

Coleman Bomar • Lorraine Hanlon Comanor • Suzanne Hicks • Andrew Kozma • Julián Martínez • Achi Mishra
Will Musgrove • Devon Neal • Charlotte Newbury • Ashley Oakes • Maria S. Picone
Jay Rafferty • Purbasha Roy • Claudia Tong • Addison Zeller

UNSTAMATIC

a journal of brief words and art
vol. ii 11.23



missoula, montana

From the Editor

Welcome to the second-ever Newsprint Issue of *Unstamatic*, coming to you a whole year after the first. We knew we wanted to do another one, we just took our time getting here.

Which, incidentally, has sort of become the *modus operandi* of the magazine. *Unstamatic* doesn't quite have the staff power (or the budget) of other venues in the ecosystem, but what we do have is persistence and a nagging desire to create. That, and incredible contributors who time and again heed the call whenever we editors feel that restless itch to get away from our day jobs and make something, share something, spend a little time in our little lives to do anything worthwhile. Like put together a literary magazine.

This time around, we received hundreds of submissions to the Newsprint Issue, and reading each and every one of them was humbling, nourishing, and continuously surprising. There was no theme or prompt for the issue, but as we read, we began to connect threads of climate anxiety, ghosts of family and friends, lovers left behind, and cycles doomed to repeat. As *Unstamatic* has always been and will forever be, this is a mishmash of things, a multitude, but one that echoes and sings. We hope it sings to you.

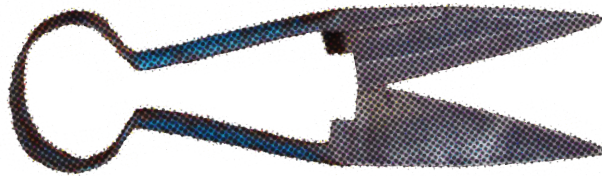
So hold this menagerie in your hands, feel its inky pages between your fingers, and let these stories, poems, and works of art take you where they will, from blood-stained pastureland to the Winter Olympics to a car commercial and a melting ice rink and back.

Safe travels.

Regards,
Luke Larkin
Editor-in-Chief

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Grief

Achi Mishra

"We shed skin like wool¹," Tom tells me. I stare at him, suppressing an eyeroll while I chew on the soft, lush grass at my feet.

"You mean we shed wool like wool," I correct him between mouthfuls.

He stares at me blankly with his empty black eyes. Confused as usual.

"You know," I tell him, "on account of we are sheep after all."

He snorts in distaste and shuffles away from me towards the top of the hill. I hear him mutter something about poetry as he leaves me behind.

I follow after him. I'd rather chomp half-way annoyed instead of lonely. It's much worse to chomp while you're lonely.

"When'd you get into poetry?" I ask him.

He huffs at me.

"Overheard The Owners talking about some poem. Saying we shed skin like wool."

Figures. I think in silence. Tom would never get into poetry himself. The biggest barrier was not knowing how to read. Although that wasn't really his fault. Most sheep don't know how to read.

Except me. And Patty. But now she's dead. So, I guess it's just me. I've been itching to read something other than the "TRESPASSERS WILL BE SHOT" signs at the edges of the property. And summer is long gone. The owners' grandchildren aren't here for the holidays anymore reading a book in the open fields where I can lay next to them, peeping at the words on their pages.

"Which owner said that?" I ask Tom.

He takes his time chewing.

"The Bald One or The One with Hair?" I try to speed him along.

One chew. Two chews. Three chews. All as slow as can be.

"The Bald One," he says.

Which means The Bald One must have the book somewhere inside the house. Where none of us have ever gone into unless we're dead and chopped up and about to be eaten for dinner.

¹ "We shed skin like wool" – from "Parasitoid" by Frank Gallimore, first published by the Academy of American Poets in 2023.

I wish Patty was here. She'd understand the need to find the book. What the fuck business does a human have talking about shedding skin like wool anyways? Like they know what it feels like to be itchy and hot and weighed down. What it means to depend on The Owner to shear you and give you relief. To even briefly love The Owner before you remember your end destination is on his plate, in his belly, and dropped into his porcelain throne.

Poor Patty.

I look at Tom in disgust. Kick him for no reason before I walk away.

He chews once, twice, thrice, before he bleats out in pain.



