

Ooligan Press Editorial Department

May 3, 2020

J.T. Bushnell | *The Step Back* | Copyediting Editorial Note, Round 1

Dear J.T.:

Thank you for your patience as we worked to complete the first round of copyediting on *The Step Back*. You've been incredible while navigating this editing journey with us and trusting your manuscript to the sometimes complicated Ooligan process.

This current draft has a few dozen queries to help further clarify character motivations, as well as concerns about some of the more vulgar moments that paint Tanya as more of a caricature than a well-rounded character. We've also addressed the mechanics of language: spelling, punctuation, basic manuscript formatting, and grammar usage. In some places, because your writing is quite strong, it was a relatively light dusting of edits and hopefully won't be too arduous on your end to review, revise, and send back.

In order to view our edits using Microsoft Word, select the "Review" tab, and under "Tracking," select "All Markup." Probably the easiest way to navigate the document is to use the "Next Change" and "Previous Change" buttons (located to the right of the Tracking menu). This button will "select" each change individually, after which you can accept or reject it using the neighboring "Accept" and "Reject" buttons. (Accepting or rejecting a change will also automatically bump you to the next change, making it easy—hopefully—for you to breeze through the document.)

The biggest areas we focused on:

- ❑ **Basketball descriptions.** We pointed out moments in the manuscript where the descriptions or use of basketball terms would not be well-understood by readers unfamiliar with what those moves look like.

- ❑ **Maturing the language:** In order to make sure this book is more firmly situated in a literary fiction category versus a YA category, we focused a lot on Ed's inner monologue as well as his contribution to dialogue. One repeat example of this is

that there are a lot of times Ed starts a sentence with "So," which gives longer portions of the story an almost child-like rambling feel. We tightened up some of those sections to make his thoughts sound more confident and fully fleshed out.

- ❑ **Shortening sentences:** You excel at vivid imagery and descriptions of the things that Ed is experiencing, but your descriptions can often translate to long, run-on sentences. We focused a lot on areas where we could break up those longer sentences into shorter, more concentrated thoughts, without losing the lyrical feel of the sentence structure.
- ❑ **Clarifying vague language:** There are several queries throughout the MS that point at language that is misleading or too vague. Several of the metaphorical phrases in the MS are effective and clear, but there are times when the connection to the plot is harder to follow and leaves the reader wondering what the intention was. Many queries offer examples of more precise words or phrases that may help remedy that issue.
- ❑ **Rounding out Tanya's character:** A large amount of focus for the middle section of the MS was centered on making Tanya a fuller character, and steering her away from qualities that are too stereotypical or trope-like. Sections we worked on included portions that her language was unnecessarily raunchy or outlandish, depictions of her that put too much of the blame for various situations on her shoulders versus Ed's, or scenes that, again, made her look disproportionately crazy compared to Ed. Something we would love to see develop a bit further is Ed's contemplation on his relationship with Tanya, and that some of the issues they have have less to do with Tanya being crazy or unreasonable, and more to do with Ed's lack of maturity or depth when it comes to their relationship.

We were so pleased to see that you are invested in the new title and in finding ways to work it into the manuscript. I pointed out a few areas in the basketball games, along with the suggestion that perhaps there is a special significance between the two brothers around this particular move. Maybe they practiced really hard to perfect it or have some secret signal to indicate it needs to be deployed.

Other than that, the most important thing to know is that right now we're essentially in the process of putting the final polishing touches on *The Step Back*.

The biggest thing to highlight at this point, is that we are nearing the final edit of the book. The next phase after this will be the medium/light copyedit where the bulk of the scan will be for mechanical edits, so any significant content changes you need to make, should be made during this round. Now is the time!

Once you are finished reviewing our edits and making any changes of your own, please send the manuscript back to us by Friday May 22, 2020. If you encounter any roadblocks or have any questions, please reach out! Hazel, Emma Wolf, and I are always happy to help.

Thank you so very much for sharing this story with us. *The Step Back* is such a compelling peek into that world of the late 90s and early 2000s, and such a fascinating portrait of a young man evolving towards a better understanding of himself. Happy editing!

Take Care,

Melinda Crouchley | Managing Editor | Ooligan Press