A Time For Tractors

In the recent past, some Middle Eastern intellectuals have been preoccupied with politics and social issues, while others have been more concerned with economic development and stability. In this context, the concept of "time for tractors," which has been widely discussed in the region, refers to the need for economic growth and progress in the Arab world. This concept is based on the idea that political stability and social harmony cannot be achieved without economic development and progress. Therefore, the focus on economic growth and progress is seen as a necessary step towards achieving political stability and social harmony in the region.

The Abortion Stereotype

By Raafat Khan

I’ve been long aware of the stereotype that women and men are often lumped into the same category, as if they are interchangeable. In the same vein, I’ve also been aware of the stereotype that women are more likely to be found in the lower echelons of society, as if they are inferior to men. These stereotypes are not based on facts but rather on the biases and prejudices that exist in society.

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A Ruse to Make Tax Cuts Look Good

By Edward D. Kleinbard

A Republican opposition strategy

The current political climate in Washington is such that it is difficult to find any opposition to the Republican power. However, a new book by Edward D. Kleinbard, "The Politics of Tax Cuts: How the Republicans Take Care of Their Own," offers a unique perspective on the politics of tax cuts.

In his book, Kleinbard argues that the Republican Party has a unique ability to create the illusion of fairness and progress in their tax policies. He explains that the Republicans have been able to use this strategy to their advantage in the past, and that they are likely to continue using it in the future.

"The Politics of Tax Cuts: How the Republicans Take Care of Their Own" is a must-read for anyone interested in the politics of tax policy and the role of the Republican Party in shaping it.

Gail Collins

Hillary Versus History

When Hillary Clinton thinks about running for president, she knows her possible role is an uncertain one. She has been elected to succeed another Democratic incumbent, Sen. Barack Obama, in 2008. But she has also been considered as a protégé of former President Bill Clinton, and she has been rumored to be considering a run for the White House.

"We bring this perspective to honor of Hillary Clinton," the former secretary of state said in a statement. "She has been a tireless advocate for women and girls around the world, and she has been a strong voice for making the world a better place."

But the prospect of Clinton running in 2020 is also a reminder of the challenges she will face. "It's a daunting task," Clinton said. "But I'm confident that I have the experience and the passion to make a difference."
For Officers’ Killer, Shifting Between Identities Clouded a Lifetime of Wrong Turns

Clarksdale has no trout. Family photo with a young Lemma Rider. In white, a child; he is remember as a goodnatured but difficult child. A way about an Instagram photo of the gun used to kill Officer Rafael Ramirez and Wernigan Lai had a caption that read, in part, “I’m putting Wings On Today.” Mr. Rider on his Facebook page an Instagram photos posted on the 10th, 11th, at right, with friends.

I can’t even understand why. All this, the way it was, he had no idea. No he had no idea. The only was Mr. Rider possibly 1961 and was four children, one to the record radio, said of his death. “That’s when, this is the day he was the day he was his death story. The only one was not the day he was his death story. He was there, the day he was his death story. He was the only one was not the day he was his death story.

But he still was. He was the only one was not the day he was his death story. He was the only one was not the day he was his death story. He was the only one was not the day he was his death story. He was the only one was not the day he was his death story.
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Intro

Linda and I thought the most useful thing I could do--because I’ve been a full-time professional writer practically since the dawn of civilization--is to bring in an actual piece of writing that’s being written, even as we gather here, and go through it with you, and talk about what I think I’m doing in some specific ways. So, what you’ll hear is from manuscript, the opening scenes of what will be my eleventh novel--the first pages of a 300-page book that I’ve been working on for a year and a half, and that I’ll finish by Labor Day--perhaps appropriately--which would mean it’ll be published sometime next year, probably late spring or early summer.

I’m going to divide this into four segments of reading--the first one about eight minutes, and the others two or three minutes apiece--with some notes I’ve made as to what I think I’m doing, in between. All together, it’ll probably take half an hour of our period, so I’ll have to ask you to hold your questions until then--but after
that you can fire away, about what I’ve read or said, or anything else about the glamorous writing life.