Custom of a Previous Time

Addison Zeller

In the last century it was customary to reward clever children with a photograph of a dead guy. In the last century death was near to our hearts. The children accepted the photos with reverence. They tapped the glass to acknowledge in their hearts that death was true. The photos might show a dead guy in his coffin, his face peeking out from a glass window, flowers packed close around his ears. Or they might show him on a window ledge, like a lazy cat, one arm drooping down into the grass. Or there he might be, slung over a fence. It did not matter what the photo looked like, so long as the subject was dead. The child would gratefully accept the photo, tuck the frame under its arm, and march right to bed, to set the photo up on the bedside table. Into the room you would come, candle in hand. Time to say your prayers, child, you would say. Into bed! Into bed! the photo would say. Prayers, lights out. The children dreamed of stillness. The photos moved. They drew their arms up out of the grass. They opened the windows on their coffins and looked out.



There Goes the Neighborhood *Kingcup* ▲

A New Era

Suzanne Hicks



On the radio they say we're entering a new climate era. I run the fans 24 hours a day. After I let the dogs outside in the mornings, I close all the curtains to keep the sunlight out. Even though the air conditioning is on 75°, I'm roasting like a turkey. When an excessive heat advisory is issued, I'm melting so rapidly that my vision blurs and my legs wobble. At dinner I try to explain the heat dome to my husband as we sip gazpacho at dusk with the lights off. My fingers are turning into noodles, so I ask for a straw to finish the last drops. On the third day, people are urged to stay inside. When I press my warped hand against the doorknob in a brief moment of curiosity, it's scalding like a fire rages on the other side. I can feel the heat steaming its way through the walls. Hot water runs out of the tap. In the bathroom, I fill the bathtub. A faint cool breeze from the vents sends a slight shiver through my torso before my arms and legs slough off and I slither into the water.

The Beetle in the Forest Fire

Charlotte Newbury



watches the rapid unfurling of Spring,
the tissue-like rebudding of the branches,
the stripping, losing the race to hungry glow,
winter again

goes to ground. Below the leaves, the
rumbling of evacuation, the displaced
migrating. And in their feet is something—
call it harmony

feels first the lick of it, the touch
not harsh as a talon, but gentle. A caress
that turns diapause place to pyre,
spreads out, and up

does not, like the birds do, scream,
does not, in fact, make a sound.

My Parents Discuss Shaun White's Fourth Place Finish at the Winter Olympics

Ashley Oakes

I go to lunch with mom and dad where they are
following the men's halfpipe event. *Larry* (mom says)
he is going to retire. His girlfriend has made him
a to do list. It will be hard
when there are no more medals it's too bad

but my dad says *things end* (here mom brushes
a crumb off dad's chin and cuts steak into bites
for this former high school tackle)

glory is only available once. Then I leave
to attend a friend's mother's funeral

at one of those churches with no altar
It is a flatly sacred plane, no one is elevated
or more holy than another but
the granddaughter plays *Claire de Lune*
movingly: she stares at her own hands

afterwards. We wish we could clap
but an usher shifts his weight as if
to say heaviness is all

there is the gold thread of grief
in the coats of ladies hugging

and on the head of the talented girl
a bow gathers
itself like a firework
in ribbons coming down
as all arcs do, to an end so small

After Raymond Carver's At Least

Purbasha Roy

One day I want to drop sleep from my body
and night. Stay awake with a small candle
light. All the house lights around mine return
to switch boxes. The dark unfencing itself. From
the window I would look at the hill and the wood
that keeps perfecting the woods on its chest. Seems
nothing like a ship navigating elseplace. Just a
stillness busy in multiplication of stillness. And
how this happening runs parallel to my void pulling
more void inside it. On my slow shift of gaze I see
an earthward meteor, sing last shine. How it quivers
like a train. That keeps abandoning bogies in middle
stations. An owl hoot launches sound between silence.
My consciousness stands somewhere between an
unwritten poetry and an understanding eager to be
forced into words. I want to follow the moon as it
passes over my home. Until it dips in the far sky
that holds its whiteness. With the harvest of sleep
unpuckering dreams. Of a land that recreates itself.
Like *Bryophyllum Pinnatum*. As I wake this night
I desire unweave the late hours balancing beauty
and mystery. So, when the bed gets my body my
skin seeps out the magic and tenderness. And sails
through the sheet to touch you the way a synonym is
touched. With belief the connotation wouldn't get lost.

