

# New Englander's Choice



FOLK-LEGACY  
RECORDS, INC. FSL-95

## Skip Gorman, fiddle







# New Englander's Choice Skip Gorman, fiddle

with Peter Craig, David Paton, Nick Hawes and Steve Liebman

Although English dancing masters were thought to have plied their trade at an early stage in the colonies, it was probably not until well into the 18th century that New Englanders, young and old, danced with zest to familiar jigs, reels and hornpipes as we know them today. At weddings, harvest and husking bees, kitchen junkets, sleighing parties, sheep shearings, and turtle frolics, fiddle tunes and dances with odd names originating from across the Atlantic were the order of the day.

By the time of the Revolution, Yankee fiddlers and fifers often shared a common repertoire. Country dances became known as "contradances" through the Anglicization of the French "contradanse." Later, the "quadrille" may have superseded the contradance in urban areas, and quadrille bands, often consisting of wind instruments and 'cello, in addition to fiddle, became popular. During the latter part of the 19th century, waves of immigrants flooded the New England states, and for economic and political reasons tended to settle in cohesive urban enclaves. "Little Canadas" cropped up in the mill towns of Lowell, Fall River and Woonsocket. Many Cape Breton Scots settled in and around Boston, while droves of Irish immigrants flocked to Boston and Providence—all these groups adding, however slowly and perceptibly, Celtic and French-Canadian bowing and fingering techniques, as well as tunes, to the Yankee tune bag.

The reels, jigs, hornpipes, strathspeys, marches, polkas, airs and lament that make up this album are not all indigenous to the New England area. Nor has it been our intention to play them exactly as they might have been played at any particular time in New England's early history. Rather, gathered here is a selection of favorite tunes harvested from hundreds, even thousands, over years of listening to and playing traditional music in and around the Northeast. Represented are melodies and styles from many sources—Scottish, Irish, English, French-Canadian, and Shetland—all of which have had a great impact on the evolution of traditional fiddling in New England. Some were indeed played around the colonies in years past, and I've included five of my own compositions. So, with special thanks to Sandy and Caroline Paton and to musicians of the caliber of Peter Craig, Nick Hawes, Dave Paton, and Steve Liebman, I'm very pleased to present to you these tunes—one New Englander's choice in a continuing tradition.

O, that you grow to love them as I have.

Skip Gorman  
Suffield, Connecticut  
September, 1983

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Notes by Skip Gorman

This record is also available as a cassette: Folk-Legacy C-95

## SIDE 1:

1. **Reel du Poteau Blanc**  
**Woodchopper's**  
**Golden Wedding** (reels) 3:19  
**Green Meadows**
2. **Banks of Avon**  
**Johnny, Will You Marry Me** (march and reels) 4:06  
**St. Anne's**
3. **Whaleman's Lament (\*)**  
**Oliver Jack**  
**Merry Boys of Greenland** (lament and reels) 3:37  
**Villafjord**
4. **Lad o' Beirne's**  
**Peacock's Feather** (hornpipes) 3:47
5. **Miss Gordon of Park**  
**Up to New Hampshire (\*)** (jigs) 2:05
6. **The Rhode Island (\*)**  
**The Poppy Leaf** (hornpipes) 2:18
7. **Hard is My Fate**  
**Mrs. Greig's** (air, strathspey, hornpipe) 4:18  
**Jenkins'**

## SIDE 2:

1. **Merrily Danced the Quaker**  
**Teviot Bridge** (jigs) 3:34  
**Woodbury's (\*)**
2. **Planxty George Brabazon**  
**Lord Inchinquin** (planxties) 3:04
3. **The Favorite Polka Medley** (polkas) 2:30
4. **The Clog**  
**Harvest Home** (hornpipes) 3:12
5. **The Skylark**  
**Beavertail Light (\*)** (reels) 2:52
6. **Farewell to Whiskey**  
**Spanish Ladies' Polka** (polkas) 3:01  
**Lass of Gowry**
7. **Haste to the Wedding**  
**Full Rigged Ship** (jigs) 3:12
8. **The Green Mountain Reel**  
**Snoring Mrs. Gobeil** (reels) 2:26

