

Sunday, January 16, 2005

“Someone once told me ...” writing prompt

Someone once told me my writing needed work. “Long-winded,” he barked. “Strip it down. Clean it up. Get rid of the useless qualifiers.” Well, maybe I didn’t want to. His criticism reeked of that certain brand of advice that your interior monologue grudgingly admits is a fair assessment. Not that anyone would ever admit it to this blunt, offensive, professor. So, of course he was right. It was obvious in hindsight. It must be the most common suggestion every writing teacher makes. Worse, he was a journalist, used to be editor of so-and-so newspaper and city editor of such-and-such booming metropolis record. He was overly fond of yelling “86 it!” and scrawling inverted pyramids on the chalkboard, like dietary guides that pitched their brightly colored food off when they flipped over. He would pontificate about nut grafs with the passion of a squirrel CEO at a board meeting. Later, in the privacy of my dorm, tears welled in my eyes more than once as I watched my precious essays and interviews bleed from his pen’s punctures.