggin would benefit from, ah, a more traditional Battle School experience -

But McGann is gruff and upfront:

MCGANN

He's pathetic. Look at that gun work.

RACKHAM

I want him to learn to fend for himself, without turning to superiors for help. Call it an experiment.

MCGANN

He's just a child. Your "experiment" will ruin him. I think it's a waste.

RACKHAM

Your thoughts are your own business, Captain.

But despite Rackham's callous words, the prospect of ruining Ender weighs heavily on him.

ON THE SURVEILLANCE FEED, Ender looks angrily at the screen, as if he knows Rackham is watching.

INT. BATTLE ROOM

The ROOM GOES DARK. A 30-SECOND WALL CLOCK appears, counting down to the start of the battle.

Among the SALAMANDER ARMY, the pre-battle tension is palpable. Idle chatter ceases. Madrid's soldiers take their positions behind obstacles.

Dimly, across the room, the LION ARMY can be seen doing the same, as the clock counts down: 20...19...18...

Ender steels himself for a reprimand and glides over to Madrid. The Salamander commander's whisper is harsh:

MADRID

Get back to your hiding place! Now!

ENDER

Let me fight, Sir. I've been practicing-

Madrid turns to Alai:

MADRID

Spay him!

Before Ender knows what's happening, Alai grabs him by a flash-suit buckle. Petra is about to speak up on Ender's behalf, but before she can get a word out -

Alai SHOOTS ENDER'S PROPULSION PACK. The PACK LIGHTS UP. Alai starts to drag Ender away.

Ender tries his throttle and finds his pack is dead. Alai hangs him on an obstacle like a piece of laundry, and Ender is powerless to stop him.

ALAI

Be good.

The countdown ends, a BUZZER sounds, the LIGHTS come up. The battle begins - once again, without Ender.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - AFTER BATTLE

Furious, Ender storms away from the (victorious) Salamander Army. Only Petra bothers going after him.

ENDER

He won't let me fight, Rackham won't let me transfer out of Salamander, I run back and forth between them like a lab rat...

PETRA

We're all lab rats. Rackham's trying to break everybody - he's just trying a bit harder with you. Take it as a compliment.

Ender stops and turns to face her, eyes burning:

ENDER

He won't break me. Not ever.

PETRA
He will if you don't lighten up.
(pulls him ahead)
Come on, ratso.

ENDER
Where are we going?

PETRA
Somewhere where you can relax, put your
feet up, enjoy a little cheese.

INT. SPACECRAFT - GUNNER'S POD

A POV SHOT, looking out into SPACE, sweeping slowly
across the star field as the unseen PILOT speaks:

PILOT (O.S.)
Where the hell are they? They can't have
gone far...

The POV scans downward, through a 90° rotation.

PILOT (O.S.)
There! Up to your left!

The POV does a WHIPLASH SWEEP UPWARDS--

--for a subliminal glance at THREE INSECTOID FORMIC SHIPS
before they RAM INTO THE GLASS and everything goes BLACK.

Then ANDREI KARPOV APPEARS and points right at us.

KARPOV
Too slow. You lose.

We PULL BACK TO

INT. GAME ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bean kicks the "KARPOV CHALLENGE PRO" VIDEOGAME MACHINE
and slaps the "Play Again" button. We PAN TO

Ender, gawking at the mother of all arcades, with Petra
beside him. The room is crammed full of VIDEOGAMES so
stunning that we want to stop and look at each one.

PETRA
Tell me you haven't been here yet. You've
been at Battle School how many weeks?

We get glimpses: A FIGHTING GAME that mirrors the exact
movements of its players.

A nauseatingly realistic HOVERBIKE RACING GAME. A surreal EXPLORATION GAME, in which a MOUSE scales the body of a huge, lifelike GIANT.

But Ender keeps walking; Petra stays close behind, watching him. Off in a dark corner, he stops at

Ten identical head-to-head REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAMES: A line of 2-D, transparent PARTITIONS, separating the players like a prison visiting room. Only one game is in progress, involving two people.

Ender runs his hand along one of the partitions:

ENDER

Cool. They're like the old strategic projection decks they've got at the Memorial Museum in D.C..

PETRA

Why does it seem inevitable that you would have to pick the lamest game here?

She's right. The SPACE BATTLE ICONS on the partitions are so simple, even a Game Boy owner would feel gypped.

CADET 1 (O.S.)

Arkanian! DeathShot rematch - or are you busy with your new boyfriend?

PETRA

I've gotta go blast somebody's head off. Have fun.

Ender sits down behind one of the game decks and studies the icons, trying to figure out what they might mean, until another cadet approaches.

CADET 2

Hey. I'll play you.

ENDER

Sure. If you teach me how.

CADET 2

Okay. But I'm warning you: I'm good.

CUT TO:

Ender and Cadet 2 play the RTS game, seated opposite each other. All commands are spoken aloud, after the "COMMAND" BUTTON is pushed:

CADET 2
A6 Fighters to E4, fire on Mechanized
Infantry.

Icons move on the game screen. Without delay:

ENDER
S5 Lander to S14, load Infantry.

CADET 2
You know, "real time" doesn't mean you
have to move immediately.

ENDER
I know.

Shen comes by.

SHEN
I like this game. The other ones make me
feel like I'm gonna puke. Can I play the
winner?

CADET 2
(cocky)
Sure. Shouldn't be long.

ENDER
Take that deck. I'll play you both.

He's serious. Shen sits down on the deck next to Ender's
opponent and makes the first move. Ender leans over,
slaps the "Command" button on the second deck, and makes
his first move in his second game.

CUT TO:

On one side of the Real-Time Strategy game line: All ten
seats are filled with furrow-browed cadets.

On the other side: Ender, *playing ten games at once*.

He ranges back and forth along the line, barely taking
time to look at each screen before SLAPPING the "Command"
button and barking out commands with Emininem rapidity:

ENDER
D4 mine sweeper to A8 sweep, T9 missiles
to D2 rest, S1 fighters to F2 rest, E5
tac-nukes fire G8 planetside (I win)...

One of his opponents slumps in defeat:

OPPONENT 1
Unbelievable...

Ender isn't just playing ten games at once; he's winning ten games at once.

Fresh from her own DeathShot victory, Petra returns to the RTS game area and sees what Ender is doing:

PETRA
Wiggin, what the hell are you-

But he doesn't hear her; he's in his own world. Realizing that something extraordinary is happening, she steps back and watches him command.

Meanwhile, on Bean's KARPOV CHALLENGE PRO machine, we hear a loud SMASH:

KARPOV (IN THE GAME)
Too bad! Not good enough.

Bean slides around the back of the machine and pops the ACCESS PANEL. His fingers dance over a keypad therein.

On the GAME SCREEN, an "ACCESS CODE" WINDOW opens and fills with characters. Then: "Rackham, Maser (Adm)"

On the GAME SCREEN:

KARPOV (IN THE GAME)
Nice job! High Score!

Bean nods, satisfied - and then sees a CROWD gathering. He goes to see what all the fuss is about.

In front of the REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME, kids are watching Ender and MURMURING to each other:

CADET 1	CADET 2
That's the kid Rackham	The launchie who went right
singled out in the launch	into Salamander...
shuttle....	

Ender beats another opponent, and another.

Dink and Molo watch, and reassess their opinion of Ender.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rackham and Anderson watch Ender's feat on a SURVEILLANCE FEED. Rackham asks a stunned Anderson:

RACKHAM

How does this fit into the "traditional
Battle School experience"?

INT. GAME ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender beats his last opponent and slumps into a chair.

The CROWD CHEERS. Only Madrid looks unimpressed.

INT. CLASSROOM

Military Tech class. Plump CAPTAIN KRENSKY (50s) lectures
on the SPACE FIGHTER pictured on the DISPLAY SCREEN:

KRENSKY

...and the DX-101 is capable of reaching
and sustaining 0.45 light speed...[etc.]

A CLASSROOM OF LAUNCHIES follow along on their TABLETS.
Bean appears to be listening intently, but

ON BEAN'S TABLET, we see what he's really doing: Entering
the ACCESS CODE he stole from Rackham's office. Bean's
desktop disappears, and RACKHAM'S DESKTOP replaces it.

Bean grins to himself and starts to snoop around.

ON BEAN'S TABLET, he cycles through various BATTLE SCHOOL
SURVEILLANCE FEEDS: Barracks, mess hall, Battle Rooms.

An IMPATIENT LAUNCHIE raises his hand and asks Krensky:

IMPATIENT LAUNCHIE

Why are we learning about these ancient
ships? What about the DX-115? The DX-115
kicks ass!

MURMURS OF AGREEMENT from the class. Krensky calls up a
PICTURE OF THE DX-115 - a much sleeker, better looking
ship - next to the PICTURE OF THE DX-101. But only so he
can point for emphasis:

KRENSKY

You've got to understand the DX-101 to
understand the DX-115. Now...[etc.]

As the DX-115 disappears from the classroom display,
something on Bean's tablet catches his interest:

A VIDEOCONFERENCING FEED. In one window: A bedraggled man
in a worn I.F. jumpsuit, with an expansive ship's bridge
behind him. This is CAPTAIN TUOLA (40).

In another window: RACKHAM.

Bean pulls out an earpiece and slips it into his ear.

ON THE TABLET:

CAPTAIN TUOLA

You've been in our shoes, Sir. Not everyone involved can say as much.

Rackham reads between the lines:

RACKHAM

You've trained with Karpov?

CAPTAIN TUOLA

There have been four exercises so far.

RACKHAM

And?

Bean's eyes widen. He hits a key on the tablet -

ON BEAN'S TABLET, we start to ZOOM IN:

CAPTAIN TUOLA

I'm sure the Commander is well-versed in many aspects of strategy and tactics that-

The image Bean zooms on: In the b.g., through the window behind Captain Tuola, a GROUP OF SPACECRAFT, flying in formation through the void of SPACE.

RACKHAM (O.S.)

Save the diplomacy for the Council. Vega is just around the corner. In your opinion as a Flagship Captain, is Karpov ready for it?

Bean looks at the OUTDATED SPACESHIPS on Krensky's DISPLAY SCREEN, then back to the SHIPS on his tablet.

They are the exact same ships.

CAPTAIN TUOLA (O.S.)

No Sir. He is not.

Bean is confounded by the realization -

- but the teacher, Krensky, is walking his way. Bean slaps a button to remove Rackham's desktop from his tablet. He palms the earpiece while scratching his ear.

INT. BATTLE ROOM ENTRYWAY - FREE PERIOD

Ender fastens his helmet and takes a running leap into

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He soars into the Battle Room. His flying has greatly improved; we FOLLOW HIM on a long, slow turn around an obstacle. Only when he rounds the other side does he see

FIFTEEN LAUNCHIES waiting for him in their flash-suits. A few we recognize: Dink, Molo, Shen. Many still struggle with basic zero-G movement. Shen starts to salute; Molo grabs his arm before he can.

Ender is confused:

ENDER

Uh, hi.

DINK

Hey. We were, uh, wondering if we could practice with you.

ENDER

Sure, there's plenty of room. I'll just go over there, and-

But Shen corrects him:

SHEN

No, we want you to train us.

ENDER

(overwhelmed)

Oh...I can't train anybody. I'm a student, just like you.

MOLO

We saw you in the Game Room. You're not just like us.

ENDER

What do those games have to do with Battle Room?

DINK

What does Battle Room have to do with fighting Formics?

Dink has a point. Still, Ender is on the fence -

- until one last trainee flies in almost as deftly as Madrid: BEAN. With a series of tight swirls, he deposits himself in front of Ender.

BEAN

You helped me borrow Rackham's logon password - least I can do is help you teach these tossers which way's down.

Bean's cocky grin is as close to a friendly handshake as Ender's going to get for now.

ENDER

Okay. I can't promise anything, but-

SEEN

Can we work on basic platoon formations? McGann's been trying to teach us, and-

ENDER

Let's not worry about this formation or that formation just yet. Let's talk about space. 3-D is a lot different from 2-D...

As Ender starts to INSTRUCT THE GROUP, all his hesitation melts away. His small voice delivers an authority that brings smiles to the faces of the practice group launchies. They have come to the right place.

INT. OBSERVATION RING - CONTINUOUS

Petra watches Ender, proud of him. But to her left -

Madrid watches as well. They make eye contact, but Madrid keeps his evil thoughts to himself.

INT. BATTLE ROOM

Ender talks to his practice group:

ENDER

Even the best armies are thinking about the Battle Room the wrong way. Platoons, lines, columns, phalanxes - they're all battlefield tactics.

CUT TO:

A LATER PRACTICE SESSION, where we see Ender's ideas being translated into action. [For the remainder of the sequence, we will cut back and forth between his initial speech and the later practice session.]

BEAN pushes off from the wall and floats like a skydiver in free-fall.

CUT TO:

ENDER

But where's the field? Is it here?

Ender swipes his flat hand, indicating a PLANE OF MOTION.

CUT TO:

ENDER

Slingshot!

A CADET TRIAD SPINS CLOCKWISE, parallel to the plane of motion just indicated by Ender, like a clock hand with Dink fixed at the center - although, of course, Dink is not fixed to anything.

[Ender CALLS OUT COMMANDS in the b.g., in a rapidfire delivery reminiscent of his Game Room performance.]

Bean is incoming - his HAND SLAPS INTO MOLO'S HAND - the triad WHIPS BEAN AROUND -

ENDER

And...release!

The triad "SLINGSHOTS" BEAN ACROSS THE ROOM at a right angle to his original path, toward a SECOND CADET TRIAD.

CUT TO:

ENDER

Or is the field here?

He swipes his hand through a different PLANE OF MOTION.

CUT TO:

The SECOND CADET TRIAD spins in a "pinwheel" formation parallel to the plane just indicated by Ender, around the axis point made by their INTERLOCKED WRISTS.

Bean is sailing toward them.

Bean connects with the "pinwheel." They SPIN HIM IN A CIRCLE, faster and faster, until the centripetal force is so great that Bean starts to lose his grip -

ENDER

Scatter!

Everyone in the pinwheel lets go of everyone else, and they spin away from each other with balletic grace.

Bean heads off in an entirely different direction. Two LARGE ASTEROIDS follow him, keeping pace as he propels himself toward

SIX CADETS, all clumped together in a tight formation, feet in, heads out.

Bean lays on the speed, heading for the SIX CADETS in a direct collision course.

CUT TO:

ENDER

This is space. The field is wherever you want it to be. Or nowhere at all.

CUT TO:

ENDER

Go Nova!

The SIX CADETS kick with their legs and EXPLODE OUTWARD IN EVERY DIRECTION.

Bean passes through without touching a single Nova cadet.

The NOVA CADETS UNLOAD ON THE ASTEROIDS with a BARRAGE OF SLO-LIGHT, neutralizing them all in seconds.

