

### Chapter 3

#### *A Brave New World*

The next morning Skylar booted up her computer. She wasn't thrilled about it, but she still had to finish her math homework. The computer hummed to itself, taking much longer than usual to become conscious. There were wavy lines on the home screen and at least one new icon: *AmberPort*. She was a cautious computer user, having suffered the depredations of far too many

viruses at school. ~~So~~ she shut down her desktop and started doing her math homework on the little portable computer she ~~took~~**brought** with her to class. |

Immediately, though, there was a fizzing and crackling sound from the other side of her room. The table ~~far~~**fur**thest from her bed had all sorts of oddments on it: a microscope, a lava lamp, and an ancient red plastic Silvertone radio with the rear plate removed. Skylar never used it as a radio, but she liked to watch the tubes glow Halloween red-orange. Now it was hissing and humming as if it were receiving a strong AM signal.

She looked at the radio curiously. Most of the time it emitted soft, comforting white noise. ~~She turned~~ the tuning dial slowly.

**Commented [1]:** Changed the word: she is at home not school so "took" could be smoother ("take" goes elsewhere, "bring" comes here).

**Commented [2]:** I started a new paragraph with the noise from the radio to help with event tracking and break up the disproportionately long starter paragraph. Are you OK with this, or do you have another suggestion?

**Commented [3]:** Edited for traditional usage where "farther" is used for physical distance and "further" is used for figurative distance. OK with this bit of grammar nerdiness?

**Commented [4]:** I added the Oxford comma (and will do so throughout) to conform with American fiction publishing norms. If you don't want to use serial commas, stet this and I'll revert all.

**Commented [5]:** Q: In the previous paragraph Skylar was on the other side of her room from the radio. Would you consider adding an indication of movement somewhere? e.g. "Approaching, she looked at the radio curiously. . . ."

... *Four Seven Decimal Six Three Five Nine Four One Negative One Two Two* ...

It was a girl's voice, or a woman's. Possibly a teenage girl. There was no expression and

no cadence. Every number was enunciated exactly the same way. There was some static or

distortion. ~~And there was~~ an aimless melody *doodling around* in the background. *It sounded*

~~vaguely familiar but she couldn't quite place it.~~ It wasn't like any radio station she remembered

hearing.

Skylar wrote down all the numbers carefully. *Seventeen numbers. Two decimals.* And

repeat. Over and over.

*Four Seven Decimal . . .*

They didn't make any sense to her at all. She typed them into Google ~~but and still~~ didn't

get any meaningful hits. ~~But~~ she had a much more reliable source of information, *however*. She

opened Skype on her laptop and called her friend Peter.

A boy with a dark complexion and thick glasses appeared on the screen.

"Hey, Skylar! I saw you on television!"

Skylar grimaced. "Yeah. I'm never gonna hear the end of it at school, I don't think.

Listen! Do you have an AM radio?"

Commented [6]: Q: Did you intend to present the numbers station voice in italics, when you also use italics for interior monologue?

I do like each word being capitalized; it alludes visually to that stilted, toneless speech I think of with automated transmissions. Nice!

Commented [7]: I like the way this whole section is blunt and choppy like the expressionless, cadence-less numbers. Wonderful!

Commented [8]: I merged these sentences to keep it from getting "too" staccato, and then made some edits to keep the conciseness in the merged sentence. (Also, on the next page the melody "wanders" so that imagery is still retained.) Changes OK?

Commented [9]: I've cut this statement as it is repeated on the next page and the later placement builds up the mystery of the melody more strongly. Do you agree?

Commented [10]: Q: Would it bear mentioning the "Negative" here, given its importance to Peter solving the mystery? If so, it should also be 16 numbers.

Commented [11]: Q: Is this the radio continuing to play, or is it Skylar going over the numbers in her head? Or both?

Commented [12]: "And still" implies that typing them into Google is an ongoing action, so I replaced with "but." Are you OK with this, or would you rather rephrase?

Commented [13]: Cut and replaced with "however" at end of sentence, to avoid repetition of "but." OK?

“A radio?” The boy frowned. “I guess. Somewhere. Why?”

“Can you get it?”

“Sure. But—”

“I want to show you something. Maybe something cool. And ask you about it.”

Peter disappeared for a minute or two. Skylar continued to listen to the radio, pointing at each number with a drawing pencil as the voice pronounced it. **While her friend was gone** She **almost** thought she **almost** recognized the melody wandering among the static, but it immediately slipped through her mind like a half-remembered dream.