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Skip Gorman,  
fiddle



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RECORDS, INC. FSL-95

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# New Englander's Choice

## Skip Gorman's Fiddle



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RECORDING STUDIO

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SKIP GORMAN

"New Englander's Choice"

"Twas no time for New England to dance," stated Judge Samuel Sewall, the only one of nine judges to later confess his error in imposing death sentences on three women in the Salem witchcraft trials. But despite early Puritan, religious and legal objections to fiddling, dancing and merry-making in the colonies, better days were to crown the efforts of our founding fathers and "even good cheer sometimes went forward and strong liquors walked."

Although English dancing masters were thought to have plied their trade at an early age in the colonies, it was probably not until well into the 18th century that New Englanders, young and old, danced with zest to familiar jigs, reels and hornpipes as we know them today.\* At weddings, harvest and husking bee dances, kitchen junkets, sleighing parties, sheep shearings and turtle frolics, fiddle tunes and dances with odd names originating from across the Atlantic were the order of the day. "High Betty Martin," "Money Musk," "The White Cockade," and "Speed the Plough" were some favorites. But not to be overlooked are those titles of special historical significance which point to a thriving Yankee tradition: "Bennington Assembly," "Portland Fancy," "Jefferson and Liberty," and "Hull's Victory," to name a few.

By the time of the Revolution, Yankee fiddlers and fifers often shared a common repertoire. Country dances became known as "contra-dances" through the Anglicization of the French "contradanse." Later, the "quadrille" may have superseded the contradance in urban areas, and quadrille bands, often consisting of wind instruments and 'cello, in addition to the fiddle, became popular. During the latter part of the 19th century, waves of immigrants flooded the New England states, and for economic and political reasons tended to settle in cohesive urban enclaves. "Little Canadas" cropped up in the mill towns of Lowell, Fall River and Woonsocket. Many Cape Breton Scots settled in and around Boston, while droves of Irish immigrants flocked to Boston and Providence — all of these groups adding, however slowly and perceptibly, Celtic and French-Canadian bowing and fingering techniques, as well as tunes, to the Yankee tune bag.

Although some folklorists, collectors and dance callers such as Helen Hartness Flanders, Eloise Hubbard, Elizabeth Burchenal and Ralph Page worked to preserve or raise the cultural awareness of the fiddle and dance traditions of New England, changing social patterns brought on by radio, phonograph and automobile, and especially the emergence and popularity of Country and Western music of the post-World War II era, all but eliminated the tunes and dances as New Englanders had known and loved them. It was, for example, at this rather

\*See notes on *New England Traditional Fiddling (1926-1975)* by Paul Wells (JEMF 105) — a record.



plastic point in time that a recorded rendition of "Red River Valley" or "Mac the Knife" with drum and saxophone accompaniment was likely to replace the live playing of a traditional tune in an authentic style at square or contradances.

In large part, it was left to a young and culturally aware generation to restore the lost art of traditional music and revive the old fiddle and dance styles which, although dormant for decades, are now found flourishing in contradances and old-time fiddle contests throughout New England.

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So, with special thanks to Sandy and Caroline Paton and to musicians the caliber of Peter Craig, Nick Hawes, Dave Paton and Steve Liebman, I'm very pleased to present to you these tunes — one New Englander's choice in a continuing tradition.

O, that you may grow to love them as I have.

