Chapter 1 -- Third

"I've watched through his eyes, I've listened through his ears, and tell you he's the one.

Or at least as close as we're going to get."

"That's what you said about the brother."

"The brother tested out impossible. For other reasons. Nothing to do with his ability."

"Same with the sister. And there are doubts about him. He's too malleable. Too willing

to submerge himself in someone else's will."

"Not if the other person is his enemy."

"So what do we do? Surround him with enemies all the time?"

"If we have to."

"I thought you said you liked this kid."

"If the buggers get him, they'll make me look like his favorite uncle."

"All right. We're saving the world, after all. Take him."

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The monitor lady smiled very nicely and tousled his hair and said, "Andrew, I suppose

by now you're just absolutely sick of having that horrid monitor. Well, I have good news

for you. That monitor is going to come out today. We're going to just take it right out, and

it won't hurt a bit."

Ender nodded. It was a lie, of course, that it wouldn't hurt a bit. But since adults always

said it when it was going to hurt, he could count on that statement as an accurate

prediction of the future. Sometimes lies were more dependable than the truth.

"So if you'll just come over here, Andrew, just sit right up here on the examining table.

The doctor will be in to see you in a moment."

The monitor gone. Ender tried to imagine the little device missing from the back of his

neck. I'll roll over on my back in bed and it won't be pressing there. I won't feel it tingling

and taking up the heat when I shower.

And Peter won't hate me anymore. I'll come home and show him that the monitor's

gone, and he'll see that I didn't make it, either. That I'll just be a normal kid now, like

him. That won't be so bad then. He'll forgive me that I had my monitor a whole year

longer than he had his. We'll be-- not friends, probably. No, Peter was too dangerous.

Peter got so angry. Brothers, though. Not enemies, not friends, but brothers-- able to live

in the same house. He won't hate me, he'll just leave me alone. And when he wants to

play buggers and astronauts, maybe I won't have to play, maybe I can just go read a book.

But Ender knew, even as he thought it, that Peter wouldn't leave him alone. There was

something in Peter's eyes, when he was in his mad mood, and whenever Ender saw that

look, that glint, he knew that the one thing Peter would not do was leave him alone. I'm

practicing piano, Ender. Come turn the pages for me. Oh, is the monitor boy too busy to

help his brother? Is he too smart? Got to go kill some buggers, astronaut? No, no, I don't

want your help. I can do it on my own, you little bastard, you little Third.

"This won't take long, Andrew," said the doctor.

Ender nodded.

"It's designed to be removed. Without infection, without damage. But there'll be some

tickling, and some people say they have a feeling of something missing. You'll keep

looking around for something. Something you were looking for, but you can't find it, and

you can't remember what it was. So I'll tell you. It's the monitor you're looking for, and it

isn't there. In a few days that feeling will pass."

The doctor was twisting something at the back of Ender's head. Suddenly a pain stabbed

through him like a needle from his neck to his groin. Ender felt his back spasm, and his

body arched violently backward; hi head struck the bed. He could feel his legs thrashing,

and his hands were clenching each other, wringing each other so tightly that they ached.

"Deedee!" shouted the doctor. "I need you!" The nurse ran in, gasped. "Got to relax

these muscles. Get it to me, now! What are you waiting for!"

Something changed hands; Ender could not see. He lurched to one side and fell off the

examining table. "Catch him!" cried the nurse.

"Just hold him steady."

"You hold him, doctor, he's too strong for me."

"Not the whole thing! You'll stop his heart."

Ender felt a needle enter his back just above the neck of his shirt. It burned, but

wherever in him the fire spread, his muscles gradually unclenched. Now he could cry for

the fear and pain of it.

"Are you all right, Andrew?" the nurse asked.

Andrew could not remember how to speak. They lifted him onto the table. They

checked his pulse, did other things; he did not understand it all.

The doctor was trembling; his voice shook as he spoke. "They leave these things in the

kids for three years, what do they expect? We could have switched him off, do you

realize that? We could have unplugged his brain for all time."

"When does the drug wear off'?" asked the nurse.

"Keep him here for at least an hour. Watch him. If he doesn't start talking in fifteen

minutes, call me. Could have unplugged him forever. I don't have the brains of a bugger."

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He got back to Miss Pumphrey's class only fifteen minutes before the closing bell. He

was still a little unsteady on his feet.

