

# Sheila Hancock: If I Ruled The World

BY READERS DIGEST  
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**D**ame Sheila Hancock is the multiple Sunday Times-bestselling author, and one Britain's best loved actors of stage and screen

## All showers would be the same



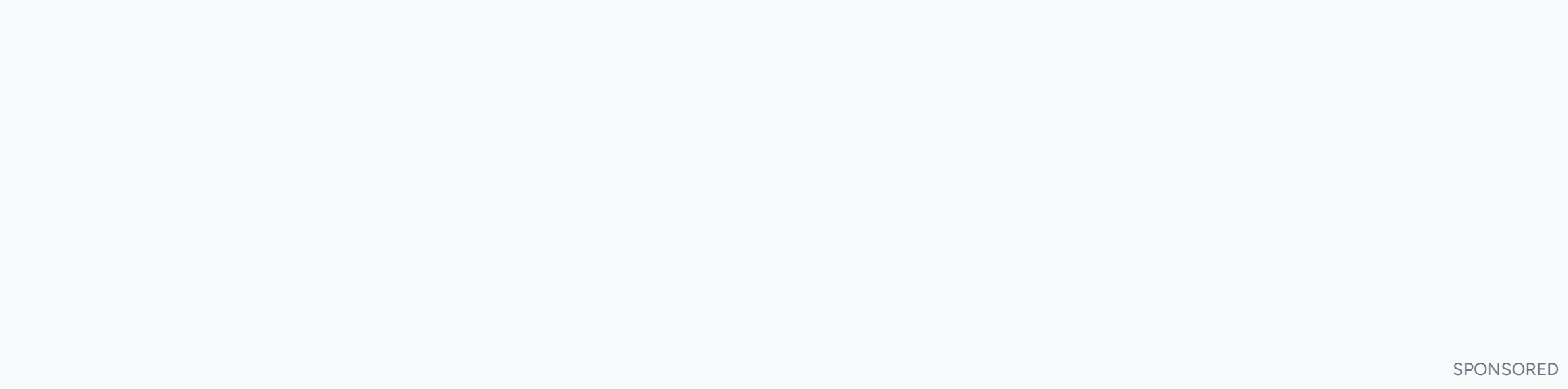
Every hotel or house you go into has a different shower and, invariably, you have to find which is the overhead one, and which is the hand-held one. I hate the [water coming on my hair](#) because it ruins it and it's a nightmare. If all showers, even the ones in homes, were exactly the same, you would always know how to work them.

## People would know how to do all chores

Couples over 60 would be forced to learn what their partner does around the house. Women would know how to change a lightbulb and turn the fuse off, while men would be able to do things like [cook](#) and sweep the floor. So, if your other half dies, you won't end up in that awful situation where you don't know how to do the finances, what your [insurance](#) is, or perhaps just starve to death, because you've never cooked anything beyond a cup of tea.

## Politicians wouldn't be allowed to use superlatives

We would stop politicians talking in superlatives. I'm sick to death of hearing, "We have the best vaccination service," "We are the best people receiving refugees," and so on. It's all part of Brexit—they have to make out that we're fine. Most of the things politicians say are lies, and they do it constantly. Take, for example, Boris Johnson saying, "We are the [best country in the world for receiving refugees](#)". We've got queues of people in Calais waiting to come over because they can't fill in the forms\*. It's a disgrace. Politicians shouldn't be allowed to ever use a superlative unless it's followed by the evidence and the statistics that back up their claim.



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## Boys and girls would be taught mutual respect



Boys and girls would be taught how to respect one another. With the [#MeToo movement](#) that's happening, women are becoming conscious of what their relationship with men really is. If men were tackled about what a little girl feels when a load of builders whistle at her when she goes past a building site, then they wouldn't do it. But they think they're paying a compliment. So, I think that very early in primary school, it should be possible for a little girl to say, "You've upset me by saying that. You've upset me by pulling my dress up." And for the boy to understand that what he's doing is upsetting—because most of them don't. They think it's a lark. It's terribly important to start changing men's relationship with women because it's [leading to violence and rape](#).

