

Jay Rayner "If I ruled the world"

BY READERS DIGEST
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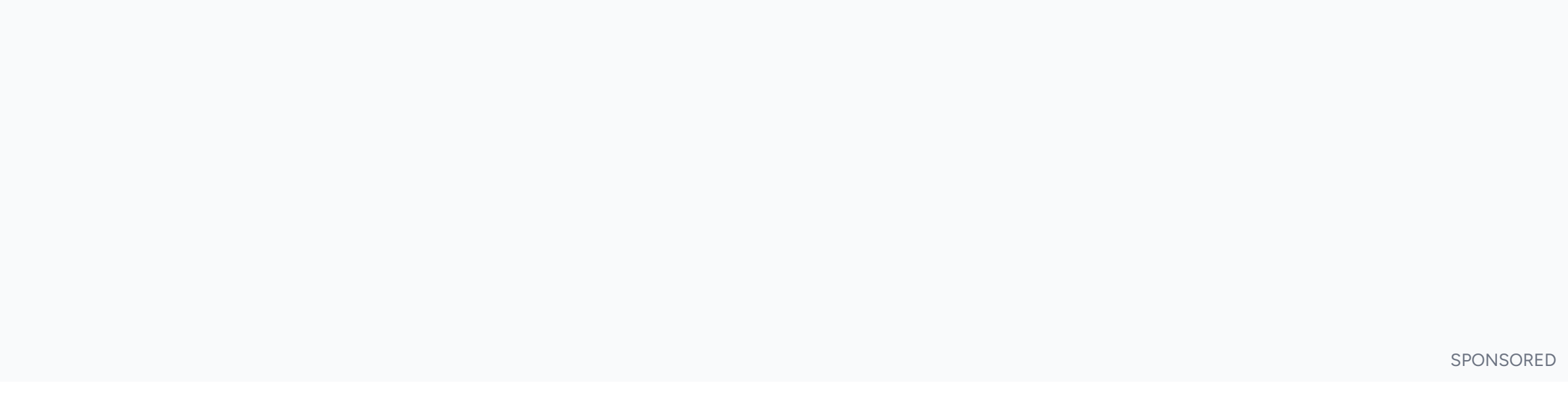
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Jay Rayner is an award-winning British journalist, broadcaster and writer, best known as the restaurant critic for *The Observer*. Here's what he'd do if he were in charge

I would ban the serving of food on anything other than a plate. It would be illegal to use slates, let alone dustbin lids or trowels or tiles, or God forbid, anyone would put a cocktail in a jam jar. Plates are brilliant, they're really good at holding food and they're much easier for front-of-house staff to pick up. If your food only looks impressive to you when you put it on a dustbin lid or hang it from a washing line, there's something wrong with your food. We don't need anything other than a nice piece of crockery. God save us from mini fryer baskets for chips. I hate them with a passion.



All waiters in restaurants would have to take your order with a notebook and a pen. They wouldn't be allowed to stand looking at you as if memorising your order because that just makes me anxious. I have no idea how good their memory is and there have been a lot of screw ups with orders for me in the past with waiters who think they are a mysterioso Memory Man, not taking a note. Your job is to make me feel comfortable and relaxed in the restaurant, and if you don't take my order with a notebook and a pen, I'm going to be anxious. And if I'm anxious, that ruins my meal.



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I would make cutlery optional. All food tastes better when it's eaten with your hands. I know it's not necessarily pretty but cutlery is a Western affectation, there are billions of people around the world who don't use cutlery, and it functions really well. The great thing about it is that when you use cutlery you're using the senses of sight, taste and smell, but when you're using your hands, you bring in the sense of touch. And that malleability of food, how it feels in your fingers, augments the experience hugely. But you need to feel relaxed enough to be able to do it in all social environments so I think the simplest way would be to change the law and make it actual part of statute that eating with your hands is entirely fine and no one can judge you on it.

The question you have to ask yourself is—when you see someone eating a chicken wing with a knife and fork, how do you view that person? You wouldn't want to have anything to do with them. I'm a benevolent dictator, so no capital punishment, but mentally I could punish such a person.



