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SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



NEW
YEAR
SPECIAL

Fading art of keeping a diary

COVER STORY

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Sidharth Goutam, active since 2017, is a pioneering Odia YouTuber turned filmmaker. He has directed 60+ projects, including the acclaimed 2022 short 'Byaase Sunucha' and award-winner 'Raasta'. Known for 'Chup', 'Royals', 'Garam Chaa', 'Sunya Pura', and 'Srushti', he blends grounded storytelling with cinematic depth. Former assistant to National Award-winner Amartya Bhattacharyya, he now runs digital marketing and scriptwriting agencies while developing his debut mainstream movie, set to hit screens in 2026



● **A day for introspection**

On Sundays, I journal and reflect on the entire week, writing down how I spent my days, experiences, lessons learned and moments that stood out.

● **An occasion to socialise**

Recently, I've been exploring club culture, socialising more, exchanging ideas and broadening my perspectives through meaningful interactions and shared experiences.



With wife

● **Spending time offline**

After working six days straight, I want my Sunday to be slow, relaxed and peaceful. I love spending time offline and away from constant social media distractions.

● **Time to rest and recovery**

For me, an ideal Sunday is about rest and recovery, listening to music, watching movies and recharging for the week ahead.



With renowned documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan

● **Family man on Sundays**

My Sundays are dedicated to helping my wife with household chores and spending quality time with my family, strengthening bonds, sharing moments and unwinding together.



WhatsApp This Week

Only on **Sunday POST!**

Send in your most interesting WhatsApp messages and memes at: features.orissapost@gmail.com
And we will publish the best ones

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- My tennis opponent was not happy with my serve. He kept returning it.
- What do you call an alligator in a vest? An investigator.
- Homework is the only creature that multiplies faster than Indian relatives' WhatsApp forwards.
- In-flight meals are now like UFOs—everyone's heard of them, few have actually seen one.



Blanket ban not the way

Sir, This refers to the last week's cover story titled Teens at crossroads. Banning social media for teens is like grounding a kite for flying too high—well-meant, but it forgets the wind. Used recklessly, Instagram and TikTok can erode sleep, body image and attention span; used wisely, they are today's playground, noticeboard and classroom rolled into one. A blunt ban merely migrates usage to secret accounts, deprives adults of teachable moments, and cuts young people off from peer support, creative outlets and even crisis helplines posted online. The smarter route is graduated access: 13-15-year-olds get messaging-only versions, 16-17-year-olds earn fuller features through digital-literacy modules completed with parents. Built-in time limits, default private profiles and algorithm-free feeds should be mandatory, not optional. Rather than outlawing the town square, we should chapterone it, because the skills needed to navigate likes, lies and lifelines there will shape citizenship, commerce and mental health for the next half-century. Prohibition postpones problems; preparation prevents them.

YOGESH THAKUR, PATNA

LETTERS



A word for readers

Sunday post is serving a platter of delectable fare every week, or so we hope. We want readers to interact with us. Feel free to send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to

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Fading art of keeping a diary

NEW YEAR SPECIAL

As time progresses the habit of keeping diaries and journals is quietly fading. Once a familiar nightly ritual for countless people, it now survives mostly as a niche, almost old-fashioned pastime practiced by a determined few

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Until a few years ago, the approach of New Year triggered a predictable rush for crisp, ribbon-bound diaries; today that excitement has evaporated. Paper diaries haven't just lost casual users—they've been demoted to branded swag. Digital calendars, note apps, and to-do software now handle the scheduling and reflection once entrusted to bound pages. So the only steady demand left comes from companies ordering leather-stamped notebooks as conference freebies.

Diary writing, once an intimate ritual, is slowly fading into the shadows of a digital age obsessed with speed and spectacle. There was a time when diaries were sacred



companions, quiet witnesses to first loves, unspoken fears, small triumphs, and long nights of self-discovery. Each page carried the weight of honesty, each sentence written without the pressure of likes, shares, or validation. The diary asked for nothing but truth.

Today, emotions are typed, filtered, and posted, often diluted by performative expression. The slow magic of pausing, reflecting and committing thoughts to paper is being replaced by fleeting digital confessions that vanish with a swipe.

As the world prepares to welcome 2026, a few diary lovers share with Sunday POST the importance of preserving this fading ritual.

'I have a diary where I write about my dreams'

Eminent poet, writer and academician **Devdas Chhotray** says diary writing has been an integral

part of his life since his early years.

