

July 2026, ISSUE 02

LIT MAG

CABBAGE PATCH

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Key said this quote is too obvious. We agreed to keep it anyway.

We don't claim originality with this issue. All we say has probably been said before, in one form or another.

But all these experiences, although similar in essence, are significantly different. Together, they weave a quilt made of tiny patches.

Maybe this quilt of shared experience connects us. Maybe there is a reason to share these ancient ideas after all.



Key M.,
Ksenia S.

**"To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.**

— William Blake

CONTENT WARNING

Cabbage Patch Issue 02 contains mature themes including depression, PPD, miscarriage, existential dread, and visceral body imagery; please practice self-care while reading.

Key M.,
Ksenia S.



Where To Find Whimsy by Emily Eaton



Where To Find Whimsy by Emily Eaton

Sometimes you watch, read, or see something you like, and then you can't just be normal about it.

Suddenly you're searching Substack and Google for reviews and interviews, engaging in a world that was previously distant from you.

On January 2nd, late in the evening, my dad decided to catch up on the rest of the New Year's Day Concert in Vienna that gets broadcast across a huge number of countries. I've watched many bits and pieces of classical music concerts over the years due to my dad's prompting, and the New Year's Day Concert is a standout memory for me. I used to enjoy watching the dancing in particular, but I've never shown a significant interest in classical music despite growing up with violin and piano lessons, and despite it being such a large part of my parents lives.

This 2026 concert struck me, though. Maybe it was because I have a better attitude these days and am more open-minded, creative, and curious. Maybe it was that this year's concert genuinely was more engaging than previous years—or maybe it was a combination of both.

It was conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and he oozed a charisma seemingly born from a world I try to seek out. He conducted with care and grinned with a love for being alive. He kissed the neck of his husband—violinist Pierre Tourville, who was brought on to play for the Radetzky March—with pure and proud affection. Yannick possessed a kind of whimsy I wish to see surrounding me, growing in reality like bright, floppy flowers.

And a couple of months later, I sit next to my girlfriend in one of Essex's town halls, watching one of my closest friends since childhood perform as the female lead in her musical. A whole community has shown up to support the production, and they don't hesitate to laugh and cheer at all the right moments. The comedy is certainly achieving what it desires to do, but when my friend appears on stage, I start to cry amongst the cackling crowd. I cry because she's sensational and I've watched her come so far. I have pride pouring out of me and, by the time I'm home, I've had the epitome of a good evening. There's whimsy in friendship—and in theatre, creativity, community. Passion for passion's sake.

So whimsy is alive in the arts! Of course it is; how could it not be? I think whimsy breathes in exclamation marks too. But where does art begin? Does it start when daylight breaks through curtains, or when eyes open to the sight of it, or with the way I stir my coffee, choose an outfit, or queue the Spotify songs I want to listen to today? Is it as I click the button labelled “Write an article” and let thoughts become written words? Is it as I edit them and craft something coherent? Is it when I lock eyes with strangers and smile at them? Embrace someone I love? Art is alive in people being people, and in the forest and the wind and the sky’s constantly beautiful paintings. I talk about the sky all the time, but it’s because it’s beautiful all the time. No words will ever be enough, and the way I try to do enough anyway is possibly art. Art is whimsical because we’re playing with time that’s gifted to us—we’re never getting over what it means to be here and to try to have a good time.

Art is in performance, but it’s also in what exists when nobody’s trying: glowing embers of authenticity. Find whimsy in your choices, kisses, and reminiscences. Find whimsy in the delight—and your right—to exist exactly as you are.



Emily Eaton is a queer writer from Essex, England. She loves to travel and try different food/coffee, and spends her time online connecting with communities. She hosts a soft place to land over at:
<https://www.somewheresoftly.com>

**Selected poems
by Michelle McMillan-
Holifield**

Death of the Clementine

Thumb plunged
into tart unkindness.

A mute commotion:
juices scoundreling

in downpour. The boundless
absurdity of it all.

Of the mural
of tears fleshing out

and the clementine's bulb
ploughed through.

Tissues will not stop
this sluicing deluge.

It's absurd
to curl them against
the flesh-shell unfurling.
Absurd, even, to think
any part of the body
is safe.

Oh that tug!
Of tendons and muscles
thundering north
and south. Of synesthetic viscera
splayed upon
the blueprint of grief.