Peter came back on the screen. He had an old clock radio with big, red, seven-segment numbers blinking 12:00 **A.M.** on his lap.

“Okay, Sky. Now what?”

“So, can you tune it to . . .” she looked at the dial of her Silvertone, “56.2”

Peter fussed with his clock radio for a while.

“Just static.”

“Are you sure?”

“I moved all around that frequency.”

**Commented [14]:** Cut for repetition (Peter only just left in the previous line). OK?

**Commented [15]:** I added periods for A.M. in order to distinguish between AM (amplitude modulation) and AM (ante meridiem).

Chicago recommends using "a.m." (lowercase with periods) for time, but the look of lowercase run counter to those old digital clocks. So I chose capital letters, which could be set as either regular or small caps.

Does this work for you, or do you have another suggestion?

**Commented [16]:** Q: The AM radio frequency runs from 535–1605 kHz, so I'm not sure what the number is that Skylar is giving to Peter? I also checked a few Silvertone radio dials (see below) and they are all marked with that range, or others (aviation, foreign) but none of which include 56.2. How would you like to adjust this?

Silvertone dial images:  
- <https://www.radiodaze.com/silvertone-4788-dial-set/>  
- [https://retroradiorestore.com/store/p5/Silvertone\\_4465\\_Tombstone\\_%281936%29.html](https://retroradiorestore.com/store/p5/Silvertone_4465_Tombstone_%281936%29.html)  
- [https://www.tuberadioland.com/silvertone4465\\_main.html](https://www.tuberadioland.com/silvertone4465_main.html)

**Commented [17]:** I moved Peter's dialogue to the same paragraph to help with attribution; is this OK?

“Okay. Listen to this.”

Skylar turned up the volume on her radio and brought the laptop closer. Peter’s eyes grew wider and wider as he listened.

“Sky! That’s *insane*. You found a *numbers station*!”

“What’s a numbers station?”

“It’s . . . it’s like a Cold War thing. It was used for sending secret codes. Only this isn’t exactly the same thing. With a real number station *everyone* can hear it, but only the people who know what kinds of things it encodes can understand it. But for some reason you can receive this transmission and I can’t.”

“But I don’t know what it means!”

“Turn that thing off,” he demanded, “It’s distracting. Now,” he demanded, “~~and~~ read me the numbers.”

Peter got out his smartphone and typed in the numbers as Skylar dictated them. Then he pushed his glasses back up his nose and ran his fingers through his curly hair.

Commented [18]: I tweaked this as only the first clause is a demand (the second is an explanation). Are you ok with the move?

"I think . . ." Then he laughed. "Lucky about that 'Negative' or it might have taken a lot longer. Sky! It's a latitude and longitude. It's near school, too. Right in the middle of the Arboretum. I'll send you a map with the location pinned. You gotta show me that radio later!"

"Thanks, Peter! I will! You're amazing! I'll see you at school."

Skylar noted Peter's glow when she complimented him; she smiled brightly and signed off.

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It was still raining hard when Skylar left after breakfast. She normally bicycled to school through the Arboretum, but she hated~~didn't enjoy~~ navigating the wet road in the rain. It left trails of mud up and down her clothing. Besides, she really wanted to see exactly where those GPS coordinates were pointing, the ones the strange voice on the radio kept repeating. So, smartphone in hand, she started hiking through the park.

She trudged above the main road, not paying attention to where she was going. She knew every path, every bush, rock, and stream. She was staring at the phone, watching the coordinates of her current position as they updated, occasionally wiping droplets from the screen. The rain was clenching down to a bitter drizzle as the last two digits wobbled into place. Looking up, she

**Commented [19]:** Q: It could help clarify the series of events if you added something about Peter Googling the numbers—otherwise one has to wonder how he immediately knew where the coordinates pointed, and with such precision!

Could be something like:  
"I think . . ." Peter tapped furiously at his phone, then laughed. "Lucky about . . . etc.

**Commented [20]:** Q: Is it odd for a young person to use the full "might have" here, but "gotta" a few sentences later?

**Commented [21]:** Q: This could be an alternative, or additional, place to clarify the source of Peter's knowledge. He could pinch at his screen and then peer at it, or pinch and then hold the screen up to the camera to show Skylar, before continuing with the dialogue?

**Commented [22]:** Or "disliked"? Editing for a more straightforward construction, OK with it?

found herself standing in the middle of a shallow stream surrounded by a thick copse of rhododendron bushes, brown flowers still clinging to the branches in sticky balls.

