

Trey's Destiny
(Prologue)

One of the best books I have ever read was by Orson Scott Card called “Ender’s Game”. He wrote it in 1985 and won both the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award. They even made a movie out of it starring Harrison Ford. I don’t usually steal a plot line, but this one was too good to miss. My story will be different, but will parallel it in many ways.

Here is the backdrop for the story:

The world is in imminent danger from alien invading forces. In the last decade, a genius general saved the planet, but that was just a temporary fix. The alien forces have had time to reassemble and will mount another attack having learned from the first encounter. This time they will be much more formidable.

The central command has been searching for a new commander to lead against the impending attack. Two children from one family were chosen, but neither was picked. The first was too ruthless. The second was too docile. The parents were relieved that none of their kids were chosen. Then surprisingly, they had an unplanned third child. They named him Trey. At the age of 6, the commanding general Marcus of the central command paid a visit to their home. The parents knew what was about to happen. Sure enough, they conscripted Trey to enter Battle School. He really didn’t want to go, but refusal was not an option.

A week later he was aboard the space transport on his way to Battle School boot camp.

Trey's Destiny
(Chapter 1)

Trey’s departure and separation from his family was an emotional trip. His brother hated him because he had been rejected and Trey had been chosen. His brother had tormented him most of his life. His sister was the complete opposite. He adored her and hated the thought of leaving her and his parents. The commander Marcus accompanied him to the launch site. Trey was a

little apprehensive about space flight. Having Marcus there was somewhat comforting since he knew him and thought Marcus liked him.

Trey was sitting in the space transport ship on his way to Battle School boot camp. They were all strapped in their seats. After the strain of the launch on their bodies, they were now weightless. One of the bigger kids was teasing him about his wimpy looking body. Why would anyone chose such a feeble looking kid? I bet you will be washed out in the first week. Marcus overheard this exchange. He answered the kid himself. Do you think brawn is more powerful than brains? This was a rhetorical question. The boy you are teasing is bound to be your executive officer someday you pea brain. What is Marcus doing thought Trey? He is setting me up to be hated by the others. Praising him in public will only make the future more difficult. The others will think he is privileged and will be jealous. Marcus left the area. The kid behind Trey started to smack him on the head. So you think you are special. Friends with the master teacher. He can't always be there to watch your back. Trey was thinking the very same thing. If he was going to survive he needed to take care of himself.

Trey was used to being ridiculed. Everyone back in his grade school knew he was what they called a "third". Couples were only allowed to have two children. Because his brother and sister were of genius level, his parents were granted a waiver. Being bullied was not new to him. He had been bullied by a big kid back in fifth grade. He learned early on how to deal with it. The kid had cornered him outside of school. Several kids were around watching the drama. Bruce had reached out and pushed him. Come on coward, let's see you fight back. The kid outweighed Trey by 50 lbs. The second time he tried to grab his arm, Trey brushed it aside and stepped back. As the kid advanced, thinking Trey truly was a coward, he placed a hard kick to his sternum. He was used to fighting with his brother who was brutal compared to this chump. Bruce went down not expecting anything from such a frail boy. Trey knew that if he didn't finish this now, a retaliatory event would be forthcoming. While Bruce lay on the ground, Trey kicked him in the ribs. Bruce emitted a groan.. Then Trey kicked him in the crotch. Bruce could not even utter another sound after that. Then Trey kicked him in the face as blood came spouting out his nose. He turned back toward the

onlookers. If any of you have thoughts of revenge, this is what I do to those who would hurt me.

In order to get a better angle on smacking Trey, the kid undid his shoulder harness and stood up holding on to the bar on the back of Trey's seat.

Another smack, only harder this time. Trey timed the hits and when the next one arrived, he grabbed the kid's wrist and angled it up toward the ceiling.

Without gravity, the kid went flying and hit the ceiling with much more force than Trey would have believed. The kid went bouncing around the cabin like a ping pong ball. Marcus chose that point to re-enter the cabin. He grabbed the kid and brought him down. He called a medic. The kid was dazed and had a broken arm. Now you see what I am talking about. Anyone else want to intimidate Trey? Only silence remained.

