



Reviving the Lost Art of Writing Letters

celebrated on September 1st each year, World Letter Writing Day is a gentle reminder of the lost art of putting pen to paper. In an age dominated by instant messaging and emails, this day encourages people to slow down and express their thoughts through handwritten letters. Started by Australian artist Richard Simkin in 2014, it celebrates personal connection, reflection, and the emotional power of words on paper. Whether it's writing to a loved one or a stranger, the act brings back a sense of intimacy and nostalgia that digital communication often lacks.

#COURAGE AND JUSTICE

"Ghudlo Ghumela Ji"

140 girls from a village in Marwar had gone to worship Gangaur. It was then that Ghudle Khan abducted them



"Ghudlo Ghumela Ji Ghumela" is more than a traditional folk song of Rajasthan. Behind its lively rhythm and festive sound lies a powerful story of bravery, sacrifice, and justice, a story that has been carried through generations in the folk traditions of Marwar. The story is associated with the festival of Gangaur, when women and girls across Rajasthan come together to celebrate and worship Gangaur. According to the popular tradition, during one such celebration, around 140 girls from a village in Marwar had gone to worship Gangaur. It was then that Ghudle Khan, remembered in the folk tradition as a Mughal invader, abducted them. When news of the incident reached the ruler of Marwar, Rao Satal Singh Rathore, he decided to act. He gathered his forces and confronted Ghudle Khan and his men. A fierce battle followed, fought with the honour and courage for which the warriors of Marwar are remembered. The battle became a fight not only against an invading force but also for the safe return of the abducted girls. In the traditional telling of the story, Ghudle Khan was eventually killed, and the girls were rescued and sent safely back to their village. But what happened next is what gave the story its enduring place in Rajasthan's folk memory. According to the legend, the severed head of Ghudle Khan was given to the rescued girls. They carried it through the village, turning the after-

math of the battle into a public celebration of victory. The terrifying symbol of the enemy's defeat became a symbol of order before I did. Over time, this memory became connected with the Ghudla tradition. During the festive period associated with Gangaur, women carry an earthen pot with holes in it, with a lamp burning inside. As they walk through the streets singing "Ghudlo Ghumela Ji Ghumela," the glowing pot becomes a powerful symbol of the old story. The pot is traditionally understood as representing Ghudle Khan's severed head, while the light shining through it represents the victory and justice achieved through the battle. The image is striking: a simple clay pot, pierced with holes, carrying a flame that refuses to go out. This is the extraordinary power of Rajasthan's folk culture. History does not always survive in monuments or written records. Sometimes, it survives in songs, rituals, dances, and stories passed from one generation to another. "Ghudlo Ghumela Ji Ghumela" therefore becomes more than music. It becomes a living memory of a time when courage was tested, women were rescued, and an act of resistance became part of the cultural identity of Marwar. For Rajasthan's people have kept this story alive through celebration. Every song, every procession, every glowing pot carries a fragment of that memory. And perhaps, that is what makes Rajasthan's folk traditions so powerful: a battle can become a song, a pot can become a symbol, and a flame can become the light of justice.

BEFORE



Shailaza Singh
Published Author,
Poet and a YouTuber

My most stable relationship for a decade was with Zomato. It knew my order before I did. Then, I divorced it, and started listening to something I had been ignoring for years: my own hunger. Twenty kilos later, we are finally friends. There is a particular thing I started doing as my weight climbed, and nobody around me seemed to notice. I stopped looking at myself. Not dramatically. I just began avoiding mirrors, and when someone took a photograph, I already knew I would not like it. So, I overcompensated. Smartest clothes I could find, careful makeup, the whole production. I was dressing for other people, because I could not bring myself to dress for me. For most of a decade, I sat between 90 and 95 kilos. Always on a diet. Some fast, some plan, some rule I had read about at midnight and abandoned by lunch. I would lose four or five kilos, feel briefly triumphant, and then work and home and worry would arrive together and the kilos would come back with friends. A hamster wheel, but with snacks. Through all of it, my most stable relationship was with Zomato. It understood me in a way few people did. It knew I would crave by ten at night. It knew my order before I placed it. The delivery boys knew our floor without checking the flat number, which is the kind of intimacy most marriages never reach. I told myself I was a foodie. Perhaps, I was. But many of those late-night orders had very little to do with appreciating food. I was outsourcing