CUT TO:

ENDER

Left, right, forward, back... in zero-G, they don't mean anything.

CUT TO:

Bean is heading for the wall at a dangerous speed.

He retrofires to slow himself; by the time he reaches the wall, he's going just fast enough to execute a perfect SWIMMER'S TURN and SHOOT BACK at a 45° angle.

CUT TO:

ENDER

There's only one direction here: Down.
That's where the enemy's gate is.

CUT TO:

In an added flourish, Bean tucks tight and does FLIP
AFTER FLIP onward through the zero-G -

CUT TO:

ENDER

The enemy's gate is down.

CUT TO:

At the perfect moment, Bean unwinds and SAILS THROUGH THE
GATE like Superman.

The practice group cadets all CHEER.

Ender beams.

INT. SALAMANDER BARRACKS - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ender is still feeling good about the practice as he
unzips his flash-suit to put it back in his locker.

His smile disappears when Madrid appears in the bathroom
doorway. Ender does not turn to face him; he tries to
walk away, re-zipping his flash-suit as he goes.

But Alai and Bernard step into the barracks doorway as
Ender reaches it, and back him into the room.

MADRID

Why you got that flash-suit on?

ENDER

I was practicing in the Battle Room.

MADRID

So I heard. I don't want you practicing
in the Battle Room anymore.

ENDER

You can't stop me. A cadet can do what he
wants with his free time.

Madrid looks inside Ender's open locker and finds the
PHOTO OF ENDER AND VALENTINE at their lakeside cabin
taped to the inside. He pulls the photo free.

MADRID

If I tell you your practices are
finished...

(RIPS THE PHOTO)

...your practices are finished.

Another pause, as Ender considers how to react to the provocation.

ENDER

A cadet can do what he wants with his free time.

Madrid loses what little cool he has and PUNCHES ENDER IN THE STOMACH, doubling him over.

MADRID

You get used to bossing around a bunch of little shit-pants launchies, you think you can talk to me like that?!

Just thinking about it makes Madrid mad enough to push Ender back into Bernard, who sets him up again for Madrid. They wait for Ender to find his breath again.

ENDER

I've got a brother like you.

MADRID

Yeah?

ENDER

Yeah. Just like you. Being the absolute best is the most important thing in the world to him.

(beat)

But deep down inside, he knows he's not. So he doesn't like himself very much, and he beats on people smaller than him to make himself feel better.

Madrid HITS ENDER IN THE FACE with a closed fist, bloodying his mouth.

Worzy surfaces in Alai; Madrid is stepping over the line.

Madrid waits for a counterattack from Ender.

ENDER

He likes it when I fight back, but I stopped doing that a long time ago. I only fight the fights that matter.

MADRID

(to Alai)

Hold him.

ALAI

It's enough, Madrid.

MADRID

Did I say it was enough? Hold him!

Bernard steps in and holds Ender's arms behind him.

ENDER

Who's going to hold the Formics down for you, Madrid? What if they're bigger than all three of you combined?

The questions hit home for Alai, but before he can speak -

- Madrid HITS ENDER IN THE FACE AS HARD AS HE CAN.

Alai watches with horror as Bernard lets go of Ender's arms, and Ender falls unconscious to the floor, next to the "VALENTINE" HALF OF THE TORN PHOTOGRAPH.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - UCLA - DAY

Amidst a lab full of scientific equipment, Valentine reads her tablet's screen:

ON VALENTINE'S TABLET, a LETTER FROM ENDER. Most of it has been BLACKED OUT by military censors. The "Love, Ender" at the bottom is one of the only bits remaining.

A prickly MALE GRAD STUDENT calls out:

MALE GRAD STUDENT

Wiggin! These polypeptide chains won't sequence themselves.

She puts the tablet down - but before she can get to the sequencer, their advisor DR. SARTORIUS (50s) enters.

DR. SARTORIUS

Valentine, can I see you in my office?

INT. DR. SARTORIUS'S OFFICE - DAY

Valentine is dismayed:

VALENTINE

Transferred? Why? What did I do wrong?

DR. SARTORIUS

Nothing. Your work here has been exemplary.

VALENTINE

So why?

DR. SARTORIUS
The I.F. wants a laboratory assistant.
(beat)
For their Exobiology Program.

VALENTINE
A lab assistant? What would an exobiology
lab have to work on? Everybody knows we
never captured-
(beat; disbelief)
You don't mean- they don't-

Sartorius speaks as though he's telling her the biggest
secret in the world, because he is:

DR. SARTORIUS
They have a specimen.

INT. DIFFERENT BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - FEW MINUTES LATER

Rackham rushes down the corridor, his concern on open
display -

-until he gets to the INFIRMARY DOOR, slows down, and
resumes his official demeanor.

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUOUS

Rackham enters to find Ender in bed, bruised, with a
split lip. He looks to see who it is - then looks away
with anger before delivering a perfunctory salute.

Rackham tries to defuse Ender's anger:

RACKHAM
I bet that lip hurts even worse than it
looks. What happened?

But Ender does not look at Rackham when he speaks:

ENDER
You know what happened, and why. Is this
how you want me to "prove my potential"?
By getting beaten to a pulp?

RACKHAM
I'm afraid I don't know what you're
referring to.

Ender turns to glare at Rackham:

ENDER

You're no better than Madrid. You're just another bully.

RACKHAM

That kind of talk can buy you a ticket on the first shuttle home.

ENDER

Fine! I'm sick of being your lab rat!

Before Rackham can respond, Bean, Shen and the rest of Ender's practice group rush into the infirmary. Surprised by Rackham's presence, they all salute reflexively.

Bean, however, eyes Rackham with suspicion.

RACKHAM

(to Ender)

We'll continue this discussion later. Get some rest.

Rackham salutes the cadets and leaves. The cadets move to Ender's bedside.

MOLO

What happened?

DINK

Who did this?

ENDER

Nothing, nobody... you know that access ladder between E3 and E4? I missed a rung on it and fell.

They all seem to buy it - except Bean. They make eye contact. Ender knows Bean knows he's lying; Bean knows Ender doesn't want him to say anything about it.

Enter Petra. She runs to Ender's side:

PETRA

Oh my God! What happened to you!

Petra starts to dote over Ender, holding his hand, gently touching his face where he was hit. Dink takes note:

DINK

What ladder did you say that was again?

INT. INFIRMARY - LIGHTS OUT

Ender sleeps peacefully -

- until a piece of CANDY hits his shoulder. He stirs.

On a corner chair, Bean eats some candy, then throws another piece at Ender.

The second piece hits Ender in the head, waking him.

BEAN

It was Madrid, huh.

ENDER

Yeah. And Alai and Bernard.

BEAN

Does Rackham know?

ENDER

He's pretending he doesn't, but he does. He knows everything that happens here.

BEAN

He doesn't know that I been spying on his private conversations with Fleet Captains, though, does he?

Ender sits up and takes notice. Bean hops from his chair.

BEAN

S'right. And guess what? Our great Fleet, the one that's going to save us from the Buggers? Every ship in it is 30 years old. DX-101s, saw em with my own eyes.

ENDER

Why would they be using old ships?

BEAN

I dunno. But it sounded like they're planning on using em soon. "Vega's just around the corner," they said.

ENDER

What's "Vega"?

BEAN

Dunno that either - but it didn't sound like they were looking forward to it.

(beat)

That washed-up old geezer Rackham isn't just dumping on you. He's hiding things from you, and from all of us. I don't trust him farther than I could piss.

ENDER

Why are you telling me all this?

Bean steps over to Ender.

BEAN

'Cause you I trust.

(beat)

What you gonna do about Madrid? Want me to hamstring him for you?

Bean makes a cutting motion along the back of his leg.

ENDER

No. But if Madrid doesn't care about the rules, and Rackham doesn't... then I don't either.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - NEXT WEEK

The BATTLE CLOCK is counting down: 20...19...18...

The Salamander and Eagle Armies prepare for a battle.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

While watching the Battle about to begin, Rackham speaks into an intercom:

RACKHAM

Initiate Dynamic Battle Room Condition 1 in Battle Room 4.

Anderson's eyebrows raise in surprise.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - TWENTY SECONDS LATER

3... 2... 1... The LIGHTS come up.

And with a SUBSONIC HUM, the floating OBSTACLES - fixed features of the room until now - begin to ROTATE LIKE MOONS AROUND THE CENTER OBSTACLE. They move at different speeds and in different orbits, complicating the Battle Room environment tremendously.

Before either side realizes what's happening, they find their positions EXPOSED and their strategies ruined.

Madrid is furious:

MADRID

Dynamic Battle Rooms aren't until the Tactical Academy! This is bullshit!

BERNARD

Yeah! Bullshit!

But the Eagle Commander takes a wiser approach:

EAGLE COMMANDER
Shoot, shoot 'em, hurry!

The Eagles SHOOT -

- ICING TWO SALAMANDERS, including their sharpshooter Petra. The rest of the Salamander Army flees for cover.

But they are not used to their cover moving on them. The obstacles' orbits quickly turn secure positions into exposed positions. More SALAMANDERS GET ICED.

Ender, however, is out of the action as usual, holding onto the OUTERMOST OBSTACLE. When it starts moving, he moves with it. He's so close to the wall that he's covered wherever he goes.

He looks behind him, at a BLUE SURVEILLANCE EYE, one of many, watching his every move. Then he peers around the edge of his obstacle.

ENDER'S POV as he quickly takes stock of:

- MADRID GETTING ICED before he can take cover.
- The FOUR REMAINING SALAMANDERS all guarding their GATE.
- The ENEMY'S GATE. The rotation of Ender's obstacle is slowly bringing him closer to it.

An ICED MADRID floats by Ender and sees what he's doing.

MADRID
Wiggin, don't you even think about -

But Madrid's inertia carries him right past Ender and into the wall, powerless.

SIX EAGLES are closing in on the Salamander Gate. The Salamanders are going to lose.

Ender decides to do something about it.

He SHOOTS HIS OWN PROPULSION PACK as Alai did earlier; the PACK GLOWS, indicating that its wearer has lost his mobility. He SHOOTS HIS LEGS; they GLOW and go rigid.

With only his arms still in use, Ender scrambles around the obstacle until his back is facing the inside of the room. No one notices him; they see his GLOWING PACK and take him for iced.

Craning over his shoulder, Ender takes a hard look at:

- The ROTATING OBSTACLES, and
- The ENEMY'S GATE.

Ender's brain is overclocking, tracking the trajectories of the multiple obstacles like a supercomputer. He waits for the right moment -

- and PUSHES HIMSELF BACKWARDS. He folds his LEFT ARM over his chest and SHOOTS it, freezing it there.

ENDER DRIFTS in a dead man's float toward the middle of the room, heading right for the EAGLE MARAUDING PARTY -

- but Ender is heading away from their gate, and the Eagles are in a big hurry to beat the Salamanders. On a cursory glance, Ender appears to be iced, with his glowing arm blocking his un-iced chest plate.

One Eagle looks Ender in the eye - thinking about shooting him once more, just to be safe. But:

EAGLE COMMANDER (O.S.)
Come on! Only four of them left!

The Eagle offensive moves forward at full speed, leaving Ender to float on, heading right for -

- a ROTATING OBSTACLE. It looks like he's going to run right into it -
- but he doesn't. He's almost past the OBSTACLE when it COLLIDES WITH HIM like a perfectly aimed cue ball, changing his trajectory to bring it in line with -
- the ENEMY'S GATE. Only ONE EAGLE GUARDIAN has been left behind. He doesn't pay much attention to the glowing, spinning Salamander casualty -
- until Ender stretches out his remaining arm and ICES THE EAGLE GUARDIAN with one shot to the chest.

Across the room, the Eagle Army swoops in and ices the last guardian of the Salamander gate.

EAGLE COMMANDER
We did it! We beat Salamander!

But before he can pass through the gate -

- ENDER PASSES THROUGH THE EAGLE GATE.

The LIGHTS come on. Everybody de-ices. The Eagle Commander is confused; he hasn't passed through the Salamander Gate yet.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Victory Salamander.

EAGLE COMMANDER
What?!

Madrid is elated - until he sees Ender on the other side of the Eagle gate. Enraged, he flies straight at Ender:

MADRID
What were my orders, Wiggin!?

Alai interposes himself between Madrid and Ender.

ALAI
We won, Madrid! We won!

MADRID
I told him to stay covered! He disobeyed a direct order!

RACKHAM (O.S.)
Is that true, Cadet?

Rackham glides into the Battle Room. The surprised cadets have never seen him in this space before; they all try to salute, but given their different angles of orientation, the effect is awkward.

Rackham approaches Ender.

RACKHAM
Did you or did you not disobey a direct order from Commander Madrid?

ENDER
Yes, Sir. I did.

RACKHAM
It's the last time you'll do so.

Ender bows his head and waits for the axe to fall.

Rackham turns to address all the cadets:

RACKHAM
As of today, Cadet Wiggin will assume command of the Dragon Army.

The entire room is dumbstruck, Ender most of all.

ENDER

But... there is no Dragon Army...

RACKHAM

As of today there is.

(to group)

The order to lose is one you're all free to disobey, even if it comes from me.

Madrid is furious:

MADRID

What?! He's just a launchie, you can't!

RACKHAM

This is my Battle School, Cadet Madrid. I can strap you to a torpedo and fire you at the Formics if I want.

Exit Rackham.

Alone of all the Salamanders, Petra grins. Ender, however, watches Rackham go with a frown.

INT. DRAGON ARMY BARRACKS

With his new COMMANDER'S BARS pinned to his jumpsuit, Ender walks down the center aisle. To his left -

The DRAGON ARMY stands at attention, Shen especially so. Dink stands proud, as does Molo. The three NEW LAUNCHIES to her left, however, are nervous.

Bean struggles with the smile that's creeping onto his face. Ender walks the rank in silence, keeping the four new launchies after Bean on their toes.

But no one is more nervous than the last Dragon: ALAI has been transferred into Ender's army. He has not been kind to Ender in the past; now he is at his mercy.

Ender lets Alai sweat it out and heads back up the line, walking with authority, but not swagger.

ENDER

At ease.

(beat)

We'll have four platoons, when we use platoons at all. I'll float between them and supervise. The toon leaders will be Dink, Molo, Bean...

Ender turns and looks back down the rank.

ENDER

And Alai.

No one is more surprised by this than Alai. No one gets overly upset about it except Bean.

BEAN

What? You're giving a toon to Madrid's girlfriend? After he-

ENDER

That's enough, Bean.

Ender's look tells Bean: I don't want anyone to know about that incident but you, me and Alai.

ENDER

Alai is the only one of us who's not underaged and undertrained. We're being set up to lose. We're supposed to lose.

He stops and faces them. Coming from someone of his age and size, his poise is almost chilling:

ENDER

Dragon Army: Did you come to Battle School to lose?