One of Marcus's associates was a psychologist. She had been monitoring Trey since he was first singled out. Marcus, what are you trying to do? Do you want to break this kid? If I can break him, then he is not what we are looking for. I have to make him believe that no one, even me, will ever come to his aid.

After the flight ended, all were escorted to their living quarters. When Trey arrived there was only one bunk left empty. It was a bottom bunk near the exit door. He could tell that this was the most undesirable bunk. Instead of complaining he said, oh great, someone left me the best bunk. I always wanted a bottom one near the exit door. This reversal of psychology helped him save face. He spent the next week in orientation. Where to go, where not to go, when to eat, and when to sleep. He also spent time getting to know his roommates. They were all destined to be on the same team in future battle sport wars. Trey met another frail looking kid. He said his name was Pistachio. Is that your real name? No, the other kids gave me this nickname because every time I try to eat the food here, my face turns green in the gills and I vomit it all up. Where are you from? I was born in China and I was only used to Asian foods. This food here is trying to bulk me up, but instead I am getting weaker day by day. If it is OK, I will just call you Stash. Works for me.

One of the training methods employed by the school to evaluate ingenuity and dexterity was the Battle Bot arena. The arena had several hazards to add to the fun. One was called the pulverizer. It was a heavy metal hammer that if your bot got caught under it would come down hard and smash your machine to pieces. Another area had saw blades that would rise up and tear the underbelly of your machine if you happened hover over its location. Rotating screws could trap your bot or shred it. Part 1 required the contestants to build their own remote controlled robot. These were often the size of an earth lawnmower from the past. Trey teamed up with Pistachio. It was a splendid match. Stash was ingenious in robotic construction and Trey was superior in combat strategy. Putting both of their brains together, they came up with the following Battle Bot characteristics. It had sufficient armor to protect it from hits from other bots. It had a spinning wheel on the front and back that when contact was made with another bot, would send them flying 2 meters into the air. Two forks low to the ground allowed it to get under other competitors and initiate a lift to send them flying again. A third feature was a claw. If caught in it, it's Sayonara for them. Sorry Stash, that is Japanese not Chinese. The claw could pick up even the heaviest of bots and drive them into the screws where they would be mangled.

Their machine had a backup motor drive in case the first one was disabled. A front mounted flame thrower, when switched on, could melt the opponents wires.

After all had completed their designs, a weekend tournament was scheduled to test them out. I wish I could have witnessed the actual videos. Their bot was something like a combination of these two.





Trey operated the drive remote and Stash operated the weapons control. During the weeks competition, they never lost a single match. It wasn't even close.

This was child's play compared to the next phase. Instead of robots fighting, it was time for each student to fight for real in a different kind of arena.

Trey's Destiny (Chapter 2)

Just when Trey was starting to get comfortable with his roommates, an unexpected newbie returned to his group. It was the boy whose arm he had broken by accident. His name was Pauli. Apparently Pauli, due to his size and personality, was the unofficial leader of the group. Trey needed a way to knock him down a step or two. As part of their school training, each newbie was given a desk tablet. You had to sign in with your finger print and it gave you your assignments, scheduling, and notices. Pauli immediately assumed his role, but was cautious in dealing with Trey. Maybe he had learned his lesson. True to his nature, he started harassing some of the weaker newbies. One was a small kid he called Worm. His real name was Teak. Trey asked, why does he call you that? He says that when I walk my butt wiggles like a worm. Trey had already hacked into the tablets program. He could send messages to all the other's without the source being revealed. The next time Pauli called Teak that name, a message was sent out. "Watch you butt, Pauli is watching!" There was a chorus of laughter from the group. When Pauli read it he was furious. He suspected who had sent it, but there was no way to prove it.