"Are you all right, Andrew?" asked Miss Pumphrey.

He nodded.

"Were you ill?"

He shook his head.

"You don't look well."

"I'm OK."

"You'd better sit down, Andrew."

He started toward his seat, but stopped. Now what was I looking for? I can't think what I

was looking for.

"Your seat is over there," said Miss Pumphrey.

He sat down, but it was something else he needed, something he had lost. I'll find it

later.

"Your monitor," whispered the girl behind him.

Andrew shrugged.

"His monitor," she whispered to the others.

Andrew reached up and felt his neck. There was a bandaid. It was gone. He was just like

everybody else now.

"Washed out, Andy?" asked a boy who sat across the aisle and behind him. Couldn't

think of his name. Peter. No, that was someone else.

"Quiet, Mr. Stilson," said Miss Pumphrey. Stilson smirked.

Miss Pumphrey talked about multiplication. Ender doodled on his desk, drawing

contour maps of mountainous islands and then telling his desk to display them in three

dimensions from every angle. The teacher would know, of course, that he wasn't paying

attention, but she wouldn't bother him. He always knew the answer, even when she

thought he wasn't paying attention.

In the corner of his desk a word appeared and began marching around the perimeter of

the desk. It was upside down and backward at first, but Ender knew what it said long

before it reached the bottom of the desk and turned right side up.

THIRD

Ender smiled. He was the one who had figured out how to send messages and make

them march-- even as his secret enemy called him names, the method of delivery praised

him. It was not his fault he was a Third. It was the government's idea, they were the ones

who authorized it-- how else could a Third like Ender have got into school? And now the

monitor was gone. The experiment entitled Andrew Wiggin hadn't worked out alter all. If

they could, he was sure they would like to rescind the waivers that had allowed him to be

born at all. Didn't work, so erase the experiment.

The bell rang. Everyone signed off their desks or hurriedly typed in reminders to

themselves. Some were dumping lessons or data into their computers at home. A few

gathered at the printers while something they wanted to show was printed out. Ender

spread his hands over the child-size keyboard near the edge of the desk and wondered

what it would feel like to have hands as large as a grown-up's. They must feel so big and

awkward, thick stubby fingers and beefy palms. Of course, they had bigger keyboards--

but how could their thick fingers draw a fine line, the way Ender could, a thin line so

precise that he could make it spiral seventy-nine times from the center to the edge of the

desk without the lines ever touching or overlapping. It gave him something to do while

the teacher droned on about arithmetic. Arithmetic! Valentine had taught him arithmetic

when he was three.

"Are you all right. Andrew?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You'll miss the bus."

Ender nodded and got up. The other kids were gone. They would be waiting, though, the

bad ones. His monitor wasn't perched on his neck, hearing what heard and seeing what he

saw. They could say what they liked. They might even hit him now-- no one could see

anymore, and so no one would come to Ender's rescue. There were advantages to the

monitor, and he would miss them.

It was Stilson, of course. He wasn't bigger than most other kids, but he was bigger than

Ender. And he had some others with him. He always did.

"Hey, Third."

Don't answer. Nothing to say.

"Hey, Third, we're talkin to you, Third, hey bugger-lover, we're talkin to you."

Can't think of anything to answer. Anything I say will make it worse. So will saying

nothing.

"Hey, Third, hey, turd, you flunked out, huh? Thought you were better than us, but you

lost your little birdie, Thirdie, got a bandaid on your neck."

"Are you going to let me through?" Ender asked.

"Are we going to let him through? Should we let him through?" They all laughed. "Sure

we'll let you through. First we'll let your arm through, then your butt through, then maybe

a piece of your knee."

The others chimed in now. "Lost your birdie, Thirdie. Lost your birdie, Thirdie."

Stilson began pushing him with one hand, someone behind him then pushed him toward

Stilson.

"See-saw, marjorie daw," somebody said.

"Tennis!"

"Ping-pong!"

This would not have a happy ending. So Ender decided that he'd rather not be the

unhappiest at the end. The next time Stilson's arm came out to push him, Ender grabbed

at it. He missed.

"Oh, gonna fight me, huh? Gonna fight me, Thirdie?"

The people behind Ender grabbed at him, to hold him.