The Fox Hunt

The beardsman scuffs
his face-radiant scraggle upward,
scraps of cheek-to-cheek wirelings.
Churned stubble: spun

and razor-scraped.
The popple of shaving suds
into the sink's oceanscape, oh my,
that muddy spillage!

The interlude of his grin
begins like a fox's stalking.

The hunt—this is not rehearsal—
is afoot.

Lunging for Apples

You sleep at your quasi-job
which is like magic tricks:

sleight of hand
versus legwork.

At your desk, you're a ghost.
The only cursive work you do

is during breaks. What heartbreak
to know this job has you

on the balcony, not lounging
but lunging. Look: work

is that necessary pendant
around your neck.

Work like you mean it.
Work for the apples and the figs.

For the mandarins.
For the pistachios you love so much.

For the garnet wave of cranberries.
For the seeds you plant
hoping they grow and grow and grow.
Work for wine that drapes

along the alley
of your enflamed throat.

The Art of Being Consumed

Green onions
scissor-snipped

to the roots.
Slipped

into a cup
of water.

Stems (dense
with juice)

pitch counter-
ward. Clipped

again. Volt
of earthy spittle

petaling forth:
Onion sass

sluicing.
Confessing.

Stems extending,
skins thinning and

thinning again
until all

that's left is
their degradation.



Poet **Michelle McMillan-Holifield** calls the American South her home. She was recently a finalist for the Wheelbarrow Books Poetry Prize (2026).

<https://www.michellemcmillanholifield.com/>

The Paradox of Lost Time by Natalia Sérés



The Paradox of Lost Time by Natalia Sérés

Never look back and regret it.

It was one of those clichés that had lost its lustre over time, the kind of thing older people said when you visited them in a nursing home, or actors past their prime trotted out during interviews or in autobiographies they clearly hadn't written themselves.

It didn't matter. It wasn't a phrase Valeria gave much thought to, especially now that she was approaching twenty-four and everything she'd done in her life seemed like a total waste of time. The list of things she regretted was enormous, and it grew longer every day she entertained the idea.

She shouldn't have spent so much time in dance classes; she barely danced anyway. She shouldn't have cut her own bangs at thirteen—her photographs from that age were unbearable. Clearly, she shouldn't have started wearing fake nails as a pre-teen and ruined her natural ones in the process. Maybe she should have studied art instead. The economy was a mess anyway, the world was falling apart, and a third world war seemed more likely than her ever becoming financially independent.

She was sure of one thing: she'd regret this in the morning. What was she doing awake at three o'clock in the morning? Tomorrow she'd have a terrible headache from lack of sleep. Seriously, she should have been doing something better with her time than scrolling through her phone, lost among piles of photographs of friends and cringey videos of strangers.

Her late-night existential crisis wasn't helping her fall asleep. Eventually, she resigned herself to stumbling to her feet and making her way to the kitchen for a midnight snack. If she was going to mull over her insignificant, fleeting existence, she might as well do it with something sweet in her mouth. Your twenties—the stage of life that could be summed up in a single word: despair.

You could almost hear a clock ticking behind you, reminding you that you were no longer a child and, more than anything, the most pathetic attempt at an adult in existence. At what point did you become a lost cause? A failure? That already felt just around the corner, and although she knew she wasn't the only person in that boat, she didn't feel particularly comfortable talking about it, even with her closest friends.

With the sound of an imaginary clock ringing in her ears, she opened the fridge and grabbed a beer. She set it on the kitchen island and opened a cupboard, pulling out a packet of biscuits.

She was sure of one thing: she'd regret this in the morning. Why did everything feel like a competition? With all the photographs and posts, she felt as though everything was happening in the blink of an eye. Her friends had stable jobs. Some had already moved out on their own. Others were posting photographs with their partners on their fifth anniversaries. And then there was her. Graduating late. Unemployed. Living with her parents. Driving with an expired licence. Oh, and let's not forget her disastrous love life. No prospects. No women in sight.

Even in that respect, she felt she'd missed her golden age, which had barely lasted from nineteen to twenty-one. Lately, dating had become yet another exhausting, impossible task. There were only two extremes: people looking for a one-night stand, or people looking for someone to entertain them for a couple of weeks before they stopped answering messages and your chats ended up archived in the graveyard at the back of your phone.