"I have been a diary writer from a very young age, from my school days," he says. In his formative years, his diary entries were deeply influenced by his surroundings. "Every time, I would mention the weather of the day and the quality of light. Sometimes I would even look at the weather outside and decide what colour I should wear." These small, sensory observations became a defining feature of his early diaries and, he notes, continue to shape his writing even today.

Over time, however, his relationship with diary writing has evolved. "Now my diary writing has become slender. I don't write every day," Chhotray admits. Reflecting on how the act of writing itself has changed in the digital era, this year's Sarala Puskar winner said "Our writing has moved from pen and paper to mobile phones. Time has changed, but I miss writing diaries." Despite this shift, he still returns to the practice whenever possible, noting that he often writes about the day's events. For him, a diary is not



merely a record but a space where memory is preserved. "Diary is a place to etch memory, memories that are more enduring than time. Time is lost once it is over, but memory beats time because it remains captured."

Chhotray also reveals a unique personal habit of maintaining a dream diary. "I have a dream diary where I write about my dreams," he says. He describes an unusual ability to resume interrupted dreams. "Sometimes a dream breaks halfway when I wake up, but if I remember it, I can continue the dream from the exact point where it stopped." Drawing from literary influence, he adds, "I have read that writer Graham Greene advised that if you do not remember half of a dream, you should complete it with your own imagination." He concludes by suggesting that diaries, whether of memory or dreams, allow creativity, reflection and inner life to coexist quietly on the page.

'Diaries remain crucial both to history and personal life'

Professor Jayanti Dora, Head of the Department of History at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, underscores the vital role diary writing has played in historical research. Diaries act as first-hand sources, offering personal accounts of individuals and the times they lived in, says Dora.

"Unlike official records or textbooks, diaries capture the thoughts, emotions, ideas, and lived experiences of individuals within a particular time and space," she adds. One of the key objectives of diary writing, according to her, is to help historians understand everyday life. Through these personal records, historians gain insight into how people lived, worked and thought, along with details of social customs, family life, education and cultural practices that are often missing from formal historical documents.

Dora also highlighted the importance of diaries in documenting major historical events. "Diary writing is especially significant because it offers personal perspectives on events such as wars, revolutions, pandemics, social movements and freedom struggles," she notes. Diaries written during periods of conflict or oppression reveal how ordinary people experienced suppression and hardship, making history more human and authentic. She further points out that diaries preserve the voices of those frequently ignored in traditional historical narratives, including women, children and common citizens. Referring to renowned examples, she adds, "Works like Mahatma Gandhi's 'My Experiments with Truth' provide invaluable insights into historical events through deeply personal lenses."

Commenting on the present decline of



diary writing, Dora observed, "Today, people are overloaded with work and mental stress. They lack peace of mind and quality time to record their experiences." She believes that the race for money, fame and power has reduced the value placed on reflective practices like diary writing. Despite this, she stresses its continued relevance, stating that diaries remain crucial both to history and personal life, as they preserve authentic, emotional and detailed records of the past, helping society understand the present and shape the future in a more meaningful way.

'Journaling is a record of emotions, perceptions and personal growth'

Renowned filmmaker and author **Biyot Projna Tripathy** traces her relationship with diary writing back to her childhood. "I started writing a diary when I was 14 years old because my cousin gifted me one on New Year," she recalls. "All my diaries are still with me, and I read them from time to time." She reflects on a pre-digital era when diaries, books and letters were constant companions. "At that time, there were no mobile phones, no computers, no internet, no social media. Your diaries, books and letters were your best friends," she says. Interestingly,

she began writing without knowing how to maintain a diary. "In my first diary, I used to write who visited us that day, how I reacted, whom I liked, whom I didn't like. These were simple things a child would write."

As she grew older, her diary evolved along with her thoughts. "When I grew up, my diary writing changed. I started writing general opinions, about the weather, why things were happening," she explains. Over time, daily writing slowly turned into an occasional habit, but the connection never faded. "Even now, I write whenever I travel. I start from the airport. I write in the flight also, about what is going on around me, about people, the sky, the traffic, whether the flight is on time or delayed." She candidly shares her fear of flying over the deep blue sea. "I am scared, so I write about my fear and my feelings." After landing, she continues documenting people she meets and places she visits, believing that some emotions are too unique to be left to memory.

