



The Apology

by Jean-Pierre Lacrampe

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Dear Mr. Juan Ramirez,
President and CEO of Ramirez Industries
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Cc: To whom it may concern

This probably seems a little awkward: Receiving an apology letter from someone you've never met before (by the way, I'm going to operate under the assumption that you can understand English, let me know if this is otherwise, and I can send you a new copy in Spanish [my friend has a computer program that automatically translates stuff; in fact I could probably send you a copy of the program if you think that would be of use to you, let me know]).

I suppose the first thing you are wondering is: What in the world can this "gringo" (I'm actually half-Lebanese) be apologizing to me for if I've never even met him? That's a fair question. The answer lies with a toucan—a fact that is probably heightening the awkwardness of this situation because now you are probably wondering how some American nut-job owes you an apology on behalf of some rare bird that, until four days ago, lived half a world away. But I can assure you, there is a somewhat reasonable explanation for most of this.

I don't know much about Argentina, but I'm just guessing you haven't heard of the term "house-sitting." Well, every so often, to make a little extra money, I watch over someone's house while they are away on business trips or vacations or legal entanglements. My duties usually include some light dusting, general straightening, and the feeding and exercising of pets. It's a great way to make some good cash without working too hard (my real job is playing bass for the Stardust Rangers [let me know if you want me to send you a CD or something since I already have your address, although I think this is your office address and it might be better to send it directly to your house]).

One of my clients is this guy, Martin Glestin. I think you know him because he *definitely* knows you. He's the one who is making me write this letter. I mean, he's not holding a gun to my head demanding that I write an apology letter to some foreign small-business owner—although he may as well be. He's garnishing my wages until I send you this apology.

Garnishing wages, by the way, has nothing to do with parsley or sage or whipped cream (in case you were using a dictionary to translate). Garnishing wages means some cheap, stingy jerk thinks he's in a position of power and will not pay you for work that you already *did* because something happened to his precious toucan—despite the fact that it is not your fault in the least.

First of all, toucans are not good pets. They can't hold a conversation or even talk like the birds that look just like them. In fact, they don't

do much of anything. I take that back. They squawk. Really loud. I'm talking ear-piercing shrieks. About what, you may ask? Mostly they squawk because they're in a three-foot metal cage instead of the Amazon rain forest—which, if you think about it, is a pretty damn good reason to squawk. Second of all, I need that money. Really bad.

I guess we've gone a ways without me explaining how you fit into all of this and why I owe you an apology. See, it was your company that *gave* Mr. Glutton the toucan to begin with. Now I don't know what kind of a corporation goes around presenting indigenous toucans to visiting businessman, and I guess that's not really for me to say. My question is: Why Martin Glestin? This guy doesn't even deserve to be *employed* (trust me, I've rummaged through his effects, he might be looking at some jail-time in the near future), let alone be treated to exotic birds for the bang-up job he did.

For one, he never looks people in the eye. You could be telling him the most fascinating thing ever, some strange fact about toucans, if you like, and he wouldn't even look up from his desk. He'd say something like: "Oh, you don't say" (boy, is *that* ever patronizing!). You may as well be squawking, you know what I mean? It makes absolutely no difference to him whether you're talking about the history of what's been under your toenails or the history of toucans.

And that's what I don't get about this whole situation: I bet he couldn't tell you the first *thing* about the Stardust Rangers (I told him all about the upcoming tour and album when we first met [he agreed to purchase a copy {let me know if you're still interested}]), but I'm supposed to remember that Peaches or Parsnip or whatever he calls that stupid bird is allergic to *raspberries*? He's a toucan! They love fruit! They love it so much a cereal company here in the States decided to use a toucan as the animated frontman for a cereal called *Fruit Loops*!

But you expect me to believe that Persnickety the wonder-toucan is *allergic* to raspberries?!? Why even keep raspberries in the house then?!? I'm telling you, there were f—ing vats of this poisonous* berry stuffed into every single compartment of his fridge: the crisper, the side shelves, behind the milk. He even had some in the *freezer*! What kind of a pet owner is that? Tell me that! And for a bird that is supposedly *deathly* allergic to raspberries, Peaches sure loved them. I mean he absolutely *adored* them. He would squawk to high heaven whenever I walked away without giving him a raspberry. And I mean really squawk.

If he died of *anything* it was probably a *lack* of raspberries, that's how bad it was breaking Peaches' heart not to have raspberries around to eat. So, out of a kindness Martin Glestin could never fathom, I left a bowl of frozen berries next to the cage for Peaches to

enjoy so I could practice the bass for an hour in peace (we have a upcoming tour). An hour; that's it. Big deal. I'm *sooo* sorry*.