## Compulsory cooking lessons for children

Children would start cookery lessons when they're in primary school. Economically we're coming into a really tough time, and it is [much cheaper to cook your own meals](#). In the old days, you would buy a piece of meat at the beginning of the week, then you'd have it cold, then you'd have it minced, then you'd have it in a stew. It lasted the whole week. Children should be taught to enjoy [simple, healthy cooking](#), and you've got to catch them at five, start right at the beginning. Mummies and Daddies don't have time to do that now because they're working hard and they just want to get the meal on the table, so most kids grow up not knowing how to cook. Luckily, mine did because I'm such a lousy cook that they did it in self-defence.



## More respect for old folk

You wouldn't be allowed to ask questions like "Do you still drive?" or "Are you still working?". It's just deeply ingrained in people to think that old folk can't do things. I think there should be an appeal to stop people from being invisible after they're 70. If I go anywhere with my daughter, they address her, not me. They don't see me because I'm old. They think they'll talk to the young one who might explain it to me later—or whatever their motive is. I also loathe all the articles in magazines that tell you what will make you "look younger" or "rejuvenate you". Why? Why should I want to look younger? I'm nearly 90 and I'm proud of it. I'm lucky. [This fear of old age and death is disturbing](#). It's going to happen to all of us.

*\*The interview took place in March 2022*

[Old Rage by Sheila Hancock](#) is out now

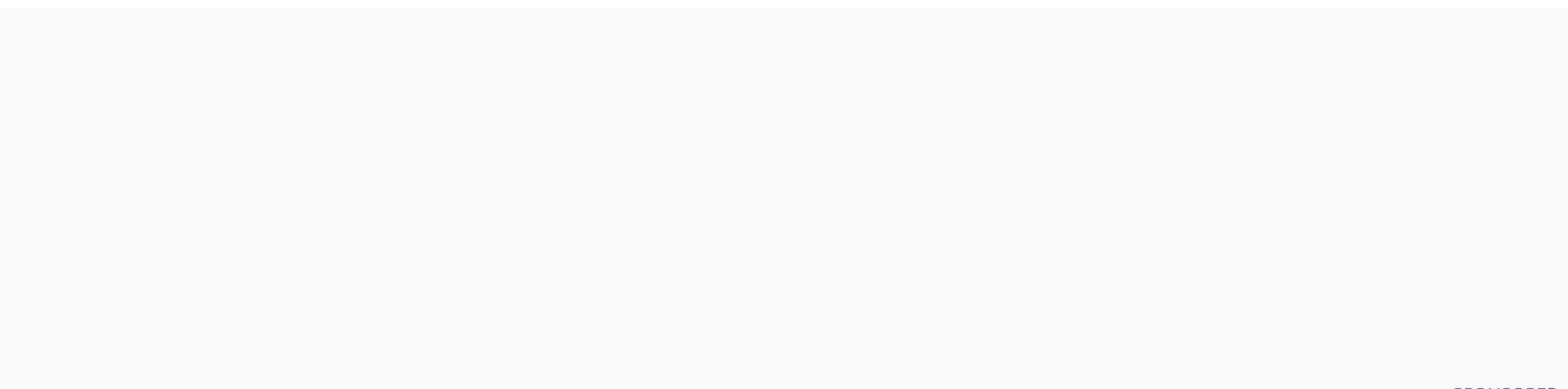
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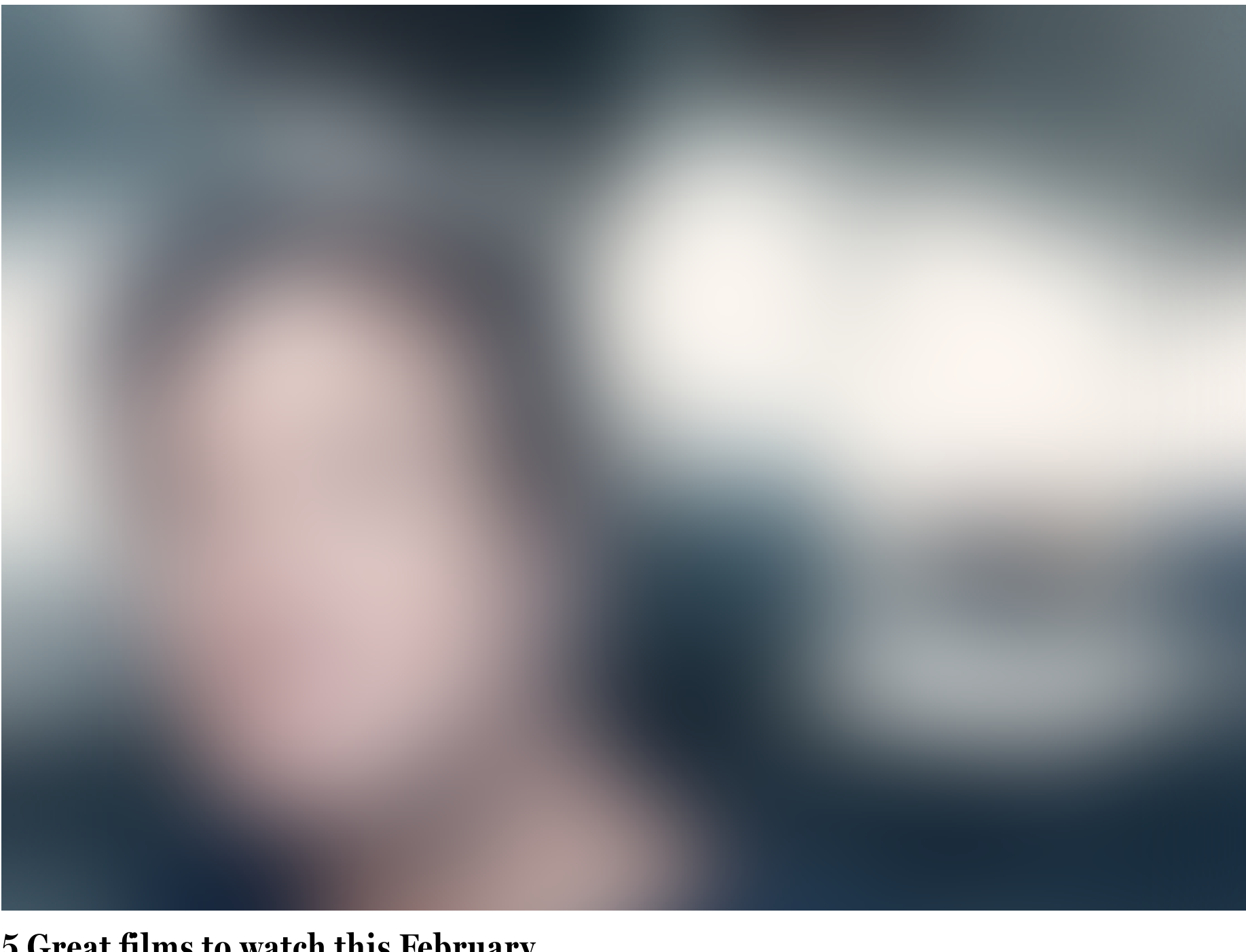
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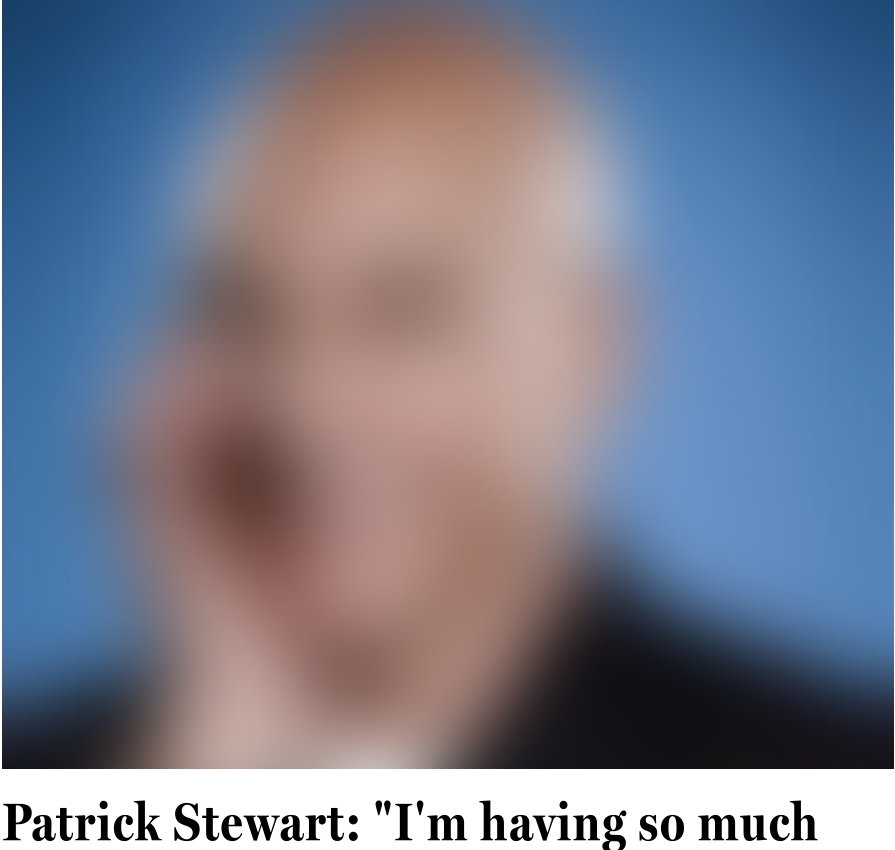
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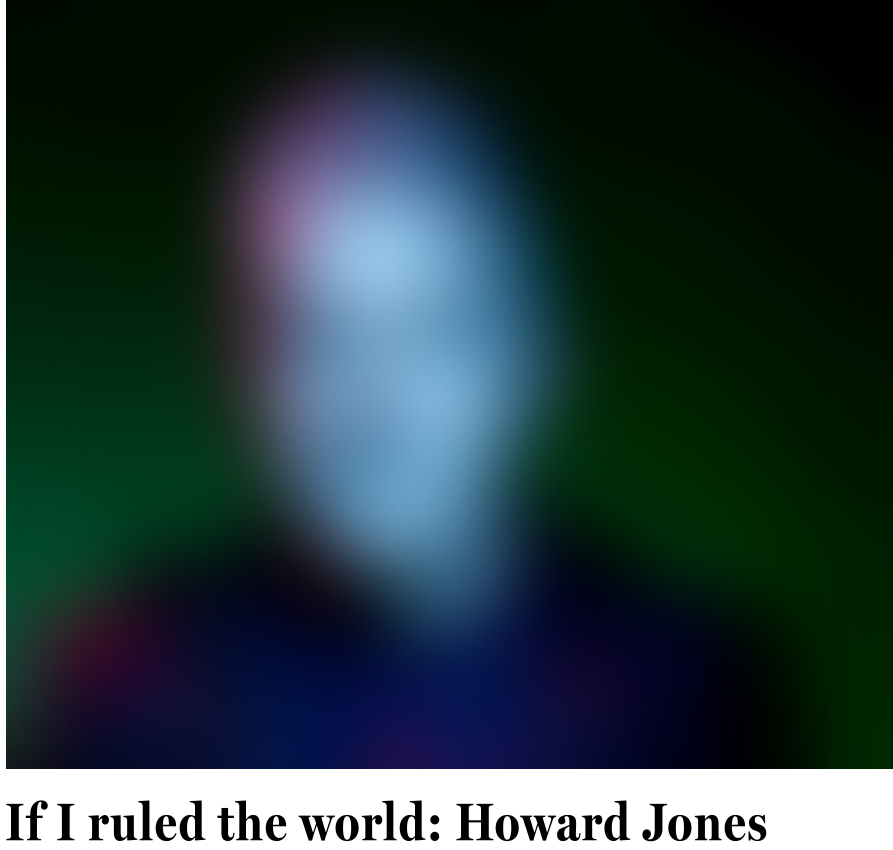
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