Ender did not feel like laughing, but he laughed. "You mean it takes this many of you to

fight one Third?"

"We're people, not Thirds, turd face. You're about as strong as a fart!"

But they let go of him. And as soon as they did, Ender kicked out high and hard,

catching Stilson square in the breastbone. He dropped. It took Ender by surprise he hadn't

thought to put Stilson on the ground with one kick. It didn't occur to him that Stilson

didn't take a fight like this seriously, that he wasn't prepared for a truly desperate blow.

For a moment, the others backed away and Stilson lay motionless. They were all

wondering if he was dead. Ender, however, was trying to figure out a way to forestall

vengeance. To keep them from taking him in a pack tomorrow. I have to win this now,

and for all time, or I'll fight it every day and it will get worse and worse. Ender knew the

unspoken rules of manly warfare, even though he was only six. It was forbidden to strike

the opponent who lay helpless on the ground; only an animal would do that.

So Ender walked to Stilson's supine body and kicked him again, viciously, in the ribs.

Stilson groaned and rolled away from him. Ender walked around him and kicked him

again, in the crotch. Stilson could not make a sound; he only doubled up and tears

streamed out of his eyes.

Then Ender looked at the others coldly. "You might be having some idea of ganging up

on me. You could probably beat me up pretty bad. But just remember what I do to people

who try to hurt me. From then on you'd be wondering when I'd get you, and how bad it

would be." He kicked Stilson in the face. Blood from his nose spattered the ground

nearby. "It wouldn't be this bad," Ender said. "It would be worse."

He turned and walked away. Nobody followed him, He turned a corner into the corridor

leading to the bus stop. He could hear the boys behind him saying, "Geez. Look at him.

He's wasted." Ender leaned his head against the wall of the corridor and cried until the

bus came. I am just like Peter. Take my monitor away, and I am just like Peter.

Chapter 2 -- Peter

"All right, it's off. How's he doing?"

"You live inside somebody's body for a few years, you get used to it. I look at his face

now, I can't tell what's going on. I'm not used to seeing his facial expressions. I'm used to

feeling them."

"Come on, we're not talking about psychoanalysis here. We're soldiers, not witch

doctors. You just saw him beat the guts out of the leader of a gang."

"He was thorough. He didn't just beat him, he beat him deep. Like Mazer Rackham at

the--"

"Spare me. So in the judgment of the committee, he passes.

"Mostly. Let's see what he does with his brother, now that the monitor's off."

"His brother. Aren't you afraid of what his brother will do to him?"

"You were the one who told me that this wasn't a no-risk business."

"I went back through some of the tapes. I can't help it. I like the kid. I think were going

to screw him up."

"Of course we are. It's our job. We're the wicked witch. We promise gingerbread, but

we eat the little bastards alive."

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"I'm sorry, Ender," Valentine whispered. She was looking at the bandaid on his neck.

Ender touched the wall and the door closed behind him. "I don't care. I'm glad it's gone."

"What's gone?" Peter walked into the parlor, chewing on a mouthful of bread and peanut

butter.

Ender did not see Peter as the beautiful ten-year-old boy that grown-ups saw, with dark,

thick, tousled hair and a face that could have belonged to Alexander the Great. Ender

looked at Peter only to detect anger or boredom, the dangerous moods that almost always

led to pain. Now as Peter's eyes discovered the bandaid on his neck, the telltale flicker of

anger appeared.

Valentine saw it too. "Now he's like us," she said, trying to soothe him before he had

time to strike.

But Peter would not be soothed. "Like us? He keeps the little sucker till he's six years

old. When did you lose yours? You were three. I lost mine before I was five. He almost

made it, little bastard, little bugger."

This is all right, Ender thought. Talk and talk, Peter. Talk is fine.

"Well, now your guardian angels aren't watching over you," Peter said. "Now they aren't

checking to see if you feel pain, listening to hear what I'm saying, seeing what I'm doing

to you. How about that? How about it?"

Ender shrugged.

Suddenly Peter smiled and clapped his hands together in a mockery of good cheer.

"Let's play buggers and astronauts," he said.

"Where's Mom?" asked Valentine.

"Out," said Peter. "I'm in charge."

"I think I'll call Daddy."

"Call away," said Peter. "You know he's never in."

"I'll play," Ender said.

