

**Books**

## Tom Hanks, Ann Patchett and the man in her basement

By [Ron Charles](#)

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This is a happy story about a very big author and a very tiny magazine.

The author you know: He's Tom Hanks, the Academy Award-winning actor, whose films have grossed more than \$9 billion.

The magazine you probably don't know: [One Story](#), a

Brooklyn-based nonprofit with 12,000 subscribers.

How these two got connected is a curious tale of serendipity.

Next week, Hanks will release his first collection of short stories, "Uncommon Type," inspired by his passion for typewriters. With blurbs from Steve Martin, Mindy Kaling and Stephen Fry, the collection is sure to be an instant bestseller.

In 2014, [one of these stories](#) appeared in the New Yorker. You might expect that prestigious magazine — or Vanity Fair or Entertainment Weekly — to print another one of Hanks's stories as the publication date rolls around for his full collection.

But no.

Instead, in the days leading up to the release of "Uncommon Type," you'll find one of Hanks's stories only in One Story magazine: Issue No. 232 — "A Month on Greene Street."

In the publishing world, this is a very uncommon type of good luck.

It came about because of a man in Ann Patchett's basement.

Patchett is the beloved author of seven novels, including "Bel Canto" and "Commonwealth." For some 20 years, she has been friends with Patrick Ryan, the editor in chief of the unadorned little magazine One Story, founded in 2002. In each diminutive issue, it publishes — as you might have guessed — *one* story and just *one* story.

But let's get back to the basement.

Each year, Ryan travels to Patchett's home in Nashville for what they call their own private "writing camp."

"I stay in her basement, which is larger than my apartment in New York, and work on whatever book I'm working on," Ryan says. "And she, two floors up, works on whatever book she's working on, and we meet on the first floor for meals, moral support and to read aloud to each other."



When Ryan arrived at Patchett's house this year, she was raving about a collection of stories she had read by — of all people — Tom Hanks. Curious, Ryan got hold of an early copy, too, and was just as impressed.

He dreamed of publishing one of Hanks's stories in his little magazine, but that seemed like asking one of the world's most famous actors to — *well* — publish one of his stories in a little magazine. In response to his first entreaty to Penguin Random House, Ryan was told he was too small. He pointed out that One Story had published works later included in "The Best American Short Stories" and "The O. Henry Prize Stories." He wooed. He pleaded.

This is where Patchett came in. She had recently agreed to write a blurb for "Uncommon Type" and to fly to Washington to [interview Hanks on Oct. 20](#) at the Warner Theatre.

Could she ask the publisher for a favor in return?

How about a story for a certain magazine?

"I've been a huge One Story fan since I edited 'Best American Short Stories' in 2006," she says. "I hoped that the Hanks story would be a boost for them, but I also know that One Story readers would love to get such a great story in their mailboxes. It was a perfect storm. Everything about this deal, and everything about 'Uncommon Type,' confirms my long-held suspicion that Tom Hanks is a good guy."

From the famous actor's point of view, this long-winded tale of a little magazine getting a big break sounds different.

"It was a very difficult process," Hanks says. "First, One Story asked. I admire what they do, so I said yes."

The end.

**Ron Charles** is the editor of Book World and host of [TotallyHipVideoBookReview.com](#).


#### **UNCOMMON TYPE: SOME STORIES**

By Tom Hanks

Knopf. 416 pp. \$26.95

 **0 Comments**

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Ron Charles writes about books for The Washington Post. Before moving to Washington, he edited the books section of the Christian Science Monitor in Boston. [Follow](#) 

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