Okay, maybe she was being dramatic—when wasn't she?—but lately her life felt almost torturous, with nothing remotely interesting or appealing on the horizon. Everything was moving so fast, and she was stuck in the same place. Then came winter break, a lull with no classes and nothing that made her want to get out of bed. The world was now wrapped in a blanket of freezing fog, as though the failure hanging over her head wasn't enough.

Honestly, she was reaching a whole new level of melodrama.

She needed to clear her head.

She opened the beer and sank into one of the chairs in the tiny kitchen dining area. A sip of bitter liquid, then a bite of a chocolate-chip biscuit. After a moment of silence, she sighed and set her phone down on the table.

One finger scrolled through the endless feed while her free hand alternated between bringing a biscuit to her mouth and taking another sip of beer.

She must have looked pathetic, standing in her kitchen wrapped in a colourful cat-print robe with butterfly wings, a satin bonnet covering her unruly curls, and pink slippers several sizes too large for her feet.

But it didn't matter.

In the darkness of the night, she could exist without anyone watching.

She was already drowning in the feeling that she was wasting her youth; worrying about what impression she'd make if someone found her like this seemed pointless. Maybe it was the weight of everything bearing down on her. Maybe it was the part of her brain that kept insisting that nothing really mattered, that everyone was going to die eventually—perhaps sooner rather than later, considering the state of the planet. Maybe it was the alcohol entering her system, or her brain damaged by insomnia.

Or maybe it was all of those things together.

Because when a familiar face and name appeared in the "People You May Know" section, she stopped doomscrolling immediately.

Normally she ignored it. It was usually full of relatives she barely recognised, former classmates from the darkest years of her life, and random strangers who didn't even appear to live on the same continent.

But this time her heart skipped a beat.

She recognised the profile instantly.

She clicked on it and cursed under her breath when she realised it was private. All she could see was a profile picture and a list of mutual accounts.

First, she tapped the photograph, her eyes scanning Eleonora's smiling face.

The smile was the same. The corners of her eyes still crinkled when she smiled.

But she looked older now. More mature.

Valeria backed out of the photograph and checked the list of mutual friends.

Valeria backed out of the photograph and checked the list of mutual friends.

Which wasn't short.

How was that possible?

There was Victoria—Dani's girlfriend—with whom Valeria had felt that strange sexual tension for months.

Damn it, Victoria.

How many terrible decisions had she made on tequila-fuelled nights at Victoria's parties?

The list continued with five other drinking companions she hadn't seen in a year or two, but that didn't lessen the impact.

Eleonora Escandón had been lingering around the edges of her life for four years without her noticing.

Eleonora Escandón.

Eleonora.

El...

What could she be doing now?

It wasn't the first time she'd asked herself that question. It surfaced every now and then when she was drunk, bored, running into someone from secondary school, or caught in one of her strange moods of nostalgia.

It was an innocent question.

A small doubt.

A what if?

It was a regret.

Her only regret with a first and last name.

Well, it was hard to forget your first love, wasn't it?

She sighed and finished her beer in one long gulp while her mind drifted towards memories of nervous laughter, a kiss in the darkness of a cupboard, a hand taking hers beneath a table, and a gaze fixed on her from across a dance floor.

Never look back and regret it.

What a load of rubbish.

She glanced at the phone, rolled her eyes, and pressed a single button.

Then she stood up, tossed the biscuit wrapper and empty bottle into the bin, slipped the phone into her robe pocket without looking at it again, and headed back upstairs.

The phone ran out of battery sometime after she fell asleep, well past four in the morning.

Which meant that when she woke up, she left it charging in her room while she ate breakfast amid yawns and her father's loud opinions on the morning news.

By the time it powered back on, the screen lit up with the usual collection of notifications: messages from friends, emails from university, and assorted headlines.

But buried beneath the pile of digital clutter were two simple Instagram notifications.

Eleonora E._Don has accepted your follow request.

Eleonora E._Don has started following you.



Natalia is a lesbian Mexican writer based in Madrid, exploring identity and the dread that comes with her twenties.

A green cabbage is shown with a large plume of white steam rising from its top. The background is a dark, starry night sky with numerous small, bright stars scattered across the frame.

How Small Things Lead to Big Changes

Interview with
Kendall Concini-Moore

<https://cloudydaychronicles.org>

<https://www.instagram.com/cloudydaychronicles>

<https://cloudydaychronicles.substack.com>

INTERVIEW



WITH
KENDALL
CONCINI-MOORE



Kendall, an author of *Mom's Cloud and the Beach Adventure*, is a mental health advocate and devoted mother.