Tripathy considers journal writing deeply nostalgic and an art form that

is slowly declining. "There are certain feelings you will forget if you don't note them down," she says. Drawing parallels with letter writing, she adds, "Letters were also a beautiful art form, like Nehru's letters to Indira Gandhi, which have historical importance." For her, journaling is a record of emotions, perceptions and personal growth. "When you go back and read your diary, you see how you perceived things, how you have changed, or how the core person in you remains the same."

She believes writing helps declutter human memory.

'Digital calendars and apps have replaced pen & paper'

Gadadhar Dash, who has been running a bookstore in Bhubaneswar since 1985 and has long dealt in diary sales, reflects on the changing times with both nostalgia and realism. "There was a phase when diaries were an essential part of life," he says. "Earlier, I used to receive bulk orders from various organisations, schools and corporate houses. Diaries were gifted, maintained, and valued. Many customers would return every year, asking for the same size, the same paper, sometimes even the same design. It had become a habit, almost a ritual."

Over the years, however, the pattern has changed drastically. "Today, the number of diary buyers has significantly come down," he notes. "People who once purchased diaries regularly no longer do so. Digital calendars, mobile notes and apps have replaced pen and paper. Now, I only bring diaries when there is a confirmed order. Earlier, I would stock diaries worth lakhs of rupees without hesitation. That confidence no



FAMOUS DIARIES

Anne Frank

Perhaps the most famous diary is Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, published posthumously in 1947. Frank wrote of her experiences in hiding during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. *Diary of a Young Girl* has been read by millions all over the world, and is a cornerstone of curriculum for many students.

Marie Curie

Nobel prize-winning chemist and physicist kept a diary of her research with radioactive materials. To this day, her diaries are still so radioactive that they are stored in a lead box. Anyone who wishes to view her diaries must sign a waiver and wear protective clothing.

Ludwig van Beethoven

One of the most renowned composers of all-time, Ludwig van Beethoven kept numerous notebooks, journals and letters which provided an indication of the man behind the compositions. Despite a quick temper and sometimes furious demeanour, a compilation of letters released after his death revealed a different side to Beethoven.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Italian painter Leonardo da Vinci recorded his thoughts in a series of papers and notes, which was then put together after his death. The notebooks contain his notes on a range of topics, including mechanics and astronomy, offering an insight into da Vinci's thought process.

Marco Polo

One of the earliest recorded travel journals was by the Venetian merchant and explorer, Marco Polo. His journal, *Livre des merveilles du monde* (*Book of the Marvels of the World*), documented his travels to Asia, and explained to Europeans the vast size and wealth of one of the unexplored corners of the planet.

longer exists."

Yet, Dash does not view this decline with bitterness. Instead, he believes the essence of diary writing still holds value. "While digitalisation has made life faster and more convenient, it has also made it more restless. Writing in a diary was never just about noting dates or tasks; it was about reflection, discipline and emotional release. That depth cannot be replaced entirely by a screen."

He adds with hope, "I still see a few young people and old readers asking for diaries, especially during the New Year. It gives me faith that this habit may return in a new form. Trends change, but meaningful practices often find their way back. Diary writing may have slowed down, but I don't believe it has disappeared completely. As long as the need for personal reflection exists, diary writing will remain relevant, even if practiced by fewer people."



ORIGIN OF JOURNALING

For centuries, people have maintained written records of their daily lives, initially for practical and professional purposes. Early records focused largely on business, trade, or agricultural activities, while personal thoughts and emotions remained largely undocumented. One of the earliest known examples of personal diary writing comes from Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor of the 2nd century AD, whose *Meditations* offered deeply personal reflections rather than mere records of events. Similar traditions emerged across Middle Eastern and East Asian cultures. In 9th-century China, scholar Lio Ao kept a travel diary detailing his journeys, while in the 11th century, Ahmed Ibn Banna recorded his travels across Northern Europe in a date-wise format that closely resembles modern diaries. During the Medieval era, diaries were often used by mystics to document spiritual experiences and interpret everyday events through a religious lens. By the Renaissance, diary writing evolved into a means of expressing private opinions and inner thoughts, with no intention of publication. Reflection and self-examination became more central than routine documentation, and by 1605, the term "diary" was officially used to describe such written daily records.

