

## Street Knight Squad

### Chapter 1

Laura's new life was about to start. She could see it, just a few, agonizing steps in front of her. Of course, she had to crane her head to see around the fat ~~fan-boy~~fanboy blocking her view, but it was worth it to catch a glimpse of that all powerful, all new hunk of metal.

"So, like, what if the police catch us?" Tiffany asked, ~~standing from~~ behind her.

They would be standing side-by-side, but unfortunately, the crowd moderators were total Nazis. You had to stand single-file in the line. You could not leave the line. There would be no pushing, shoving, or jostling while waiting in the line.

"Look, we're not the only teenagers out this late. That whole city-curfew thing is mostly a joke," Laura responded, refolding her bony arms.

The line moved up one. One more step towards victory. One more step towards *Street Knight IV*.

"All right, Tif, ~~do~~Do you remember what I told you?"

"Umm..." Tiffany cocked her head to the side, like a collie hearing her master's voice in the distance. She wore more mascara than a collie, but the resemblance was still striking. "Most of it. You'll probably have to tell me again, though."

Laura ~~let out a deep~~groaned in her throat. ~~Actually, it~~It came out aswas more of a mild snarl.

"Fine. But *please* try to get through the registration as fast as possible. We only have until one."

**Comment [J1]:** I understand what you're trying to do here with trying to entice your readers into your story, but I feel it leaves your beginning a little flat. Give your readers at least a few details, like the setting, some detail, etc. so they can start to get a sense of what this is all about. Basically, try to use specifics rather than generalities.

**Comment [J2]:** I like this. It grabs the reader's attention and makes them interested in what's happening.

**Comment [J3]:** A short introduction to Tiffany would be helpful somewhere around here. It would help to get at least a short explanation of who Laura is so readers can start to get a sense of who these characters are.

**Comment [J4]:** This makes Tiffany seem a bit empty-headed. I don't know if that was your intention, but if it wasn't, I would show Tiffany's lack of understanding in a different way that showcases her as more inexperienced than forgetful.

**Comment [J5]:** This seems a bit too conversational coming from a narrator. In first person, it is perfectly natural, but it's a bit out of place in third-person.

Only until one. Weeks of begging and bargaining, and one was the latest her parents would let her stay out. And then she still had to go to school the next day.

“We have all tomorrow afternoon, don’t we?” Tiffany asked, checking her cell phone.

Even at the stroke of midnight, she was still getting texts.

“This is a launch party. You’re supposed to stay up all night, and the day after, and maybe the night after that if you’re really hardcore.”

Laura was hardcore. As soon as *Street Knight IV* was announced, she’d started saving her money. Four hundred dollars (and a twenty dollar monthly subscription) was a lot to ask from a fifteen-year-old girl with no job. But she’d found ways. Recycling cans, mowing lawns, doing extra chores. All for this.

From up front came the blissful call.

“Next.”

Yes! Laura was next! She was next! This was her turn, her chance to experience the game to end all games.

*Breathe. You can’t waste time passing out.*

She stepped up to the counter ~~of in that~~ the dingy little game store, and surrendered her hard-earned money. After signing a few papers, rushing through the instructions, and registering in the database, the clerk handed ~~her over~~ her prize. ~~It was Fe~~eight inches long, metallic, ~~and~~ shaped like a gauntlet. ~~It was Though~~ hard and cold to the touch, ~~but it was~~ still much lighter than she expected. ~~Like~~ like its own awesomeness buoyed it up.

Laura forced herself to exit the store calmly. Since this building was ~~Marked~~, technically, the ~~Bounder~~ would work in here. ~~But Bb~~ooting up inside a building, ~~though,~~ was

**Comment [J6]:** I like these asides you put in because they add to the characterization. Although, really, these are more typical in a first-person narration. The story and characters would really lend themselves well to first-person, so it’s something you might want to consider.

**Comment [J7]:** You give some explanation of what this is later in the chapter, but it would really help your readers understand the significance of this if you took some time here to give at least a short explanation of what this is and why it’s so important to her.

**Comment [J8]:** Love this! It made me laugh inside.

**Comment [J9]:** What does this mean? Does this need to be capitalized?

**Comment [J10]:** Why is it called a bounder? And does this need to be capitalized?

going against everything *Street Knight* was about. ~~One does not play *Street Knight* indoors.~~

~~Such is blasphemy.~~

**Comment [J11]:** I also love this!

So, like the rest of the nerds before her, Laura took her high-tech hunk to the blissful outdoors. Not bothering to wait for Tiffany, she slipped it on. Instantly, the glove tightened, matching itself to the shape of her hand. If anyone else wanted to use her glove, they'd have to hard-connect it to the main database, ~~and~~ reset it, and ~~then~~ go through a bunch of red tape.