The first time Trey saw the Battle Room Arena he was fascinated. So this is where the combat games are played. Each newbie had a locker in the compartment. Inside his was a form fitting uniform. The next instruction said to put on your uniform and go to the Battle Arena. As each newbie went through the portal they entered zero gravity. If you failed to hold on to a rail, you would just drift or spin in place. Trey was also given some kind of gun. He didn't know its purpose or how to use it yet. It had three buttons. One sent out a laser beam. Another was some kind of thruster. The third he didn't know what it did. He saw another kid launch off of the wall and propel across the room to the other side. This kid was supposedly Pauli's friend. His name was Ali. Trey tried to do the same thing. His angle was off and instead of hitting the other wall he ran into Ali. Ali reached out and grabbed Trey's arm to keep him from crashing too hard. That was a cool move you made. Do you know what these other buttons on the gun are for? Not sure, but there is only one way to find out. Go ahead and shoot me. This might be dangerous. Why not shoot me instead? Why don't we shoot each other in the foot. That should be safe enough. They did that. Both of their feet were suddenly frozen. The suits had a small reflector on them. What if the light beam hits the reflector? Let's try it. They fired at the other newbies. Hitting the reflector disables the suit and you can't move. Now all the others were stuck in place. Just about that time the instructor entered the arena. The other newbies started complaining that it wasn't fair. He just said, you had the same chance as these two. It's not their fault you were too slow to figure out the equipment. That was the end of the first arena practice.

Back at their compartment, it was time to chose a group leader. Pauli was sure he would be chosen. Instead, Ali was the hands down favorite. Trey was happy about this. It appeared that Ali was not as aligned with Pauli as he had first thought.

For the next two weeks, Trey started to feel he belonged. He had two friends in Stash and Ali and just one enemy in Pauli. A message appeared on his desk tablet. Report to station 2 for reassignment. What! How can they do that? Newbies were never reassigned that soon. A bad vibe shuttered through his whole body.

Alanie, the psychologist asked Marcus, why are you doing this? He was getting too comfortable. We need to keep him off balance or he would stagnate at that level. Isn't putting him into Salamander group too soon? He barely had time to learn the arena and now your going to assign him to a real battle platoon. We will find out.

On the way he noticed a score board listing the team standings. The Salamander group was in the middle. Each platoon was given some kind of animal name. Dragon, Condor, Snake, Rat, etc.

Trey knocked on the entrance to the Salamander Team compartment. Some big kid opened the door. What are you doing in this area newbie? He showed him the assignment paper. He started to take it then Trey pulled it back. I was told to only give this to Mikhail. He motioned for Trey to enter. While waiting, a handsome tall kid approached. Who are you? Trey handed him the notice. Mikhail emitted a string of cuss words. You have got to be kidding. They took away one of my top platoon leaders and gave me this worthless wimp of an inexperienced newbie. Trey could tell that this was not going to be a pleasant experience. I don't want you messing up my battle strategies. I am forced to include you in the arena, but here is my command. You will not enter until 5 minutes has passed. You will not engage the enemy and will never fire your weapon. Is that clear? Yes sir, that is clear. What he did not say was what was clear is this commander was stupid. Instead of thinking of a way to use him, he just wanted keep him out of the action.

In his new locker was a lose fitting combat uniform. He guess that no one this young and small was suppose to wear a regular one.

The next morning was his first battle arena fight. He did as Mikhail commanded. He watched the battle. Mikhail's strategy was to send formations out. This strategy was too predictable. Trey entered the arena. He aimed his shoes at the enemy. This gave them a smaller target to hit. He did get hit and his feet were frozen. The rest of his body was OK. As the battle continued, the Salamander team was soon defeated. In order to win a battle, at least 5 soldiers must exit the enemies portal. Trey was still active.

He could have shot at least one and the battle would have been a draw. This just re-enforced his opinion of Mikhail's stupidity.

One surprising result of the battle was that since Trey was not frozen and he never fired a shot, he went to the top of the efficiency board due to not being killed and a perfect firing score because he never missed, since he never fired.

This couldn't go on like this. He needed to practice in the battle room. There was one girl in the Salamander army. Her name was Arcadia. Since she was a girl, Mikhail treated her like a pariah. She approached Trey and said, it looks like I have a fellow comrade. Mikhail doesn't like me either. He only keeps me because I am the most accurate shooter. I need to get a chance to practice, but Mikhail won't let me. You can practice yourself during free play. There are empty battle rooms available. Can you show me where to go? She not only showed him where to go, she decided to help teach him to shoot. After several sessions, his aim improved dramatically. He still needed to train with others. He visited his old group and asked if anyone would like to work with him. Both Stash and Ali agreed. Several other did too. They figured that now that Trey was a real soldier that he could give them information not previously available. So everyday Trey practiced with these kids. They would try all kinds of moves. Some did not work out well, but they learned how to correct.

