

*Leyla Abdullayeva*

### **How the decline of handwriting killed the romance**

PEOPLE COMPLAIN ABOUT ROMANCE BEING DEAD. I have heard numerous times about how men do not try and women do not care. In most cases, shifting gender roles are to be blamed, whereas the convenience and speed that technology has offered us are not even considered a reason. Dating apps make it easy to meet people, and instant messaging makes it easy to send a message. How could romance survive in such a comfort zone?

A few months ago, at a Christmas party, a friend handed a postcard with a personalized message to everyone at the event. Some were perplexed, and others just smiled, saying they could do the same, but they never thought of it. I think there were a few who did not even understand the meaning of it.

I was thrilled. Why? Because in the era of instant messaging, no one spends time writing a postcard or a letter. To me, if someone writes a letter, it means they care. If someone sends a postcard, it means they care. The time and energy spent on writing that postcard, even choosing it meticulously from a stash of them, says the person cares. And I think romance is dead nowadays because people find it more convenient to rely on what technology offers.

Dating apps that have become so important in the past decade have hastened the death of romance. Now, to find an eligible person who might match you, you only need to swipe right, match, and text them. Of course, this happens only if you are not an 'I never text first' type of person.

The conversation starters in the dating apps are another story: 'What's up, beautiful?' 'What are you here for?' And so on. In some cases, people just copy-paste the messages. I know this because I am guilty of it myself. Let's be honest, when you receive dozens of the same questions, you want to be practical, not romantic.

But can we blame the people when a dating app makes it easier to meet new people? Or eases the stress of communicating by giving sample messages to start the conversation? No need to be creative or take time to think, just text.

Over the years, texting has become a part of our daily lives. So much of a part that we do not even call our loved ones; we prefer texting them. We do not email potential employers and partners but text them on LinkedIn. To get on hold of friends we have lost contact with, we search for them on Facebook to text them. Be it sending or receiving, it is all about texting. Centuries ago, French philosopher Rene Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am'. Modern people think, 'I text, therefore I am.' Let's be honest, if someone does not text you for a long time, you think they are dead. If that is not the case, you wish them to be dead.

Sending a letter or a postcard has become an element of the past. A letter has become so rare, so linked to ancient times, that even walking in the antique shops around the Czech Republic, Prague, you can see old letters dating 60-80 years back. Yes, I am ashamed to admit that we have become

## Wilderness House Literary Review 17/4

a generation who does not appreciate writing a letter, but we will buy letters of total strangers to exhibit them at home.

There is a beautiful movie called *Letters to Juliet* starring Amanda Seyfried. The film is about a secret society writing back to people who sent letters to the imaginary Juliet of *Romeo and Juliet*. Because let's be honest, how else could Juliet respond, considering she never had a smartphone? Can you imagine her sitting in the Capulet house with the latest iPhone and sending 'heart' or 'blowing a kiss' emojis? Trust me, that story would not sell unless it is about steamy sexting.

On the other hand, thinking with today's standards, they would still be dating if they were alive now because who could stop them from texting or video calling each other? And occasionally, Romeo could allow himself to message a 'Babe, send me nudes.'

The plot of *Letters to Juliet* develops into a romantic adventure after the main character decides to respond to an old letter. This is a symbolic gesture of the importance of the old-fashioned letter. If you want romance, take a paper, write a few lines coming from deep from your heart and then send it to the person you intended those lines for. That is how you embark on a romantic journey.

Writing is essential to me, as you may have guessed at this point. Writing on paper was a way to train my thinking, help with my overthinking personality and bring order to my chaotic mind. Thus, I have always felt I can put my feelings on a page way better than I would explain them verbally. Not surprisingly, I always recommend others to use handwriting for clearer thinking and expression.

As a personal example, I would like to mention that writing has helped me overcome my post-divorce trauma. By journaling every day, I felt relief and became conscious of the pain I was going through. The more I wrote to express myself on paper, the more I felt free of the wounds that would crush my chest. Writing proved to be a great way to heal but not only. It is also a great way to share joy and celebrate the warmest feelings.

Since starting dating again, I am glad to highlight the important moments with nicely written letters and postcards. Lucky for me, it is an act of reciprocity, and by receiving a postcard every month, I can sense care and dive into romance. I could do it, and so could you. Get a postcard and put down a few words to deliver it to the person you care about. In the beginning, it feels hard, sometimes even silly, but then it gives you wings.