decisions to an app at exactly the hour I had the least strength to make them. I am a journalist by training. I could research any diet in the world. I simply could not live inside one. Then, in 2023, my body ended the debate on my behalf. It happened after my daughter's board exams, in that flat exhaustion that arrives when a long tension finally lifts. A gallbladder attack knocked the breath out of me. I was admitted, put on a drip, told nil by mouth. For the first day, I could not eat at all. After that came the cautious post-operative food: whatever the dietician decided I could manage, in small quantities, simple meals, nothing that Zomato would have recognised as food. I want to be honest about this, because it is the part most weight-loss stories quietly delete. I did not begin with a brilliant plan. I began with surgery. The first kilos came off because I had been ill, hospitalised, operated upon, and was eating very little. The turning point was not willpower. It was an interruption. But the interruption handed me something I did not expect. A break from the noise of food. If you have never heard that noise, it is hard to describe. It is the constant hum of what to eat, what you should not have eaten, what the family is ordering, the parantha you cannot refuse because it is already on your plate. Illness switched it off. For once, there was no negotiation. I was not deciding whether to resist the food around me. For a while, most of it simply was not an option. And Zomato, for the first time in years, went unanswered. We did not have a dramatic breakup. No shouting, no blocked numbers. I just stopped opening the app, and one day realised that I had not thought about it in weeks. Then, I came home, and the options came back. During the operation, my blood pressure had climbed alarmingly, and my gallbladder, the surgeon told me afterwards, had been badly

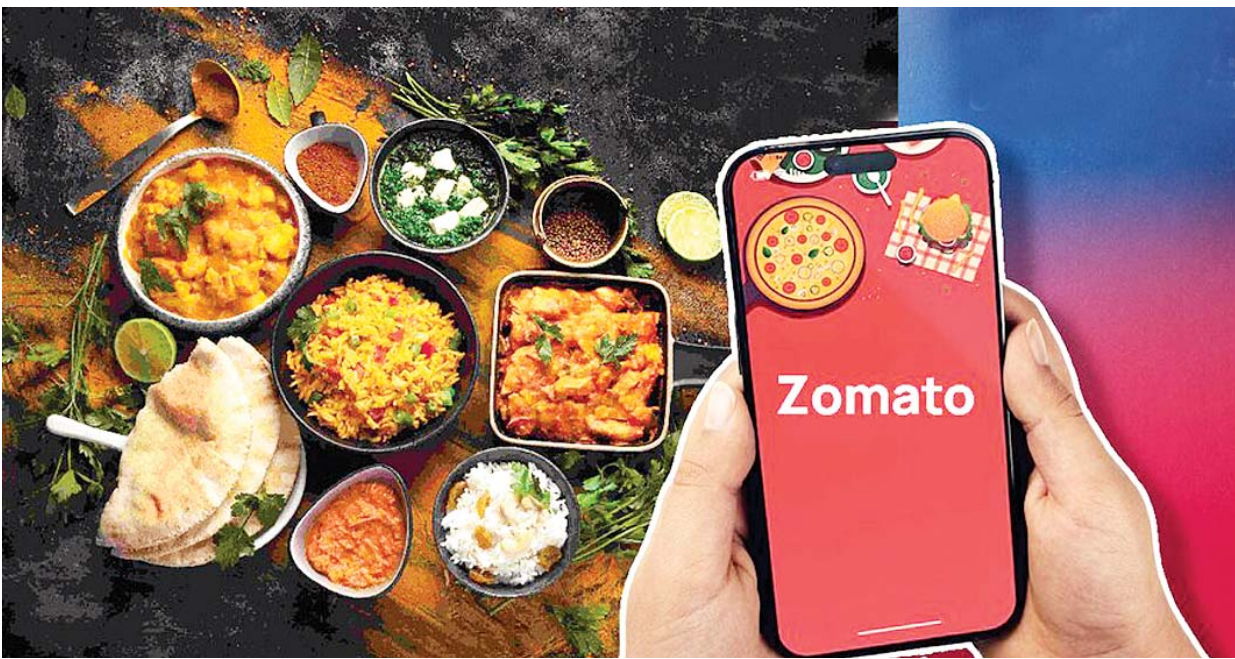
I Divorced Zomato and Married My Hunger

The medical side is more complicated than a before-and-after photo, and I will be honest about that too. My weight now moves within a far narrower band than it once did, and my blood readings improved a great deal. But I am still under a doctor's care, still on medication, still doing the tests. This was never only a story about a smaller body. Zomato, for the record, still texts me. The occasional wistful notification. Your favourite is missing you. I feel nothing. It is taking the separation harder than I am.