*Skip Gorman  
Suffield, Connecticut  
October, 1983*



## THE TUNES

### SIDE 1, BAND 1.

#### REEL DU POTEAU BLANC (The White Post Reel)

The first reel in this medley and, I feel, a most fitting beginning to the album, is from the playing of Jean Carignan, master French-Canadian fiddler. It's believed that Carignan was inspired by the famous Joseph Allard, who was born near Montreal in 1873, but lived in the U. S. for some twenty years, establishing himself as a fiddle champion throughout Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

#### THE WOODCHOPPER

Long popular among "Down East" fiddlers, this reel, often attributed to Ned Landry, is published in Don Messer's *Way Down East* (1948) and even in Bob Christeson's collection from Missouri, *The Old Time Fiddler's Repertory*. It's interesting that many Canadian tunes such as this one found their way into the repertoires of midwestern and western fiddlers, most likely through the radio broadcasts of groups such as George Wade and his Cornhuskers (a group which at one point included Jean Carignan) and Don Messer and his Islanders.

#### THE GOLDEN WEDDING

The late Louis Beaudoin became a great contributor to Northeast fiddling while residing in Burlington, Vermont. This reel comes from his rich and rhythmic playing.

#### THE GREEN MEADOWS REEL

This can be found in *Allan's Irish Fiddler* (1920-1930) and is similar to a three-part tune in *O'Neill's Music of Ireland* (1903) called "Over the Moor to Maggie," as well as to another in the *Robbins Collection* (1933) referred to simply as "An Old Reel."

### SIDE 1, BAND 2.

#### BANKS OF AVON

This pretty march came my way by means of a tape lent to me by the old-time banjo player and folklorist Blanton Owen. I think the player was Scotty LeBlanc, the fiddlin' French-Canadian Scot.

#### JOHNNY, WILL YOU MARRY ME

This is a traditional Scottish reel for which there is a strathspey version published in James Kerr's *Collection of Merry Melodies for Violin* (1880-1890). The Riendeau family of Berlin, New Hampshire, who also play this tune as a reel, call it "Reel du Mon Grandpere."

#### ST. ANNE'S REEL

No album of New England fiddling would be complete without including this national anthem of "Down East" playing.

### SIDE 1, BAND 3.

#### WHALEMAN'S LAMENT (*Gorman*)

This is my instrumental contribution to the sea shanty revival which, through the efforts of singers like Louis Killen and John "Fud" Benson, has gained popularity of late up and down the coast, especially in areas like Newport, Mystic and South Street Seaport. While playing this tune, I try to keep in mind that whaling was often a terribly harrowing experience.

#### OLIVER JACK THE MERRY BOYS OF GREENLAND VILLAFJORD

The Shetland Islands, which were part of Norway until 1612, have remained culturally distinct from the mainland of Scotland, and the Scandinavian influence in the music there is apparent. Aly Bain, the inspired Shetland fiddler, used to play this medley of Shetland reels when he first began touring the



U. S. with Mike Whellans in the late 1960's. For these tunes, and many more, I am indebted to Aly, along with the rest of the Boys of the Lough.

The second of these reels comes published in James Hunter's *The Fiddle Music of Scotland* as "Da Mirrie Boys o' Greenland." As did some Yankee whalers, Greenland skippers sometimes carried fiddlers on board to entertain their crews.

SIDE 1, BAND 4.

LAD O'BEIRNE'S

This sweet hornpipe from the prolific composer of Irish tunes, Ed Reavy, has always held something special for me. This octogenarian from Philadelphia has written scores of powerful traditional tunes that have been widely circulated in Ireland and elsewhere.

THE PEACOCK'S FEATHER

Invariably, everyone's first trip to the Emerald Isle is a mystical experience. Mine proved to be no exception. About ten years ago I happened upon Alec Finn while hiking through the little town of Spiddal on the coast of Galway. The days that followed at the gatehouse of the castle he was tending, and the mornings, afternoons and evenings at Hughes' Pub which we were prone to frequent, were truly enchanting. Therefore, it was no surprise to see that shortly thereafter Alec fell in league with a quality group like De Danann and fiddler Frankie Gavin. This hornpipe is from their playing.

SIDE 1, BAND 5.