Twelve HEELS SNAP BACK TO ATTENTION, and in loud unison:

DRAGON ARMY

No Sir!

An impressive show of discipline and devotion - but it is interrupted by a LAUNCHIE who enters and salutes.

LAUNCHIE

This is for you, Commander Wiggin Sir.

Ender takes a piece of SMARTPAPER from the launchie. The paper is blank until Ender presses his thumb to it; then the text appears: It is a BATTLE SUMMONS.

Ender reads it, and tries to swallow his anger:

ENDER

Our first battle is in three days.

Decorum breaks down:

DRAGON ARMY

What? Three days?! That's insane! [etc.]

INT. FACULTY FITNESS CENTER

With no one else in sight, Rackham hits the HEAVY BAG. Age has taken away none of his form or focus; he fires tight, punishing combinations, hitting with sharp SLAPS.

Then he stops abruptly and lets his hands fall. We're not sure why, until Rackham turns to face Ender, who watches him from the doorway, now wearing his anger openly.

RACKHAM

You're not supposed to be in here,
Commander Wiggin. Faculty only.

Ignoring this, Ender approaches.

ENDER

Why bother giving me an army?

RACKHAM

I thought we've been over this-

Ender's pushes forward:

ENDER

I deserve to know. Why give me an army full of fresh launchies and make us fight in three days? Why are you so interested in making me lose?

RACKHAM

My reasons are not your department.

ENDER

What is?! Making my life hell?!

Overwhelmed with frustration, Ender HITS the bag.

Rackham's face is blank - until he breaks down in LAUGHTER. Ender looks at him, puzzled.

RACKHAM

That was the worst punch I've ever seen.

ENDER

So teach me how to do it right.

Rackham looks down at tiny Ender and shakes his head:

RACKHAM

Boxing's not your department either.

ENDER

Teach me anyway.

(punches the bag again)

Teach me something.

Rackham stares at Ender - and a glint of admiration for the boy shows through. Finally, Rackham breaks:

RACKHAM

Okay, do what I do: Left foot forward, back foot up, elbows in, hands covering the head, and... Pop the left!

Rackham fires a LEFT JAB. Ender follows. Rackham moves over to help Ender.

RACKHAM

Bring the hand back to cover the head, always cover the head... better, but throw with your whole body, not just the arm... better... Okay. Okay, not bad.

Ender stops, panting from the effort:

ENDER

When we met, you told me I belonged at Battle School. Ever since I got here, all I've wanted to do is prove you right - but you won't let me. I want to believe there's a reason. Is something going on, something you're not telling me?

RACKHAM

Why do you ask? A little bird been talking to you... or a little Bean?
(smiles at Ender's surprise)
You think cadets can steal my access codes without my permission?

ENDER

So why did you let him eavesdrop?

Rackham softens:

RACKHAM

You may be a Commander, Cadet Wiggin, but there are still things I cannot tell you without facing my third and likely final court martial.

(beat)

(MORE)

RACKHAM (CONT'D)

But you do belong here. So do me a favor: Use that pattern-finding, Big-Picture-drawing brain of yours. Think about what your friend told you. And think about why I might be "making your life hell" - other than the pure, sadistic joy I get from torturing my lab rats.

Rackham throws a slow, mock-punch toward Ender's head. Ender brings his hands up to block it, and smiles in spite of himself.

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB - TIME UNKNOWN

Valentine is apprehensive behind the VISOR of her BIOHAZARD SUIT HELMET, with the accoutrements of a high-level BIOSAFETY ROOM behind her. She listens as

A team of biohazard-suited I.F. SCIENTISTS tensely discuss the specimen before them (as yet unseen).

I.F. SCIENTIST 1

I don't like this.

Their leader, the wan DR. FARLAND, speaks for the team:

DR. FARLAND

Neither do any of us. But the risks have been outweighed by pressing concerns.

VALENTINE

Why was this specimen left intact when all the others destroyed themselves? Do you think it got disconnected from the hive, somehow?

DR. FARLAND

You're not here to write a dissertation. Bring the specimen up to 0.1.

On a touchscreen CONTROL PANEL with the word *STASIS* prominently featured, Valentine does as she's told, nudging a virtual SLIDING SWITCH up from zero.

Farland watches with intense, cold interest. We turn away from him, and finally see

A TRANSPARENT CYLINDER, frosty with refrigeration. Inside: A 2' semi-opaque COCOON with the coloration of a white onion skin. And beneath the cocoon...

A patch of DEEP BLUE that can only be a FORMIC PUPA.

We PUSH IN on the FORMIC as the deep-freeze fog dissipates. No movement from it.

Valentine leans in, as do the others.

Still nothing from the Formic -

- until it JERKS unexpectedly.

Everyone JUMPS.

The Formic pupa JERKS again -

- and a tiny BURST OF COLOR appears in one section of a WIDEBAND SPECTROSCOPY MONITOR SCREEN. Farland watches the screen closely, but no more activity is forthcoming.

DR. FARLAND

In the event of any EM emissions like that, you're to notify me immediately.

(beat)

Start the ATP feed.

Valentine nudges up a different fader switch.

In the containment cylinder, a CLEAR LIQUID begins to flow through a FEEDING TUBE into the specimen itself.

INT. BATTLE ROOM

The BATTLE CLOCK counts down, a BEEP with each number: 15... 14... 13...

In time with the BEEPS, we CUT among the members of the DRAGON ARMY, ending on Ender as the LIGHTS come up.

MONTAGE - DRAGON ARMY'S TRIALS - FOLLOWING WEEKS

The Dragon Army is pushed to the absolute limit:

--A BATTLE SUMMONS, in Ender's hand: "Dragon Army v. Phoenix Army"

--IN RACKHAM'S OFFICE, Rackham watches Anderson on the intercom, calling in a new Dynamic Battle Room condition.

--IN THE BATTLE ROOM: 20 LARGE ASTEROIDS are released.

--IN THE OBSERVATION RING, a small CROWD looks on.

--Ender calls out, and BEAN'S TOON "SLINGSHOTS" him right at the Asteroid field...

--IN RACKHAM'S OFFICE, Rackham watches, tensing up...

--BACK IN THE BATTLE ROOM, Bean sails through the middle of the Asteroid field without touching a single one, and through the enemy's gate.

--IN RACKHAM'S OFFICE, Anderson looks up at Rackham, impressed with Ender's win. Rackham breaks into a grin.

--IN THE CORRIDOR, the DRAGON ARMY exits the Battle Room alone, flush with victory.

--THE MESS HALL SCOREBOARD puts the DRAGON ARMY at 1-0.

--Another BATTLE SUMMONS: "Dragon Army v. Lion Army"

--IN THE BATTLE ROOM: A FOG fills the space, reducing visibility to 10'.

--SHOT OF ENDER calling out commands, a true leader, fierce and unwavering.

--The SLO-LIGHT SHOTS cut through the fog like lightning.

--THE MESS HALL SCOREBOARD. Dragon Army: 2-0.

--BATTLE SUMMONS: "Dragon Army v. Bear Army"

--REACTION SHOTS from Dragon Army. This call to battle comes sooner than expected; they aren't happy, but Ender pushes them onward.

--IN THE BATTLE ROOM: CADETS from both armies are SUCKED INTO THE OBSTACLES as though by an invisible whirlpool, and ICED. Rackham has introduced SIMULATED GRAVITY.

--SHOT OF ENDER AND BEAN. Ender points:

ENDER
Slingshot.

BEAN
How?! "Gravity" just iced half my toon!

ENDER
Exactly.

--SHOT OF BEAN SPEEDING TOWARD THE CENTER OBSTACLE. He just misses, overshooting it...

--But the "gravity" pulls Bean back toward the obstacle. He SLINGSHOTS AROUND the other side...

--...and through the enemy's gate.

--IN THE OBSERVATION RING, the CROWD of onlookers has grown. They CHEER like victors at a horse race.

--A flurry of BATTLE SUMMONSES: Viper, Wolf, Eagle...

--THE MESS HALL SCOREBOARD. The Dragon Army climbs the ranks without a single loss: 5-0, 9-0, 15-0... until they reach 28-0, tied for first with Salamander.

--IN THE CORRIDOR: the Dragon Army exits alone again, battle-weary but victorious.

They turn the corner to find Rackham emerging from a door. Everyone stands at attention and salutes. There's a twinkle of amusement in Rackham's eye as he salutes back. As he passes Ender, he smiles and nods:

RACKHAM
Commander Wiggin.

Ender is exhausted - but Rackham's respect pleases him to no end.

END MONTAGE.

INT. DRAGON ARMY BARRACKS - HALF HOUR LATER

Ender and the rest of the Dragons are about to lay down for a much-needed nap when a LAUNCHIE enters with another BATTLE SUMMONS. Ender takes it, reads, SIGHS stoically:

ENDER
Five o'clock. Today.

MOLO
Two in one day?! That's totally ridiculous! Who're we fighting?

Ender shows her the SUMMONS: Dragon Army v. *****

ENDER
The "Mystery Army." Think about it this way: How could it get any worse?

The fate-tempting question makes Bean frown.

INT. BATTLE ROOM ENTRYWAY

The Dragons are all exhausted, as they follow Ender into

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It is DARK; on the walls, the SURVEILLANCE EYES glow blue like stars. The OBSTACLES rotate through patches of thick FOG, tugging at the Dragons with their gravity, like a microcosm of space itself.

ENDER

I hate to admit it, but it's almost beautiful.

The rest of the Dragons take in the sight, until:

BEAN

Where's our mystery army?

ENDER

Maybe Rackham made them invisible.

Some CHUCKLES at this - until they're all startled by a THUD, followed by a GROAN OF MACHINERY unlike anything we've heard in the Battle Room thus far.

Across the room, visible through a break in the fog, a HOLE opens in the wall and widens like a camera aperture.

EXT. BATTLE SCHOOL SPACE STATION - CONTINUOUS

From outside the station, we see what is happening: TWO BATTLE ROOMS ARE MERGING INTO ONE GIGANTIC BATTLE ROOM.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The resulting space is as vast as an indoor stadium. On the other side of it, as small as ants...

BEAN

They've got two armies!

He's right: TWO FULL ARMIES, SALAMANDER and EAGLE, surrounding a single GATE.

INT. OBSERVATION RING - CONTINUOUS

DOZENS OF CADETS watch the battle unfold.

CADET 1

Two against one? That isn't right.

Cadet 2 nods in solemn agreement.

CADET 2

Thirty yuan on Salamander and Eagle.

CADET 1

Two-to-one odds? Okay, you're on.

INT. DOUBLE BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ON THE SALAMANDER SIDE, Petra is the first to spot the Dragons. She fires a BARRAGE into the fog -

- and almost hits the Dragons from 150m away.

Petra looks at her double army and frowns; the unfairness of the fight does not sit well with her.

Ender herds his army out of the line of fire. He is silent for an uncomfortably long time, eyes darting from Dragon to Dragon. Has the strain finally gotten to him?

DINK

We can't shoot it out with two armies.

His voice spurs Ender into action:

ENDER

I know. Stand at attention.

DINK

But... there's no ground...

ENDER

Attention!

Dink holds his body stiff and upright. Ender makes Alai do the same, and hooks Alai's and Dink's feet and arms together to create a TWO-MAN "WALL."

MOLO

What about our gate?

Ender adds a third Dragon cadet to the wall.

ENDER

Forget about our gate. The enemy's gate is down.

Without warning, Ender starts ICING HIS "WALL" TEAMMATES. Their suits go rigid, holding the wall together.

ALAI

What are you doing?!

Ender shoots Alai, icing him:

ENDER
Building an elevator.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rackham is watching the battle intently with Anderson when McGann walks into the office unannounced.

MCGANN
What's this I'm hearing about-
(sees the surveillance feed)
Oh for Christ's sake, Rackham.

ANDERSON
Uh... he's shooting his own teammates.

MCGANN
What did I say? You finally ruined him.

Rackham says nothing, but he's beginning to worry.

INT. DOUBLE BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From Madrid's end of the arena, the DRAGONS ARE HIDDEN behind their CENTER OBSTACLE.

EAGLE COMMANDER
Let's go, they're sitting ducks!

Madrid holds him back, squinting through the fog:

MADRID
Not before I know what he's doing.

And then confusion warps Madrid's face -

- as something TREMENDOUS and GLOWING rounds the Dragon obstacle: A half-ton "COCOON" BUILT FROM THE ENTIRE DRAGON ARMY, fronted by a WALL OF ALREADY-ICED DRAGONS.

The Cocoon moves with startling quickness -

- as ENDER DELIVERS COMMANDS from his position INSIDE THE COCOON, lying on his stomach on a "floor" of two other cadets. He speaks too quietly for the enemy to hear:

ENDER
Left side 9 o'clock full, rear full-dive,
rear stop, left side 12 o'clock...[etc.]

The COCOON IS HEADING RIGHT FOR THE SWARM OF ENEMY ARMIES like a shark for a school of fish.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rackham can't contain an approving LAUGH at Ender's ingenuity. Anderson and McGann smile, surprised.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MADRID

Where is Wiggin...

EAGLE COMMANDER

Shoot it!

Both armies unload on the Cocoon - but the cadets in front are already iced, and you can only die once.

The combined propulsion of 9 cadets has closed half the distance to Madrid. The Cocoon banks right, dives, rises-

Some of the Salamanders manage to flank the Cocoon and ICE ITS LEFT SIDE, but the icing just locks the cadets together, adding to the Cocoon's structural strength.

Madrid squints at the Cocoon:

MADRID

Where the hell is Wiggin?!

EAGLE COMMANDER

(panicked)

Should we go for their gate?

MADRID

No... it's too far...

(to two Salamanders)

Push them back!

The Salamanders obey Madrid's orders, but they fly tentatively, and -

-the DRAGON COCOON KNOCKS THEM ASIDE without deviating, and proceeds to BARREL INTO THE MIDST OF THE TWO ARMIES, sending them ricocheting in all directions -

- but the impact SLOWS THE COCOON, enough for MADRID to GRAB ONTO THE TOP. Peering into the Cocoon, MADRID SEES ENDER inside. He reaches HIS GUN ARM THROUGH -

Ender grabs Madrid's arm and ICES it, then SHOOTs MADRID IN THE CHEST and pushes him off the Cocoon to drift away.

But other than Madrid, the Dragons haven't shot a single opponent, and their entire Cocoon GLOWS, all iced -

- except Bean, who is crouched in back, hiding.

DINK

Go for it!

ENDER

Not yet.

The enemy is pushing against the Cocoon, and they're out-pushing Bean. The Cocoon comes to a standstill five feet from the ENEMY GATE.

Ender gets ready...

ENDER

Go!

Bean SHOOTs UP FROM THE COCOON. As he rises, he RAPID-FIRES DOWNWARD at all opponents near the gate.