Kendall kindly shared how her life was changed by mental health advocacy, when something as simple as turning her experience into the analogy of a cloud became a powerful catalyst for change. It enabled her to become a conscientious parent, an author, and a stronger advocate. Today, Kendall is making a significant impact in the field of children's mental health, parenting, and maternal mental health. She generously shared her story in this interview.

Interview: How Small Things Lead to Big Changes

The Small Beginning

Q: You mentioned that turning your experience into a cloud analogy changed your life. Can you tell us the story behind that moment? Why was this analogy so powerful?

A: Articulating my depression as a cloud helped others understand what I was experiencing and allowed me to be kinder to myself. The metaphor began as a wave. My therapist described my depression as coming in waves; I could be enjoying the beach and suddenly feel a powerful, invisible undertow pulling me away.

When explaining this to my family, a cloud made even more sense. We know the sunshine is still there, but we're standing in the shade. Clouds bring different storms, and no two look alike. Saying "I'm having a cloudy day" made it easier to tell people I was struggling without explaining the full depth if I wasn't ready. It gave me gentle, accessible language.

Before, if I canceled plans, people naturally wanted an explanation and said, "Just push through it". But "I'm having a cloudy day" shifted things. People understood I was carrying something heavier, creating space for understanding without requiring total explanation.

Q: Looking back, what was the first small step that started your journey toward advocacy?

A: My journey started with my Instagram, Cloudy Day Chronicles, which I created for accountability. I planned to post daily, intentionally rotating quotes, resources, personal stories, cloudy days, and sunny days. I wanted to remind myself that while mental health was a part of my life, it wasn't all of who I was. People followed, shared their experiences, and turned it into a community. Seeing those connections grow pushed me to write a book and deepen my advocacy.

Unexpected Ripple Effects

Q: How did that single idea begin to influence other areas of your life? You shared that it helped you become a parent, an author, and an advocate. Can you walk us through those connections?

A: When dating my husband, I told him I didn't see parenthood in my future because I couldn't make sense of my own brain. Instead, we found purpose through fostering, volunteering, and advocacy. Over time, as I saw the positive impact we were making and as he reminded me, "It's only a part of you," I realized I did want to become a parent. I did everything to prepare—found a therapist and built a support system. Yet, many of my worst fears still came true. We experienced a traumatic miscarriage, and during a subsequent pregnancy, our daughter arrived early with medical challenges. I struggled, but survived because I wasn't alone.

When we decided to have our second child, I worried what my older daughter would notice if I slipped back into PPD. So, we started talking about Mom's clouds. At bedtime, we'd discuss how clouds sometimes shaded the day and how we could look for sunshine tomorrow. It helped us talk honestly about hard feelings without shame. I began writing those conversations down, which became the foundation for my book.

Q: Were there any moments when you almost dismissed the importance of that small insight?

A: Yes. When pursuing traditional publishing, many agents called the story "too niche" or said the market wanted lighter stories, like "happy animals doing happy things". I started to wonder if the story wasn't strong enough. But while rejections arrived, my online community was growing. People were sharing their experiences with mental health, grief, and parenting. I remembered I wasn't writing for a trend; I was writing for real families looking for language to talk about hard things. That community gave me the confidence to self-publish and bring the book into the world myself.

Q: What surprised you most about the ripple effect it created?

A: When I published, the book was for strangers—the parents online at 2 a.m. looking for reassurance. What surprised me most was the response from people already in my life. Friends and family began opening up in ways they never had before, sparking deep conversations with people I had known my entire life.

Small Actions, Big Impact

Q: What are some small daily practices that have made a significant difference in your mental health?

A: Practicing daily authenticity. Being able to say, "It's a cloudy day, can we play today by ear?" has helped me release the guilt and shame I used to carry. For a long time, I hid how I felt and made excuses. Approachable language makes it easier to communicate what I need without justifying it, allowing others to support me more authentically. Being honest isn't a weakness; it's an act of self-compassion.

Q: Have there been small acts of kindness or support from others that had a lasting impact?

A: I've connected with amazing platforms like The Merriment Maker and Drop Dead Generous, which focus on spreading kindness. Their work expanded our initiatives; a portion of our book proceeds supports community kindness projects. I also received a grant from Drop Dead Generous to purchase cloud plushies and ornaments to accompany donated books, making those donations even more meaningful. It's been a gift discovering how many people are committed to making communities brighter.