Let me emphasize that this is from manuscript, drafts as we call the various stages of a piece of writing, and no one except my editor and my wife have read or heard any of this. So, we’ll have a public world premiere, right here and now.

Okay, ready? [Cell phones off, text fingers taking a rest, goggles on, helmets fastened--here we go.]
Miss You excerpt #1 (8 min.)

My father was the best bartender who ever lived. No one really questioned that in a town like Gros Ventre, glad of any honor, or out in the lonely sheep camps and bunkhouses and other parched locations of the Two Medicine country where the Medicine Lodge saloon was viewed as a nearly holy oasis. There was a reliability rare in life for a customer to walk into the oldest enterprise for a hundred miles around and be met with just the right drink whisking along the polished wood of the prodigious bar, along with a greeting as dependable as the time of day. Not even heaven promised such service.
Growing up in back of the joint, as my father always called it, I could practically hear in my sleep the toasts that celebrated the Medicine Lodge as an unbeatable place and Tom Harry as perfection of a certain kind behind the bar.

Which was not to say, even the adherents comfortably straddling their bar stools might have admitted, that he added up to the best human being there ever was. Or the absolute best father of all time, in ways I could list. Yet, as peculiar a pair as we made, the bachelor saloonkeeper with a streak of frost in his black pompadour and the inquisitive boy who had been an accident between the
sheets, in the end I would not have traded my involuntary parent for a more standard model. It is said it takes a good storyteller to turn ears into eyes, but luckily life itself sometimes performs that trick on us. In what became our story together, when life took me by the ears, what a fortunate gamble it was that my father included me in his calling. Otherwise, I’d have missed out on the best seat in the house--the joint, rather--when history came hunting for him.

I turned twelve that year of everything, 1960. But as my father would have said, it took some real getting there first.
My mother, who was my father’s housekeeper when domestic matters underwent a surprising turn and I was the result, long since had washed her hands of the two of us and vanished from our part of Montana, and for all I could find out, from the face of the earth. “She up and left,” was his total explanation. “Pulled out on us when you were a couple of months old, kiddo.” Accordingly, he handed me off to his sister Marge and her family in Arizona, and I spent my early years in one of those sun-baked Phoenix neighborhoods where saguaro cactuses had not yet been crowded out entirely. It
was not an easy existence. My cousins, Danny and Ronny, were four and six years older than I was, and infinitely more ornery. Aunt Marge was loyal to me—or at least to the checks my father sent for my support—but she took in laundry and ironing as well as running the household, and so her supervision of her unruly sons was sporadic at best. None of us saw much of the husband and father, Arvin, a fireman who usually was trying to catch some sleep in the back bedroom or on shift at the firehouse. My enduring memory of that period of my life is of the big Zenith console radio saving my skin the same time every afternoon, when the bigger boys took a
break from tormenting me and we all slumped down on the living room floor to tune in to serial adventures far beyond what Phoenix had to offer. So, I survived, as children somehow do, and occasionally I even was reprieved from Danny and Ronny. A time or two a year, my father would show up and take me off on what he declared was a vacation. We saw the Grand Canyon more than once.

As time went on, my situation started to slip drastically. Ronny was about to become a teenager, and turning mean along with it. Among other stunts, he liked to grind his knuckles on the back of my head when Aunt Marge wasn’t
watching. All the while, copycat Danny was just waiting for his turn at me. The saying is that what does not kill you strengthens you, but sometimes you wonder which will happen first.

By the summer I turned six, I was desperately looking forward to the first grade when I would be out of Ronny’s reach at least that much of the day. It all culminated one hot afternoon when we were sprawled on the rug in the living room listening as usual to “The Lone Ranger.” Ronny was alternately mocking Tonto—”Why it never your turn to sweep the tepee, Kemo Sabe?”—and spitting sunflower seed husks at
me, Danny was giggling at such good fun, and I was wincing at how life stinks when a person has to put up with relatives like the pair of them. Then, more dramatically than anything on the radio, there was a thundering knock on the front door, which brought Aunt Marge rushing to see what it was about.