AFTER



#THE BREAKUP



swollen and stubborn to remove. He was kind and direct, and he suggested that I consider bariatric surgery for the weight. I remember saying, with far more certainty than I had earned, that I would not be needing it. I have no idea where that sentence came from. But once you say a thing like that out loud to a surgeon, you have to go home and make it true. Here is what I expected next, and did not get. I expected my appetite to stay politely gone. It did not. Ten days after surgery, I weighed 86 kilos. I ate a banana one morning and was hungry again almost immediately, and what I wanted was something savoury, something that tasted like actual food and not like an apology. A few days later, hungry between meals, I made roasted makhana with a boiled potato, jeera, lemon and black salt. Weeks passed and the hunger refused to leave. At



not long after a meal I had been sure would hold me. That turned out to matter more than any number on the scale. Because instead of reading each hunger pang as fresh evidence that I was weak, I got curious about it. Old habit. When something keeps happening, a journalist wants to know why. Why did some meals carry me comfortably for hours, while others, which looked just as sensible, sent me back to the kitchen by four? The weight kept coming down. By October, I was 74 kilos. By November, around 72. The early loss had happened in the shadow of illness and surgery. But as the months passed, that explanation became less satisfying. I was no longer living on post-operative food. I was eating normally again, and the weight was still moving. I want a sceptic to sit with that, because it is the whole

point. What kept me going was not a chart. It was clothes. Kurtas I had worn as a newly married woman, folded away for years in a bag I no longer opened, began to fit again. One day, even my shoes felt loose, which nobody warns you about. Apparently, I had lost enough weight for my feet to hand in their resignation too. These small, undeniable, physical proofs did more for me than any app notification ever had. The stretch from 80 to 70 was the hardest, and somewhere inside it, I finally understood the thing that changed everything. All my life, when I was heavy, I had been handed the same instruction in a hundred costumes. Eat less. Eat less than you want. Push the plate away while you still wish it were closer. That architecture had never held for me. I could tolerate hunger for hours, for days, sometimes weeks. But hunger keeps asking the question, patiently, endlessly, and eventually, I would answer it with whatever was nearest, usually at night, usually through an app. And another carefully controlled day would collapse. The hunger always collected its debt, with interest. So, I stopped asking how little I could get away with eating, and started asking a different question. What could I eat now that would actually leave me satisfied? There was no magic food, and I am not going to pretend there was. I began noticing patterns. Some meals held me for hours. Others that looked perfectly healthy waved me back to the kitchen embarrassingly soon. Slowly, I learned to build the first kind more often. That is not the whole method, and it took months of paying attention. But the principle underneath was simple enough to change my life. I did not conquer my hunger. I stopped fighting it and started learning its language. The medical side is more complicated than a before-and-after photo, and I will be honest about that too. My weight now moves within a far narrower band than it once did, and

my blood readings improved a great deal. But I am still under a doctor's care, still on medication, still doing the tests. This was never only a story about a smaller body. Zomato, for the record, still texts me. The occasional wistful notification. Your favourite is missing you. I feel nothing. It is taking the separation harder than I am. More than a year later, something has shifted that matters to me more than the number on the scale. My body and I are finally on speaking terms about food. Hunger no longer feels like a bottomless well that always wants filling. Sometimes, my body says it is hungry, and I eat. Sometimes, halfway through something I love, it says it has had enough, and I stop. And sometimes, food is sitting right in front of me and I simply do not want it. That last one still astonishes me. For years, I believed thin people had been issued some secret discipline I had somehow been skipped over for. Now, I think I had been asking willpower to do a job it was never designed to do. I had stopped hearing the difference between hunger, appetite, habit and enough. I have not conquered hunger. I do not want to anymore. We have become friends. It tells me when it needs something and I have learned to listen. More importantly, I have finally learned to hear it when it says, enough. And the mirror? I look now. Not because I have acquired a perfect body. I have not. Not because weight has stopped mattering, or because keeping it steady takes no thought. I look because somewhere between the hospital bed and the old kurtas fitting again, the person I was dressing for changed. For years, it was everyone else. Now, finally, it is me.