"You be the bugger," said Peter.

"Let him be the astronaut for once," Valentine said.

"Keep your fat face out of it, fart mouth," said Peter. "Come on upstairs and choose your

weapons."

It would not be a good game, Ender knew it was not a question of winning. When kids

played in the corridors, whole troops of them, the buggers never won, and sometimes the

games got mean. But here in their flat, the game would start mean, and the bugger

couldn't just go empty and quit the way buggers did in the real wars. The bugger was in it

until the astronaut decided it was over.

Peter opened his bottom drawer and took out the bugger mask. Mother had got upset at

him when Peter bought it, but Dad pointed out that the war wouldn't go away just because

you hid bugger masks and wouldn't let your kids play with make-believe laser guns. The

better to play the war games, and have a better chance of surviving when the buggers

came again.

If I survive the games, thought Ender. He put on the mask. It closed him in like a hand

pressed tight against his face. But this isn't how it feels to he a bugger, thought Ender.

They don't wear this face like a mask, it is their face. On their home worlds, do the

buggers put on human masks, and play? And what do they call its? Slimies, because

we're so soft and oily compared to them?

"Watch out, Slimy," Ender said.

He could barely see Peter through the eyeholes. Peter smiled at him. "Slimy, huh? Well,

bugger-wugger, let's see how you break that face of yours."

Ender couldn't see it coming, except a slight shift of Peter's weight; the mask cut our his

peripheral vision. Suddenly there was the pain and pressure of a blow to the side of his

head; he lost balance, fell that way.

"Don't see too well, do you, bugger?" said Peter.

Ender began to take off the mask. Peter put his toe against Ender's groin. "Don't take off

the mask," Peter said.

Ender pulled the mask down into place, took his hands away.

Peter pressed with his foot. Pain shot through Ender; he doubled up.

"Lie flat, bugger. We're gonna vivisect you, bugger. At long last we've got one of you

alive, and we're going to see how you work."

"Peter, stop it," Ender said.

"Peter, stop it. Very good. So you buggers can guess our names. You can make

yourselves sound like pathetic, cute little children so we'll love you and be nice to you.

But it doesn't work. I can see you for what you really are. They meant you to be human,

little Third, but you're really a bugger, and now it shows."

He lifted his toot, took a step, and then knelt on Ender, his knee pressing into Ender's

belly just below the breastbone. He put more and more of his weight on Ender. It became

hard to breathe.

"I could kill you like this," Peter whispered. "Just press and press until you're dead. And

I could say that I didn't know it would hurt you, that we were just playing, and they'd

believe me, and everything would be fine. And you'd be dead. Everything would be fine."

Ender could not speak; the breath was being forced from his lungs. Peter might mean it.

Probably didn't mean it, but then he might.

"I do mean it," Peter said. "Whatever you think. I mean it. They only authorized you

because I was so promising. But I didn't pan out. You did better. They think you're better.

But I don't want a better little brother, Ender. I don't want a Third."

"I'll tell," Valentine said.

"No one would believe you."

"They'd believe me."

"Then you're dead, too, sweet little sister."

"Oh, yes," said Valentine. "They'll believe that. 'I didn't know it would kill Andrew.

And when he was dead, I didn't know it would kill Valentine too.'"

The pressure let up a little.

"So. Not today. But someday you two won't be together. And there'll be an accident."

"You're all talk," Valentine said. "You don't mean any of it."

"I don't?"

"And do you know why you don't mean it?" Valentine asked. "Because you want to be

in government someday. You want to be elected. And they won't elect you if your

opponents can dig up the fact that your brother and sister both died in suspicious

accidents when they were little. Especially because of the letter I've put in my secret file,

which will be opened in the event of my death."

"Don't give me that kind of crap," Peter said.

"It says, I didn't die a natural death. Peter killed me, and if he hasn't already killed

Andrew, he will soon. Not enough to convict you, but enough to keep you from ever

getting elected."

"You're his monitor now," said Peter. "You better watch him, day and night. You better

be there."

"Ender and I aren't stupid. We scored as well as you did on everything. Better on some

things. We're all such wonderfully bright children. You're not the smartest, Peter, just the

biggest."

"Oh, I know. But there'll come a day when you aren't there with him, when you forget.

