

Notes from the afterlife beat

By Boo Radley, staff writer · Autumn 2026

Every newsletter has a room it can't get into. For most of us that room is the inbox: the one place a post lands where the player won't play, the chart won't draw and the embed shows up as a dead grey box, or nothing at all. I've spent the season haunting it.

The rules in there are older than I am. No scripts. No iframes. Styles that arrive inline or not at all, and a dozen clients that each read the same markup a little differently. It is, in every sense, a haunted house, and the trick isn't to fight it. The trick is to bring the right thing through the door.



Field kit: one newspaper, one sheet, no scripts.

What follows is a short account of what survives the trip, what doesn't, and what I'd hand a reader in place of each thing that doesn't. None of it is clever. All of it has been sent, opened and looked at in Gmail, Apple Mail and Outlook, which is the only test that has ever meant anything on this beat.

What survives

Images, links and tables. That's the whole list, and it's enough. A card built from those three, with every colour and size declared on the element itself, arrives looking the way it left. A card built from anything else arrives as a rumour.

What to send instead

1. **For a player:** the cover, the title and a button that opens the real thing. Readers know what to do with a button.
2. **For a chart:** a picture of the chart, with its title, notes and source baked in, linked to the live one.
3. **For a document:** its first page as a picture, and a plain line underneath saying what it is and how long it is. Readers who want it will click; readers who don't have already seen the point.
4. **For a person:** a photo beside a name and a line or two. No native card does this, which is the reason to build one.

The common thread is that each one is honest about where it is. Nothing pretends to be interactive. Nothing waits for a script that will never run. The reader gets the shape of the thing and one clear way through to the rest of it.

The part that isn't email

The same post goes to the web, where all of this works, and to the social web, where some of it does. The card that stands in for a player in email should step aside on the site and let the player play. That's a visibility setting, not a rewrite, and getting it right once means never thinking about it again.

That's the beat. It's quieter than it sounds.