From fifty meters away, Petra gets a bead and ICES BEAN with a single shot -

But from the far end of the Battle Room, Madrid calls:

MADRID

Watch out for Wiggin!

Petra hears him, but before she or any of the others know what he's talking about -

- ENDER SLIPS FROM THE COCOON and SHOOTs THROUGH THE ENEMY GATE like a missile.

The LIGHTS come up.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Victory Dragon.

The Dragon Army CHEERS.

INT. OBSERVATION RING - CONTINUOUS

CHEERS erupt among the spectators. Cadet 2 pays Cadet 1.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender smiles proudly right at the SURVEILLANCE EYE, seeking Rackham's approbation -

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

- and receiving it, as Rackham nods with pride at the feed while McGann YAWPS like a football fan.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the CONTROL PANEL, Ender de-ices the room. The DRAGONS start to APPLAUD - and the EAGLE ARMY JOINS IN. Even the bulk of the SALAMANDERS CLAP, ignoring Madrid's rage.

Ender flies toward Madrid with his hand outstretched, but Madrid won't reconcile; he fixes Ender with an evil look, then turns and heads for the exit, with stalwart followers Bernard and Sebastian in tow.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - A MINUTE LATER

PETRA

Hey!

Ender is heading back to barracks with his exhausted, triumphant army; he motions for them to go on ahead, and goes to talk to Petra.

PETRA

That was a load, making you fight both armies. I wouldn't want to win that way.

ENDER

(grins)

You didn't.

She LAUGHS at this rare display of swagger.

INT. DRAGON ARMY BARRACKS - ONE MINUTE LATER

Ender enters to find many of the Dragons wearing not jumpsuits but favorite OLD T-SHIRTS. Molo puts on MAKEUP. Alai and Bean pass a BASKETBALL back and forth; Bean's HAT is once again on his head.

ENDER

Where did you guys get this stuff?

Something bumps into Ender's leg - his SUITCASE, rolling over to meet him.

Dink calls out as he hangs GIRLIE POSTERS in his locker:

DINK
Ain't it good to be King?

CUT TO:

Ender OPENS HIS SUITCASE and removes his hundred favorite COMIC BOOKS, carefully bagged and wrapped in towels. From his smile, you'd think they were bars of gold.

ENDER
(to Bean)
They were my Dad's.

Then he remembers something - he goes to his locker and takes out the SUPERMAN COMIC that Petra loaned him.

ENDER
I've gotta go give this back to Petra.
I'll be right back.

INT. RACKHAM'S CONFERENCE ROOM

Rackham is in heated discussion with the other members of the I.F. High Council; the other members, of course, are there in HOLOPRESENCE only.

HIGH COMMANDER
This is not the time to discuss putting the fate of the human race in the hands of a child.

RACKHAM
I'm not proposing that...

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CENTCOM - CONTINUOUS

The entire HIGH COUNCIL is gathered around the holoconference table in person, except for Rackham. Off to their right: A huge HOLOGLOBE similar to the ones we've seen before, only 15' across and inactive.

RACKHAM
But he's mastered every challenge the Tactical Academy can offer - and he's done it on his own, without help. I've made it almost impossible for him.

HIGH COMMANDER
I've reviewed his file. The boy doesn't like violence, Admiral.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR

A RIPPING sound - and Petra's SUPERMAN COMIC hits the floor, torn in half.

Madrid, Bernard and Sebastian carry a struggling Ender down the hall. Madrid's hand covers Ender's mouth. Madrid and all his followers wear FLASH SUITS, sans helmets, but Ender has only his jumpsuit on.

HIGH COMMANDER (V.O.)

And violence is what we do out here.

MADRID

I thought I taught you a lesson, Wiggin.
I thought I taught you a bunch of them.

INT. BATTLE ROOM ENTRYWAY - ONE MINUTE LATER

Madrid et. al. carry Ender toward the Battle Room door.

HIGH COMMANDER (V.O.)

He's not ready to shoulder our burdens,
no matter how good a game player he is.

MADRID

Now we have to go back to lesson #1. This
time, I'll make sure you learn it right.

They TOSS ENDER INTO THE BATTLE ROOM, as they did the day after his arrival at Battle School. This time, though, Ender has no Flash-Suit. No padding, no propulsion.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender drifts through the zero-G, utterly helpless.

HIGH COMMANDER (V.O.)

This is no game we're facing.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rackham watches Ender's ordeal on a SURVEILLANCE FEED for a split second. Reflexively, he grabs an intercom mic -

HIGH COMMANDER (V.O.)

This is a real fight.

- but he does not call for help, and a grim determination comes over him. He puts down the mic, hits "RECORD" beneath the feed and turns away.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madrid and friends fly in after Ender. They circle him, toying with him, spinning him like a top.

ENDER

Please stop.

Sebastian SMACKS ENDER IN THE HEAD and flies away from Ender's return smack.

MADRID

Oh, does that mean you're ready to fight?

ENDER

We don't have to do this.

Madrid swoops in and PUNCHES ENDER IN THE FACE.

MADRID

But I want to.

INT. DRAGON ARMY BARRACKS

Petra enters the Dragon Army barracks.

PETRA

Hey guys. Is Ender around?

ALAI

We thought he was with you.

As they exchange looks, alarm grows among them.

BEAN

Madrid.

Bean bolts from the room, and the others follow.

INT. BATTLE ROOM

Madrid grabs Ender by the feet, spins him around and FLINGS him into the CENTRAL OBSTACLE'S SHARP CORNERS.

Ender looks right at a BLUE SURVEILLANCE EYE embedded in the obstacle.

We see his convex reflection as he screams at the eye - not at Madrid, but at Rackham:

ENDER

This doesn't have to happen!

Bernard RAMS Ender back into the obstacle like a tackling dummy. Ender hits the side of his head; when he touches it, his hand comes away BLOODY.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rackham is on the other side of the room, arms folded across his chest. But Anderson types on the terminal -

- and the wall in front of Rackham becomes one giant SURVEILLANCE FEED OF ENDER, PLEADING DIRECTLY INTO THE CAMERA. Anderson tells Rackham with disgust:

ANDERSON

Stop this.

RACKHAM

Ender will stop it himself, as soon as he's sure there's no other way.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clinging to the obstacle, Ender sees Madrid and friends circling him, savoring the moment.

Then he sees a way to escape the violence: The BATTLE ROOM EXIT. He PUSHES OFF THE OBSTACLE, sailing between Bernard and Sebastian. He's almost at the threshold -

- when Sebastian SWOOPS IN, grabs his ankle and throws him back into the fray.

Ender sails toward Madrid, who cocks his arm and CLOTHESLINES ENDER, catching him right in the NECK.

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ANDERSON

They'll kill him!

But Rackham shakes his head and turns from the feed:

RACKHAM

He won't let them.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

COUGHING from Madrid's blow, Ender manages to sputter:

ENDER

Rackham!

Madrid shows no signs of letting up.

MADRID

Rackham won't help you. Rackham doesn't care what happens to you, or any of us.

He PUNCHES ENDER IN THE FACE again.

MADRID

He only cares who's the best. I was the best before you came - and I'll be the best after you're gone.

Madrid throws Ender at a SIDE OBSTACLE -

- but Ender GRABS A HANDHOLD on the geometric obstacle, and then another. Having stabilized himself, he turns to look at Madrid, and we see it in his face:

Ender is going to fight. He knows he has no choice.

Madrid and his friends LAUGH at Ender's resolve.

Ender PUSHES OFF and sails from the obstacle to the CONTROL PANEL against the wall, grabbing onto a hand grip and holding himself in place.

Madrid doesn't come after him immediately, remaining in the middle of the Battle Room space, laughing:

MADRID

What, you gonna turn off the lights?

Ender hits the "COMMAND" BUTTON on the CONTROL PANEL.

ENDER

Initiate Asteroids...21F.

The SAFE ZONE encloses Ender in laser light.

FIVE PORTALS OPEN in the walls. TWENTY ONE LARGE "ASTEROIDS" EMERGE from them and hang in the air around Madrid and his friends. They are no longer laughing.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Asteroids 21F can be extremely hazardous for fewer than 10 skilled cadets. Please ensure that helmets are on.

Madrid and his friends all raise their hands to their heads. None of them bothered to wear helmets.

They charge Ender. Too late:

ENDER
Begin Asteroids 21F.

The ASTEROIDS COME AGLOW and FLOAT TOWARD MADRID AND HIS FRIENDS. Madrid flies carefully, avoiding them.

At this difficulty level, even these slower-moving large Asteroids hit hard enough to hurt; when Bernard gets tagged by one, he reacts by angrily OPENING FIRE at it and all the Asteroids around him.

MADRID
No! Don't!

Too late. Bernard creates dozens of faster-moving MEDIUM and SMALL Asteroids.

A fast-moving SMALL ASTEROID HITS SEBASTIAN IN THE GUT. Enraged, he starts firing at the Asteroids himself. His aim is excellent; he hits many of them.

Too many. Soon, there are HUNDREDS OF TINY ASTEROIDS WHIZZING around, dive-bombing them like angry bees. Bernard and Sebastian are both getting slammed; Bernard catches one in the head and swoons.

But Madrid's flying skills are amazing; he is weaving a twisted path among the Asteroids, swooping, dipping, contorting to avoid them.

A softball-sized Asteroid comes hurtling at Ender -
- only to SWERVE AWAY from the SAFE ZONE.

Madrid sees this, and heads for Ender's safe zone. His path is circuitous, requiring frequent ducks and detours-

- but Ender sees that Madrid is getting closer. He looks to the other two:

Bernard cries as ASTEROIDS BATTER HIM; Sebastian's LIP GETS SPLIT; Ender is stoning them without lifting a hand-

- but Madrid keeps coming. The Asteroids may have levelled the playing field for Ender, but they're not going to beat Madrid for him. Ender's face registers an understanding of this.

So he steels himself and SPRINGS FORWARD, out of the safe zone, free-falling through the zero-G -

- and SLAMMING into the slow-moving Madrid at upwards of 25mph. He grabs hold of Madrid, and together the two tumble backward into the Asteroid field.

The ASTEROIDS SMASH INTO THEM BOTH, punishing Ender and Madrid alike. MADRID PUNCHES ENDER IN THE HEAD.

But when Ender decides to fight, he fights to win; all the aggression he's pent up over the past months explodes from him with wild-animal frenzy.

Ender HEADBUTTS MADRID sharply in the NOSE, sending GLOBULES OF BLOOD floating into the zero-G. He hits him again, and again.

A wave of Asteroids hit Ender and Madrid alike. The combination of the headbutts and the Asteroids bring Madrid close to the edge of blackout -

- but like a berserker, Ender doesn't even register the damage to himself. He grabs Madrid by the collar with his left hand and PUNCHES HIM in the face with his right, over and over, putting all his weight into it...

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rackham and Anderson now watch the feed wall as Ender implements Rackham's earlier boxing lesson with brutal efficiency. Rackham's hands remain behind his back. His jaw muscles clench.

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MILITARY POLICEMAN (O.S.)
Terminate Asteroids 21F!

The voice brings Ender back to reality; he looks to see two big MILITARY POLICEMEN at the control panel.

The Asteroids all go dark, drop to the walls of the room and roll back into their portals.

Ender lets go of Madrid, and watches his nemesis float through the air like a drowned man through water.

The MPs fly to Ender and grab him by the arms.

INT. BATTLE ROOM ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Petra, Bean and the others arrive, too late; they're just in time to see the MEDICS jump into the Battle Room. Bean runs up to the threshold:

BEAN

Ender!

INT. BATTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the medics strap Madrid and company into stretchers, Ender turns to look at his friends over his shoulder.

But the two MPs grab him by the arms. Ender turns back, bowing his head. A PORTAL we've never seen before opens in the Battle Room wall.

As the MPs pull Ender through the portal, he looks into a SURVEILLANCE EYE -

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

- forcing Rackham to face the fact of his betrayal, writ large upon his office wall.

INT. DETENTION CELL - LATER

Ender sits on a bunk, bruised, alone, staring into space.

Rackham enters the cell. Ender doesn't stand, salute or even acknowledge his presence.

RACKHAM

It was important that you solve the Madrid problem on your own.

Enraged, Ender finally turns to look at Rackham:

ENDER

The "Madrid problem" tried to kill me! I am a person, not a game piece! We all are, even Madrid. This didn't have to happen - to me, or to him.

RACKHAM

Trust me when I say it did.

Ender looks away again.

ENDER

I'm done trusting you. I'm done playing. I quit.

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB

The FORMIC PUPA is TRIPLE THE SIZE it was last we saw it.

Valentine is assisting Dr. Farland, as he HITS THE FORMIC WITH AN ELECTRIC SHOCK.

The PUPA JOLTS. Beneath the white cocoon, a tangle of LIGHT skates briefly across the Formic's blue surface.

Valentine winces with involuntary sympathy.

On the EM MONITOR, a brief BURST OF COLOR, then nothing.

On her TABLET, Valentine adds "1.251" to a "Galvanic Response" column of similar numbers: 1.258, 1.247, etc..

Farland frowns.

DR. FARLAND

I want to force something out of it, some extended EM signature... Keep hitting it, increase the voltage 5% each time.

VALENTINE

I thought you wanted to keep it alive?

DR. FARLAND

(impassively)

5% each time, up to 150%.

Farland leaves the room. Valentine looks at the Formic pupa the way we might look at a beached whale, wrestling with the request.

On her TABLET, she starts filling in numbers - 1.243, 1.267, 1.222 - without actually doing the experiment.

INT. VALENTINE'S QUARTERS - ONE HOUR LATER

Valentine enters her room to find Dr. Farland waiting for her with two I.F. SOLDIERS.

DR. FARLAND

Ms. Wiggin, you're to go with these men.

VALENTINE

Dr. Farland- about the experiment, I- I didn't mean to question you, it's just-

DR. FARLAND

Just do what they say, and nothing will happen to you.

Farland leaves without another word. Valentine looks to the soldiers; they look back at her without expression.

INT. DETENTION CELL

Ender sits cross-legged on his cot, staring at the wall. He was serious about quitting; he is disheveled and unwashed, indicating that he's been here for a while.

Enter Rackham.

RACKHAM

There's no more time for this. You've got to come with me.

Ender shakes his head.

RACKHAM

I'll ask you one more time.

ENDER

Screw yourself.

Two MILITARY POLICEMEN enter the cell alongside Rackham.

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL CORRIDOR - THIRTY SECONDS LATER

The MPs escort Ender, as Rackham walks a step ahead.

ENDER

Go ahead, take me to prison.

RACKHAM

I'm not taking you to prison.

The MPs back off. Rackham opens the door to

INT. BATTLE SCHOOL ENTRY BAY - CONTINUOUS

Rackham leads Ender through the entry bay where Ender's launch shuttle first arrived.

ENDER

So where are you taking me?