In front of a little pagoda.

There were no pagodas in the Arboretum.

Skylar was dumbfounded, and more than a little unnerved. She knew every building in the park. There were a few gazebos scattered around, and several other dilapidated structures for picnics and shelter from the rain. But this was more ornate. It was just barely large enough for four people to stand on the narrow porch. It was made of delicate wooden screens painted gold, with red tiles layered on the roof, and jaunty, upward-tilted eaves. Skylar didn't see any way to get inside. The porch was covered in polished wooden planks and surrounded by a wrought iron fence with delicate twisted bars depicting lilies and some kind of fishing bird.

Perched anxiously on the fence was a red-tailed hawk with a wounded wing.

Skylar approached the bird slowly. "Hey, hawk." She wondered if she could find some way to help it.

The red-tail screeched and backed away, dragging its left wing.

Skylar and the hawk stared at each other.

**Commented [23]:** The way you use single-sentence paragraphs to build tension and create a sense of slow motion is wonderful, but perhaps the effect is stronger when used sparingly?

I combined these two sentences into a single paragraph to contribute to the escalation to the attack itself, look OK?

“Hey. Hey, sweetie. Your wing looks like it hurts a lot. What if I take you to the zoo?”

Huh? They have a rescue program. We can get you all fixed up. Okay? We can go to the road. I can phone Mom. We can get you somewhere safe.”

The hawk tilted her head to the right.

Skylar held out her hand.

Faster than her eye could follow, the red-tail struck out with its talon and slashed three long, bloody gashes in Skylarthe girl’s wrist.

She jumped backward quickly, nearly slipping. “Yow! I scared you! I’m sorry! Yow!

That really hurt, hawk!”

She opened her backpack and took out the towel she used to dry her hair, wrapping it around her bloody wrist. She would definitely need to go to the nurse’s office when she got to school. She might even need stitches. It was throbbing and bleeding a lot. Once, a long time ago, she had tried to feed a feral cat. The cat bit her and her hand got badly infected. She didn’t imagine the hawk’s talons were a whole lot cleaner than that cat’s teeth.

“Come on, hawk.” Skylar moved her towel-wrapped hand toward the hawk’s breast. She thought of how she got Allison’s parakeet to perch on her finger. She had a feeling that hawks

**Commented [24]:** A comma isn't required after an introductory adverbial phrase, but I thought it might help prevent misreading. OK with the change?

**Commented [25]:** I made this change to keep the POV feeling consistent. The sentence starts aligned with Skylar's POV ("Faster than \_her eye...") but the switch to "the girl" felt very distant, almost like 3rd person omniscient.

It can't be "her" as the current phrasing would make the pronoun's antecedent be the hawk, not Skylar, but you could rephrase if you prefer to not use her name.

**Commented [26]:** I really love this, it's such a great example of showing not telling. I know so much about who Skylar is as a person that her response to being attacked by the hawk is to apologize—while also expressing the pain she feels.

didn't work the same way as parakeets—. ~~M~~ maybe she *should* have had Aunt Phoebe teach her some falconry after all. But ~~then~~, with a loud "~~kee!~~" the hawk jumped onto her hand. She could feel its hot talons gripping ~~her wrist~~ all the way through the thick towel.

"What are you doing to my Rosa!" a voice behind her said.

~~Skylar turned and saw~~ Behind her there was a girl on a horse.

A horse? Was there a Renaissance ~~f~~fair going on?

The girl ~~sat erect. She~~ was perhaps sixteen years old, wearing ~~her hair in~~ an intricate crown of charcoal-~~black~~ braids. She ~~sat erect in her saddle, was~~ dressed in an honest to goodness ~~redingote, made of~~ brown silk with metallic gold brocade. She frowned at Skylar. "Your father has not trained you well in falconry. That is no way to handle a hawk, child! Have you wounded her?"

Skylar was outraged. "First of all, I'm eleven. I'm not a *child*. Second, I found her like this! *Your* hawk sliced me to ribbons! I thought I would take her to the zoo or the vet. Her wing is broken or something. Do you have a car?"

The rider barely looked at her. "Our master austringer is not far from here. You must carry Rosa a little further. I didn't think to bring my gauntlet."

**Commented [27]:** Added quotation marks because the many uses of italics felt confusing. (Earlier in this paragraph it's used for emphasis, and a few lines down it gets used for interior monologue.) Does this work for you?