The year that was

Whether it's lifestyle, tradition, Gen-Z concerns, or the latest in artificial intelligence, **Sunday POST** showcased them all. Take a quick glance at some of the most compelling cover stories published throughout the year

Not Ozempic, it's Hara Hachi Bu

Centuries-old Japanese eating philosophy Hara Hachi Bu is not a diet plan with special foods or strict rules; it is simply a reminder to stop before you feel stuffed. The idea is to leave the table still a little bit hungry, trusting that the body will feel satisfied a few minutes later



Power of faith

In the heart of devotion, Rath Yatra and Lord Jagannath weave a tapestry of faith through timeless tales. These stories, rich with miracles and legends, capture the essence of a centuries-old festival, showcasing the profound bond between the divine and the devout



Digital divide

The digital age certainly presents challenges to traditional theatre shows but at the same it also has offered opportunities creating new avenues for creative expression and reaching wider audience



Recognise red flags

In a world where resilience, empathy, and communication are becoming as essential as technical skills, teaching Gen-Z how to handle their emotions might just be one of the most relevant and empowering steps forward



Make them feel valued

Behind every success story lays the quiet strength of a girl who dared to dream, even when the odds were stacked against her. National Girl Child Day, observed January 24, is more than a date on the calendar. It is a heartfelt tribute to the resilience, courage and potential of every girl of India. It's a day to pause and reflect on the countless barriers girls continue to face, from unequal opportunities to societal expectations and to renew our commitment to breaking these chains



Blending tradition with trend

For those who are tired of awkward small talk, endless buffet lines, and the pressure of attending yet another traditional wedding, here's a fresh, playful trend sweeping the scene: fake weddings—the ultimate celebration without the bride, groom, or any of the usual stress



Nora's secret to glowy skin

Actress Nora Fatehi once revealed the "great routine" behind her glowy skin. A recently resurfaced video from one of Kapil Sharma's shows has the actress talking about her diet. In the video, Kapil asked her, "Nora, what do you eat that makes your skin so glowy? What is your routine?"

Responding to the same, the actress said in jest, "I have a great routine. I eat pasta. I eat mashed potatoes. I eat rice, roti and lentils. I don't have a car. I travel by rickshaw".

Nora has carved a distinct space for herself in Indian cinema through her exceptional dance skills and growing acting range. She first gained attention in Bollywood with her electrifying dance numbers, quickly becoming one of the most recognisable faces in item songs and stage performances. Dance numbers showcased her mastery of belly dance and fusion styles, earning her massive popularity across India and abroad.

Beyond dance, Nora has steadily expanded her acting portfolio with roles in films and web series, demonstrating confidence and screen presence. She has appeared in projects such as *Batla House*, *Street Dancer 3D* and *Madgaon Express*, balancing glamour with performance-driven parts.



IAN S

Actor Sharman Joshi has opened up about completing 25 years in the entertainment industry.

In an exclusive quote shared with this news agency, he reflected on his journey and the milestones along the way. The *Golmaal* actor shared insights into how he carved his own path without a filmy background, recalling his early days in theatre and the experiences that shaped his career. Sharman shared, "It's been almost 25 years since my first breakthrough. As you know, I don't come from a film background I come from theatre. Early on, I had three options in mind: becoming an actor, a lawyer, or a businessman, but I chose to take the leap into this world."

"My first appearance was a cameo in *Godmother*, and then *Style* happened quite unexpectedly. We were all newcomers, in-

Sharman on the milestones achieved



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credibly excited, and that energy was truly irreplaceable. I still love that film, and it means so much to me that people continue to remember and talk about it even today."

The *Xcuse Me* actor further mentioned, "It's hard to believe it's been a quarter of a century since I entered the film industry. Theatre has always been an integral part of my journey as well, and I continue to pursue it with the same passion. I recently completed 100 shows of *Raju Raja Ram* and am currently planning an English play in January."

Did Ranveer actually quit Don 3?

Speculation had been swirling around Ranveer Singh's reported exit from Farhan Akhtar's much-anticipated action franchise *Don 3*, with several reports claiming that the actor chose to walk out following the success of *Dhurandhar*.

According to a new report, these rumours, clarifying that the actor was dropped from the project, "Ranveer hasn't mills claim. It's actually an explained that producers had initially offered Ranveer setbacks and continuing filmmakers stepped away.

Highlighting the scale of the project, the source added that *Don 3* is a prestigious franchise, with Ranveer set to step into the iconic shoes previously worn by Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. Farhan reportedly stood by the actor at a time when *Dhurandhar* had not even released.