Teeth

Devon Neal

I know your shape the way I know
The way my teeth are arranged in my mouth.

This morning before I run out for the groceries,
I slip quiet through the bedroom door

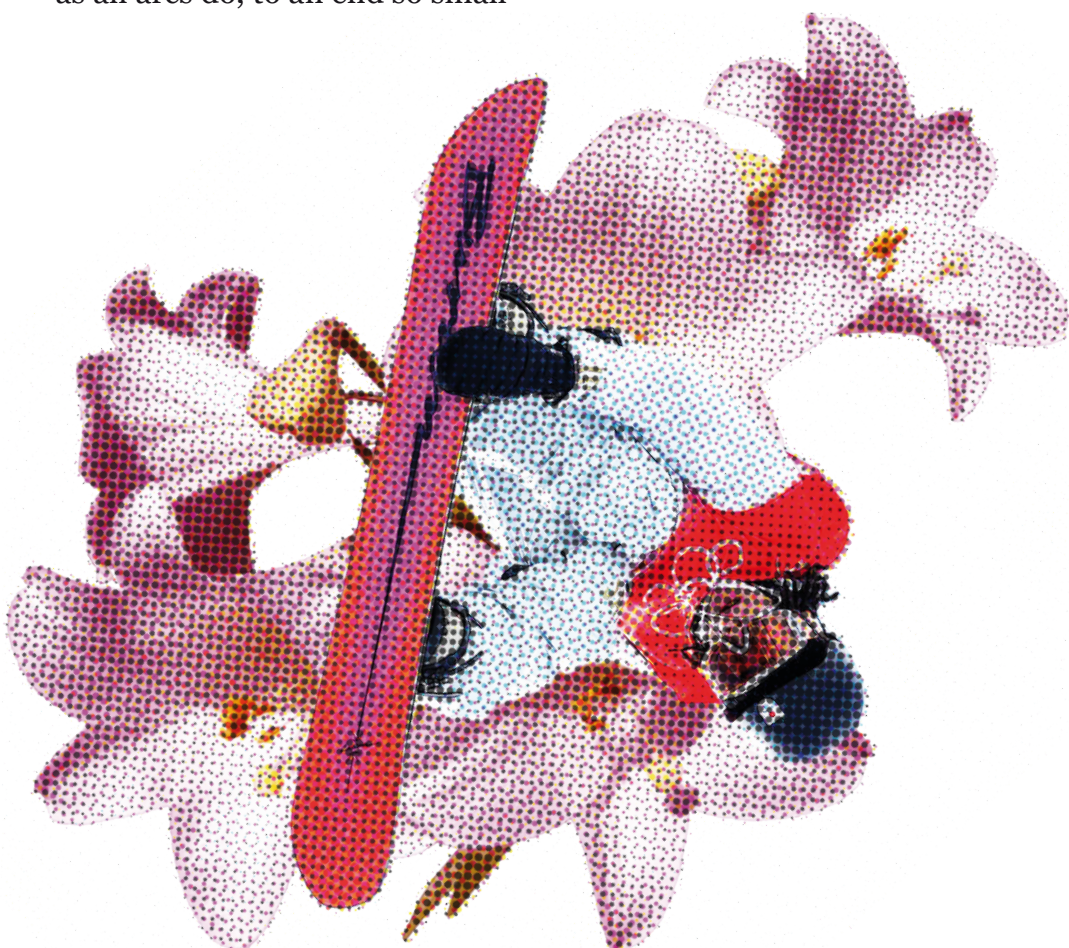
and softly under the blanket where you're still sleeping.
To wake you up I slip my hand under your shirt

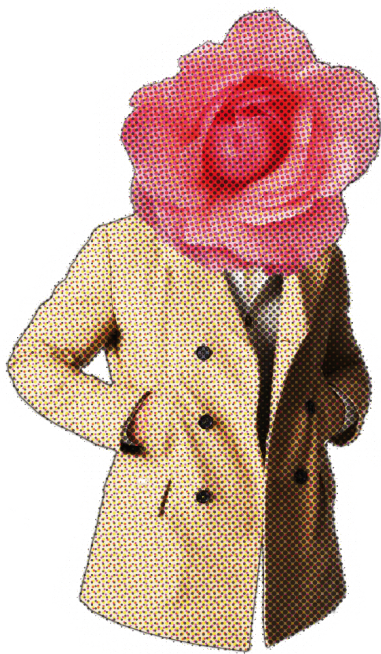
and trace the curves of your back with my fingertips
lightly until you turn toward me

and breathe into my neck.
It's hard to care about how busy the store will be

when slowly caressing the curve of your hip,
the sharp edges of your shoulder blades,

the crown of your side,
the molars of your spine.





