



SWEATIN' THE SMALL STUFF

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I bring my seminar paper to the Writing Center to have it checked, proud to walk through the door. It's due in a couple hours, so I plan to ask the tutor to mark my grammar mistakes, wishing I could've dropped the paper off. She asks what I'm studying, I answer her and fidget while she asks another question.

"The book was alright." Then she asks what I liked about it.

What did I like about it? Sheesh! Well, maybe it brought up some past stuff about my brother. So I tell the tutor what happened and how the second chapter made me think of him.

My tutor smiles, "That's great!" I open my backpack, nervously complaining that the books for this class are so boring! She laughs while I find the page. She says it's cool to write about my brother because it relates to the book and shows me how I can use a quotation to strengthen my paper. She asks if I'd like to meet with her again next week. I say yeah, I might, and rush to the computer center to dash off another draft before class.

Once I plop down at a computer, out comes my headphones and favorite CD. I push in the floppy, open the document, frown—yuck—and start again from scratch. Words fly onto the screen, and I'm done in thirty-five minutes. What a relief! Looking it over, I hear a crackle, some kind of short in my headphones.

"Yo! What's happening? I thought you didn't like me." Flustered, I pull off the phones and stare at the screen. Looking around in case anyone notices, I push the phones to my ear. "It's me," says the voice, "your very own pesky paper—ta da!"

Whoa! Maybe I should stay off the energy drinks.

"Technology, baby. I'm interactive! Go on, tell me—how do I look?"

My face flushing, I whispered, "Um, okay, I guess. I don't know."

“Check out the form, the grace, the style. Lookit—I wanna thank you for takin’ me to the Writing Center. I feel better! Listen, sweetie, about the little mistakes, the proofreading?”

I had forgotten about proofreading.

“Don’t sweat the small stuff. You know, spelling, commas. Beauty marks, that’s what I say. Tell you what, next time you go to the Center, you ask the questions. They love questions, take it from me: ideas, structure, grammar... You can fiddle with my thesis together; don’t be shy.”

Look, I gotta secret. The tutors will help you develop your own proofreading process, and they’ll even help you find short-cuts. Red ink messes with the mind, and they don’t like it anymore than you, so don’t just drop a paper off or expect them to proofread for you. Become your own expert! I’m your paper, and it’s you I wanna hang with. Just keep it together, and before you know it, we’re gonna be swankin’. Listen, gotta letcha go. Can’t let ‘em hear you chattin’ up your homework; who needs that kind of analysis! One more thing—I could use a name.”

“A name?”

“Yeah, a name—a title!”

The screen shivers, the headphones crackle; I’m back with my CD. Thirty minutes ‘til class, and I need to think of a name, I mean a title.