Mikhail heard about his practice with some of his former newbies. In front of his whole squad, he told Trey that he didn't want him associating with any newbies. Trey asked him if he could speak with him in private. A commander could not refuse this request. They stepped outside away from the ears of the others. It is my understanding that free play is "free" play. I can do whatever I want during that time. Why you insolent kid. Look, if I am allowed to practice, it will be easier for you to trade me if I have more skill. Even though he was angry that Trey would question his command, he could see the logic in what he said. Trey pushed his position even further. If you interfere with my free play, I can get you iced. Trey didn't know if this was true or not, but neither did Mikhail. I already told the group that you

couldn't practice with newbies. No problem, just tell them you changed your mind because you want to trade me and having more skill will work faster.

The next battle was with Rat team. They were not even as good as Salamander team. Trey was still under the same restraints as before. This time, when he entered he shot his own feet and appeared inert like before. The other team completely ignored him. Mikhail's weak strategy allowed the Rat team to win. Seven soldiers were left and headed for the exit portal. Trey disobeyed Mikhail's orders and shot three of the exiting soldiers before they made it to the portal. He turned a loss into a draw.

Back at the team compartment, Mikhail smacked Trey hard across the face. How dare you disobey my orders. Didn't you want to win? The other soldiers saw how he treated someone who had saved them from a loss. Mikhail lost some respect that day. The next day Trey was traded to Rat team. Once again, he was at the top of the efficiency board having shot 4 soldiers without a miss.

Trey's Destiny *(Chapter 3)*

Trey reported to his new army. Whereas Mikhail had been super tedious and clean, Rosen was just the opposite. The quarters were messy, items strewn here and there, no apparent order. Rosen didn't even welcome Trey. He just pointed to a guy at the far end of the compartment. Trey followed his pointed direction. Welcome to Rat army. My name is Sike. Why did Rosen assign me to you? He didn't assign you, I requested you. This was a surprise to Trey. I am relatively inexperienced, why would you want me? I have seen promise in you that others have missed. Let's go somewhere where we can talk in private. Is Sike your real name? I can barely remember my real name. Everyone of us gets tagged with some nickname regardless of the past. I bet Trey is not your real name. Actually it is. Your parents must have been geniuses realizing that being a third, you would have ended up with this moniker anyway. Why this name for you? In the past, before I was taken, I studied psychology. I am always analyzing others. Take your former commander, Mikhail. He is of Russian heritage. He is always trying to

impress his father. Nothing makes him angrier than someone topping him. That is why he hates you so much. Our illustrious leader is another example. His name is Rosen from Jewish heritage. Everyone calls him Rose the Nose. Antisemitism is alive and well here in the future. He practices self deprecation to take the sting out of the hatred of Jews that still exists. He shouldn't even be a commander. Why not? Rat army has been wining the majority of its games. He doesn't know why we win or lose. He just realizes it has something to do with me. Why aren't you the commander then? I was asked many times to be promoted, but I refused. I don't want the elitist who run the games to use me against my will. Don't you want to fight against the Aphids. That is what earthlings call the invading force. It is because they look like this.



Only they are not the small bugs that we know. They are taller than the average adult male and have jaws and claws. A small contingent broke through earth's defenses and landed on soil. The ensuing battle was not pretty. Many soldiers were eviscerated and torn to bits before the enemy was overwhelmed and subdued.

I don't believe that an alien force is even coming. We defeated them and I think they were totally annihilated. Why would we need a battle school to train commanders then? Because those who run the schools make a lot of money. They don't want to lose their power. I find that hard to believe. Don't you remember ancient history. At one time the American, so called democracy, had two opposing parties. They always voted to keep themselves in power regardless of whether it benefited the common folks or what was reasonable. Trey did not believe that aliens were not on their way. He had seen the videos of the war and it looked all to real to him. If you feel that way, why not just quit and go home. I am addicted to the games. It is the only time I feel alive.

So that is where Trey ended up on his second reassignment.