~~However, she~~ ~~But she~~ didn't plan on lending her Bounder up any time soon. It was all hers.

**Comment [J12]:** Words like "however" seem much too formal for the tone of the narration and for the character.

~~After~~ ~~When~~ the Bounder finished the physical formatting, it jumped ~~in~~ to the linking process. A tingle shot through her body. After it was done calibrating, the interface came up,

**Comment [J13]:** This seems a bit too list-like. This is a big moment for her. Really get into how she's feeling and what she's experiencing. Don't just tell us what's happening.

~~That~~ gorgeous blue screen, floating in midair and awaiting her caress.

**Comment [J14]:** Fragments can sometimes be appropriate, but not all the time, especially if you're using them constantly. They should be reserved for very important things and should only be used if it is the absolute best way to convey the feeling/emotion behind the statement.

"Okay, so what do I do ~~know~~?" Tiffany asked behind her. She had her Bounder on, and she was staring at it ~~like a Neanderthal would stare at a Christmas tree~~. So familiar, and yet so strange.

**Comment [J15]:** This is the second analogy you've used to describe Tiffany. Normally, this wouldn't be a bad thing, especially since they're good analogies, but they're used very close together. Also, you have yet to give any other kind of description of Tiffany, so all the reader is getting right now is comparisons, but no actual descriptions.

"You are such a noob," Laura moaned, rolling her eyes. She didn't want to play the game alone, but she didn't want someone clinging to her the whole night. ~~I~~ interrupting all those precious moments.

"I've played video games before," ~~Defended~~ Tiffany ~~defended~~, holding her head ~~up~~ high. She was still four inches shorter than Laura.

~~Okay, j~~ "Just follow me and do what I do," Laura ordered. With her gloved hand, she tapped on the blue interface. ~~Of course, t~~ To anyone walking by, it would look like she was tapping the air. Only other players could see the interface. The Bounder was ~~the~~ key to a whole new, magical, fantastical world. ~~R~~ ~~built~~ right on top of the old one. "You have to choose a username. Don't pick anything too stupid, okay? Other people will be able to see

**Comment [J16]:** These all seem to be saying basically the same thing. It might be better to condense this description down into just one or two words instead.

it.”

“Right, right, I got that. I’m just a little confused about the whole classes thing.”

“Noob,” Laura teased. Her fingers itched to get this stupid registration done with, so she could start playing. “Each ~~of the classes~~ class has a different fighting style. Warriors are the tanks. They can deal a lot of damage, and they usually have a high level of health, but they also suffer from low magic defense and \_\_\_”

“I thought you said you wanted to get through this quick,” Tiffany interrupted. ~~There was a~~ smirk stuck to the edges of her lips. No one knew better than Tiffany how much Laura loved to rant about her favorite video game.

“Just pick the thief. They’re small and pesky, just like you.”

“I am *not* small,” Tiffany sniffed. However, she took Laura’s advice. After all, when it came to *Street Knight*, Laura was the leading authority.

“I’ll be a warrior. We won’t have a mage, but maybe we can pick up someone to join our party.”

“Maybe I can ask Bruno!” Tiffany squealed, like she’d just had an epiphany. ~~Her hands stopped fluttering across the interface, in order to clap together.~~

“No. And don’t stop. We only have forty-five minutes left.”

“I don’t know why you hate him so much,” Tiffany muttered, returning to her button-pressing. “He’s absolutely adorable. If I didn’t know better, I’d say \_\_\_ oh holy crap, ~~that’s that is~~ awesome!”

Laura was thinking the same thing. Her registration complete, the Bounder was creating her avatar. ~~Except, avatar wasn’t quite the quite right word. She’d be directly playing the game, but she’d be doing it in a costume. A costume~~ made from the most amazing

**Comment [J17]:** This seems to come out of nowhere. One second she’s smirking, then she’s offended, and now she’s a squealing girl. It might be helpful to sit down and really decide who Tiffany is and what her typical mannerisms are.

**Comment [J18]:** This is worded rather awkwardly, especially since you’re using the more formal phrase “in order to.” It would be better if you restructured the sentence to avoid that.