MISS GORDON OF PARK

While a college student in Providence, I became enamored with the wonderful rhythm and bounce of the Cape Breton style of playing. Through Tom Carter, college chum and budding folklorist, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to John Alan Beaton, his brother Alec, and their wonderful family at Broad Cove Marsh, Inverness, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. There, this lively jig is some-

times referred to as "Lady Menzie," but it can be found in the *Marshall Collection* under its older Scottish title of "Miss Gordon of Park."

William Marshall (1743-1833) was butler to the Duke of Gordon and estates factor to his successor, the "Cock o' the North." A true Renaissance man, athlete, dancer, architect, astronomer and clockmaker, Marshall also composed 257 tunes and plaintive melodies which were published in two volumes. His musical accomplishments alone certainly merited him Robert Burns' accolade: "the first composer of strathspeys of the age."

UP TO NEW HAMPSHIRE (*Gorman*)

This is one of my own jigs, named in honor of the wild contradances that Perron used to run up in Dublin and Frankestown, New Hampshire, with Bob McQuillen, Rod and Randy Miller, and Ken Segal.

SIDE 1, BAND 6.

THE RHODE ISLAND REEL (*Gorman*)

This is named after the place where I was born and raised, as I felt that the state deserved something more of its own in the way of folk melody.

THE POPPY LEAF

This may be found in both *Ryan's Mammoth Collection* (1883) and its reprint, *Cole's One Thousand and One Fiddle Tunes* (1940). Here I play it as a last hornpipe.

SIDE 1, BAND 7.

HARD IS MY FATE

The title refers to Prince Charles Edward Stuart's "hard fate" at being unnerved and disgusted with the "innocent prattle of children" after his defeat at Culloden in 1746. You can find this Eb air in Simon Fraser's *Airs and Melodies Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland*.



MRS. GREIG'S

A traditional strathspey taken from the fiddling of Scotland's Ronald Gonella.

JENKIN'S HORNPIPE

This comes from Hal Cannon's majestic concertina version. The melody holds some similarities to a tune called "Bob's Double Clog" published in Ralph Page's book of contras.

SIDE 2, BAND 1.

MERRILY DANCED THE QUAKER

The origin of this lyrical jig, like the one that follows it in this medley, is probably English or Scottish.

*The Quaker's wife she baked a scone  
And merrily danced while it was on...*

TEVIOT BRIDGE

This tune is found in *Kerr* and is very well-travelled in New England, Canada and the Maritimes.

WOODBURY'S (*Gorman*)

I wrote this tune for my father, Woodie Gorman, the blueblood dean of all "Yankee Episodes." As he worked to raise me with as much freedom as he could tolerate, I owe him a debt of gratitude and much love.

SIDE 2, BAND 2.

PLANXTY GEORGE BRABAZON/LORD INCHQUIN

Both of these melodies are thought to be from the blind Irish harper, Carolan (1670-1738). The first tune is in O'Neill's *Music of Ireland* and in *Kerr* (Vol. 3) as "Bonnie Prince Charlie's Welcome to the Isle of Skye" and refers, once again, to the Prince's defeat at Culloden. Usually, the Scottish version is played at a quicker reel pace in Canada.

Lord Inchiquin may have been written on some occasion having to do with the Fourth Earl of Inchiquin, whose family

seat was Dromoland Castle, Newmarket-on-Fergus, County Clare.

SIDE 2, BAND 3.

THE FAVORITE POLKA MEDLEY

This consists of bits and pieces of Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald's "Southern Melodies," an English polka called "The Bottom of the Punch Bowl," and one more, if you can locate it in the mix.

SIDE 2, BAND 4.

THE CLOG

"The Clog" is listed in *Ryan's* and *Cole's* as the "London Hornpipe" and in *Harding's Original* as "The Cog Dance." It appears to have been popular in Yankee fiddling for some time. Here I play it as a strathspey.

HARVEST HOME

The title of this tune most likely has its origin in English harvest home suppers which were given to harvest laborers by farmers when crops were gathered.

SIDE 2, BAND 5.

THE SKYLARK

I gleaned this Irish reel, otherwise known as the "Kincora Reel," from David Molk, a multi-talented musician from Bloomington, Indiana.