The practice sessions became more interesting. Sike was not like his other leaders. He trained his platoon completely in private away from Rosin's other soldiers. He was not afraid to take and use suggestions. Their first scheduled battle was against Centipede army. Sike told Trey to be the first one out, freeze his legs, and accelerate toward the enemies while firing between his knees. Great, a suicide mission. This didn't seem much better than what Mikhail had him do. The results proved otherwise. Before Trey was frozen, he had shot five enemies and wounded two before they even got out of the gate. Rat army won easily. Trey still remained at the top of the efficiency board due to his kill score.

After that, Sike ordered all his soldiers to aim their feet at the enemy. He reasoned that it was harder to hit the whole body that way.

Trey resumed his practice with his former newbies. He taught them new skills he had picked up now that he was in a real army.

As the rotation came around, once again Rat army was to face Salamander army. With the new strategies that Sike and Trey introduced, the battle was one sided. In fact, it was the biggest slaughter in battle school history. Trey knew all of Mikhail's maneuvers. Sike also used the stars in the corners to position his soldiers for better cover.

The next morning, Trey, once again, got a surprise. A new member had been transferred. It was none other than Arcadia. Why would Mikhail transfer his best shooter? The answer was revealed when Trey and Arcadia met. She had a nasty bruise below her right eye. What happened? Mikhail went into a rage when I mentioned that he should not have transferred you. You can report him to the authorities. I thought about that, but decided it was better to let it slide and get transferred. Getting away from that lunatic was worth it.

Now, other soldiers from other armies started showing up at the free practices. Trey was still first on the leader board and that gave him some credence. Some of the commanders from the other armies started showing up and taking names of those who participated. Random incidences of violence

against those who practiced started occurring. Trey wanted to quit the practices. Ali said, no way. If you give in to those bullies, they will see that their tactics work. Just keep doing what we are doing. During one of the practices, a group of bigger kids showed up at the arena. Mikhail was one of them. They thought they would teach these followers of Trey a lesson. Trey wanted to stop, but Ali said no. What are you afraid of? These dudes are no match for us. We operate as a well oiled machine. Lets see how this plays out. Sure enough, violence was on their mind. The battle suits gave little protection against blows. Trey directed his group to scatter and use the stars. The bigger kids weren't use to the free play arena. Trey directed his group to head for the portal. Everyone except him made it. He was left alone to battle the rest. His first encounter left him too slow to make it safety out of the portal. As one of the assailants came close, Trey pushed his arm and sent him spinning into a wall. He yelled out in pain as the trust broke his arm. Another managed to strike Trey, but not realizing the forces that were created, he rebounded and hit one of the stars. Another cry of pain. Mikhail was closing in on Trey. As he got close enough, Trey rendered a kick to his groin. He saw his team starting to enter the arena to come to his aid. He motioned them to stay away. Another tried to grab him and he twisted his wrist and kicked him in the ear. All this resulted in a lucky motion for Trey. Now his momentum carried him to the exit portal.

Why didn't the instructors stop all this violence? It looks like no one will ever come to my aid.

The next day it was reported that four soldiers were hospitalized. The conclusion was that their injuries were a result of accidental collisions in training.

Trey barely ate much food. A couple bites just to ease his hunger pains was enough. While the rest of the team continued to eat, he slipped out to shower. He was doing double duty. While in the shower, he heard the door open and close. Shortly thereafter he was facing Mikhail and 5 of his friends. Ali had warned him never to go anywhere alone. It was well known that Mikhail hated Trey with a passion and others imagined if given the opportunity he would bring serious harm to Trey. It looked like it was about to happen.