The Immaterial Macintosh

Jay Rafferty

(Great (Great)) Grandda Macintosh was a Scotsman. He had thick red hair like mine. Granny told me that

one night. We don't have any pictures. When I imagine him, and as I said we have no photos, it's always the long coat that bares his name, with delicate floral sketches tucked, ruff-like between tiny flounder-beige collar and thick ginger mop. It's a vision of gentle watercolour petals pouring from the sleeves and hem, like a sheet of rain or a waterfall of paper hiding his shins and hands. He is not of waterproof or watercolour fame, His name was James.

There's no man in my mind. No corporeal ancestor, flesh and blood, just a raincoat bleeding flower study folios. And, of course, thick red hair like mine.

Bathtime, NYC, 1977

Julián Martínez

is the caption to a video your dad just sent to the family group chat and it's the girls, three and four, filmed today in Chicago, 2023, splashing gray bathwater at him and at each other, giggling, and maybe it's 'cause the broken pink tiles on the wall remind him of his own childhood

as his youngest granddaughter waves a waterproof crayon, one she calls 'Hiney,' and draws brown streaks all over the tub's floor while they both make fart sounds and spit pretend turd water by the cheekful at each other between gasps of laughter and maybe it reminds your dad of his childhood because

he didn't realize how much shit his family was in at that size, either

gwisin 맥주 hang out

Maria S. Picone

their cigarettes loll
newspapers rustle
eyebrows speak
& in stone worn voices
they pause the proprietor
to clear their long table
of sizzled out beef
& soju shots pop
up like fruiting mushrooms
spreading sporous joy



Romantic Comedy

Coleman Bomar

They're filming my execution. You're about to cut my head off. The director yells cut. You're confused whether he means cut as in stop or cut as in cut. You hesitate. The studio shifts sideways. My head hinges from my neck. The director yells God fucking dammit. You peel off your hood, your rosy cheeks sweet with sweat. I don't need to bend to kiss you. I wave goodbye then walk through the wall.

Squirrel Gumbo

Andrew Kozma

Pawpaw cooked squirrel gumbo with squirrels he shot himself. Skinned and gutted them, too, the lean, nutty meat an example

of how to use every bit of nature to sustain yourself, how the trash animals we've learned to ignore were once staples. Delicacies.

Even the pigeon once dressed tables as squab. I gut a chicken pre-gutted, a bag of organs slipped out from its insides.

If only we all were so prepared for the afterlife. Chicken gumbo, squirrel gumbo, grandfather, I eat this memory: you kneeling

in the forest by your camp shack, praying over the dead squirrel with your knife, boiling over with dreams of dinner.





The Potato Spoon Race

Lorraine Hanlon Comanor

As I'm not yet good enough for the Skating Club of Boston, Mother takes me to the Willard Street pond in Cambridge, saying "no" to the Charles River after someone fell through the ice and was trapped.

This early March Saturday, everyone is going round and round, joining and leaving the skating oval at different points like the Dodo's Caucus race where you never know when it's over and everyone wins and gets prizes. The sun is shining and the ice is getting slushy, but it should hold for the promised potato spoon race.

At six, it's my first competition. Mother's put together a costume fit for the Mad Hatter: last summer's bikini on top of red sweater and tights. The other kids have real skating outfits and are bigger and faster. Mother advises, "Just keep the potato on the spoon."

The referee clears the ice, places the potatoes, and lines up the seven of us, tablespoons in hand. We're to skate thirty feet, pick up our potato, go another thirty feet, round a cone, come back to the start, and toss it in the bucket.