THE BEAVERTAIL LIGHT (*Gorman*)

On the southern tip of Jamestown, Rhode Island, is a lighthouse that is purported to be the third oldest on the East Coast. During my youth, nearby Hull's Cove was the scene of many animated music sessions with Chris and Dick Lutman, Steve and Rich Fensterer, Bill Smith and the boys at the shack.



SIDE 2, BAND 6.

FAREWELL TO WHISKEY

Neil Gow (1727-1807) of Inver, Scotland, thought of as "the best fiddler that ever kittled thairm with horse hair," composed this tune which alludes to the prohibiting of the making of whiskey in 1799. The tune can be found in the *Skye Collection* written as a strathspey, and where, according to the appendix, it is expressive of a highlander "being deprived of his favorite beverage." Gow later celebrated the lifting of the prohibition with a tune entitled "Welcome Whiskey Back." Patronized by three Dukes of Athol during his lifetime, Gow composed about 87 tunes.

SPANISH LADIES/THE LASS OF GOWRY

I picked up these two polkas from the fiddling of the English fiddler, Dave Swarbrick. The title of the second comes from Cathal McConnell.

SIDE 2, BAND 7.

HASTE TO THE WEDDING

The melody for this jig, quite common in New England, has probably existed for some time, but the title may have been fastened to it when it was introduced in a pantomime called "The Elopement" at London's Drury Lane Theatre in 1767.

FULL RIGGED SHIP

Another tune of Shetland origin. In keeping with the sympathetic strings of the Norse "Hardangerfele," I've taken the 4th string up a tone to A to produce the drone in both jigs.

SIDE 2, BAND 8.

THE GREEN MOUNTAIN REEL/SNORING MRS. GOBEIL (La Ronfleuse Gobeil)

"The Green Mountain Reel," otherwise known as "The Maid Behind the Bar" or "Judy's Reel," is quite common on both sides of the Atlantic. Because it shares a part in common with "La Ron-

fleuse," a Willy Ringuette composition, I've combined the two reels, as is often done with fiddle tunes in New England and Canada.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

*SKIP GORMAN* was born of Scotch-Irish parents in Providence, Rhode Island, in May of 1949. He found the few guitar lessons he took at the age of eight to be inordinately dull, preferring to play along with Jimmie Rodgers records as a means of acquiring the musical skills he sought. In fact, he says, "I'm stubborn enough to have convinced myself that my aversion to written music has added immensely to the quality of my fiddle playing." While he was in high school, he fell in love with bluegrass and played mandolin in several bluegrass groups.

Discovering, as a college student in Providence, that the roots of American traditional music were to be found in the music of the British Isles, he turned to the fiddle, being greatly influenced by the vast collection of field recordings amassed by Howard Glasser and others. He then began to travel around northern New England and Nova Scotia in search of other players and tunes.

*Skip* has never formally studied violin or fiddle, preferring to follow the time-honored folk process of the informal acquisition of skills. "I've picked up bits of technique and different versions of tunes over years of playing. I feel that the art of fiddle playing stems less from technique than from long experience in living with a tune."

For awhile, *Skip* lived in Utah, where he played with the Deseret String Band, a group specializing in western tunes. Out of this experience he developed the repertoire and style that may be heard on *Folk-Legacy's Powder River (FSI-76)*. Since returning to the east, where he now teaches Spanish and history at Suffield Academy in Connecticut, *Skip* has renewed his concentration on the tunes of Ireland, Scotland, Canada and his native New England, travelling throughout the area to play for dances and in sessions with other musicians.



Recently, he has begun to add some fine tunes of his own to those of the tradition, several of which are presented here.

Of the musicians who assisted him in this recording, Skip writes:

PETER CRAIG — Of all the fellows who have kindly helped me with this record, I've known Peter the longest. Since our early old-time and bluegrass music days at Old Joe Clark's boarding house in Cambridge, Peter has been prepared to contribute great things with his old harringbone Martin guitar. He is a fine mandolin player as well, and a lover of many different kinds of music. He currently resides in West Hartford, Connecticut, where he does sound for many top groups.