Rackham keeps walking toward the loading door.

RACKHAM

That's a decision only you can make. But you need to make it now.

INT. TWO-MAN SHUTTLE CRAFT - CONTINUOUS

The cramped quarters surprise Ender - and Rackham climbing into the pilot's seat surprises him even more.

But he keeps silent as Rackham seals the vessel, engages the engines and

EXT. BATTLE SCHOOL SPACE STATION - CONTINUOUS

The TWO-MAN SHUTTLE UNLATCHES from the space station, and BLASTS OFF into space.

EXT. SPACE

The TWO-MAN SHUTTLE HURTTLES toward EARTH.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

With the SHUTTLE in a large clearing behind them. Rackham heads into the woods. Ender follows; the place seems naggingly familiar, but he's not sure why, until -

EXT. LAKESIDE CABIN - DAY

They emerge from the woods. Ender can't believe his eyes.

ENDER

No way.

He is standing on the SHORES OF LAKE NAMAKAGON, looking at his family's modest LAKESIDE CABIN - the one we've seen before in the photograph of him and Valentine.

VALENTINE EMERGES FROM THE CABIN, onto the porch.

ENDER

Valentine!

Ender and his sister run to hug each other. Briefly, for the first time in a long time, Ender is a child again.

Then Rackham approaches, killing the joy of reunion.

INT. LAKESIDE CABIN - DAY

Ender takes in the cabin's living room in silence, picking up knickknacks, running his hand along the couch, breathing in the old, familiar smell of the place.

VALENTINE

Why did you bring us here?

RACKHAM

Your brother has proved... exceptional.

VALENTINE

I'm not surprised.

RACKHAM

Our best intelligence suggests the
Formics will reach Earth within the year.

Valentine is floored. And Ender realizes:

ENDER

Vega.

RACKHAM

The I.F. code name for the Formics'
second wave.

(beat)

Their technology is superior, and their
numbers... we expect the worst. We're
going to need one hell of a commander
helming the Fleet.

ENDER

We've got Karpov.

Rackham manages to be both grave and matter-of-fact:

RACKHAM

No. We've got you.

ENDER

Me?!

RACKHAM

If it had been anything less, I never
would've let the Madrid incident happen.
But the High Commander didn't think you
were a fighter, and I had to bring him
proof before he'd let me bring you to
CentCom.

VALENTINE

CentCom?! He's twelve!

RACKHAM

If he's going to be anything close to
ready, we have to start training him now.

(to Ender)

But it would be no good forcing you. It's
your decision. That's why we brought you
two here: To make that decision. Together.

ENDER

And if I say "No"?

RACKHAM

Then you both go back home. Together.

EXT. LAKE NAMAKAGON - DUSK

Ender and Valentine walk along the lake shore. Valentine has told Ender about her work with the Formics.

ENDER

Aren't you afraid of the thing?

VALENTINE

It's got no toxins, no teeth, no claws...
They must be helpless without their
ships. The only aggressive things in that
lab are us - poking, prodding, shocking.

(beat)

I know it sounds crazy, but I almost feel
bad about it.

She looks at Ender, staring distantly across the lake.

VALENTINE

What's wrong? Is it the "Madrid
incident," whatever that is?

ENDER

Yes- No- It's not only that, it's
everything.

VALENTINE

Look, no one has any right to expect you
to handle this. Not the great Mazer
Rackham, not anybody. If you can't do it,
then don't. Stay.

She puts her arm around her brother's shoulder. Together,
they watch the sun as it sets behind the lake, painting
everything crimson and gold.

EXT. LAKE NAMAKAGON - EARLY EVENING

Ender finds Rackham down the shore. He's breathing in the
clean air, looking out over the darkening water, lost in
thought. Ender's arrival brings him back.

RACKHAM

So? What did your sister have to say?

ENDER

(resentful)

You knew it wouldn't matter what she had
to say. You knew what would happen if you
took me to see my favorite person in my
favorite place, and then told me the
Formics were coming to tear it all down.

(MORE)

ENDER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Don't pretend I had a choice.

Rackham starts walking back toward the shuttle and Ender follows.

RACKHAM

I used to come to a place a lot like this - well, it was a river, but same trees, same smell, same sunset. Whenever I had a week's leave, my wife Anna and I would pack up the car, strap in our boy and head down to the campgrounds on the Shenandoah. I did a lot of fishing, she did a lot of reading. Derek, my son, he liked fishing better than reading, but not much. The boy couldn't sit still for more than thirty seconds at a time. His biggest joy was splashing around in the water and scaring the fish away from my hook.

ENDER

I didn't know you had a family. They never said anything about that in history.

Rackham stops and looks out across the lake:

RACKHAM

The last time we went, we talked all weekend about me resigning my commission. We were sick of moving every few years, I was angry about being passed over for promotion... We'd just about decided to go civilian when the call came: Unidentified craft had been detected off Jupiter, heading our way. We rolled up the tent, I went back to base, my wife and boy went home. To D.C..

Ender bows his head, making it all-too-clear what happened to Washington D.C. in the Invasion.

RACKHAM

We're all free until humanity needs us.

EXT. SPACE

Rackham's shuttle flies into the frame and BANKS LEFT -

- toward JUPITER, which looms large before it, staring at us with its red ammoniac eye. Between the planet and the shuttle: A WALL OF I.F. WARSHIPS.

INT. TWO-MAN SHUTTLE CRAFT - CONTINUOUS

YOUNG OFFICER (ON RADIO)
You're cleared, Admiral Rackham.
(awed, nervous)
It- it's truly an honor to have you, Sir.

They proceed slowly between two HULKING SHIPS. Rackham looks to Ender:

RACKHAM
Someday you too will strike fear into the hearts of men.

Rackham's joke brings a smile to Ender's face -

- but the awesome sight of JUPITER erases it. The planet's yellow, green and brown striations fill the cockpit window, broken only by a dark, oblong MOON.

RACKHAM
Metis. Jupiter's closest, smallest moon.

ENDER
CentCom is on Metis?

RACKHAM
CentCom is in Metis.

They head for a DEEP CRATER on the moon's surface.

ENDER
Why did we choose this place?

RACKHAM
We didn't. The Formics did.

EXT. METIS - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle disappears into the crater's maw.

RACKHAM (V.O.)
This was their base for the Invasion.

INT. TWO-MAN SHUTTLE CRAFT - CONTINUOUS

For a moment, the cockpit window is BLACK.

ENDER
Why would we use their base?

Then they emerge into a MASSIVE CHAMBER, THREE MILES ACROSS. Many varieties of SPACECRAFT maneuver carefully therein, around the chamber's centerpiece:

Between a STALACTITE and a STALAGMITE each larger than a skyscraper, a GIANT BLUE SPHERE hangs, 1000ft in diameter, suspended from nothing. Its entire surface has been carved with intricate geometric designs reminiscent of Maori tattoos, and it CRACKLES with PLASMA LIGHTNING, illuminating the whole chamber.

RACKHAM

That's why. We call it the Ansible. It's how they communicated with their home world - faster than light. We don't know how it works, but we've figured out how to use it.

The sight leaves Ender speechless.

RACKHAM

Our four Flagship groups are spread around the Jovian orbit. Now we can command them instantaneously, with no lag. Last time, Jupiter was where the Formics started...

The walls are riddled with what look like TINY HOLES -

EXT. CENTCOM HARBOR - CONTINUOUS

RACKHAM (V.O.)

...this time, it's where they stop.

When Rackham's shuttle craft heads into one of these "tiny holes," however, we see that they are actually HUNDREDS OF FEET ACROSS. Outcroppings of recognizably human SCAFFOLDING and EQUIPMENT jut from the walls.

The SHUTTLE DOCKS at a scaffold.

INT. CENTCOM CORRIDOR - THIRTY SECONDS LATER

Rackham strides down the hall with purpose, returning frequent SALUTES from people in regalia-heavy UNIFORMS. Ender struggles to keep up.

ENDER

Where are we going?

INT. BATTLE ROOM

PAN ACROSS a BATTLE ROOM that appears to be identical to the ones Ender trained in at Battle School: Spherical, fixed center obstacle, rotating peripheral obstacles.

ENDER (O.S.)

It's identical to the Battle Rooms.

RACKHAM (O.S.)

No, they're identical to this. You think we really care how good you are at laser tag? The Battle Rooms exist to teach you about space. Gravity, propulsion, inertia-

As Rackham speaks, the BATTLE ROOM TRANSMOGRIFIES BEFORE OUR EYES. The center obstacle becomes a PLANET. The rotating obstacles become MOONS. The walls are erased by a STAR FIELD, providing the illusion of infinite depth.

RACKHAM (O.S.)

Now you understand them the way you need to: From the inside out. Now you're ready to train where Admirals train...

Our PAN brings us around to ENDER'S FACE - the SIZE OF A SUN, looking in on this planetary system like a god.

RACKHAM (O.S.)

On the Command Simulator.

PULL BACK to reveal -

INT. COMMAND SIMULATOR PRACTICE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- the HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION GLOBE that we've been looking at all this time - very similar to the one on which Mr. Graff tested Ender the first time we saw him.

Rackham and Ender are the only ones in the spare room.

ENDER

Nice.

(leans in)

Where are the tiny little cadets?

Rackham smiles indulgently and puts his hand on a SENSOR:

RACKHAM

Initiate Ship Roster Demo.

IN THE COMMAND SIMULATOR, the planetary system is replaced by a familiar PHOTOREALISTIC FIGHTER SHIP, which rotates in slow motion as a soothing voice intones:

COMMAND SIM VOICE

DX-101 Fighter. Main constituents of fighter squadrons. Primary armaments plasma cannons, with-

RACKHAM

Next.

The DX-101 is replaced by a HUGE FLAGSHIP, hundreds of times the size of the fighter.

COMMAND SIM VOICE

280 Flagship. Serving as command center for 10 to 15 divisions. Armed with 2-gigaton Planet Buster bombs-

RACKHAM

Next... next... next...

The COMMAND SIM CYCLES through SEVERAL SHIPS.

RACKHAM

End.

The display ends. Recalling Bean's report on the 30-year-old Fleet, Ender is suspicious:

ENDER

All those ships are 30 years old. What about the DX-115, the H9-11, all the other new ships?

RACKHAM

The- "prototype" craft are great public morale boosters for the air and space shows. This is what we've really got. Learn how to use it. There are a lot of practice scenarios built into the Command Sim. Practice.

ENDER

How? I don't know how this thing works.

RACKHAM

Yes you do. The commands are almost exactly the same as the ones in the Game Room's real-time strategy game.

ENDER

That game? Most of the kids hate it.

RACKHAM

And most of the kids aren't here.

Rackham leaves Ender to his Command Sim practice. Ender applies himself to the globe immediately, with a laser focus that should come as no surprise.

INT. TESTING ROOM - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

The walls are BLACK GLASS. The room's only feature: FIVE COMMAND SIM GLOBES arranged in a semi-circle, with a SWIVEL CHAIR in the middle. Rackham enters with Ender.

ENDER

Isn't it a little bit soon for a test?

It's only been a week.

(off Rackham's head shake)

Okay. What do I do?

RACKHAM

Sit down.

Ender sits. The MIDDLE SIM GLOBE comes alive. Rackham claps Ender on the shoulder.

RACKHAM

Play.

Exit Rackham. Ender puts his hand on the SENSOR.

IN THE GLOBE, Ender's ships are represented by BLUE DOTS against the planetary background, until he ZOOMS IN -

In CLOSE UP, the realism of the ships is startling; only their blue halos remind us that they are simulations.

When he ZOOMS OUT again, he sees his opponents heading his way, represented by RED DOTS, and starts to play.

CUT TO:

Ender is still in the middle of his match on the first globe when a SECOND GLOBE LIGHTS UP to his right. He grins, recognizing that he's being asked to repeat his Game Room feat with a more complex game.

ENDER

This again? All right...

Ender swivels on the chair, slaps his palm on the sensor, and starts up the second sim match.

CUT TO:

The THIRD GLOBE lights up. Ender whips around to engage.

CUT TO:

The FOURTH GLOBE lights up. Sweat beads on his forehead, but he is in the zone, keeping the enormously complex goings-on of four matches straight in his head.

CUT TO:

Ender plays on ALL FIVE GLOBES SIMULTANEOUSLY, a ceaseless STREAM OF COMMANDS flowing from his mouth. The SWIVELING from globe to globe is dizzying.

Sweat pours from his forehead. The strain starts to show on his face...is the challenge getting the best of him?

No. On one globe, the ships disappear, and the GLOBE GLOWS SOLID GREEN.

COMMAND SIM VOICE

Victory Blue.

In short order, another globe goes green, and another:

COMMAND SIM VOICE

Victory Blue...Victory Blue...Victory Blue...

Finally, the last globe - the one in the middle, the one he started playing on - goes green.

COMMAND SIM VOICE

Final Victory Blue.

Ender slumps into his chair amidst the green-glowing globes, utterly drained. Only after a few deep breaths does he manage to ask:

ENDER

Well? How's that? That the best AI you've got? Uh, hello?

In front of him, the GLASS WALL DEPOLARIZES, becoming a window onto a room identical to his own. Ender sees who he just beat:

The famous, goateed ANDREI KARPOV, sitting at the middle sim globe, flanked by his FOUR SUBCOMMANDERS. All five of their SIM GLOBES GLOW RED.

ENDER

No way.

His surprise is nothing, however, compared to that of Karpov and his team; if we could hear what they're saying to each other, this would no longer be a PG-13 movie.

To Ender's left, ANOTHER WALL DEPOLARIZES: And Rackham claps for him, flashing a roguish grin that no doubt drove many superior officers crazy, once upon a time.

INT. CENTICOM CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

The High Commander's expression, however, could not be more different. Ender and Rackham stand side-by-side before him and the rest of the High Council. As Rackham has it out with the High Commander, Ender's eyes ping-pong between the two men.

HIGH COMMANDER

How dare you waste Karpov's time with an unauthorized farce that-

RACKHAM

He won.

HIGH COMMANDER

It was utterly unacceptable-

RACKHAM

He won.

HIGH COMMANDER

If you think membership on the High Council provides you with immunity from court martial, I'd ask you to remember-

RACKHAM

He-

They are interrupted when someone enters: ANDREI KARPOV, followed by his SUBCOMMANDERS. They line up and salute.

HIGH COMMANDER

What the hell is this?

KARPOV

We're here to step down, Sir.

He hands the High Commander his ADMIRAL'S STRIPES. All his subcommanders do the same with their STRIPES.

HIGH COMMANDER
Unacceptable! Refused!

KARPOV
With all due respect, Sir: I can't. Vega is coming soon. The fight is real. Knowing what's at stake, and knowing that he is sitting on the sidelines, while I... I can't do it. None of us can.

Karpov LAYS HIS STRIPES ON THE TABLE. The subcommanders follow suit. They salute the High Commander and Rackham - and then they turn and SALUTE ENDER before leaving.