She opened the door to my father, head and shoulders above her even though she was a large woman. "Hey, Marge. How's tricks?" I was too surprised to jump up and run to him as usual. Seeing him materialize in that doorway--he looked like he always did, his hair slicked back and his
lively eyebrows cocked, although his usual blinding white
shirt was unbuttoned at the neck in concession to the Arizona
heat--challenged my imagination more mightily than the
masked man and his faithful Indian companion ever could.
What was wrong? Why was he here, suddenly and
unannounced?

The perfectly bland answer confounded me as much as the
question. "I came to get the kid."

Aunt Marge laughed in his face. "Tom, you can't drag
Rusty off on some dumb vacation right now. He starts school
pretty soon."
That did not seem to perturb him the least bit. “Last time I looked, Montana has schoolhouses.”

She was speechless, although not for long. “You don’t mean you’re going to try to raise him! That’s crazy!”

“That’s one description of it.” My father’s wallet now entered the conversation, a raffle of bills as he counted out more money than I would have ever dreamed I was worth. He thrust the wad of cash into her nearest hand, saying “Much obliged, Marge” and peered past her to our three gaping faces amid the unheard palaver of the radio.
In that moment, my life stopped stinking. Maybe I was imagining, but I thought I heard a scared gulp out of Ronny as my father sized up him and the sunflower seed shrapnel. Then he was looking at me as if we were the only two in the room. “Let’s grab your things and hit the road, kiddo.”
Miss You excerpt #1 notes (3 min.)

Okay, I hope you can see some of the things those few opening pages of this novel are doing. First of all, they’re promising you a story: This kid would have missed out on what happened to his bartender father when history came hunting for him if the kid hadn’t been allowed to hang around the joint, the saloon. So that’s one thing a writer wants to do there at the start--get the plot into gear, even if it’s only low gear.

--And, the writer has to play God with the characters, right away, create them, breathe the breath of life into them; they’ve got to be alive and tantalizing, there on the page, in that new world that is the opening of a book. Thus we know real quick that Tom is not the usual kind of father, and that Rusty is a kid with a lot of curiosity and a lot to be curious about.
I owe thanks to Linda for one way I try to establish characters; several books ago, she encouraged me to think visually as I write. So, Tom shows up in that doorway and right away we know he’s physically big, don’t we, because he is head shoulders over Aunt Marge who is a large woman, and his black pompadour with the frosty streak in it—mentioned way back there in the second paragraph—is slicked back, and his eyebrows are cocked, and he’s wearing the customary white shirt he bartends in even though he’s a thousand miles from home, and that starts to give us a pretty good picture of him, doesn’t it.

--The setting, the time and the place of the story has to be established. Rusty says almost right away the story happens in 1960, the year he was twelve, but this first scene flashes back to when he was six, which makes it 1954 as we join these characters there in Phoenix.
--Last but not least on this short list, the voice of the book has to come across to the reader. The style. The tone the book is going to have. In this case, a first-person narrator, Rusty telling us this story from his dual viewpoint of back then as a kid, and now as the grownup with the perspective and language to make the story artful and, I hope, engaging.

With those elements getting underway, here's the next segment, a short one of just a few minutes.
Miss You excerpt #2 (3 min.)