Trey was naked and in the shower. Well, well, if it isn't mister genius. Always at the top of the leader board, showing off. Mikhail was 3 years older and 50 lbs heavier than Trey. Even though Trey had taken defensive combat training, Mikhail most likely had too. If Trey had any chance of getting out of here without serious damage, he had to end this quick. A little psychology was in order. So Mikhail, I bet your father would be real proud of you. Beating up someone much smaller and younger and bringing a gang to back you up. As expected this reved up Mikhail's anger. Trey was already in the shower and didn't bother to turn off the hot water. He was lathered up with soap and steam was beginning to cloud the air. As more steam built up, the distance between Mikhail and Trey was getting foggier. Mikhail couldn't hold his rage any longer. As he approached, instead of backing up, Trey advanced. Mikhail had him in his clutches. This is exactly what Trey wanted. Mikhail thought Trey would kick out and go for his crotch. Instead, Trey slipped out of his grasp and as he bent down, he used his legs to spring back up and caught Mikhail right in the face with his hard skull. Blood spurted out of Mikhail's nose. Trey then spun around and did kick him in the crotch. Even with the steam, Trey saw Mikhail's eyes go blank. He hit the tiled floor with a resounding smack and didn't move. About that time, some attendants ran into the room. It was over. They must have been watching. So instead of preventing the violence, they just let it go until someone really got hurt. This reinforced Trey's belief that no one would ever come to his aid. Mikhail would be iced out for his action. Trey learned later that Mikhail was in a coma. His first thought was that he was just like his brother. Embedded in his psych was a killer's instinct.

Trey's Destiny (Chapter 4)

No one talked about what happened to Mikhail. Rumor had it that he had died. There was no way to verify. It didn't matter. The witnesses who had been present knew that if Trey could take down someone as formidable as Mikhail, then he could take down anyone. No one bothered him after that. Due to his high standing and obvious intelligence, talk was always subdued when he walked into a room. He still had Teak, Ali, and Stash as close friends. He didn't need more. For the next few years things went along like

this. He kept winning. The game directors kept altering the rules to make it more difficult for him to win. It didn't matter, whatever they threw at him, he figured out how to get around it. He was finally given his own army. They took away all of his experienced soldiers and gave him a group of newbies. There was one runt in the group who was arrogant enough to request to be a platoon leader. Why would I choose you? What makes a little piss-ant like you think he could do that? I know I could, if you give me the chance. What is your name? They call me Peewee. Of course that was not his given name at birth. He was even smaller and more frail than Trey was when he first arrived. I don't give out promotions without performance. You will see. Within a month I will be a platoon leader. This irritated Trey to know end. Then he realized, he was treating this kid the same way other commanders had treated him. Has the school really change him that much? This was not a pleasant thought. I don't want to be like my brother James or Mikhail.

Peewee's prediction came true. He was truly brilliant and caught on quicker than any of the others. How is Trey going to keep his record with this group of newbies? They gave him some time to train them. He kept coming up with new formations, moves, and strategy that offset their lack of experience. Continue winning he did.

The game coordinators keep taking Trey's best soldiers from him. Arcadia now had her own army, as did Ali and Stash.

The final straw for Trey came the day they pit two top armies against him.

Trey decided this would be his last battle game. He was tired of it all. When he approached the battle gate, there were four stars blocking his view. Sure, why not make me blind. He couldn't see where the two armies were or what their setup was. He told Peewee, take this line and wrap it around you waste. Make a circuit of the arena and tell me what you see. Peewee propelled himself rapidly and bounced off of the far wall. He was moving at such speed that the enemy couldn't hit him even though they fired. As he returned to the gate he told Trey, the two armies are hiding behind stars in the far right and left corners. What should we do? We will make a formation. We have never used formations. They are inherently ineffective. I agree, but here is

what I want you and four more soldiers to do. He whispered his commands. Trey and the rest of the group moved to the center of the arena, then they split into two groups. The two enemy armies fired and annihilated the two group formations. When the lead commander tried to fire at Trey, his gun became inert and the lights came on. The last thing he saw before that was 5 of Trey's soldiers exiting his team's gate. It took a second before he realized what had happened. A victory occurred when the opposing team sends 5 or more soldiers through the opposing team's gate. Trey had won without firing a single shot or freezing any opposing members.

The game coordinator told Trey, we are going to change the rules so that doesn't happen again. I don't care anymore. This was my last game. I quit.

Trey was called to Marcus's quarters. Looks like I beat you again. You beat the other team, not me. What are you going to do now. Put my team in a cage without guns? Do you think I am stupid. I know what you have been doing. Pushing me to the limit to see if I can be broken. Well, I guess you have done it. Actually, we are transferring you out of Battle School. Where to? Central Command School. You mean pre-command don't you? No, the full Central Command School. Your shuttle leaves in 20 minutes. Isn't Command School among the asteroids? A shuttle can't reach there. That is true. We are sending you back to earth for a short vacation.