The High Commander is furious.

RACKHAM
Shall we call him our... "command candidate"?

ENDER
I have a condition.

HIGH COMMANDER
You what?!?

ENDER
Before I accept the title. I have a condition.

The High Commander's fury deepens. Rackham is confused.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - THREE WEEKS LATER

BEAN GAPES - as do PETRA, and ALAI, and DINK. All four kids stare out a window at

A PANORAMIC VIEW of the VAST CENTCOM HARBOR, and the crackling blue ANSIBLE that spans the cavern's height.

When the DOOR OPENS behind them, they turn to see

Ender entering the room, in front of Rackham and the High Commander. The four kids jump to attention and salute the highest officials in the world - and Ender.

Ender, Rackham and the High Commander salute back. Ender has assumed Rackham's military demeanor. He marches toward his former classmates, stiff, expressionless.

RACKHAM

...which I will command against you for your final exam.

The prospect of going up against one of the world's greatest living tactical geniuses drains Bean's bravado.

RACKHAM

I know I'm a "washed up old geezer," but I still have a few tricks up my washed-up sleeve.

Realizing Rackham has known about his eavesdropping all this time, Bean is at an uncharacteristic loss for words.

ENDER

(grins; to his friends)

Come on. I've got something to show you.

INT. WAR ROOM ANTECHAMBER - LATER

Ender strides past TWO GUARDS and throws open a door. The four others follow him, a few hesitant steps behind, into

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The SIMGLOBE at the center of the room looks very much like the Command Sims we've seen Ender using - only it is TWENTY FIVE FEET IN DIAMETER. The PLANET and MOONS inside it are absolutely indistinguishable from the real thing.

DINK

Is this the real War Room?

ENDER

No, it's just a sim. Wild though, huh?

PETRA

So much for the Battle School Game Room.

Flanking Ender's command globe in a semi-circle are FOUR SUBCOMMAND GLOBES, three feet across.

ENDER

Each of these SimGlobes oversees one of the Fleet's four Flagship groups.

As Ender assigns them their groups, each of the kids sits down at the appropriate globe and puts on a HEADSET:

ENDER

Petra, take Lion. Dink, take Eagle.
Alai... Viper. Bean, you're Phoenix.

Rackham, the High Commander and the rest of the HIGH COUNCIL quietly enter the room. His friends' backs are to the door - but Ender sees the top brass watching.

He sits in the COMMANDER'S CHAIR and puts on his own headset. He pushes a button on his armrest.

The Command Globe ZOOMS IN, and we get our first (virtual) look at the whole INTERNATIONAL FLEET: HUNDREDS OF SHIPS of many varieties, centered around FOUR GARGANTUAN FLAGSHIPS, each the size of a city.

Ender maneuvers the command perspective controls -

- and the FLEET ROLLS in the globe as if frozen in a marble. Ender SHOOTS THROUGH THE SHIPS' RANKS to focus on an individual DX-101. Completely indistinguishable from the real thing, down to the scrapes on the hull.

The other four watch with awe. They take in the sheer density of visual information before them, and look at each other apprehensively.

The High Council is apprehensive also, as they wait to see if these kids can work together on this dauntingly complex equipment the way they did in the Battle Room.

Bean puts his arms on his armrest - and a THUMBSTICK-AND-TRIGGER CONTROL FLIPS into his left hand, almost identical to the Flash-Suit's propulsion control.

Bean grins. When the others get their hands on the controls, they do the same. They're in their element. A wave of confidence rolls through them all.

Bean puts on his HAT over his headset:

BEAN

Let's do it.

ENDER

Nova on three...two...one...Go!

With uncanny skill, Ender and the others take to the War Room like they've been training here for years, BARKING COMMANDS AND RESPONSES BACK AND FORTH with such speed that they seem to be speaking a language all their own.

Their words mean nothing to the HIGH COUNCIL -

But in the COMMAND GLOBE, the FLEET GOES "NOVA": The flagships peel away from each other, and their many squadrons fly braided defensive patterns around them with the elegance of kinetic sculpture. Absolutely beautiful.

Rackham and the rest of the Council watch with awe. When the High Commander and Rackham make eye contact, the High Commander nods once, with extreme gravity.

INT. CENTCOM BARRACKS - LATER

As Ender and the others are fast asleep -

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The huge OBSERVATION GLOBE in this room has always been dark before - but now, as the HIGH COUNCIL surrounds the globe with almost religious solemnity, it is alight.

IN THE GLOBE: The INTERNATIONAL FLEET.

The Council members place their hands on PALM SCANNERS.

In front of the High Commander, a TOUCH SCREEN goes from RED to GREEN. He reaches for it...

INT. WAR ROOM

Ender and the others practice moving their flagship groups together and apart, shifting the defensive weight of the accompanying divisions from front to back to side.

A LIGHT BLINKS on Ender's control panel.

ENDER

Guess what?

ON THE COMMAND GLOBE, Ender ZOOMS OUT to reveal 20 FORMIC SHIPS about 20 Flagship lengths away from the Fleet.

ENDER

Formics.

PETRA

Virtually.

It is our first clear view of the FORMIC SHIPS, which appear not so much built as secreted, with opaque blue "cockpit" areas. Unlike our ships, each is unique. They move in erratic fits and starts, like a cloud of gnats.

Ender stops the Fleet's forward motion, and they all watch the Formics as they swarm, often nearly colliding.

DINK

These are the "excellent AI simulations"
Rackham was talking about?

ALAI

They're not even coming after us.

BEAN

Let me hit em with one of them Planet
Buster bombs.

ENDER

Overkill. Lion, take them out with a few
DX-101 squadrons. Phoenix, Viper, cover
with one mixed squad each.

Ender ZOOMS ON THE FORMICS. PETRA'S SHIPS head for the
aliens in two ranks, FIRING and ROLLING AWAY in sequence.

Almost all the Formics are destroyed immediately. Two of
them break in erratic squiggles away from the others -

- but Alai's flanking squadron takes them out before they
can hit. And that's it.

ENDER

Well. That wasn't too bad.

BEAN

They was about fifty times easier than
the Buggers in Karpov Challenge Pro. Why
bother with all this if you're not even
gonna make it as hard as the Game Room?

It's a good question. Ender thinks about it until the
LIGHT BLINKS on his control panel again.

ENDER

Maybe these will be tougher.

In the COMMAND GLOBE, a similar cloud of SWARMING FORMIC
SHIPS. We PUSH IN on them. When we PULL OUT again -

INT. RACKHAM'S OFFICE

- on Rackham's HOLOGLOBE, as Ender and Rackham speak.

ENDER

I guess I was hoping they'd be more of a
challenge. Their AI's so weak, it hardly
counts as training to shoot them.

RACKHAM

You do realize you'll go up against more than 20 of them in your Command exam. And they're a hive species: The more there are, the smarter they are. Especially when they're being controlled by me.

ENDER

Maybe if I learned more about them...

On the HOLOGLOBE, Ender ZOOMS IN on a single FORMIC SHIP. On the part of the ship that would correspond to an Earth ship's cockpit: A BLUE MASS cut with intricate designs.

Rackham turns off the globe.

RACKHAM

There'll be time for axobiology lectures after the exam. Not much time, but some.

ENDER

(apprehensive)

It's just- this is different from everything else I've done, and-

RACKHAM

No it isn't. It's exactly the same.

(beat)

Doubt's a good thing, doubt keeps you honest. But every time you've come to me saying "I don't think I can do it," you've been wrong. From the beginning, you've won every game you've played. Focus on this exam, and it won't be any different.

Rackham smiles, and for a moment he sounds more like a father than a commanding officer:

RACKHAM

You're the best kind of fighter: The reluctant kind. If my son had had a chance to grow up at all, I hope he'd have grown up to be a person like you.

(back to 'military')

Dismissed, Wiggin.

Rackham salutes Ender. Ender returns the salute, flush with pride. Rackham smiles at him until he leaves.

But when Rackham turns away, he comes face to face with his own REFLECTION in the dim glass of the HOLOGLOBE.

Rackham looks at himself with a kind of loathing we've never seen on his face before. Or on anyone's.

With an angry sweep of his arm, he KNOCKS THE HOLOGLOBE OFF THE TABLE to SHATTER on the floor.

INT. CENTCOM BARRACKS - THAT NIGHT

Ender discusses the previous conversation with his subcommanders as all five of them lie in their bunks.

ENDER

So basically, it's going to be a lot harder when there are a lot more of them. Which there will be in the exam.

PETRA

Makes sense, "hive species" and all. You ever see a Queen bee traveling solo?

Bean alone is mistrustful:

BEAN

That's all he told you? Didn't tell you nothing else about the Buggers?

ENDER

For instance?

BEAN

I dunno... What do they really look like, inside the ships? When they came to Earth the first time, who fired first?

ALAI

Aw, come on-

BEAN

Don't even pretend you know-

ENDER

It's not worth arguing over. Rackham promised we'll learn all about the Formics - if we pass that final exam.

BEAN

And you trust him to keep his word?

It's a big question. Ender thinks about it for a moment.

ENDER

Yeah. I trust him.

INT. CENTCOM BARRACKS - AN HOUR LATER

Everyone is asleep - except Bean. He looks over at Ender.

BEAN

(quietly)

No worries, Commander. I don't trust him for you.

Bean reaches over his head, removes the already-unscrewed air recirculation panel and climbs into the vent.

EXT. ALIEN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Bean climbs to the exterior of the ductwork, and finds himself in the midst of

The TREMENDOUS TUNNEL, dug by the Formica, into which the CentCom corridors are built. From around one corner, the blue glow of the Ansible is dimly visible.

From another access panel fifty yards away: A LIGHT. Bean moves closer, watching his step lest he drop to the rock below. Soon, he hears RACKHAM'S VOICE.

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB - TIME UNKNOWN

Valentine enters the lab's inner sanctum.

In her biohazard helmet's VISOR, we see a hazy REFLECTION of something - something round, and blue, and huge.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER

In a HIGH ANGLE SHOT through a GRATE, we look down on Rackham, the High Commander and the rest of the Council at the CONFERENCE TABLE, talking solemnly to

A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION of CAPTAIN TUOLA, whom we first saw when Bean used Rackham's access code to eavesdrop on his conversation.

HIGH COMMANDER

We all salute you, Captain. Your sacrifice will be remembered for as long as there are people to remember it.

CAPTAIN TUOLA

Meaning no disrespect, Sir, but we're not dead yet.

As everyone LAUGHS at the gallows humor -

- BEAN watches through a grate in the ductwork overhead.

HIGH COMMANDER

I was referring to the fifteen light-year trip to Vega 351. Thirty years is a long time.

Bean's jaw actually drops with this revelation.

CAPTAIN TUOLA

It was "only" two years for us. Thank God for relativity.

(undertone of dread)

Although, now that we've entered the Vega star system, I suppose I wouldn't say no to another 28 years.

RACKHAM

Given what you're about to do for all of us, Captain, is there anything we can do for you?

CAPTAIN TUOLA

If I might presume, Admiral Rackham, Sir... If you're ever in New Lagos, if you could look up Mrs. Sophie Tuola and introduce yourself, it would give her such a thrill. And you won't find a better pepper stew in all Nigeria.

RACKHAM

You have my word.

Rackham and the High Council salute Tuola. He salutes back, and his projection winks out.

HIGH COMMANDER

We can't wait any longer. They know we're here. We have to hit them before they-

Bean leans forward to get a better view -

- and he FALLS THROUGH THE GRATE into their midst.

Anger renders the High Commander momentarily speechless.

But Bean stands and bravely demands:

BEAN

What's in the Vega star system?

INT. CENTCOM BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Ender and company are awakened by a loud ALARM.

ENDER

(groggy)

What- what is that-

In the doorway, an I.F. OFFICER barks:

I.F. OFFICER

Your final exam: A simulated attack on
the Formic home world! Move out!

As Ender and the rest jump from bed, a SOUND ADVANCE on
another, more trebly ALARM, joining the first...

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB

With the trebly ALARM sounding, Valentine looks at

The SPECTROSCOPIC MONITOR SCREEN, now alive with
KALEIDOSCOPIC COLOR PATTERNS.

VALENTINE

It's giving off a crazy EM signature in
the gamma frequencies.

Next to her, Dr. Farland looks to

The NEW CONTAINMENT CYLINDER, much larger than the last
one. We TILT UP the cylinder. The FORMIC COCOON inside it
is now larger than a man.

And at the top of it, a RENT OPENS in the cocoon's white
skin, revealing the BRILLIANT BLUE beneath.

INT. WAR ROOM

Ender and company take their places.

ENDER

Bring up the Fleet.

The I.F. FLEET appears in the Command Globe. Each
subcommander gets an image of his or her FLAGSHIP GROUP-

Except Bean, whose chair is empty.

ENDER

(angry)

Where's Bean?!

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER

Bean is held fast by Military Police, as the High Council argue his fate on the other side of the room.

HIGH COMMANDER

Lock him up, shoot him, I don't care which, we can't spare a minute-

RACKHAM

We can't spare him. He's part of the team.

HIGH COMMANDER

His loyalties lie with Wiggin, not us.

RACKHAM

I know. That's why he won't tell Ender the truth.

Rackham motions for Bean to be brought over to him.

BEAN

This ain't a "final exam." This is it. The real fight.

The Council waits with baited breath, to see how Rackham will handle this. After a pause:

RACKHAM

It is. The Formics attacked us without provocation. Rather than wait patiently for them to return, we launched a preemptive attack on their homeworld with everything we had.

BEAN

You're tricking Ender into fighting for you. He trusts you.

Rackham's pain is evident. However:

RACKHAM

He's going to be sending a lot of men to their deaths. You all are.

(beat)

He's the only one who can do this. And he won't be able to do it if he knows the truth. We don't have a choice.

Bean thinks about it, looking smaller than ever.

INT. WAR ROOM - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Bean enters the War Room.

ENDER

Where the hell have you been?

BEAN

Bathroom. Sorry.

ENDER

Well hurry up! Rackham's ships are coming into range.

The burden of the truth weighs heavily upon Bean - but he says nothing about it to Ender. He just climbs into his seat and gets ready.

IN THE COMMAND GLOBE, a LONG VIEW of the FLEET as the first few FORMICS come into view. Then MORE FORMICS.

ALAI

What was Rackham talking about? I don't see any "Formic homeworld."

DINK

Yeah, all I see is Buggers.

As the Fleet draws closer, MORE FORMICS. And MORE.

ENDER

You've got to be kidding me.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The entire High Council is ashen, as they see the extent of their predicament:

IN THEIR OBSERVATION GLOBE, an IMPENETRABLE FORMIC CORDON SWARMS around the FORMIC HOMEWORLD, outnumbering the International Fleet 500-to-1.

