

The background is a rich, detailed illustration of a study or library. In the upper right, several large, leather-bound books with gold-tooled spines are stacked. In the center, a quill pen lies on a piece of parchment. The parchment features a highly ornate, symmetrical metalwork design, possibly a decorative letter or a crest, rendered in shades of gold and blue. To the left, a small, ornate metal box sits on a blue surface. The overall scene is lit with warm, golden light, creating a sense of history and elegance.

# Cover Letters

*and Other Stories*

Lara Roberts

## **Chapter 1: Walls and Hats.**

This is the best job application letter I have ever written.

Not because it is the most perfect, but because it speaks to my soul. The opportunity to write this letter is *why* I want to apply for this role.

I have a history of interesting letters.

When I wrote my application letter for university, I spent hours in classes learning how it should be done. I love words, I enjoy understanding structure, and I enjoyed learning it.

But I submitted my application letter by spending an entire day locked behind the glass shopfront of a disused jewellery shop in a shopping-mall pending demolition. A day spent in a metaphorical fishbowl painstakingly writing my application on the yellowed, peeling, shop wall, while passersby stopped to watch.

It was mad.

It was social commentary.

It was asking “what if?”

My teachers were horrified.

I scared myself.

But, many years later, I hold a 2:1 BA in textual practices and theatre after an unconditional offer from my first-choice

university. The type of university that saw my “what if” and replied: “Try these lenses, you might see the world differently.”

Dartington College of Arts, took my love of experimentation and questioning and said, “There are no answers, see what happens, learn from it.”

I *choose* regularly to terrify myself by writing my cover letters as an experiment, to see what this framework does, to question if it must be this way, to play with my work.

Sometimes it is as simple as using a more informal tone, a well-placed joke, a piece of poetic prose or an unusual format.

Sometimes it is applying for a role as head of department using a video letter where I am wearing 7 hats simultaneously piled on top of my head and slowly removing each one.

That was also mad.

It built connection in a new way.

It only made me feel a little bit like an idiot.

It also *worked*.

However, this is the best job application letter I have ever written because it already asked, ‘what if?’ – and, as a bonus, I am not having to film myself wearing a *single* hat. Yet.

## **Chapter 2: Trials of Flaming Unmentionables.**

You may be disappointed that this letter is rather hat-free. However, I chose to write this way so that you could hear my voice, *hear the human*. This is me, and my experience, exploring and experimenting with what it means to communicate to *you*.

My experience is as varied as my letter writing. I have run my own small businesses. I have worked as an agency copywriter and social media manager. I have written and produced a competition winning play. I have directed, championed, and grown community volunteer teams and, in 2023, we even won the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

My most recent role, however, is strangely what I think has shaped me most to be best suited to your needs. I am the previous Head of Caretaking (community management and moderation) for the world's largest social media platform for adults exploring their sexuality - FetLife.

I achieved this not because I had any management training but because it is my genius to build relationships. I build relationships between people and core values, knowledge, and products. I connect people together and I listen deeply. I inspire in others the bravery needed to make difficult change by creating spaces where it feels safe to do so, and I constantly learn, both from myself and from others.

I can also sit with the fear, in the chaos, with a thousand voices screaming at me and take a breath. I can stand shoulder to shoulder with a CEO through public relation nightmares that

make Elon Musk taking over Twitter look like a pleasant stroll through PR checkboxes. I have been tempered in the fires of the darkest sides of the internet and I did not come out hollow.

I was hired as a copywriter and moderator, I left having completely transformed the team and the company. I came out with a series of achievements so long I cannot fit them on to my CV, and frankly, I am not even sure how to unpack everything in this space either.

### **Chapter 3: Questions of Softness.**

One thing I do know is that I absolutely refuse to talk about my “soft skills” here. Nothing about my skill is *soft*. It is high time we re-thought that phrasing. My skills are transformative, vital, and infinitely flexible in ways I never thought possible. My skills are those that underpin the very fabric of civilisation; that teach people how to change their world. *Screw “soft.”*

Instead, I will tell you about my favourite project. I worked with the community of FetLife to grow a community wiki: “The Kinktionary.”

In numbers it looks like this: 380+ new articles. 100% engagement improvement.

In human terms it looks like this: A questions minefield littered with unexploded and unexplored ordinance.

- How do you copy edit something as delicate as someone else’s view of their sexuality?
- How do you gain the understanding needed to accurately reflect a particular community’s ideals?
- How do you find participants from diverse communities and engage them in the process?
- How do you do all of this with people who may not be native English speakers, who may have learning difficulties, sight impairment or who are just plain embarrassed about how ‘badly’ they write?

You listen.

## **Chapter 4: Weird Marshmallows.**

So, I am not writing to you to tell you that I am the most amazing marketer, that I can single handedly transform your website into being the perfect funnel or that I can write content that will make people fall into your mailing lists like pebbles in a stream.

I'm writing to you to tell you that I know how to listen, how to edit delicately, how to build relationships and how to create in unusual spaces.

I'm writing to tell you that the mirror into my soul may look like a funhouse mirror, but its reflections are something I constantly learn from.

I'm writing to tell you that I think this is going to be an incredible journey and that I have packed s'mores.

I don't know how we will toast these marshmallows, but I look forward to finding out, and I know the destination will be all the sweeter for it.

Your strange hat-wearing, marshmallow-wielding, applicant,

Lara.



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