**Comment [J19]:** You don’t have much variety in your dialogue structure. In almost every instance, you have: “Dialogue,” (character’s name) (how they said it). It really helps both with readability and reader interest if you shake things up and make it interesting. Don’t fall into a predictable pattern. If your structure is predictable, it can get boring, which is something to avoid.

**Comment [J20]:** Make sure your characters are consistent in either using contractions or not using them. Neither of your characters really seem like the formal-speaking types.

holographic technology ever. Light blossomed from her Bouncer, spreading over her body and coating it in her game identity. She'd played *Street Knight III* (and *I* and *II*), but they were nothing compared to this. There ~~was~~ ~~were~~ some fancy light works, probably just for show, and an excellent whooshing sound, ~~and~~ ~~then~~ she watched as her body transformed.

**Comment [J21]:** This is a climactic moment, so try not to dwell on or oversay what's happening because it slows it down.

~~Well,~~ ~~†~~There was no real transformation involved. It was just light and dust and a bunch of other technical stuff. But it looked *so real*.

**Comment [J22]:** This is very nondescriptive. "some," "probably," and "excellent" are not helpful descriptors, so it would help if you went back and really tried to describe exactly what it looks like and exactly what it sounds like.

"My life is officially complete," Laura breathed. Her pale skin was replaced with a dark tan. Overlaid ~~o~~ver her own scrawny limbs were the limbs of someone who worked out quite a bit.

**Comment [J23]:** Again, this is not very descriptive.

"Me next!" Tiffany squealed, pressing buttons rapidly on her interface. In a few moments, her registration was complete, and the transformation took hold of her body, too.

**Comment [J24]:** You've already used this describer not too long ago. Try to use variety.

"Why did you make yourself taller?" Laura asked, cocking an eyebrow.

"I've always wanted to be tall," Tiffany sniffed, putting her now perfect nose in the air.

**Comment [J25]:** Same here. You just used this describer.

"You do realize no one is going ~~to be able~~ to make eye contact with you. It'll always look like they're staring above your head."

"A small price to pay."

Laura would have pressed the point, but they didn't have time to waste.

"Come on. I want to ~~get~~ level up at least once before I have to go home."

"And how do we do that?"

"The same way you do it in every game. We go kill something."

Editor's Comments:

This is a great start to what sounds like a book I'd like to read someday. What really makes it work are your characters. They are vibrant and have a strong presence in your story, which means that they are what really push the plot and story along. I also like the quasi-asides you include that give the reader insight into Laura's life, mind, and interests. It's a great way to get to know her better and also keeps the tone fun and light, which I personally enjoy in any book I read. There is enough action in this first chapter to draw the reader in, but not enough information revealed so they want to keep reading. You've found that balance, which is a hard thing to do, and it really makes your story work.

I do have a few larger suggestions for improvement, however, to kind of sum up the comments I've already made in the margins. First, I would really suggest that you spend time thinking about the point-of-view of this book. You currently have it in third-person, which works just fine, but I think that this story really wants/needs to be told through first-person. Laura's voice keeps creeping into the narrative already, and she's such a vibrant character that she could easily carry the story with her comments and observations. That takes me to my second suggestion. Compared to Laura, Tiffany seems very flat and not very well-developed. She seems more like a writing device than a character, to be honest, because her only purpose seems to be so Laura can explain what's going on to the reader. She has great potential, though, so I feel that if you take the time to flesh her out and discover who she is as a person, you'll be able to use her much more effectively in your story. My last comment is that this really needs a lot more description overall. You have almost no character description and the setting is mentioned without any kind of imagery. You also hint that this is a futuristic earth setting, but you never explain or describe anything about it, which leaves readers feeling a bit disconnected from what's going on because they don't understand it and therefore can't relate to it as well. The first few chapters are where readers expect to get really grounded in the world, plot, and characters, so make sure you give them both what they need and expect. So, if you pack not just this chapter, but your entire story with vivid descriptions and imagery, your reader will be able to clearly visualize all of these new things within your universe, which will help them feel and become more involved in your story. Switching to first-person would actually help this. It's a lot easier to give description through a character's perspective and voice because it's less likely to sound dry or boring.

Overall, though, this was really good, and I hope that you keep working on this. It is an interesting world with interesting characters, and I, at least, would like to learn more about it.

Thanks for sharing!  
~Jessica DeLand