I.F. COUNCILMAN 1

Impossible.

RACKHAM

You're surprised? They attacked us - they had to assume we'd return the favor. So they prepared for it. For thirty years.

HIGH COMMANDER

We can't do this. It's suicide.

RACKHAM

It's suicide if we don't. We don't finish them, that swarm heads straight for Earth to finish us.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The subcommanders' reaction is different; they think this is a test constructed by Rackham.

PETRA

This is complete bullshit!

DINK

Ah, what's the point?

Bean just sits, with uncharacteristic meekness.

ALAI

Maybe the whole point is to recognize an unwinnable setup and take the draw. To just run. We can't win.

Hope flits across Bean's face.

ENDER

Maybe we can.

He watches the Formics swarming around their planet, seething - but keeping their distance.

ENDER

If I were Rackham, I'd have reached out and stomped us right away. But he's not doing it. I think he's making a mistake.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The Council watches the Fleet on their globe.

HIGH COMMANDER

Show him where the Queen is, at least!

A High Councilwoman has a word with a technician. The technician shakes his head. The Councilwoman returns.

I.F. COUNCILWOMAN 1

We can't find it.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

Rackham probably disguised it.

DINK

How we going to kill the Queen if we
can't find it?

ENDER

The center of their density looks to be
about... here.

In the long view on the COMMAND GLOBE, Ender highlights a
CUBE in the middle of the Formic swarm.

ENDER

The Queen is somewhere in there.

ALAI

Why?

ENDER

A good fighter always covers her head.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Rackham nods with silent appreciation, recognizing the
source of this insight.

PETRA (V.O.)

Or her hive mind. So what do we do?

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

We move her arms out of the way.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

In the OBSERVATION GLOBE, the High Commander ZOOMS IN on
the frontlines of the battle.

A few FIGHTER SQUADRONS from each of the two frontmost
Flagship groups push forward, heading right for the
Formics, firing at them -

- until the Formics reach out for them with "TENTACLES"
of individual ships that sprout off the main Formic mass.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

And retreat.

When the FIGHTER SQUADRONS RETREAT, the TENTACLES PULL
BACK into the Formic fold. Ender is a bit perplexed:

ENDER

He's almost playing like a wimp.

The comment cuts Bean; he knows it's not Rackham playing like a wimp. But he holds his tongue.

ENDER

Okay, here we go. On my word, Eagle, 50 squadrons toward H-mu-12.

DINK

Fifty?! As in, five divisions?

ENDER

Mu-hmm. Lion, 50 squadrons toward R-epsilon-2. Viper, 50 squadrons toward Z-omega-20. Phoenix, take your Flagship and all divisions toward A-beta-3. Top speed.

BEAN

Why you sending me all the way out there?

ENDER

You'll see. On 3...2...1...Go!

All four subcommanders execute Ender's orders.

ON THE COMMAND GLOBE, we see Bean's PHOENIX GROUP TURN AROUND and HEAD AWAY from the Formic homeworld.

From the other three groups, HUNDREDS OF SHIPS PULL AWAY FROM THEIR FLAGSHIPS, and head toward the Formic mass in THREE DISTINCT GROUPS, widely spaced apart.

We PULL INTO THE GLOBE, toward Petra's Lion squadrons as they head for the belly of the beast, until we SEAMLESSLY FADE from a photorealistic simulation into

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The real battle. We PUSH FORWARD through the ranks of the Lion ships as they head full-speed for a WALL OF FORMICS. Bits of the FORMIC HOME WORLD are visible through the gaps in the Formic cordon - but there are not many gaps.

We catch up to one of the DX-101 FIGHTERS, and PUSH IN through the COCKPIT WINDOW TO

INT. DX-101 FIGHTER - CONTINUOUS

A PILOT and GUNNER clasp hands one last time.

PILOT

Give 'em some.

The GUNNER OPENS UP on the FORMICS before them.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

When hit, the Formics don't explode; they CRUMPLE into a bubbling corrosive mess. Many of them suffer this fate -

- but many more head for the DX-101.

INT. DX-101 FIGHTER - CONTINUOUS

A FORMIC SMASHES INTO THE SHIP and SPLATTERS, spreading a CORROSIVE FILM across the cockpit window -

- in seconds, the CORROSIVE EATS AWAY THE WINDOW, and the pilot and gunner are SUCKED INTO THE VOID.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The High Council watches with horror as the tragedy we've just witnessed repeats itself over and over and over.

HIGH COMMANDER

He's committing suicide! He's giving up!

RACKHAM

(shaking his head)

When Ender fights, he fights to win.

IN THE OBSERVATION GLOBE, as the Fleet's offensive squadrons continue to get hammered, the PHOENIX FLAGSHIP GROUP continues to pull away, and we ZOOM IN ON

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Captain Tuola looks at the desolate Formic MOON growing larger in the bridge window, as the fight rages behind him. Speaking into a headset:

CAPTAIN TUOLA

Please confirm course. We are running away from the fight, Over.

LOW VOICE (O.S.)

Course confirmed, Captain.

As we PULL OUT FROM THE BRIDGE...

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - CONTINUOUS

The voices continue:

CAPTAIN TUOLA (V.O.)
I have to tell you, Subcommander, that
this strategy seems foolish and wasteful.

As we continue to PULL BACK, the "LOW VOICE" gets higher:

LOW VOICE (V.O.)
Hold, while I talk to the Commander...

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

And Bean finishes the line, without the pitch shifter
that's being applied to his voice for Tuola's ears:

BEAN
...on your behalf.
(to Ender)
What about me? They need my help.

But across the room, Ender just shakes his head:

ENDER
Lion, Eagle, Viper, start to pull back -
not all at once. Tease them out. Keep
them stuck to you.

On the COMMAND GLOBE, Petra's, Dink's and Alai's ships
are getting slaughtered by the Formic dive-bombers -

- but the strategy is working: slowly, three thick Formic
"limbs" are being teased away from the main mass,
thinning out the cordon around the HIGHLIGHTED CUBE in
which (Ender believes) the Queen is located.

Bean is not even looking at his own globe; he's staring
at the front lines on the command globe. Every time a
Formic collides with a Fleet ship, he winces. Finally:

BEAN
Ender, what are you doing?!

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Hearing this, the High Commander is alarmed; is Bean
going to tell Ender the truth?

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

The enemy's gate is still down, Bean.

Bean looks at Ender with puzzlement.

ENDER

Concentric fixed shell formations around the Flagship: 5, 10, 20 and 50 squadrons. And a fixed 15 squadron wall in front. Full speed vector 4-23-71.

And Bean gets it:

BEAN

The Cocoon...

ENDER

Just like we did against Salamander. We gravity slingshot that moon, and ram right through them.

BEAN

But you can't...

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

HIGH COMMANDER

He's going to tell him! We have to cut off his comm link!

The High Commander goes for the kill switch himself.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

Why not? It's the only way to win.

At first, Bean is horrified by Ender's nonchalance, but his expression starts to change...

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Rackham GRABS THE HIGH COMMANDER'S WRIST before he can shut Bean out of the action.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bean nods at his commander; Ender is innocent of the truth, but he is also right. This is how to win the game.

Bean fingers CLACK rapidly across his keypad.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE

Tuola watches as his divisions arrange themselves around his ship with geometric perfection. He nods soberly.

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP GROUP - SPACE

The Phoenix Flagship Group HURTLES toward the Formic MOON, looking like they're going to hit it.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bean squints at his GLOBE, makes a small adjustment -

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP GROUP - SPACE - CONTINUOUS

- and the PHOENIX GROUP WHIPS AROUND THE MOON, pulled faster and faster by the moon's gravity.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The ship shakes from the extreme speed, until

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP GROUP - SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The moon SLINGSHOTS THE PHOENIX GROUP back toward the home world -

- where the other THREE FLAGSHIP GROUPS continue to tease THREE FORMIC TENTACLES away from the Formic mass, creating a TRIANGULAR BREACH.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the Command Globe, we see the Phoenix Group traveling in a dead beeline for the BREACH in the Formic mass - and the HIGHLIGHTED CUBE containing the Formic Queen.

ENDER

Lion, Viper, Eagle: Secure the Phoenix pathway! All remaining Flagships and squadrons, line the sides of the breach!

Petra, Alai and Dink work furiously at their globes while BARKING COMMANDS into their headsets -

- and the remainder of the FLEET SHIPS MOVE IN AND HAMMER AT THE FORMICS, keeping them from rushing back in on Phoenix like the Red Sea on the Egyptians.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The THREE FLAGSHIPS are doing heavy damage, their CANNONS firing CLUSTER BOMBS on the Formic waves, taking out twenty of them at a time, peeling them back -

- as the PHOENIX "COCOON" HURTTLES INTO THE BREACH, clearing Formics from their path with a STEADY WALL OF LASER FIRE, a torrent of pure destruction.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ON THE COMMAND GLOBE, Ender ZOOMS IN on the HIGHLIGHTED CUBE. The zone is still thick with Formics, and there's still no Queen in sight.

And the PHOENIX COCOON is traveling forward faster than their heavy fire can clear the Formics away. It crosses into the Formics' midst.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A FORMIC HITS the FRONTMOST SHIP in the Phoenix group, killing its pilot, leaving nothing but a corroded hulk.

Inertia keeps the hulk moving forward. But another Fleet ship falls. And two more. And three more.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dink's ships are disappearing quickly.

DINK

I can't hold 'em back much longer... let Bean hit 'em with the Planet Busters!

ENDER

Where? I can't see the Queen. The blast radius isn't big enough to waste our only chance on guesses.

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB - CONTINUOUS

In the cylinder, the white cocoon skin continues to fall away, revealing more and more hypnotic BLUE - and the same INTRICATE DESIGNS we've seen on the Ansible.

The KALEIDOSCOPIC COLORS still dance across the FORMIC'S MONITOR SCREEN.

DR. FARLAND

Give me a sonic analogue.

Valentine flips a few switches, and an COMPLEX, EERIE MUSIC fills the lab like a symphony of whale songs.

VALENTINE

It's a repeating figure... some kind of signature call?

DR. FARLAND

Record it.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender studies the Command Globe and calls to Bean:

ENDER

Slow down, keep pace with the dead ships.

(scanning for Queen)

Where are you hiding, Rackham?

Bean keys in the command. On his GLOBE, he sees his FLAGSHIP slowing, so as not to overtake the growing WALL OF DEAD SHIPS that serve as the Flagship's only shield.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

From the bridge, Tuola watches the influx of Formic ships, SMASHING into the graveyard of already-destroyed ships that float before him, knocking them out of the way or disintegrating them entirely. Peeling away his Cocoon.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DINK

They're getting through to my Flagship!
Bean, watch your port flank!

Ender ZOOMS ON the EAGLE FLAGSHIP, and we FADE TO

EXT. EAGLE FLAGSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Dozens and dozens of FORMICS HIT DINK'S FLAGSHIP, guided corrosion bombs that tear deadly holes in its hull.

They focus on the middle of the ship, for good reason: Before our eyes, Dink's EAGLE FLAGSHIP TEARS IN HALF.

The FORMICS RUSH PAST the destroyed ship, and begin to ATTACK THE PHOENIX COCOON FROM THE PORT SIDE.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dink throws up his hands in defeat, blissfully ignorant of the enormity of what just happened.

On the Command Globe, the Formics are closing in on the Phoenix Flagship from all sides. Ender scans the globe:

ENDER

Where are you?

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A TECHNICIAN calls over to the HIGH COUNCIL:

TECHNICIAN

Farland says it could be an EM signature for a Formic Queen.

HIGH COMMANDER

Find it, highlight it, point it out to Wiggins with flashing arrows--

RACEHAM

No. He knows I'd never just tell him where it is.

INT. WAR ROOM - TWENTY SECONDS LATER

PETRA

I'm getting a little bit of strange gamma interference.

ALAI

Yeah. It's faint, but I see it too.

ENDER

Triangulate, pinpoint the location.

On the Command Globe, a BLUE DOT FLASHES, directly in the Phoenix Flagship's path. Ender grins:

ENDER

He was trying to hide her, but there she is. And we're right on course.

The Formics DESTROY PETRA'S LION FLAGSHIP as well, and more Formics converge on Phoenix, BASHING INTO THE PHOENIX COCOON, knocking the dead ships out of the way, getting closer and closer to the Flagship.

BEAN

We're not going to get close enough fast enough.

But Ender ZOOMS IN ON

A FORMIC FIGHTER as it checks out Petra's dead flagship, only to leave it be in favor of an active DX-101 FIGHTER.

ENDER

Phoenix: Use Squadrons 34, 38 and 43, take out your own Flagship's engines. Have your Captain shut down everything except backup life support systems.

BEAN

What?! Why?!

ALAI

You're playing dead. That's why.

Ender gives a nod of credit to Alai, remembering who inadvertently taught him the trick to begin with.

ENDER

We get up close and blow the whole flagship, every Planet Buster at once.
(to Bean)

That should take care of the washed-up old geezer, huh?

With diamay, Bean relays the order to Tuola.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE

Having just heard the order, a somber Captain Tuola looks out the window at the encroaching Formics and noda.

INT. DX-101 FIGHTER - CONTINUOUS

The Squad Leader prepares to do his duty.

SQUAD LEADER

(over radio, to Squad)
You heard the Captain.

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP

More than twenty PHOENIX FIGHTERS FIRE ON THEIR OWN FLAGSHIP, destroying its engines.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The SHIP ROCKS. Some of Tuola's crew fall over.

Tuola flips a bank of switches, killing everything except life support. The bridge goes dark.

Tuola's hand rests lightly on a RED LEVER.

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP

The FORMICS SWARM OVER THE FLAGSHIP, scuttling along its dark, burning length, examining it. The Flagship continues to drift forward.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

CAPTAIN TUOLA

(to crew)

Stay absolutely still.

Tuola looks out the bridge window -

- at a FORMIC FIGHTER, not ten feet away. Does it understand that he's alive?

Apparently not. The Formic flies away.

EXT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - CONTINUOUS

The Formics abandon the Flagship en masse, taking it for dead, and not worth sacrificing themselves for. They move onto the live ships behind it.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

Yes!

ALAI

Damn. There goes my Flagship.

ENDER

It's all you, Bean. Our last chance.

(checks globe)

We're getting close.

The Formics batter the few remaining ships in the Phoenix cocoon, knocking them out of the way.

BEAN

Go on. Call it.

PETRA

Call it.

But Ender shakes his head. Not yet.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The High Council stare at their observation globe.

HIGH COMMANDER

Come on, damn it.

Even Rackham seems worried. Under his breath:

RACKHAM

Push the button, Ender.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

But Ender is still shaking his head, enjoying the game.

ENDER

Closer.