Q: Let me know if you'd like to add back the italics within quotation marks for emphasis.

**Commented [28]:** Q: Also, would you agree that the treatment of the hawk's screech should continue to be the same as the number station voice from the radio?

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic

**Commented [29]:** Added a direct object for the transitive verb "gripping." OK?

You could instead make it a gerund: "She could feel the grip of its hot talons all the way through..." Preference?

**Commented [30]:** Q: Ending a question sentence with an exclamation point (instead of a question mark) gives it a rhetorical feel. Was this your intent?

If it's meant as a question but you wanted to indicate tone, perhaps the voice behind her "cried out" or "demanded"?

**Commented [31]:** Edited for repetition of "behind her" OK?

**Commented [32]:** I combined these two one-line paragraphs to help set off the single line of Efa's spoken interruption. Edit OK?

**Commented [33]:** I moved the mention of posture to the same sentence as her clothing as the two are related (her bodice presumably being boned). Work for you?

**Commented [34]:** Edited to avoid confusion that it's her hair being described (we hear "crown" before "braids"). Good with this?

**Commented [35]:** Added to clarify hair color, as "charcoal" can be a descriptor for either black or grey. Change OK?

**Commented [36]:** Q: A redingote is an 18th & 19th c. garment; is that what you intended?

This note really wants to come in Chapter 2 when the redingote is first mentioned explicitly as "a Renaissance thing"—which it isn't. As we go into Sanctuary the world and technology level is less explicitly medieval/Renaissance, so I'm not really bothered, but perhaps these early mentions should be addressed—either by changing the garment name, or including some acknowledgment of the incongruity of the name?

**Commented [37]:** Q: Are you picturing a brocade made from brown silk and a metallic gold thread that creates the pattern in the brocade? Or is it a brown silk dress (could be a brown silk brocade dress) with metallic gold embroidery (pattern stitched onto the fabric not woven into it)? The current phrasing is almost there, but [...]



“Sure. I guess. Do you have any bandages? And maybe some antibiotic ointment? She totally tore me up.”

“We can doctor your wounds. What am I to call you, girl?”

“My *name* would be good. I’m Skylar. Who are you?”

“You are from the Rain Lands.”

“Rain Lands?” Skylar frowned.

The girl gestured toward the Space Needle, barely visible through the low clouds.

She was thoroughly confused. “I’m from Seattle. It gets pretty damp this time of year. It’s great that you can ride a horse. I’ve always wanted to learn horseback riding. But we don’t live near any stables, and horses are kind of scary.”

It was a peace offering. The older girl didn’t seem to notice.

“It takes many years to master riding,” she said coldly. “Put one hand on Branwen’s withers.”

Skylar looked left and right. She had no idea what a wither was. The horse was huge. She

was a little wary of touching it. The rider impatiently grabbed her hand and placed it near the horse’s spotted shoulder.

Commented [38]: This made me laugh out loud :D Wonderful lines!

“Yes. Like that. She will help you up the paths. You cannot mount without alarming Rosa.”

Branwen’s skin was surprisingly warm; it quivered slightly, but ~~the horse~~ ~~she~~ ~~gave~~ ~~showed~~ no other ~~notice~~ ~~sign~~ when Skylar leaned against her. They traveled up several muddy paths that ~~Skylar~~ ~~she~~ didn’t recognize, among trees—oaks and elms, mostly—that she didn’t recall being in that part of the park. It was disquieting.

Commented [39]: Edited for pronoun and antecedent confusion. If Branwen is female, could be "the mare" instead, for variety?

Commented [40]: Edited to resolve the question, "no other sign of what?" If you have a better phrasing, please rewrite!

Commented [41]: Edited to avoid ambiguous pronoun antecedent (Skylar or the previous "her" which refers to the horse). OK? Or would you like to rephrase?

The rider said nothing as they trudged up a muddy slope. Skylar tried once more to start a conversation: “I love your clothes. But aren’t they too fancy to wear out in the rain? Won’t your parents be angry?”

“Oh, yes. My maids will be displeased. My mother . . . died.” The rider turned her head away. “My father won’t notice.”

Something just at the edge of Skylar’s vision startled her. She stumbled in a puddle. Rosa flapped one wing, hissing angrily.

“Do be careful, girl! Rosa is temperamental,” she said. “Pay no heed to the rain sprites.”

Skylar tried to watch the ground more carefully after that, but she kept seeing shadows slip by on either side of the path. They looked like thin children dressed in rags, hiding behind