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#RARE

The World's Smallest Wild Pig Facing Extinction

Grasslands, which are essential for the pygmy hog's survival, are increasingly being encroached upon for agriculture and grazing

The pygmy hog holds the title of being the smallest wild pig in the world, but its size is not the only thing that makes this species remarkable. Found only in the grasslands of Assam in northeastern India, this tiny wild pig faces grave threats from habitat loss, human encroachment, and increasing environmental challenges. Once abundant in the region, the pygmy hog is now considered critically endangered, with fewer than 400 individuals left in the wild. It has become a poignant symbol of the fragile balance between wildlife and human development in one of the world's most ecologically diverse and threatened areas.

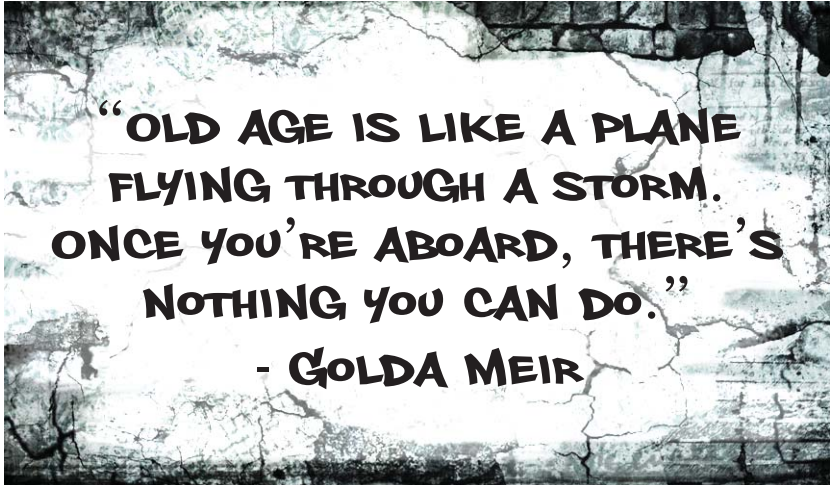


A Rare Species in Assam's Grasslands The pygmy hog is a small, stocky pig that typically weighs just around 8 to 10 kilograms (18 to 22 pounds) when fully grown, making it an especially elusive creature. It is found primarily in the tall, wet grasslands of Assam, which is a unique and increasingly rare ecosystem. The pygmy hog's natural habitat consists of tall, dense grasses that are ideal for hiding from predators and foraging for food, including roots, seeds, and small invertebrates. Assam's grasslands, however, are rapidly disappearing. These grasslands, which are essential for the pygmy hog's survival, are increasingly being encroached upon for agriculture and grazing. **Habitat Loss: The Destruction of Assam's Grasslands** One of the biggest threats to the pygmy hog is the ongoing

destruction of its natural habitat. Over the past few decades, Assam's once-thriving grasslands have been drastically reduced due to agricultural expansion, grazing, and infrastructure development. These grasslands, which provide a rich and complex environment for a wide range of species, have been cleared to make way for farming and livestock grazing. The resulting loss of suitable habitat has forced the pygmy hog into smaller, more fragmented spaces, reducing their chances of survival. **The Impact of Flooding** Flooding in the region has also played a significant role in the pygmy hog's declining numbers. Assam experiences regular monsoons, and the vast floodplains are prone to annual flooding. While the pygmy hog has adapted to the seasonal floods in the past, climate change and changing rainfall patterns are making these floods more intense and unpredictable. Heavy rains lead to flash floods that wash away the grasslands and create stagnant waters where pygmy hogs struggle to survive. **Conservation Efforts and Challenges** Despite these numerous threats, efforts to save the pygmy hog from extinction have been ongoing for years. The species is protected by law in India, and significant conservation work is being carried out. A captive breeding program has also been established to help boost the population, with pygmy hogs bred in captivity being released back into the wild once they are mature enough to survive on their own. Additionally, local communities have been involved in conservation efforts, educating them about the importance of protecting this endangered species and its habitat. These efforts have made some progress, and there have been modest successes in breeding pygmy hogs in captivity and establishing protected areas. However, the challenges remain formidable. The continued degradation of their habitat, the encroachment of agriculture, and the growing numbers of stray dogs make the conservation of the pygmy hog an ongoing struggle. Climate change, which is contributing to more erratic weather patterns, particularly flooding, adds an additional layer of complexity to the conservation efforts. Without a concerted effort to protect the pygmy hog's habitat, prevent further human-wildlife conflict, and address the issue of stray dogs, the future of this tiny, rare species remains uncertain.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

