*A sample of an **editorial letter** used for developmental editing.*

Dear Jane,

I have completed a full reading of "Take Me Home" and can agree with the agent- your manuscript has the quite the potential to captivate lovers of the drama and suspense genres! I can say that I quickly became invested in the characters and awaited what their next moves would be with each chapter. However, as your developmental editor, I must make mention of the areas that could use some changes to enhance this great story that I see you intend to tell.

PLOT:

Take Me Home has a "coming of age" aspect seen in the main protagonist that has the potential to keep the reader invested from start to finish. The story appears to be full of twists and turns, but I do feel that seeds of these exciting elements could be planted earlier on, even before mid-way of the story.

Currently, there are no stakes for the main character, leaving no room for good suspense.

WORLD-BUILDING:

The trip down memory lane is fun and anyone, including myself, who lived through the 1980s will be sure to appreciate the nostalgia conjured up as the millennial character explores his way in a foreign era. But writing about the 1980s, or any time of a past era, can become overdone to the point you find yourself constantly reminding the reader that it's the 80s. Your reader is already aware of this, from much earlier chapters. Instead, reserve the fun 80s references inside of *important* scenes and dialogue. Always ensure that any part of world-building pushes the story forward. The 80s references should always help to convey setting but also the mood, and it should help with creating a character's story arc. Maybe the millennial hears 80s pop music early on and thinks its corny, but later misses the music after he has left that world, since the music acted as a reminder of an important friendship developed in that world.

The best way to do this is to remove the reference and see if the scene works the same without it. If so, remove it. If not, keep it.

Especially with any fiction writing about the past, make sure that dates of events or products are accurately. Fact- check for the correct year.

CHARACTERS:

One way to get the reader to care about what happens to the main characters is to give them backstory that helps explain why they are the way they are. Sure, Robyn is depressed, but why? And the relationship between her and her son is estranged, but how does the reader know this other than being

told? Include other aspects of their characterization to make it clear that they are emotionally distant. This results in the big build-up of seeing their character arc.

Does the story work the same without both the multiple leading researchers? Focus on the main researcher who will likely also need their own backstory. Instead of the current 5 researchers, give 3 lesser roles to the main 1 or 2 characters. Now the reader can focus more of the motives of the antagonist.

PACING:

The early pacing is excellent, and the story slowly cooks into an exciting read. But the middle to the end went quickly, so much so that it's hard to see the stakes that the main characters faced before the final act. Slow the pacing down adding more introspection of character, creating a beginning and end for character arcs. Not only does this help make the characters more believable, but it can also create needed suspense for underlying motives that each character has. Make the action scenes quicker and the character- building scenes slower.   Finally, make sure the reveal does not happen to soon. Sprinkle seeds early on, allow them to develop and be clearly observed by the middle, and reveal their truths by the last act.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:

Show more, tell less.

Stay away from labeling emotions (sad, angry, happy, excited). Instead, describe what the emotion looks like from the characters point of view or the others around the character expressing the emotion. If a character is arrogant, don't just tell the reader this. Instead, *show* it. Replace "He was an intimidating researcher," with "When he entered the room, his subordinates looked away from him, and the ones who kept looking stuttered as he questioned them on the status updates."

Reach out with questions and let me know when you are ready to move on to the next phase!

Best,

Shayla Sullivan