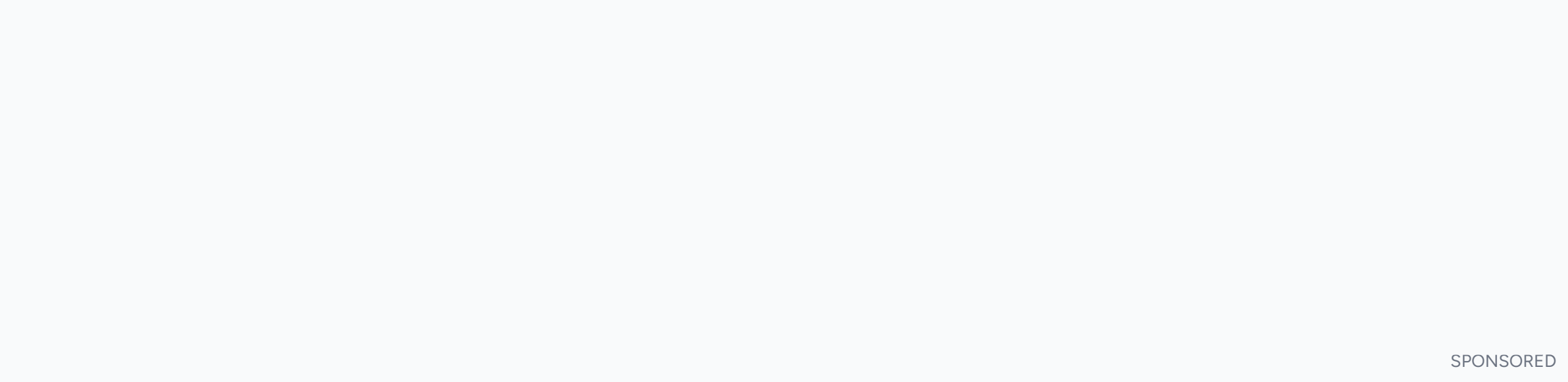
Writing in sporting metaphors would be illegal. A: they're lazy writing. "Get it in the back of the net", "knock it over the boundary"—it's lazy. And B: I have literally no interest in spectator sports. If I ever read a sporting metaphor in something that's not related to sports, I tune out. They make me grind my teeth. And I'll need my teeth for the rest of my life.

Private planes and yachts would be illegal. Not necessarily because of the question of inequality, although that does stand, but because they're tacky. Who really needs a 200-foot private yacht? Anyone who's got the money to afford to buy one of those, needs to be frustrated in their desires. And if the way to do that is to stop them being able to indulge in the conspicuous consumption of buying a private plane, or a private yacht, then so be it. It seems to be a good way of making them cross, and that sounds like a good day at the office to me.



I would reinstate free education at universities. One of the greatest tragedies of the past 20 or so years has been the removal of free tuition in higher education and proper student grants. It has done damage to higher education institutions and saddled young people going out into the workplace with debt. I would reinstitute free tuition at universities and colleges, and reintroduce a maintenance grant. And if that meant raising taxes to pay for it, so be it. My generation got all of that. I feel like we pulled up the ladder behind us and it's outrageous. Education should not be a commercial enterprise.

Out to Lunch with Jay Rayner is available on all podcast providers. Season 3 is out now