DAVID PATON — Dave Paton, son of Sandy and Caroline, gave me a call looking for tunes one day a few years ago when I was teaching at a school near Folk-Legacy's home town of Sharon, Connecticut. This was certainly a stroke of fortune for me, for as you can tell, he is clearly one of the finest concertina players to be heard anywhere. For me, music sessions with Dave have always been intensely invigorating, that is when he's not off winning national whitewater canoe championships. (You might keep your eye out for our joint musical venture, forthcoming on Folk-Legacy, along with an album which features Dave's concertina playing, to be released on the same label.)

NICK HAWES — Nick Hawes possesses the rare ability to combine an acute scholarly knowledge of folk traditions with his many talents as a sensitive musician. I am indebted to him for his sensible advice on some arrangements and his fine work on the piano. Nick resides in Northampton, Massachusetts, but travels widely playing, collecting and working on projects related to folklore and traditional music. It was through his efforts as producer that Folk-Legacy was able to record the recently released album of hammered dulcimer music from New York State, *Dulcimer Heritage*, featuring the remarkable Paul Van Arsdale (FSA-87).

STEVE LIEBMAN — Steve was trained at the Hart School of Music in Hartford and has for some time been an avid collector and aficionado of traditional playing

styles, especially those of Brittany and Wales. He is also responsible for the fine lute playing on this record, as well as for the transcriptions of the original tunes included in this booklet, for which I thank him wholeheartedly.

#### A SPECIAL THANKS:

To Tim Woodbridge and Nick Hawes, who have always been ready to help me by suggestions and with facts, I am very grateful.

Music copyist: Lani Herrmann



# Whaleman's Lament

Very freely

The musical score consists of eight staves of music. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The subsequent seven staves are in alto clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is written in a style that allows for improvisation, as indicated by the 'Very freely' instruction. It features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and includes several trills (tr) and triplets (3). The piece concludes with a double bar line on the eighth staff.

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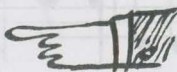


# Up to New Hampshire

A musical score for the piece "Up to New Hampshire". It consists of six staves of music in 6/8 time. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include "2x after D.C." with arrows pointing to specific measures, and "D.C." at the end of the piece. The score concludes with a double bar line.

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## Symbols:



Bowed triplet:

(long) roll:

(short) trill:

Three musical examples illustrating the symbols: a bowed triplet (three notes with a wavy line above), a long roll (a note with a long wavy line above), and a short trill (a note with a short wavy line above and a "tr" marking below).

Slide:

Bend:

Smear:

Three musical examples illustrating the symbols: a slide (a note with a horizontal line above), a bend (a note with a curved line above), and a smear (a note with a horizontal line above).

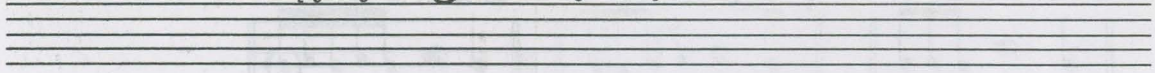
Caveat: Notation of timing is inadequate; best learned by listening.



*Rhode Island Reel*

The musical score for "Rhode Island Reel" is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The piece consists of 16 measures. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are several trills and grace notes throughout the piece. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in a circle in the 10th measure. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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# Woodbury's Jig

The musical score for "Woodbury's Jig" is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of six staves. The first four staves represent the main melody and accompaniment. The fifth staff contains two endings: the first ending is marked "1st x" and the second ending is marked "2d x". The sixth staff contains a section marked "fast time" with a treble clef and a key signature change to D major (two sharps). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

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# Beavertail Light

The musical score for "Beavertail Light" consists of eight staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music is written in a melodic style with various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The second staff through the eighth staff continue the melody, with some staves featuring triplets and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final chord.

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