We swept out of Phoenix in one of those tubby Hudsons made after World War Two, which maybe accounted for its family resemblance to a tank. I could barely see over the dashboard of the thing. In contrast to my father, who only just did fit under the car roof, tall even sitting down. By then I was catching up with the full implications of what had happened and was thrilled through and through with my escape from those stinker cousins. But was he? Every time I stole a look at him, he was squinting at the road ahead as though something more than driving was on his mind. Surely
now he wouldn’t turn the car around and deliver me back to Aunt Marge’s madhouse, would he? Would he? Squirming in the passenger seat as the desert whipped past--he drove the way Montana people did in those days, as though the speed limit was merely a suggestion--I risked a question about when our trip would be safely over but got no further than, "Daddy, how long--"

"Damn it, let’s get rid of that word right now," he muttered, fishing out a cigarette and punching the lighter on the dash. "Makes both of us sound like we’re still dealing with diapers."
Cautiously I tried again. “Father?”

“I’m no priest, am I.”

“Wh-what should I say?”

He lit his cigarette and waved the lighter as if extinguishing a match. “Don’t sweat it. We’ll think of something.”

There matters stood until we pulled in to a gas station in the first little town. As luck would have it, past the pumps I spotted a cheery enameled sign for Orange Crush soda, my favorite, and blurted: “Uh, Pop, can I please have some pop?”
He shot a look at me across the space of the front seat. His eyebrows went up in what seemed to be fresh consideration of his passenger. Gruffly he said: “Told you we’d think of something.”
Miss You excerpt #2 notes (2 min.)

So, in that little episode, we’ve heard the characters start talking to each other, haven’t we. **Dialogue.** Most good fiction lives and breathes on the energy of its dialogue.

We not only hear Tom and Rusty talking, we start to hear how they talk. This is one element of characterization. Rusty is uncertain, jittery, and his speech pattern shows that. And we can tell from what Tom sounds like that he’s not accustomed to having Rusty around and he sure doesn’t want to be called Daddy; he’s gruff but maybe reasonable underneath it, when he thinks it’s okay to be called Pop.

Incidentally, having Rusty come up with what he does to call his father solves a technical problem for me. This will be a fairly long book, and it gets me out of the trap of Tom being called “Daddy” hundreds of times; “Pop” just has a jazzier sound.
One other thing, briefly: in how Tom talks, you begin to get a hint of the lingo or the slang he uses. “Don’t sweat it,” he tells the kid. In the course of the book, he’ll say that again, and something similar like “Don’t get in an uproar” and “Don’t get hydrophobia over this”—it becomes one of the trademarks of his character.
Miss You excerpt #3 notes (5 min.)

This next scene takes a little explaining, and I want to use it as an example of what might be called cracking open the door of imagination. A writer has to do this all the time: sit around in her or his own head, and try the brain’s various doors of memory and daydream and inspiration and desperation, and see what might be in there.

So we now turn to some of this peerless handwriting on the board. When I was about your age I was in classes like this, at Northwestern University in suburban Chicago, but in summers I went back to the ranch hand life in Montana that my folks worked at, and I worked at every summer, and in those days every Montana city had its own brewery, its own beer. This is before micro-brews: this is one beer per city, one old by-god German-style brewery that had been around forever--Highlander beer in Missoula, Kessler’s in
Helena, I think in Butte it was simply Butte beer--and for the sake of our story, which features a bartender, I remembered that in Great Falls, it was Great Falls Select. (point to board)

The imagination starts to do something with that, because the nickname of that beer, I also well remembered, was Shellac-- as in, “Gimme a Shellac.” Well, okay, that starts to contribute to the language of the book, the slang, the way people are going to talk in that nearly holy oasis, the Medicine Lodge saloon.

But creak that door of imagination open a little farther and it comes to mind that those small-city breweries were bought up by the much bigger brewing company--you guessed it, Rainier, right here in our own suds-loving city. And back then the Rainier brewing company owned the minor league baseball team here in a stadium that looked out on the mountain and the team was called, you bet, the Seattle Rainiers. Imagination is starting to perk now, because when the beer barons of Seattle bought the Great Falls Select
brewery, they followed their pattern and bought the baseball team too, the Great Falls Electrics.

