

## Chapter 13: — Valentine

The chapter reveals the surprising discovery that the influential political personas Demosthenes and Locke are actually two young siblings, Valentine (12) and Peter (14) Wiggin. Authorities tracking their online activities uncover their true identities but debate whether to expose them. Despite initial disbelief, they conclude the children are acting independently, with no adult manipulation. Colonel Graff, familiar with their abilities from Battle School, confirms their intellectual prowess but notes the irony that Valentine, the empathetic and pacifistic sister, embodies the aggressive Demosthenes, while Peter, the ruthless brother, plays the moderate Locke. The decision is made to monitor them discreetly, fearing exposure could escalate tensions with Russia.

Valentine enjoys her role as Demosthenes, relishing the influence and income it brings. She and Peter strategically donate to causes and delight in correspondence with powerful figures who unknowingly engage with children. However, Valentine feels guilt when her father praises Demosthenes' columns, unaware of her authorship. A close call occurs when her school essay analyzing Demosthenes and Locke nearly gets published, alarming Peter, who fears their anonymity could be compromised. His anger grows when Valentine's Demosthenes is invited to a prestigious presidential council, overshadowing Locke's recognition, straining their dynamic.

Peter's frustration mounts as Valentine gains independence in her writing, no longer needing his guidance. Meanwhile, their correspondence with military insiders reveals alarming Warsaw Pact activities, validating Demosthenes' warnings about impending war. Valentine notices her own thoughts aligning with Demosthenes' persona, while Peter's Locke essays begin to strike her as naive. This blurring of identity troubles her, as she realizes the personas they created may be shaping their true beliefs. The chapter highlights the psychological toll of their double lives and the unintended consequences of their political games.

The chapter culminates in Valentine's introspection about the power of assumed identities. She worries that pretending to be Demosthenes has subtly transformed her, making her adopt views she initially feigned. This realization leads her to explore the idea in a column, arguing that politicians who compromise with Russia risk becoming what they pretend to be. The chapter underscores the tension between performance and authenticity, as Valentine and Peter navigate the ethical and personal dilemmas of their fabricated personas while wielding unexpected influence over global politics.

