

LOGOLOGICAL EPISTOLOGRAPHY

DMITRI A. BORGMANN (1927-1985)

One of the uses to which almost all of us frequently put the English language is the writing of letters—personal, business, or poison-pen. All sorts of books have, therefore, been published, advising us how to write letters courteously and effectively. Such books invariably include model letters that we can use in a variety of specific situations, as when applying for a job or tendering our condolences. Each potential user of these exemplars must, of course, modify them to suit his or her particular circumstances, needs and preferences.

There is a problem plaguing the published letter models. None of them was ever drafted by a logologist. Since logologists are preeminently capable of molding language to meet all conceivable needs, the sample letters heretofore published are seriously deficient in style, content, and overall quality. To help alleviate this fundamentally unwholesome situation, I have just finished composing 291 specimen letters, covering as many different epistolary requirements—needs that all of us experience many times in our lives. My sample letters deal verbally with typical, everyday situations with which all of us are thoroughly familiar but which some of us are inept at handling in writing. Model letter No. 1 follows. Watch for the remainder of my letter series in future issues of *Word Ways*.

#1 *A "Memento Mori" Letter*

Mr. and Mrs. Michael J. Fortescue
209 East Alamogordo Boulevard
McCheever, California 90378

Dear Mike and Susan:

Please forgive us for addressing you so familiarly, but we honestly feel as though we've known both of you intimately, for a good many years. In any event, the subject of our letter is so uniquely personal that any hint of formality would be quite out of place.

We have a very big surprise for you. Hope you really like it!

We are going to KILL you. Both of you. Within the next seven (7) days.

Why? Because the single most serious and urgent problem facing our nation (and the world) today is the overpopulation problem. Achieving the goal of zero population growth (ZPG) at some future time isn't going to be enough to save us. You see, there are too many of us here already now. Some of us must, accordingly, "go" so as to create sufficient Lebensraum for the rest of us. The two of you have been chosen to help spearhead our Population Reduction Project (PRP), now getting underway in earnest. Don't take this honor lightly—only a select few could have qualified for this position of leadership and trust, and both of you have passed the stringent qualifying conditions with flying colors. Congratulations!!

Why the two of you, rather than some other equally well-qualified individuals? No particular reason. Your names just happened to come up in casual conversation the other day. A member of

our Governing Council then suggested that exterminating you might be a really spiffy thing to do. We batted the idea around for a while, then put the proposal to a vote. To assure both of you and ourselves of the utmost consideration and confidentiality, the balloting was constructed secretly—so secretly, in fact, that even those voting were not permitted to know how they had voted. The tallies were counted, checked, and rechecked using a Cray-7 super-supercomputer. The final count showed that your nominations had been ratified by a vote of 9 to 2, with 1 abstention.

(The abstainer had been drinking heavily and passed out just before the vote was taken, slipping quietly under the table. We didn't even notice his absence until the votes had been counted—we were too absorbed in the election process. He is now A-OK, however, and chomping at the bit to do his part in rubbing you out.)

The thoroughly democratic procedure that we followed in picking the two of you for elimination makes it obvious that you need to accept the results of the vote cheerfully, cooperating fully with us to make the venture the ringing success it deserves to be. It is, in fact, your patriotic duty, and your obligation as citizens of the world, to do everything in your power to make our PRP a shining beacon of hope for a desperate world. We have complete confidence in your carrying the ball for us.

At what hour of the day are we going to terminate you? If you will reflect calmly on that question, you will realize that you don't want to know exactly when your lives will be snuffed out. Not knowing the precise moment for which your exit from this world has been scheduled permits you to entertain—and to cherish—the hope that the very next moment may be the one when you breathe your last. We simply don't have the heart to rob you of the anticipatory excitement in which uncertainty about the number of hours—or days—left to you allows you to luxuriate. You certainly deserve every moment of happiness that you can possibly squeeze into your pathetically curtailed remaining lifespans, and we are determined to give you such happiness.

Our team of heavily-armed professional assassins has already staked out your house. Every door and window of your home is now under 'round-the-clock surveillance. Equipped with the most modern and powerful snooperscopes, our assassins can see your house just as easily at night as during the day. Within the past 30 minutes, they have cut the telephone line running to your house. You can verify that your line is now dead—dead as a doornail.

We believe in going the extra mile on your behalves. You wouldn't, we are certain, wish to be distracted by people from the outside pestering you with trivial, mundane concerns while you are joyously preparing for your end. By cutting your phone off, and by seeing to it that no one—but absolutely no one—approaches your house, we are making certain that you will not be disturbed during your last few hours (or days) on earth. We know that you will accept this token of our good will, and of the esteem in which we hold you, with the most heartfelt gratitude.

Do not yield to some wild, irrational impulse to venture out of your house, even for an instant. Should you emerge from your "hospice" at any time of day or night, you will be immediately shot down like mad dogs. Why shorten the woefully little time that remains even further? The Grim Reaper is on his way to you even as we pen these words.

Your employers will have to start looking for your replacements a few days earlier than otherwise, but that's no big deal—they'll manage splendidly. You have more than enough food in the house to last you for the duration—much more than enough, believe us. You can probably live (and die) without seeing the new show that's coming to the Liberty Theater tomorrow. As for

your newspapers, let them pile up on your front lawn for a few days—you can make do with the news on TV, if national and international news still interests you. So, stay safely and snugly within your home. Don't even appear at a window—some of the guys have itchy trigger fingers and just love target practice. (They manage to hit the bull's eye 99 out of a hundred times, or better!)

In one fell (or is it foul?) swoop, we've eliminated all your cares. No longer need you worry about how to pay your bills, possible unemployment, ineffective birth control methods, the national debt, World War III, or your visitors overstaying their welcome. All that and more is behind you: you can devote the rest of your lives—what cruelly little of them remain—to the pursuit of unalloyed pleasure. Do just that. Live the lives of hedonists—it'll be good for you!

When the instant fixed for your departure arrives, our expert assassins will close in on you from all directions. Expect them to come bursting in upon you through numerous doors and windows, their machine guns blazing. Don't worry about a thing—it'll all be over in a matter of seconds. Your bullet-riddled carcasses, drenched in your own blood, will be carried aloft by helicopter, flown out over the Pacific, and dumped into shark-infested waters.

Remember that the fellow creatures with whom all of us share this planet are also entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Your disgusting, loathsome remains will provide a tasty snack for a couple of savage sharks cruising in the area of our drop. In death, you will achieve what has eluded you in life: making members of fellow vertebrate species happy. Your stunning act of selfless sacrifice will catapult you to the highest level to which mere mortals can aspire. You will, truly, have reached the pinnacle of human nobility. You have every right to feel proud of yourselves! As the great philosophers of Western civilization have unanimously maintained, the true and only meaning of life is to be found in death—nowhere else. You two are about to demonstrate the validity of that 2,500-year-old apophthegm.

We are convinced that you want the world to forget you quickly, and to continue as though you had never existed. We are going to help you realize that starry dream. Your house will be blown up, using the most powerful nonnuclear explosives now on the market. We'll cart the rubble away and cover your entire lot with a layer of reinforced concrete two feet deep. Your neighbors will now be able to provide their guests with more than ample off-street parking space. Here, too, you will be serving others in death as you never served them in life. Contain your eagerness, won't you? Be patient—your "Big Moment" is about to arrive!

Well, we've chatted with you long enough. Forget both the past and the future (you don't have one) and enjoy yourselves—you are about to enter the Eternal Now. We'll be seeing you soon—very, very soon!

With the warmest regards,
YOUR DEVOTED MURDERERS