Marcus knew that Trey's mind was not right. He had been close to burnout. In fact, he suspected that Trey was in danger of completely giving up. For what they need him for in the next couple of years, his mind needed to be clear. No one better to do it than his sister Valery. Marcus had told her what she needed to do. For Trey and for all mankind. So you are using me as a tool to convince him to keep going? Yes, you are correct. We have no other choice. Valery did not know what to expect. The little boy who had left home four years ago, was not the same as the one who she had to protect from his brother James. She knew about his successes at Battle School. Their reunion was subdued. Trey knew that the only reason they let him see his sister was for their own selfish reasons. He still loved her as before and hated James too. It took awhile for her presence to affect him. The two weeks turned into two months. Trey learned that her and James had both

been affecting world affairs in a way that surprised him. James had changed. Instead of torturing squirrels, he was torturing politicians and world leaders. He had discovered that the pen was truly more powerful than the sword. He and Valery had been posting scripts on the world net exposing corruption and world leader's harmful behavior. Writing under pseudo names, no one knew their true identities. Just like in the past. Man had not changed much. Putin wanting to get Ukraine back. Iran wanting to destroy America and Israel. Trump wanting to take over Greenland for resource elements and strategic position. This will continue if or until the world has one religion or none and one ethnic race.

When Marcus boarded the transport with Trey going to Eros, he could tell Trey's focus was back on track.

Trey did not like Eros. Something felt wrong. The walls seemed out of proportion to humans. Later he found out why. These chambers were the original habitat of the Aphids. The Central Command had converted them into their combat headquarters. No wonder they had felt alien to Trey from the beginning.

He spent the next few months getting use to the simulator controls. At first, he made a lot of mistakes, but soon became adept at using it and it became too easy to beat the simulations.

Marcus said he was ready for the next lessons. When Trey woke up the next morning, and old man was sitting on a stool in his room. He never said a word. Trey figured this was just another game or test for him. Instead of initiating conversation, Trey remained silent. He soon got tired of this game and started walking to the door. The door was locked. He asked, why is this door locked? The man remained silent. Trey went over to him and put his hand on his shoulder. Hey, old man, I'm talking to you! Trey suddenly found himself flung across the room. The man remained stationary and silent. So this is the game they want me to play. Trey approached again and pretended to grab his shoulder. Instead, he bent down and swept his leg and upended the man. Now that was a good move. Surprised, Trey asked, who are you? My name is Dox Strathum. Dox Strathum would have been dead

by now. He was the hero who had saved the world in the first alien attack. Who are you really? I am one in the same. You want to talk about dedication. In order to teach prospective commanders like you, they sent me on a time altering speeding ship for five years and then returned me. For me, it was the longest five years of my life. When I returned, my wife and children had already died. Only my grandchildren were alive and they did not even know me. They needed me to teach you all about the Aphids. Their strengths and their weaknesses. So it began. Can you show me how you defeated them? That is top secret. I watched the available videos shown to the public and I surmised that you hit their queen. They are just like ants. When the queen dies the whole colony dies. You figured this out on your own? You are only one of seven who know the true story. Up until now, you have been able to defeat the computer simulations. From now on, I will program the computers. It will not be as easy as before. True to his word, the simulated battles were indeed more difficult. A surprise was waiting for Trey though. The next day, when he assumed command of the control remote, his best commanders from battle school were stationed at the adjoining consoles. There was Stash, Arcadia, Peewee, Teak, and Ali. With these added comrades, the simulations became manageable. Trey was like an orchestra conductor. Directing his Lieutenants like a symphony. After honing their movements like well oiled machines, he was told his final exam was to be the next day. Get some sleep. You will need to be at your peak performance level. Having his friends and best battle school partners gave him the added confidence that he needed for a good nights sleep.

Tomorrow, the Final Exam

Trey's Destiny

(Chapter 5)

The Final Battle

It was to be Trey's final examination. The years he had been training against the computer simulations were about to be tested. Dox told him to focus on what he had learned about them. Put all your strategy together, don't be afraid to innovate, and I am sure you will succeed. Easy for you to say. You

are not the one at the helm. Dox knew this comment was meant to relax Trey and he was glad. Being apprehensive would work against him.