Let's pause a moment on that name: what's an Electric? It's like the pro basketball team that absconded from here to Oklahoma a couple of years ago—what's a Sonic, anyway? Well, Great Falls because it's on the falls of the Missouri River with a big generating dam has always liked to call itself the Electric City, and that's where that strange team name originated. But along come our beer guys and now they have both the brewing company and the baseball team, and the idea comes to them: Seattle Rainiers... Great Falls Selectrics.

Now the fiction imagination really starts to have something to play with. Tom is bartender in a part of Montana where his bestselling beer is good old Shellac—Great Falls Select—so why wouldn't he be a faithful follower of the Selectrics? Better yet, now that there's a team with this kind of goofy name, why not have a whole league of teams like that? In actuality, Great Falls played
against cities where the minor league teams generally took the names of their major league affiliations--Pocatello Athletics, Medicine Hat Blue Jays, Ogden Reds, and so on. Heck, that’s no fun, so the fiction writer gets to come up with more interesting teams for the Selectrics to play--the Fargo Fargonauts, which provides for a sports page headline like **Fargonauts Fleece Selectrics 11-2**, so you get to throw in a little classical Greek allusion to Jason and that search for the golden sheep hide. The Saskatoon Sasquatches; the Medicine Hat Toppers as in (tip of the hat). Take it from me, Class D baseball back then could use all the livening up it could get.

With that as backdrop, here’s the next segment of Tom and Rusty, another short one.
Miss You excerpt #3 (3 min.)

We had traveled together a little on those “vacations,” but this journey was far, far different. Interstate freeways hadn’t yet bisected the West, and the highway went through towns so that you felt you were visiting each one. There were advantages to that, as when Pop would slow whenever the road became a main street and ask, “Need to take a leak?” I almost always did, and he would aim for a sign that said Mint or Stockman in plain tubular neon—this was 1954, take into account, before everything began flashing like Las Vegas—and in we would go. “My kid’s got a quick call of nature,” he’d
tell the bartender, and be sure to buy a couple packs of
cigarettes or some gum or candy bars for me to give the bar a
bit of business, while I went to the toilet. On our way out he
would always say, “Nice joint you have here,” even if the
place was gloomy as a funeral parlor. I suppose I learned
something about professional courtesy from those stops.

Although I was a daydreaming type of child, the trip was
beyond anything I ever imagined. Half of a state would go by
in an afternoon, with Pop giving the Hudson’s gas pedal no
mercy. To pass the time, he was trying to follow the fortunes
of the Great Falls Selectrics baseball team. They played in a
Class D league--about one step up from picnic softball--and we took turns twiddling the car radio dial to pull in their games. I practically squinted an ear at first, trying to figure out what I was hearing. "Why are they called the Slick Tricks?"

He told me that wasn't the case, fishing in his shirt pocket to toss me a matchbook "Here's where the name comes from, see?" Back there at six I already could read, and had not too much trouble with the fancy red script lettering that blazoned GREAT FALLS SELECT--MONTANA'S BEST BEER!
“I sell oceans of it,” he spelled out further for me.

“Seems only fair to root for the team.” It sounded like they needed it, against the Ogden Ospreys. The broadcast signal faded in and out, as the Selectrics also seemed to do.

“There’s a grounder through the infield, one Ogden runner is in to score, here comes another. Seven to two, Ospreys. The ball has eluded the Great Falls centerfielder...”