And suddenly you'll remember, and you'll rush to him, and there he'll be perfectly all

right. And the next time you won't worry so much, and you won't come so fast. And

every time, he'll be all right. And you'll think that I forgot. Even though you'll remember

that I said this, you'll think that I forgot. And years will pass. And then there'll be a

terrible accident, and I'll find his body, and I'll cry and cry over him, and you'll remember

this conversation, Vally, but you'll be ashamed of yourself for remembering, because

you'll know that I changed, that it really was an accident, that it's cruel of you even to

remember what I said in a childhood quarrel. Except that it'll be true. I'm gonna save this

up, and he's gonna die, and you won't do a thing, not a thing. But you go on believing that

I'm just the biggest."

"The biggest asshole," Valentine said.

Peter leaped to his feet and started for her. She shied away. Ender pried off his mask.

Peter flopped back on his bed and started to laugh. Loud, but with real mirth, tears

coming to his eyes. "Oh, you guys are just super, just the biggest suckers on the planet

earth."

"Now he's going to tell us it was all a joke," Valentine said.

"Not a joke, a game. I can make you guys believe anything. I can make you dance

around like puppets." In a phony monster yoice he said, "I'm going to kill you and chop

you into little pieces and put you into the garbage hole." He laughed again. "Biggest

suckers in the solar system."

Ender stood there watching him laugh and thought of Stilson, thought of how it felt to

crunch into his body. This is who needed it. This is who should have got it.

As if she could read his mind, Valentine whispered, "No, Ender."

Peter suddenly rolled to the side, flipped off the bed, and got in position for a fight. "Oh,

yes, Ender," he said. "Any time, Ender."

Ender lifted his right leg and took off the shoe. He held it up. "See there, on the toe?

That's blood, Peter."

"Ooh. Ooh, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die. Ender killed a capper-tiller and now he's

gonna kill me."

There was no getting to him. Peter was a murderer at heart, and nobody knew it but

Valentine and Ender.

Mother came home and commiserated with Ender about the monitor. Father came home

and kept saying it was such a wonderful surprise, they had such fantastic children that the

government told them to have three and now the government didn't want to take any of

them after all, so here they were with three, they still had a Third... until Ender wanted to

scream at him, I know I'm a Third, I know it, if you want I'll go away so you don't have to

be embarrassed in front of everybody, I'm sorry I lost the monitor and now you have

three kids and no obvious explanation, so inconvenient for you, I'm sorry sorry sorry.

He lay in bed staring upward into the darkness... On the bunk above him, he could hear

Peter turning and tossing restlessly. Then Peter slid off the bunk and walked out of the

room. Ender heard the hushing sound of the toilet clearing; then Peter stood silhouetted in

the doorway.

He thinks I'm asleep. He's going to kill me.

Peter walked to the bed, and sure enough, he did not lift himself up to his bed. Instead

he came and stood by Ender's head.

But he did not reach for a pillow to smother Ender. He did not have a weapon.

He whispered, "Ender, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I know how it feels. I'm sorry, I'm your

brother. I love you."

A long time later, Peter's even breathing said that he was asleep. Ender peeled the

bandaid from his neck. And for the second time that day he cried.

Chapter 3 -- Graff

"The sister is our weak link. He really loves her."

"I know. She can undo it all, from the start. He won't wont to leave her."

"So, what are you going to do?"

"Persuade him that he wants to come with us more than he wants to stay with her."

"How will you do that?"

"I'll lie to him."

"And if that doesn't work?"

"Then I'll tell the truth. We're allowed to do that in emergencies. We can't plan for

everything, you know."

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Ender wasn't very hungry during breakfast. He kept wondering what it would be like at

school. Facing Stilson after yesterday's fight. What Stilson's friends would do. Probably

nothing, but he couldn't be sure. He didn't want to go.

"You're not eating, Andrew," his mother said.

Peter came into the room. "Morning. Ender. Thanks for leaving your slimy washcloth in

the middle of the shower."

"Just for you," Ender murmured.

"Andrew, you have to eat."

Ender held out his wrists, a gesture that said, So feed it to me through a needle.

"Very funny." Mother said. "I try to be concerned, but it makes no difference to my

genius children."

"It was all your genes that made us, Mom." said Peter. "We sure didn't get any from

Dad."

"I heard that," Father said, not looking up from the news that was being displayed on the

table while he ate.