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB - CONTINUOUS

Valentine and Dr. Farland see it, as the last scraps of the Cocoon fall away -

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

From his darkened bridge, Tuola sees it in the distance -

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB - CONTINUOUS

The FORMIC is not the monstrosity the "Bugger" slur might lead us to expect. It is almost perfectly round, eyeless, limbless. With its intricate, geometric convolutions, it looks like a mandala design, strangely beautiful.

And from the center of the Formic, a PERFECT WHITE SPHERE emerges, like geometry giving birth to geometry:

VALENTINE

An Egg... my God...

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINE (V.O.)

...it's a Queen.

The FORMIC QUEEN is exactly the same creature as the one we just saw in the lab - floating free in space, unprotected by any ship.

CAPTAIN TUOLA

(into his radio)

I have visual confirmation on the target.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender takes a deep breath.

ENDER

Do it.

Bean bows his head:

BEAN

Detonate.

INT. PHOENIX FLAGSHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tuola closes his eyes and PULLS THE LEVER.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A blooming, blinding WHITE SPHERE spreads from Tuola's ship, as all his Planet Buster bombs detonate. The blast ATOMIZES ALL THE SHIPS AROUND IT, Formic and human.

In an instant, the FORMIC QUEEN ceases to exist.

In the next instant, the THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUAL FORMICS begin to WOBBLE and CRASH INTO EACH OTHER. Many COLLAPSE UPON THEMSELVES, corroding into a muck.

And then they drift apart, the cells of a dying thing, crumbling away into space.

INT. HIGH COUNCIL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The High Council is speechless, until:

HIGH COMMANDER

He destroyed nearly the entire fleet.

Rackham recognizes the horror of this. But:

RACKHAM

He won.

The High Commander resigns himself to terrible necessity. He holds down a BUTTON on a control panel before him:

HIGH COMMANDER

Dragon Flagship Group, move in.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender, Dink, Petra and Alai are celebrating. Ender hugs them all. They all hug each other and slap each other on the back. Petra even lets Dink give her a hug.

But Bean is still at his seat.

ENDER

Bean, what is it?

Before Bean can answer, the HIGH COUNCIL files into the War Room. Ender and company line up and salute. Ender cannot help but smile:

ENDER

Looks like I beat you, Sir.

Rackham approaches Ender. This is the hardest thing he has ever done:

RACKHAM

You would have beat me in five minutes.

(beat)

This was not a game.

Ender's joy disappears. He looks to Bean; Bean looks at the floor. He looks back to Rackham.

ENDER

No, that's impossible... they were simulations...

RACKHAM

No they weren't. None of the Formics you've fought have been. And neither have the ships you've fought them with.

(off Ender's disbelief)

As soon as we figured out how to use the Ansible, we sent the Fleet.

ENDER

So all those pilots, those troops... how many?

RACKHAM

11,433. They'd been on their way to this fight since long before you were born.

Rackham looks to the COMMAND GLOBE, zoomed out to a long view of the UNDEFENDED FORMIC HOMEWORLD.

Ceremoniously, the High Commander steps forward:

HIGH COMMANDER

We salute you, Ender Wiggin-

But Ender sidesteps him, moving toward -

- the COMMAND GLOBE. Another FLAGSHIP GROUP has entered the periphery:

ENDER

What is that?

RACKHAM

The Dragon Flagship Group.

ENDER

I thought there were only four Flagship groups?

He gets in the command chair and ZOOMS IN:

ENDER

And this one's all bombers...

HIGH COMMANDER

And without you, they'd have never gotten close enough to do their job.

Rackham winces at the High Commander's obtuseness. Ender's friends stand by, helpless.

ENDER

Their job...

Ender blanches -

- as in the COMMAND GLOBE, the BOMBERS BREAK FORMATION and spread themselves evenly around the surface of the FORMIC HOMEWORLD.

ENDER

No... no, you can't...

He tries the command controls, but his link with the Fleet has been severed.

ENDER

I trusted you...

RACKHAM

You were our only hope. Sometimes it's necessary to fight - and sometimes it's necessary to lie, even if it means lying to a friend.

ENDER

You're not my friend, and it's not necessary!

Ender points angrily at the Command Globe:

ENDER

Their strategy was defensive! They could have wiped us out right away - but they only hit us when we hit them!

As he speaks, we PUSH IN ON THE COMMAND GLOBE until we're focused on a SINGLE BOMBER, for a seamless CUT TO

EXT. FORMIC HOMEWORLD - CONTINUOUS

The BOMBER drops into the planet's CLOUD COVER, and everything goes WHITE for a moment -

ENDER (V.O.)

What if it was all a mistake the first time?

- and then the BOMBER EMERGES 30,000ft above a LUSH LANDSCAPE, all greens and purples and blues.

INT. BOMBER - CONTINUOUS

The bomber pilot checks his NAVIGATION SCREEN, on which the flashing red TARGET approaches the center.

ENDER (V.O.)

They couldn't hear our radios, we couldn't hear their Ansibles...

The pilot flips a switch and calls in:

BOMBER PILOT

Trigger switch engaged.

EXT. FORMIC HOMEWORLD - CONTINUOUS

The bomber dips lower, toward a clearing. A TREMENDOUS HOLE is visible, very similar to the entrance to the Formic base on Jupiter's moon.

ENDER (V.O.)

We assumed there were thousands of them - and they thought we were just little pieces of something bigger, like they were.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ender pounds futilely at the controls:

ENDER

But they realized their mistake! They were never coming back! Stop this!

Rackham and the High Commander look at one another, as if weighing Ender's demand - but Rackham turns back and says with solid conviction:

RACKHAM

We can't bet the human race on it. They invaded our planet.

ENDER

Did they? Who fired first?

As if in answer...

EXT. FORMIC HOMEWORLD - CONTINUOUS

The bomber releases a CLUSTER OF "PLANET BUSTER" SMART BOMBS that all DIVE RIGHT FOR THE FORMIC HOLE.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ENDER

When they came to us, who fired first?

Rackham looks at Ender in silence. Ender's friends and the rest of the Council look away to the COMMAND GLOBE -

- where the BOMBERS ALL PULL RAPIDLY AWAY FROM THE FORMIC WORLD. Where they once were, BLOOMS OF RED now appear, and expand until they ENGULF THE ENTIRE PLANET.

Ender watches this, numb with shock, until the red blooms fade. Then he gives Rackham and the Council a final, hateful look, and storms out of the War Room alone.

EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - DAY

A beautiful day. The I.F. SHUTTLE TOUCHES DOWN on the runway and begins to slow.

EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The tarmac is THROGGED WITH PEOPLE. When Ender emerges from the shuttle, they GO CRAZY, CHEERING, waving SIGNS.

Ender's subcommanders follow him, then Rackham and the High Council.

Ender looks at the SIGNS: "We Love You Ender!" "Thank You Ender!" "Humanity 2, Buggers 0"

He is a hero to everyone but himself. His smile is empty. Scanning the tarmac, he sees

His FAMILY, waiting for him inside the security line.

Rackham tries to stand next to Ender, but Ender leaves him behind, running down the stairway toward his mother.

Under his breath, the High Commander consoles Rackham:

HIGH COMMANDER
He'll come around.

RACKHAM
I wouldn't.

Ender's mother is all-but-overcome:

MRS. WIGGIN
My baby.

Ender hugs Valentine and his mother, and for a moment his inner turmoil calms - but only until he sees

A SIGN: "ENDER WIGGIN, BUGGER KILLER!"

Valentine notices his distress.

VALENTINE
What is it, Ender?

Then she sees the sign, and knows exactly what's wrong. She doesn't say anything; she just hugs him more tightly.

Then Ender sees Peter. He steps away from his sister, approaches Peter, and holds out his hand.

Peter looks around at all the signs, the people, the cameras. History has come here today - and it has come for his little brother.

Ender said he would get back at Peter for everything. He was right. His graciousness only makes it worse.

Peter shakes Ender's hand, but he cannot hold his gaze.

Ender sees the other children: Dink with his parents, Alai with his. Petra with her father.

Bean has no one. He stands next to Rackham, looking lost.

Ender motions Bean over to introduce him to his family-

- and then turns his back on Mazer Rackham.

INT. I.F. EXOBIOLOGY LAB - DAY

In biohazard suits, Ender and Valentine stand before the FORMIC QUEEN, now back in suspended animation.

Next to it, a smaller cylinder houses the sole, spherical FORMIC EGG.

Ender and Valentine both REMOVE THEIR BIOHAZARD HELMETS.

VALENTINE

A PET scan of the egg. Look.

On a MONITOR, she calls up the PET scan.

INSIDE THE EGG, we see what looks like A PERFECT MINIATURE OF A FORMIC "SHIP."

Ender is confused:

ENDER

It looks just like a Formic ship.

VALENTINE

They didn't have "ships." What we thought were their ships were them. They didn't have technology - they evolved into this.

(beat)

They were all linked to the Queen through these nodal points, like cells to a brain.

On the MONITOR, she points at the blue "cockpit" area.

VALENTINE

They were amazing. One mind, wandering across galaxies, maybe for thousands of years, looking for someone to talk to...

ENDER

And I killed it.

VALENTINE

We killed it. We all did.

INT. PRESSROOM - DAY

Mazer Rackham speaks to the press. His civilian clothes tell us some time has passed.

REPORTER 1

Now that the Formics have been defeated, what's next for Admiral Mazer Rackham?

RACKHAM

A whole lot of fishing.

LAUGHTER from the press corps.

REPORTER 2

We've seen a lot about the subcommanders
on the nets - but what about Ender
Wiggin? How is he?

A shadow comes over Rackham's face for long enough to
warrant a few PHOTOGRAPHS.

RACKHAM

I suspect Ender is with his family.

REPORTER 3

Come on, Admiral - you really don't know
where Ender is?

Rackham struggles to maintain his smile:

RACKHAM

No, I don't. Next question?

EXT. RACKHAM'S RIVER HOUSE - DAY

FISHING TACKLE in tow, Rackham walks toward his house, in
sight of the banks of the Shenandoah river.

For the first time, he looks his age if not older, and
there is an air of sad resignation about him as he climbs
the embankment.

ENDER (O.S.)

At least you didn't lie about the
fishing.

To Rackham's great surprise, he looks up to see Ender
standing on his front porch.

ENDER

How about your family? Did you lie about
them too? Did they even exist?

Rackham doesn't take the bait.

RACKHAM

How did you find this place?

Ender removes MILITARY STRIPES from his pocket:

ENDER

They made me a Captain. I've got some pull now.

RACKHAM

Congratulations. But I'm guessing you didn't come here to show me that.

ENDER

How do you feel about what we did? It doesn't bother you at all?

RACKHAM

Nobody knew anything when we set out for Vega. There were suspicions, theories, reports... We made a difficult choice, to the best of our ability...

(beat)

It was the right choice, even if we were wrong. And yes: It bothers me. More than you could know.

ENDER

So make it right.

RACKHAM

It's too late. I'm too old. Some things can't be undone.

ENDER

This one can. Help me make it right.

The pressure with which Rackham rubs the bridge of his nose suggests he knows what Ender wants.

RACKHAM

It could take years. It could take your whole life...

Ender is silent and unwavering in his resolve.

RACKHAM

I'll see what I can do. Call in a few favors.

Ender nods soberly and heads down the porch stairs. He's ten yards away before:

RACKHAM

Ender.

Ender looks back at Rackham.

RACKHAM

What I said about my family was the truth. All of it. I'd never lie about that.

Ender accepts this. He nods, and walks away.

EXT. LAUNCE PAD - DAY

An I.F. GROUND CREW loads CRATES of supplies onto

A LARGE SPACECRAFT. Judging from the number of crates being loaded, the craft is going on a long trip - and this jibes with the writing on the side of the ship:

I.F. 1109 - PLANETARY SURVEY

An I.F. CAR pulls up alongside the launch pad. Ender, Valentine and Mrs. Wiggin get out.

Rackham and Ender's four subcommanders are waiting for them near the gangway. Bean's HAT clashes loudly with his I.F. JUMPSUIT.

Mrs. Wiggin hugs her two children tightly, and presses her head to theirs. She whispers, but what she says is between her and them.

For Rackham, she has nothing but a glare worthy of a war widow before she gets back in the car and is driven away.

Ender and Valentine approach Rackham and the others.

RACKHAM

When news of this survey team's new mission makes it to the High Commander, I'll finally get that last court martial I've been chasing all these years.

(beat, re: spacecraft)

That's a brand new AX-311. They might catch me, but they'll never catch you.

Ender nods, and steps over to his friends.

ENDER

Well... I guess this is goodbye.

Bean steps forward.

BEAN

We ain't here for "goodbyes."

DINK

We were, uh, wondering if you wanted some company.

They're offering the better part of their lives to Ender's cause. Ender is astonished:

ENDER

I- I couldn't ask you to do that, I-

PETRA

We're the ones doing the asking.

ALAI

You're doing the right thing, finding them a new home. Let us be a part of it.

BEAN

What else we gonna do? Stay here and cut ribbons on shopping malls with the Admiral?

Rackham grins indulgently at Bean's insubordination. Ender looks to Valentine. She smiles:

VALENTINE

What are you looking at me for? You all outrank me.

ENDER

Welcome aboard.

Bean tips his hat politely to Valentine. As the elated subcommanders step over to meet her -

- Ender approaches Rackham, all earlier antagonism gone.

ENDER

Thank you.

They look at each other for a long beat, probably for the last time. With fierce pride, Rackham salutes Ender, and Ender salutes back.

Then Ender and company join the FLOW OF SURVEY CREW MEMBERS as they walk up the gangway into the ship.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD

The PLANETARY SURVEY CRAFT LIFTS OFF into the sky.

EXT. OBSERVATION PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Rackham watches it go.

INT. PLANETARY SURVEY CRAFT - CABIN - TEN MINUTES LATER

The CABIN SHAKES with lift-off rumble, and the G-forces push Ender, Valentine and Bean into their seats.

All around them, the SURVEY CREW are similarly squeezed - though many strain against the G-forces to steal a look at Ender and company, who are, after all, famous.

The rumble subsides. Valentine's hair rises in the zero-G, and Bean's hat floats from his head. They all unbuckle themselves. Bean grabs his hat, plants it firmly on Ender's head and nods with approval.

As the rest of the survey team goes about their shipboard duties, Ender and company follow the handrails back to

INT. PLANETARY SURVEY CRAFT - LAB

In the center of the onboard lab, the FORMIC QUEEN and its single EGG lie in separate STASIS CYLINDERS. Members of the survey team carefully monitor their vitals.

The four subcommanders gape with wonder at the sight. Ender looks at them and smiles.

Valentine puts her arm around her brother's shoulder. Together, they look out the starboard porthole -

- at the EARTH, as it recedes into the nothingness.

EXT. SPACE

The PLANETARY SURVEY CRAFT shrinks smaller and smaller against the band of the MILKY WAY, until it gets lost among the numberless STARS.

the end