Q: Can you share an example of a seemingly minor decision that ultimately changed your path?

A: Choosing to self-publish. Traditional publishers suggested changing my children's names, simplifying speech tags, and replacing vocabulary with easier words. But my two-year-old daughter helped shape the story, and I believed in the language she used. Our beta readers proved children could engage with these concepts through context. I wanted to trust young readers. Preserving the authenticity of the story became a dealbreaker, and self-publishing was absolutely the right decision.

Q: What role do small conversations play in reducing stigma around mental health?

A: Before school readings, I always worry if the kids will connect. I start by asking, "Does anyone know what feelings are?" We play charades, acting out different emotions. Once they are engaged, I tell them, "I'm here to talk about happy and sad feelings, because parents get happy and sad, too". Without fail, hands shoot up. Children are quick to share times they've noticed someone feeling sad. They recognize emotions more than adults realize. Children notice when the adults they love are struggling. When we give them language for feelings, we help them understand the world with more empathy and less fear.

Q: How do you help parents and children understand that small changes can lead to meaningful growth?

A: I share our real-life family moments. One example is Alma's "tornado" and Max's "rock"—lived experiences used to teach. I also highlight our acts of kindness. When people ask why I don't promote our platform more aggressively, I say, "because the world needs more kindness". It's about modeling the care I want my children to value.

Q: Have you seen a small piece of advice make a profound difference for a family?

A: Knowing that talking to our children honestly is okay. I can say, “Mom’s having a hard day, it’s not your fault. I’m having a cloud right now”. Choosing honesty over white lies builds a different kind of empathy. When I tell my daughter, “Mom can’t play right now,” we pause, adjust, and choose a different moment together. She’s learned to recognize those shifts, and we’ve learned to hold space for each other.

Q: What are simple ways parents can support their children's mental health every day?

A: We use a Montessori-informed approach, talking through situations instead of defaulting to “no”. We ask questions about her plans to build reflection skills. We do the same for feelings, supporting her through meltdowns with calm acknowledgment: “Oof, you’re having a hard day”. Rather than immediately fixing the feeling, we name it and sit with it together, building emotional awareness.

Q: Why do you think people often underestimate the power of small actions?

A: There is a pull toward how things “used to be done,” which brings resistance to change. Systems become less person-centered and more focused on the masses. But leaning into small, individualized actions creates space for dignity and genuine connection. Furthermore, people are sometimes skeptical of unconditional care. When we complete acts of kindness, people ask why. I try to gently make space for kindness to happen without explanation, shifting how people feel seen and supported.

Lessons Learned & Looking Forward

Q: What has your journey taught you about personal transformation?

A: It’s less about becoming someone entirely new and more about learning to be an honest version of who you already are. I used to measure myself through pressure and comparison. Over time, I’ve learned to soften that voice, celebrate my wins, and understand that I don’t have to carry everything alone or earn space to exist.

Q: If someone is struggling today, what small first step would you encourage them to take?

A: Talk to someone; don’t hold it in. You are not alone. That first moment of sharing doesn’t have to be perfect, it just has to be a beginning. My broader goal is to expand my resource platform internationally so that anyone can find support that meets them where they are.

Q: How has your definition of success changed over time?

A: Success isn’t book sales or financial return; it’s connection, collaboration, and shared understanding. For me, success is my daughter developing her own way of expressing feelings using the language we’ve built, being authentic with friends, and feeling heard in conversations. Even the smallest step is a step.

Q: What small action would you like to see society take to improve children's and maternal mental health?

A: When people ask what age my book is for, I respond: whatever age you’re ready to have the conversation. I hope adults feel supported enough to talk about mental health earlier to build strong emotional foundations. The shift doesn’t have to be big—just honest, consistent, and open.

Q: Is there a small moment from your journey that reminds you how powerful change can be?

A: Back to Alma’s tornado. One day during a hard moment, she looked at me and said, “Mom, I don’t have clouds... I have tornadoes. Can I go into my room, scream, and throw something?” I asked, “Because you want to be a tornado?” and she said yes. So I allowed it and let my husband know to let her move through it.

Instead of stopping it, we started working with it. Now we ask her: when did the tornado touch down, what is it picking up, and what does it need to move through? We help her name it instead of shutting it down. We always come back to the feeling.

Q: If you could summarize your story in one lesson, what would it be?

A: *Clouds don’t last forever.*



Clouds don't last forever.