I still don't (not even for a second) believe that Peaches died from a food allergy brought on by the ingesting of frozen raspberries. Sometimes things just die. That's nature's way; nothing brings it on but time. Maybe Peaches was tired of squawking around in a miniscule little prison instead of the enormous rain forest and decided to fly off to heaven. We'll never know. But what we *do* know is that my check for 250 dollars is sitting on Martin Glutton's roll top desk (I know what you're thinking, but he already took back the house key and changed the security code on me) until you receive a written apology for my "lack of responsibility"**.

So here it is. That's why I'm disturbing you in what is probably a very busy work-day (what is it you guys do, by the way? Something with birds?). That's why I'm missing a very important band rehearsal. Because a business associate of yours has a toucan-sized chip angrily perched atop his shoulder. And yes, I *do* mean to imply that Martin Glestin is a pirate. I mean, if you steal and pillage from people and collect strange birds, you're pretty much a pirate, right? Do you really want to continue doing business with this sort of guy? Just a side note.

Listen: Am I sorry the toucan died? Of course (unless Peaches decided dying was for the best, then I'm okay with his decision). I'm not heartless (unlike *some* people I know). But, do I think that I'm responsible for Peaches' death? Not in the least. First of all, the damn bird was *begging* for raspberries—and we're not talking about a baby touchy with eggshell still on its beak. Peaches was 17, practically an adult in *human* terms, not to mention how it's calculated in bird years.

Bottom line: Peaches should have known better. Second of all, I bet I was hired by Mr. Glestin due to my advanced degree in veterinary medicine*. Hmmm, *no*. Oh, that's right, I was hired because Mr. Glutton's friends are as selfish as he is, and he couldn't persuade one of them to occasionally pop over to dust and straighten and feed his goddamn toucan.

Anyway, if Martin *Glesbian* was half as responsible as he'd have me believe, then he wouldn't have accepted the fucking toucan in the first place if he knew that he'd be out of town all the time and unable to properly care for it! Talk about shirking responsibility!! If you're not mature enough to handle a pet, don't get a motherfucking pet! Christ *Almighty*!!

I apologize for the language, but this whole situation has really chapped my hide. Some people like to think that they are better than other people. I'm sure this happens in your country too (although probably not as often since you guys like socialism so much). Martin Glestin thinks that he's better than me because he has a "real job"***

and a house that he fills with weird furniture and bad-health-prone captured birds.

First off, I *have* a real job—playing music for the delight of fans (don't forget about letting me know whether or not you want a CD [also my band is on the internet at www.myspace.com/StardustRangers, check us out if you have the world wide web at your office or at one of those cafes]). Second of all, I don't *want* a house and designer suits (he wears designer knock-offs from the Men's Wearhouse anyway) and balsawood bookcases with fucking spires attached to them. That's ridiculous (although, to tell you the truth, I would like a toucan, but we can talk about that later).

Anyway, I didn't intend for this letter to be so long, it's just that I got started talking about what an utter douchebag Martin Glestin is, and I sort of lost track of time. Unfortunately, it's a very rich subject (Josh, the guy who referred me to Mr. Glestin, thinks Martin's a douchebag as well [you can let me know if you agree or not {I won't tell him}]). So, I'm *sorry* about Peaches the invalid-toucan passing away on my watch. I don't know why I'm apologizing to *you* since it wasn't really your bird. But Mr. Glestin thinks that since you *gave* it to him (you've probably long forgotten that there was ever such a douchebag named Martin Glestin who you gave a toucan to) I owe you an apology as well.

If you could just call him at 555-815-1730 to let him know that you received a written apology from me, I would much appreciate it. Also, if you could call me at 555-766-1382 to let *me* know about the possibility of getting one of your company's toucans (and about the CD of course), I would appreciate it as well (what sort of shipping and handling fee am I looking at? Ten to fifteen dollars or more? Just curious because I'm a little short on cash this month, thanks to you-know-who). If the phone lines from Argentina are too crackly (I heard that somewhere), just e-mail me at bassistforStardustRangers@yahoo.com. Again, sorry about the bird.

Sincerely,

Wilbur Henley

P.S. I'm sending along a box of Fruit Loops cereal so you can see what I mean about the allergy thing (it's pretty good stuff anyway).

P.P.S. Please don't tell Martin that Josh and I think he's a douchebag. He'd probably make me write an apology letter to his mother (although she's probably the one to blame in the first place).

*I mean this sarcastically.

**Mr. Glestin does *not* mean this sarcastically. pool.