"It would've been wasted if you hadn't."

The table beeped. Someone was at the door.

"Who is it?" Mother asked.

Father thumbed a key and a man appeared on hts video. He was wearing the only

military uniform that meant anything anymore, the IF, the International Fleet.

"I thought it was over," said Father.

Peter said nothing, just poured milk over his cereal.

And Ender thought, Maybe I won't have to go to school today after all.

Father coded the door open and got up from the table. "I'll see to it," he said. "Stay and

eat."

They stayed, but they didn't eat. A few moments later, Father came back into the room

and beckoned to Mother.

"You're in deep poo," said Peter. "They found out what you did to Stilson, and now

they're gonna make you do time out in the Belt."

"I'm only six, moron. I'm a juvenile."

"You're a Third, turd. You've got no rights."

Valentine came in, her hair in a sleepy halo around her face. "Where's Mom and Dad?

I'm too sick to go to school."

"Another oral exam, huh?" Peter said.

"Shut up, Peter," said Valentine.

"You should relax and enjoy it," said Peter. "It could be worse."

"I don't know how."

"It could be an anal exam."

"Hyuk hyuk," Valentine said. "Where are Mother and Father?"

"Talking to a guy from IF."

Instinctively she looked at Ender. After all, for years they had expected someone to

come and tell them that Ender had passed, that Ender was needed.

"That's right, look at him," Peter said. "But it might he me, you know. They might have

realized I was the best of the lot after all." Peter's feelings were hurt, and so he was being

a snot, as usual.

The door opened. "Ender," said Father, "you better come in here."

"Sorry, Peter," Valentine taunted.

Father glowered. "Children, this is no laughing matter."

Ender followed Father into the parlor. The IF officer rose to his feet when they entered,

but he did not extend a hand to Ender.

Mother was twisting her wedding band on her finger. "Andrew," she said. "I never

thought you were the kind to get in a fight."

"The Stilson boy is in the hospital," Father said. "You really did a number on him. With

your shoe, Ender, that wasn't exactly fair."

Ender shook his head. He had expected someone from the school to come about Stilson,

not an officer of the fleet. This was more serious than he had thought. And yet he couldn't

think what else he could have done.

"Do you have any explanation for your behavior, young man?" asked the officer.

Ender shook his head again. He didn't know what to say, and he was afraid to reveal

himself to be any more monstrous than his actions had made him out to be. I'll take it,

whatever the punishment is, he thought. Let's get it over with.

"We're willing to consider extenuating circumstances," the officer said. "But I must tell

you it doesn't look good. Kicking him in the groin, kicking him repeatedly in the face and

body when he was down-- sounds like you really enjoyed it."

"I didn't," Ender whispered.

"Then why did you do it?"

"He had his gang there," Ender said.

"So? This excuses anything?"

"No."

"Tell me why you kept on kicking him. You had already won."

"Knocking him down won the first fight. I wanted to win all the next ones, too, right

then, so they'd leave me alone." Ender couldn't help it, he was too afraid, too ashamed of

his own acts: though he tried not to, he cried again. Ender did not like to cry and rarely

did; now, in less than a day, he had done it three times. And each time was worse. To cry

in front of his mother and father and this military man, that was shameful. "You took

away the monitor," Ender said. "I had to take care of myself, didn't I?"

"Ender, you should have asked a grown-up for help," Father began.

But the officer stood up and stepped across the room to Ender. He held out his hand.

"My name is Graff. Ender. Colonel Hyrum Graff. I'm director of primary training at

Battle School in the Belt. I've come to invite you to enter the school."

After all. "But the monitor--"

"The final step in your testing was to see what would happen if the monitor comes off.

We don't always do it that way, but in your case--"

"And I passed?"

Mother was incredulous. "Putting the Stilson boy in the hospital? What would you have

done if Andrew had killed him, given him a medal?"

"It isn't what he did, Mrs. Wiggin. It's why." Colonel Graff handed her a folder full of

papers. "Here are the requisitions. Your son has been cleared by the IF Selective Service.

Of course we already have your consent, granted in writing at the time conception was

confirmed, or he could not have been born. He has been ours from then, if he qualified."

Father's voice was trembling as he spoke. "It's not very kind of you, to let us think you

didn't want him, and then to take him after all."