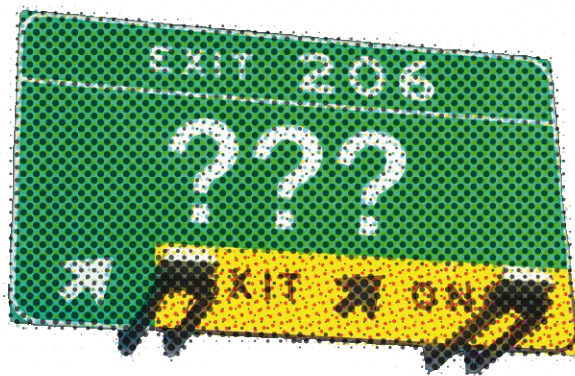
With a "one, two, three and away," we're off. After only two strokes, I'm already behind, next to last to pick up a potato. But then, four boys start showing off and potatoes start flying. The girl beside me catches her edge in a rut and falls, leaving only one boy, just ahead, and me with potatoes still on our spoons. One eye on mine, one on the bucket, I'm determined to gain on him. Five more feet to the finish, four, three—almost even with him now—another steady push off, two, one and toss the potato. Into the bucket it goes, a second before his. Holy Moly! Did I really win? The referee gives everyone a package of jelly beans and pins a blue ribbon on my sweater. Rejoining the Caucus, I skate around the pond showing it off, impatient for

another game.

Mother says enough playtime. Even with the ice as soft as a merengue, I can still work on my edges, so I can pass my preliminary test, maybe join the Skating Club of Boston that has a proper indoor rink and sponsors real competitions.

After a while, going in circles gets boring. As I venture to the middle to try a spin, the ice groans, cracks, and caves, my right boot disappearing into the murky, cold water. I wiggle my foot, certain I can pull it out, but no luck. The crowd continues to circle, no one noticing I'm trapped. My toes go numb. Eventually, someone comes with a hammer and frees me to merge into the oval again and dry off.

Eventually, I join the Skating Club of Boston, where I spend hours in its caucus preparing for one-winner competitions, childhood slipping away without another potato spoon race.



A Car Commercial

Will Musgrove

The car commercial begins with Jerry, his hands relaxed on a steering wheel. Built-in navigation system. Heated seats. The woodsy smell of the leather interior. Four doors. Two doors. Whatever he needs. The car cruises along a winding mountain road with the ease of a Sunday morning walk. A hitchhiker holds up a thumb more in approval than in ask. Jerry pulls over and opens the passenger-side door.

"Where're you headed?" Jerry says.

"Adventure," the hitchhiker replies and climbs in. "Nice car."

New car, new you.

He'll get compliments no matter where he's going.

The car commercial now begins with Jerry wringing the steering wheel like a dishrag. "Perform a U-turn," the built-in navigation system commands. He couldn't get lost even if he wanted to. The heated seats remind

him of those hot summers when he'd wake up confused and happy before remembering where and who he was. A summer where he had everything but freedom. He counts the locks on the doors, counts them again. The car cruises past a sign warning of falling rocks, and he thinks about tumbling down the mountain. A thumb. Jerry pulls over and opens the passenger-side door.

"Where're you headed?"

The hitchhiker climbs in and flashes the knife tucked in his waistband.

"Nice car."

New car, new you.

He'll get compliments no matter who's holding him hostage.

The car commercial now begins with Jerry gripping the steering wheel with his knees. The built-in navigation system tells him the way, but he ignores the directions, ignores the heated seats and the number of doors. The car cruises along the mountain road, Jerry's arm hanging out of the window. As he drives, he forgets. As he drives, he spreads his fingers and lets the wind transform his palm into a sail. He imagines scooping up everything he sees and taking it with him. His hand fills with trees, grass, clouds, and asphalt. A thumb. Jerry pulls over and opens the passenger-side door.

"Where're you headed?"

"Home."

Jerry speeds away, dropping everything he imagined himself holding, the passenger-side door flapping like a flag at half-mast.

"Nice car," the hitchhiker shouts from the road.

New car, new you.

He'll get compliments no matter what he leaves behind.

The car commercial now begins on a television screen. Jerry wakes up. He watches from his recliner, his hands limp on the armrests. He's no longer the star. The commercial ends, and a game show comes on. Jerry reaches for an imaginary steering wheel. He listens for the built-in navigation system. He smells stale air instead of a woodsy scent. Where're you headed? Jerry thinks, folding in his footrest. He unlocks his front door and steps outside.