Stash, Arcadia, Peewee, Teak, and Ali were already at their posts. The simulation began. Trey could not believe what he was seeing. Deja Vu. This seemed like his last test at battle school when they threw two armies at him at once. Only this was magnified X10. So it appeared that they wanted him to lose. I should just throw down my command control and walk out. Instead, he got angry. OK, if you want to play the game like that, lets see how it goes.

What was presented before him was a mass of enemies surrounding their home planet. The only chance he had was to get around behind it. Trying to blast through their advance fleet would not work. He sent Arcadia's force straight at the lead group. Ali and Stash, follow Arcadia and at the last moment split left and right.

Marcus grabbed Dox's arm. What is he doing? It looks like he just wants to commit suicide. The advance fleet fighters are being slaughtered. Hurry up, take over. Let him be. I think I see his plan.

Ali and Stash's fighters were equipped with nukes. Even if only one was successful, it would be game over for the bugs. The enemy was adapt at direct combat, but the side maneuvers went undetected as their focus was on the lead force.

When it looked like Trey's plan was collapsing, the planet suddenly blew up. The Aphids ships starting dropping as if no one was at the helm. Trey had done it.

Trey's thought was that he had just passed the exam. Why were the observers dancing around hugging each other? He never thought they were fans of his. It was Dox who clued him in. You did it Trey. You saved our earth. What are you talking about? This was just a simulation wasn't it? None of the past months were simulations. Except for your initial training on the simulator, you were always fighting the real invasion. Trey was stunned. Instead of joining in the jubilation, he was struck with another thought. I am

just like James. A real murderer. First Bruce in school, then Pauli in the shuttle, Mikhail in the shower room, now he had killed off an entire species. Why didn't you tell me this was real? I sacrificed many human fighters in my bid to win. If we had told you, you wouldn't have won. The fighters knew their fate. They willingly went forth. We needed you to be like James. Ruthless against all odds. We needed you to be like Valery, smarter and calculating. A balance that you achieved. Trey said, leave me alone. I need to get some sleep. He walked like a zombie through the throngs of observers patting him on the back, smiling widely, and yelling congrats. He slept for a whole 24 hours. When he woke, he was still in a bad mood. Arcadia was there beside him in his room. It was she who brought him out of his funk. Thank god she had not been annihilated along with most of her force. Trey was 16 now. Arcadia was two years older. There had always been a strong feelings between them. Nothing that could have been acted upon in Battle School. Now it was different. Even though both were still young, they had aged way beyond their years. Trey, I have always admired you from the first time I saw you. Arcadia, without your guidance in the battle arena I could never had achieved the success I had. That admiration has turned into love. I feel the same toward you. Trey never thought he would ever have a girlfriend. He has one now.

Epilogue

Back on Earth, Trey was hailed as a hero. He didn't feel like a hero. One thing he did not expect was for James to congratulate him. You did what I wanted to do, but could not. For this, I envy you. Don't think this will change anything between us. I will still attack you if I get the chance. I would expect nothing less. But be cautious, I am not the weakling that you tormented in our youth. One of the things that Trey wanted most was for James to show love for him. That would never happen, but the fact that James respected him might have to do.

The world was saved from alien attack, but not from its own strife. War between countries vying for natural resources, different religious affiliations, and corruption will continue. Trey was not concerned about this. Let fate determine the future of the world. What bothered him most was the

destruction of an entire species. He had been getting subtle messages in his dreams. So real that he couldn't ignore them. Was the species entirely eliminated? He needed to find out or it would bug him the rest of his life. Ha! Bug him. What an unintended pun. Something was prompting him to want to visit the world he had destroyed. As far as anyone knew, the inhabitants of the planet were gone. The core of the planet was still intact. Why not visit it and see what these dreams and messages were all about?

Authors note:

The end of the Ender's Game book was not the end of Orson Scott Cards Ender series. This set up the sequel called "Speaker for the Dead". Ender does visit the bugs planet and finds a queen still alive. A story for another time.

The End