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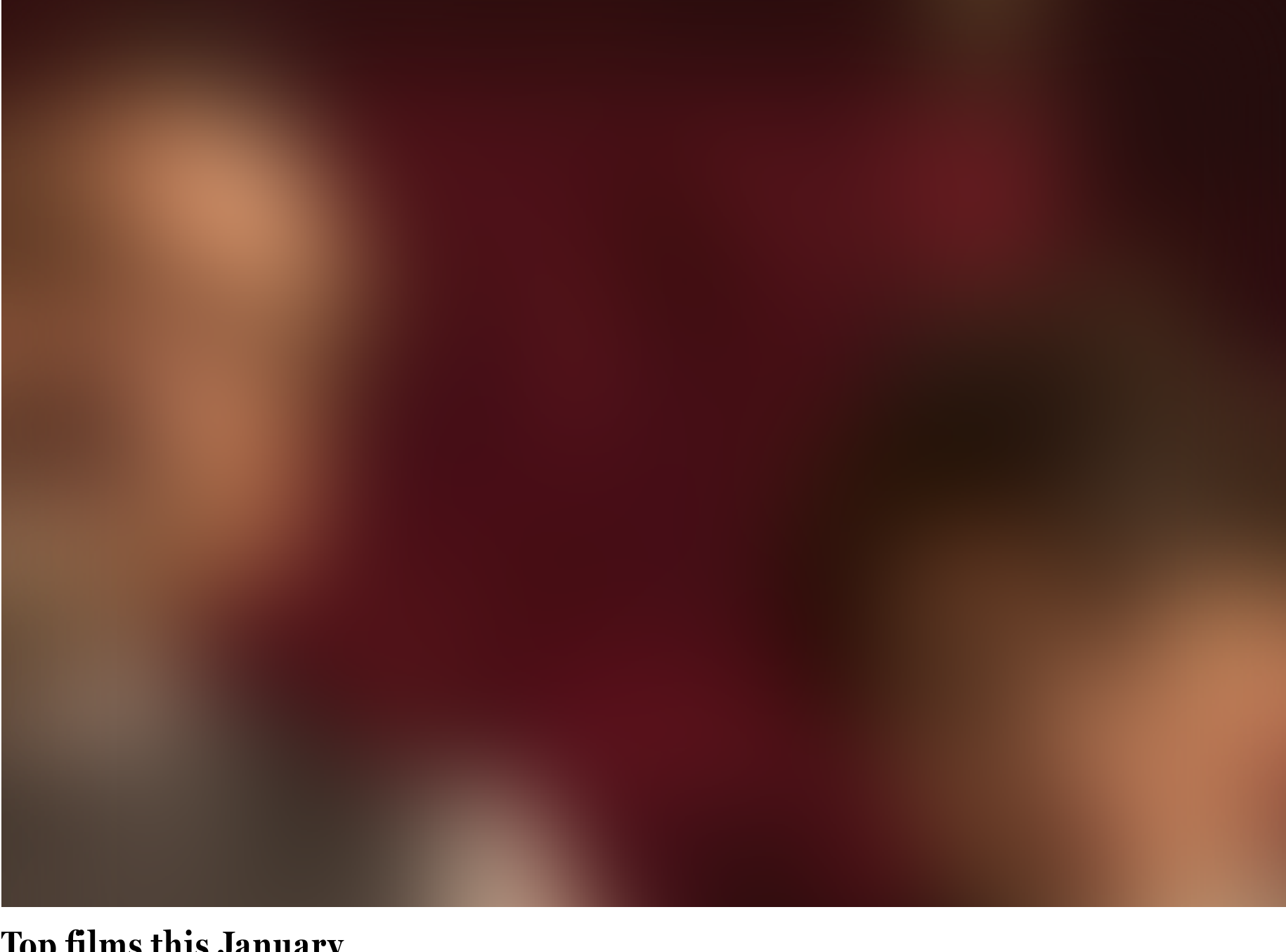
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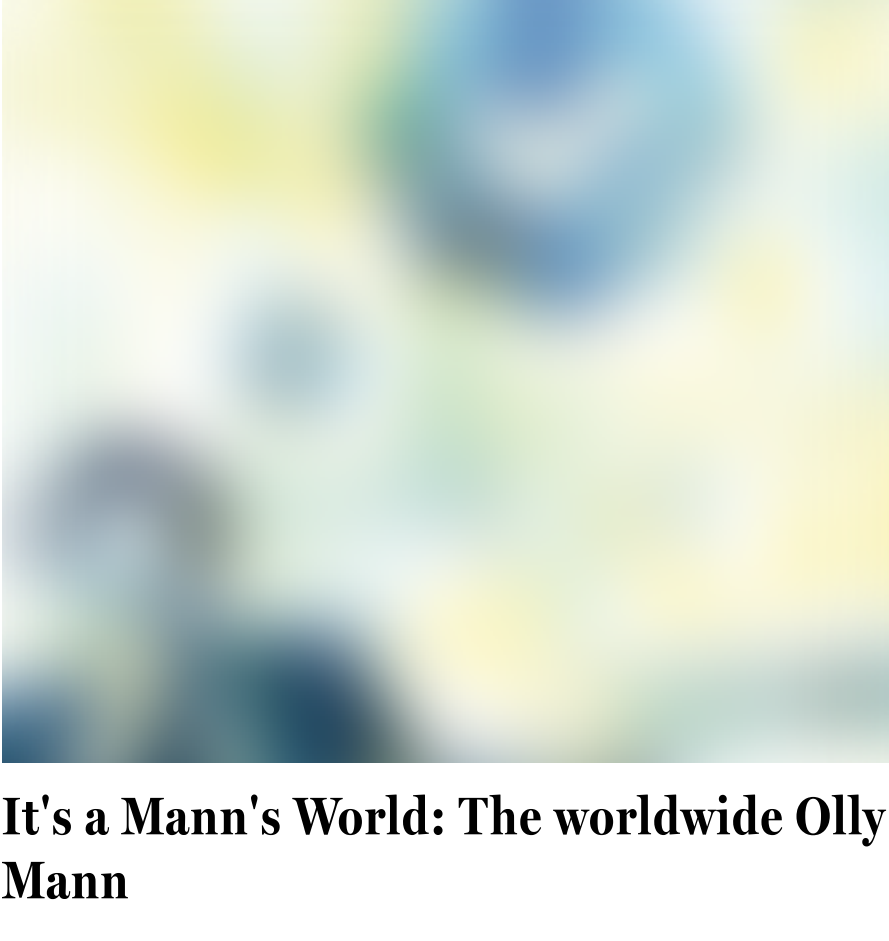