"Where're you headed?" Jerry says to himself.

No one answers, so he says it again.

"Where're you headed?"

"Nice car," a passerby on the sidewalk replies, stuck in his own car commercial.

New car, new you.

He'll get compliments no matter whether or not he knows where he's going.



Coleman Bomar is a writer from Middle Tennessee. He loves his cat and partner.

Lorraine Hanlon Comanor is a former U.S. figure skating champion and U.S. team member. An anesthesiologist, her personal essays have appeared in the *NER* (Pushcart nomination), *Boulevard* (notable Best American Essays 2020), and *New Letters*, among others

Suzanne Hicks is a disabled writer living with multiple sclerosis. Her stories have appeared in *Atlas and Alice*, *Maudlin House*, *Roi Fainéant Press*, *New Flash Fiction Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Las Vegas, Nevada with her husband and their animals. Find her at suzannehickswrites.com and on Twitter @iamsuzannehicks.

Kingcup is a digital artist. Go looking for them on Tumblr and Instagram.

Andrew Kozma's poems have appeared in *Blackbird*, *Redactions*, *The Baltimore Review*, and *Best American Poetry 2015*. His book of poems, *City of Regret*, won the Zone 3 First Book Award, and his second book, *Orphanotrophia*, was published in 2021 by Cobalt Press.

Julián Martinez (he/him) is the son of Mexican and Cuban immigrants. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *HAD*, *Hooligan Mag*, *Prolit*, and elsewhere. His work has received The Society of Professional Journalists' Mark of Excellence and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Find him online @martinezjulian.

Achi Mishra currently lives in California and is obsessed with reading and writing anything odd.

Will Musgrove is a writer and journalist from Northwest Iowa. He received an MFA from Minnesota State University, Mankato. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Penn Review*, *X-R-A-Y*, *Tampa Review*, and elsewhere. Connect on Twitter at @Will_Musgrove or at williammusgrove.com.

Devon Neal (he/him) is a Bardstown, KY resident who received a B.A. in Creative Writing from Eastern Kentucky University and an MBA from The University of the Cumberlands. His work has been featured in *Moss Puppy Magazine*, *Dead Peasant*, *Paddler Press*, *MIDLVL MAG*, and others.

Charlotte Newbury is a queer poet from South East England. She likes witchcraft, ecofeminism and spider plants. You can find her (& her most recent publications) on Twitter @charnewbpoet.

Ashley Oakes is a photographer and academic coach. Her work has most recently appeared in *Claw+Blossom*, *Pink Panther Magazine*, *Last Leaves Magazine* and *Chariot Press Literary Review*.

Maria S. Picone (mariaspicone.com/ @mspicone) is a queer Korean American adoptee with three forthcoming chapbooks: *Anti Asian Bias*, *Adoptee Song* (Game Over Books), *This Tenuous Atmosphere* (Conium). She is the recipient of *Salamander's* Louisa Solano Memorial Emerging Poet Prize and SC Arts' Emerging Artist Grant. She is *Chestnut Review's* managing editor.

Jay Rafferty is a redhead, an uncle and an eejit. He is the poetry editor for *Sage Cigarettes Magazine* and the author of two poetry chapbooks. You can read his poetry and essays in several journals including *Winecellar Press*, *Daily Drunk Magazine*, and *HOWL New Irish Writing*.

Purbasha Roy is a writer from Jharkhand, India. Her work has appeared in *Channel*, *SUSPECT*, *Pulp Literary Review*, *Acta Victoriana*, *Strange Horizons*, and elsewhere.

Claudia Tong is an artist based in London, dedicated to storytelling and humanity. Her practice spans from landscape, architecture and illustrations to mixed media, visual computing and music. She graduated from Brown University in computer science, and has lived, worked and exhibited in 4 continents. <https://linktr.ee/clauidiuxt>

Addison Zeller's fiction appears, or is soon to appear, in *3:AM*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Epiphany*, *ergot.*, *Farewell Transmission*, *Hex*, *Ligeia*, *minor literature[s]*, *Sleepingfish*, *trampset*, and elsewhere. He lives in Wooster, Ohio.

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