

Covering My Ass: two tangent-ful tangential crooked letters that share an introduction

As I wait to be accepted or rejected by grad schools (I've been accepted by one and offered a generous- for the arts- package including a tuition waiver, a stipend and fairly decent health insurance), I search for steady work with health benefits to tide me over until late August. I need health coverage now, so I write cover letter after cover letter.

I need health coverage now.

crooked letter 28: Cover, cover be my lover, or at least get me a job to cover my medical bills

I write cover letter after cover letter in an attempt to get a job; a job that I will not feel too guilty about leaving when it is time to start school this fall. I'm bound to feel guilty, regardless, since like many depressives (including bipolar II types) I tend to be over scrupulous about these sorts of things. Anything just on the edge of the slippery slope descending down into the valley of quite possibly, though not definitely, unethical behavior becomes a gianormous dilemma.

As anyone who has ever searched for a job knows, cover letters are torture. If Dante were writing *The Inferno* today, one of the rings of hell would be full of people locked to desks forced to write endless fundraising letters, statements of purpose/intent for admission to college, query letters for book proposals and cover letters to get jobs. They would receive only rejection letters, which would be the one break from the tedious work. They desperately would need to go to the bathroom but would feel compelled to stay at their desks until they finished the current letter. By the time they moved on to the next letter to be written, they would have forgotten, briefly, their need to piss. This need to micturate would be enhanced by the endless cups of coffee supplied to the condemned writers. They also would be compelled to drink cup after cup of coffee, which not only would make their bladders painfully full, but also give them that oh so fun jittery too much caffeine feeling.

Now you would think that something so universally hated like cover letters would be abolished. I will quote from an earlier crooked letter an observation that I think is pertinent to this issue:

No one in his or her right mind enjoys writing (or reading) a statement of purpose. Even the best of writers detest this particular task. The people who have to read these things hated writing them. And there is no way in hell you can get out of it. They had to do it, so you do to. Statements of purpose are almost as bad as cover letters and query letters, though you grovel more when applying for a paying job or trying to get your book published.

I have written a number of cover letters in the past month for jobs I don't want. It is hard to be serious, despite my serious financial crisis, when writing a letter for something I rather would not do. I write these letters quickly and don't proof them as closely as I should. Though some errors I wouldn't catch even proofing. Often, I find that I don't find the mistakes- not caught by spell check- until I have let the writing rest for a good long while. If I wait a while, I slip my editor eyes into the sockets, pretend that someone else wrote it. The cover letters generally need to be done quickly, so I do not have time to let the letters simmer.

I could share some samples of these letters with you, but instead I will end this crooked letter with the letter I wish I could write and still get a job.

March 29, 2007

To the poor, pitiable person who has to wade through a bunch of cover letters from people pleading for the recently posted position:

I will keep this relatively brief because I'm sure that you have plenty of cover letters that you really don't want but have to read on top of all the other work on your plate. This task probably got dumped in your lap when you already had way too much work, didn't it? And we all know that hiring people is a major pain in the ass.

Anyways, I have extensive experience in administration (both as an assistant and an administrator, of sorts), non-profit management, editing, book keeping, fiscal and strategic planning, publicity, marketing and event planning. I am a working artist who has juggled multiple part time jobs for the past few years as I build my art career but who also, over the course of my work life, has held many full time jobs that have given me a wide range of skills.

I am searching for a job with much needed health benefits, because, well, I am kind of screwed right now due to several nasty health problems. It would nice, if the job uses my rather eclectic mix of skills to full effect. I am an arty sort but a rare, exotic breed that also is a natural born producer, which means I'm good at managing time, money and the nitty gritty details it takes to put on a show or a fundraising event. These are skills that I think will carry over well to many jobs maybe even the one you've listed.

I want the job you have advertised because I really, really, really need health insurance. That is the only reason I want this job. I have health expenses that are eating about 50% of my monthly income. And just between you and me, I make next nothing. 50% of nothing is, in case, a lot.

It also seems that this job might not be too mind numbing or tedious and might actually use some of my skills. All things considered, the position doesn't sound half bad. Trust me, I have had lots of shitty jobs, so I know a semi-decent one when I see it.

I think I am a very good. . .candidate. I'm smart, funny, caring, a good friend and a great conversationalist. I make interesting, engaging and affordable art. I throw a good party. I make excellent lasagna.

It is true that I am way over qualified for the job, but that is a common occurrence in Gainesville, and you probably are used to paying peanuts to very bright, highly skilled people. And really, how can I expect better with my very varied work history. Oh, my work history is similar to many other writers and artists, but we all know that that doesn't fly in the "real" world.

It also is true that I suffer from a major mood disorder, which means that I can get a shit ton of work done, much more than most people in fact, for, if I'm lucky, long stretches. Then all of a sudden, I won't be able to get jack done. Even taking expensive pharmaceuticals, I cannot guarantee that this won't happen, if I were to work for you.

If you choose to bestow the job on me, I also cannot promise that I will work for more than a few months in the position. I will be attending grad school this fall, which I must admit will be much more enjoyable than 40 hours a week in a cubicle bathed in fluorescent light. I may not be able or want to keep this not yet bestowed on me job once school begins.

Due to the serious financial crisis caused by the aforementioned major health problems, I have to get another job very soon. I must put my economic needs first. This means my conscience is stabbing me (like the scene in the shower from Psycho, but all the bleeding is internal) since I might make things difficult for you by taking the job and leaving after just a couple of months.

My therapist is trying to get me to be less rigid when confronting what I perceive as ethical dilemmas, so I will take any job with benefits offered to me and abandon ship when I need to. But since you can fire at will, I should be able to quit at will if I need to, right?

I wish you the best of luck in your search for the right person to fill the position and hope that I may have the pleasure of meeting you during an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Enjoy,

Sheila Bishop