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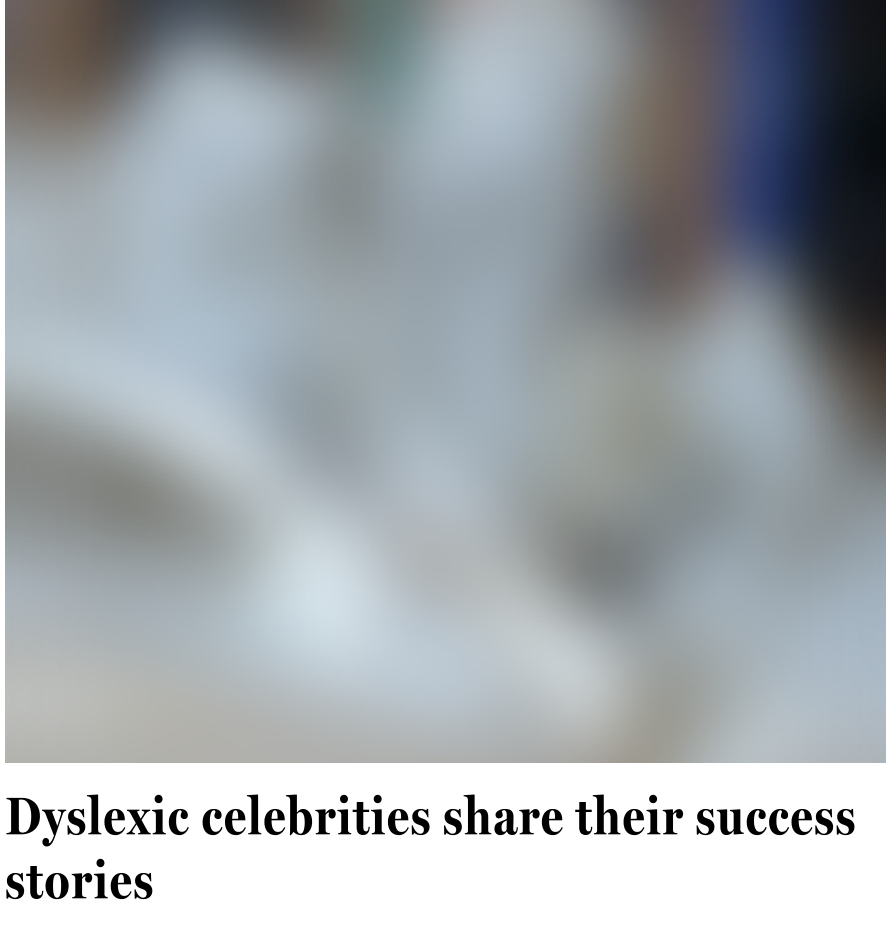
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