“Damn,” said Pop with a frown as the Selectrics wavered off the dial to their fate. “It’s real too bad they don’t live up to the beer.”
Well, that’s the baseball episode, but one more thought on that last line, when Tom says it’s too bad the team can’t live up to the beer. I get asked all the time, “Where do your ideas come from?” and I never have much of an answer except to say, “Out of my head.” But I do know where that one came from. Over the years I’ve had a lot of friends in the Missoula writing community, centered around the University of Montana writing program, and one of those was Richard Hugo, the wonderful poet, dead several years now--Dick Hugo was from here, he was a student of Theodore Roethke in classrooms like this, before he moved on to Montana and became a legendary teacher and poet there. Dick when I knew him late in life was a bear of man, with a bad hip and a lot of other ailments--but earlier, he’d been an Air Force bombardier in World War Two and a pretty good athlete, and in his early years in
And so it came to be that I heard the story, from Dick Hugo or someone else in his softball orbit, of the crucial inning, tying run on third, winning run on second, and a very hungover batter at the plate. Encouragement was needed, and of course that’s the third base coach’s job, you know how they do, chanting something like “Hey, Bobby, get a hit, that’s the kid, a little bingle up the middle, c’mon, Bobby!” This time, though, the third base coach looks at this red-eyed worse-for-the wear batter and and just shouts: “Okay, Bobby baby, be what you drank.”

The memory of that story was probably twenty years old in me when it occurred to me to use it to help out Tom’s remark about the Selectrics, and my point here is simply that whatever is in the magic box of the head is available to the writer.
Miss You excerpt #4 notes (1 min.)

All right, back to Rusty and Tom on their journey. I’m skipping over a few pages as they keep on heading for the Medicine Lodge saloon in the Two Medicine country of Montana, with Tom driving like a bat out of hell, and they’re spending their first night together at a motel with old beaverboard walls, and of course they’re both still trying to get used to the idea of each other. This little episode concludes the opening scene, which began back there in Phoenix, and is meant to propel the plot into the next part of the story. Here it is, they’re going to bed:
Missoula he was a fanatic softball player. He wrote a terrific essay about softball called “The Anxious Fields of Play,” and even more than that, a poem titled “Missoula Softball Tournament” which has

I’ve gone back to the ways of the beat,
the softball field, dirt and dust and sand,
pitcher wings, first the head rises, and wives,
the beautiful stands, basic, used,
screeching runners home, in the dirt,

Anyhow Missoula was full of guys with that same lifelong love
of the game, the town had a whole bunch of softball leagues, with
men often playing on when they were over-age and over-
estosterone as well as overweight, taking their inspiration on
weekends not only from the love for softball but, yes, beer and
similar beverages.
Missoula he was a fanatic softball player. He wrote a terrific essay about softball called “The Anxious Fields of Play,” and even more than that, a poem titled “Missoula Softball Tournament” which has these evocative lines:

I’ve gone back to the old ways of defeat,
the softball field, familiar dust and thud,
pitcher winging drops and rises, and wives,
the beautiful wives in the stands, basic, used,
screching runners home, infants unattended
in the dirt.

Anyway Missoula was full of guys with that same lifelong love of the game, the town had a whole bunch of softball leagues, with men often playing on when they were over-age and over-testosteroned as well as overweight, taking their inspiration on weekends not only from the love for softball but, yes, beer and similar beverages.
Miss You excerpt #4 (2 min.)

"Hey, look at the time, we'd better turn in. Tomorrow's another real stretch of road."

He let me choose which side of the bed I wanted, and we undressed. Pajamas were in my suitcase, but Pop got under the covers in his shorts and undershirt, so I bravely did too.

I was too excited to go to sleep, my mind going every which way, the what-ifs still buzzing in me like bees. My father was no example of repose either. I could tell he was laying there awake with his hands under his head. Before very
long he sat up in bed and I heard the scratch of a match, and the draw of breath as he lit a cigarette.

I turned on my side, toward him. “Uncle Arvin says people who smoke in bed are sticking their necks out.”

“He’s a fireman; it affects his judgment.”

I stayed the way I was, watching the red end of his cigarette as he took slow drags and expelled the smoke into the dark. “Pop? Can I ask you something?”

“Ask me no questions and I’ll tell you no lies.” My heart stopped a little at that. The springs creaked as he leaned to tap an ash into the bedside ashtray. “Only kidding. Ask away.”
“Is it gonna be just us? At"--I didn’t know what other word to use--“home?”

He did not say anything until he had finished his cigarette and ground it out in the ashtray. “We’re enough, kiddo. Catch some shuteye.”