The report further clarified that Ranveer's exit had no connection to the film's box-office performance but stemmed from disagreements over demands. Neither Ranveer nor the makers have issued an official statement yet. Meanwhile, the film has already seen other casting changes, with Kriti Sanon reportedly replacing Kiara Advani.



AGENCIES

Neha talks about work-life balance

Neha Dhupia recently spoke candidly about the realities of balancing work and motherhood, offering an honest perspective shaped by experience. A mother of two, the actress shared that returning to work after having children came with its own set of challenges. She resumed shooting nearly three years after her son was born, choosing projects that may not have been massive in scale but carried strong intent and relevance. For Neha, doing meaningful, topical work has become far more important than chasing size or spectacle.

Addressing the idea of "balance," Neha was refreshingly realistic. She believes true balance does not exist in isolation and can only come with strong support systems. With her parents helping care for her children while she works, that companionship is a crucial role in and professional highlighted how stantly judged, their choices, opinions. tance of being is in. Whether with her at

Neha acknowledges and understanding play managing both personal responsibilities. She also working mothers are often questioned about and subjected to unsolicited

Neha emphasised the importance of being fully present in whatever role she it's spending a few focused hours children or long days work, she believes in giving 100 per cent to the moment. She admitted that nothing becomes easy after having children, but learning to navigate responsibilities with honesty and support makes the journey meaningful and empowering.



AGENCIES

Sweet beginnings

A New Year celebration feels incomplete without indulging in desserts that bring warmth, joy and a touch of contentment to the table. As families and friends come together to welcome fresh beginnings, sweets and cakes become symbolic of happiness, prosperity and togetherness. Whether you prefer traditional flavours or modern treats, preparing homemade desserts adds a personal touch to the festivities. Here are five easy and crowd-pleasing recipes perfect for ringing in the New Year on a sweet note



Ingredients: Desiccated coconut, condensed milk, dark chocolate.

Method: Mix desiccated coconut with condensed milk until it holds together. Shape into small laddoos and refrigerate for 20 minutes. Melt dark chocolate using a double boiler or microwave. Dip each laddoo halfway into chocolate and place on butter paper. Let the chocolate set completely before storing.



CHOCOLATE-DIPPED COCONUT LADDOO

Ingredients: Digestive biscuits, butter, cream cheese, icing sugar, vanilla essence, fruit topping.

Method: Crush digestive biscuits and mix with melted butter. Press firmly into a tin or dish and chill for 20–30 minutes. Beat cream cheese with icing sugar and vanilla until smooth. Spread evenly over the base and refrigerate for 6 hours or overnight. Top with fruit compote or chocolate sauce before serving. Desserts and sweets are more than just food; they carry emotions, traditions and celebration. Preparing these recipes at home not only fills the house with irresistible aromas but also creates cherished moments with loved ones. As the New Year begins, let these sweet treats add joy, comfort and a promise of delightful days ahead.

NO-BAKE NEW YEAR CHEESECAKE

ITALIAN TIRAMISU CUPS

Ingredients: Ladyfinger biscuits, espresso coffee, mascarpone cheese, sugar, cocoa powder.

Method: Prepare strong espresso and let it cool. Whisk mascarpone cheese with sugar until smooth. Quickly dip ladyfingers in coffee and place in serving cups. Add a layer of mascarpone cream and repeat layers. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours. Dust with cocoa powder just before serving.



CLASSIC CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE CAKE

Ingredients: All-purpose flour, cocoa powder, sugar, eggs, butter, baking powder, fresh cream, dark chocolate.

Method: Preheat oven to 180°C and line a cake tin. Sift flour, cocoa powder and baking powder. Beat butter and sugar until fluffy, then add eggs one at a time. Fold in dry ingredients and pour batter into the tin. Bake for 30–35 minutes and cool completely. Heat fresh cream until warm, pour over chopped dark chocolate and mix to form a smooth ganache. Slice the cake, spread ganache between layers and coat the top and sides. Chill for 30 minutes before serving.



NEW YEAR VANILLA BERRY CAKE

Ingredients: Flour, sugar, eggs, vanilla essence, butter, whipped cream, mixed berries.

Method: Preheat oven to 180°C and grease a tin. Cream butter and sugar until pale, add eggs and vanilla essence. Gently fold in sifted flour and bake for 30–35 minutes. Cool and slice the sponge. Whip fresh cream to soft peaks. Layer the cake with whipped cream and mixed berries, frost lightly and decorate with fresh berries. Chill before serving. **OP DESK**



The Serbian Joan of Arc

Milunka Savic is history's most-decorated female soldier. Disguised as a man, she fought for Serbia in the Balkan Wars and WWI, was wounded nine times, and received twelve medals including the French Légion d'honneur. Milunka remains the only woman awarded the Serbian Karadorde's Star with Swords for battlefield bravery

The first time the Bulgarian patrol saw the slim Serbian soldier, they laughed. It was 1913, a skirmish near Bregalnica, and the boy—barely old enough to shave—was juggling grenades like apples. The laughter stopped when he vaulted their trench wall, jammed a bayonet into the mud beside the sergeant's boot, and growled "Drop them" in flawless Bulgarian. Twenty prisoners later, the company discovered the "boy" was a woman named Milunka Savi. She was still humming a folk song as she marched her captives back to camp, hair matted with someone else's blood.

Borrowed trousers, cracked ribs
Milunka was born in 1892 on the high plateau of Koprivnica, the kind of mountain village where girls learned to plough before they learned to curtsy. When her brother's lungs failed the 1912 draft medical, she borrowed his trousers, hacked off her braids with a sheep shear, and signed his name on the line. For weeks she slept upright in haylofts, chest strapped so tight she cracked a rib coughing. A field doctor finally noticed the truth while digging shrapnel from her thigh. The colonel offered a nurse's apron; she stared at him until he muttered "Back to the trench, soldier." No Serbian woman would legally fight again—except the one already doing it.

The midnight bomber
By December 1914 she had become the "Bomber of Kolubara," a ghost who materialised at 2 a.m. on the Austrian side of the river, coat pockets clinking with Mills bombs. During one raid she slipped on ice, landed on her back, and still managed to roll a grenade between two machine-gun nests. Forty-three prisoners later, she marched them single-file through knee-deep snow, rifle slung like a school satchel. A French correspondent asked for her secret. "Simple," she shrugged. "They hesitate. I don't."
The war kept trying to kill her and kept failing. A Mauser bullet entered her chest and exited her back without touching a lung. Shrapnel opened her scalp so wide she could see her own reflection in a mess tin; she knotted a sock around her head and kept walking.

During the Great Retreat she carried a wounded lieutenant across the Albanian Alps, swapping shoulders every mile so the frostbite would stay even.

From medal-heavy coat to bank-hall broom
By 1918 the ribbon board on her ruined coat outweighed the coat itself: two French Légions d'honneur, Russia's Cross of St. George, Britain's Order of St. Michael, and the Croix de Guerre with gold palm—an honour no other woman of the Great War re-

ceived. When a general tried to pin the last medal on her blouse, she whispered, "Make it quick, sir—the line is moving."

Peace brought the cruelest wound: obscurity. Milunka married, adopted three war orphans, and took a job sweeping floors at a Belgrade bank. Paris offered a pension and an apartment overlooking the Seine; she declined. "My country is here," she said, patting the cracked linoleum like it was sacred soil. When Nazis rolled into Bel-



the gold—to buy milk for stray cats and pencils for neighbourhood kids. Journalists occasionally tracked down the "legendary female sergeant,"



Milunka with her three adopted war orphans

expecting a grizzled prophet. They found a tiny woman in a faded apron, scrubbing steps, humming the same marching song from 1912. "History is heavy," she told one reporter. "Better to carry a broom."

grade in 1941, she refused to salute. Ten months in Banjica concentration camp followed—bread crusts, lice, interrogations. She survived by telling stories: how to aim a grenade so the spoon flies true, how to keep your ears warm when the Drina freezes. Liberation found her weighing ninety pounds and still cracking jokes.
Post-war Yugoslavia forgot to add her name to the veterans' pension list. She sold her medals one by one—first the bronze, then the silver, finally

Unmarked grave
Milunka died in October 1973, in a one-room flat that smelled of coffee and cat fur. The state buried her in an unmarked grave; paperwork misplaced, funds exhausted. For forty years only the cats remembered. Then, in 2013, a history club of teenage girls raised money for a headstone. On a rainy November morning they unveiled pink granite etched with her record: twelve medals, nine wounds, three wars, one woman. Tourists now leave roses; local brides pose for photos. The woman who once captured armies has finally captured our memory—and she still refuses to stand at attention for anyone.

OP DESK