



## ESSAY

By Kay Rae Chomic

# OUR GAME

## A Comeback for the Aged

*After receiving my online purchases of ASICS golf shoes, TaylorMade clubs, and a stylish, light gray golf bag with azure trim, I search my closet for golf attire and find nothing. I dress in a camp shirt and jeans, and visit the driving range.*

*I take a few practice swings with a 7-iron. Something's wrong. The clubs feel like oars. They seem too short, and weighted with lead. Did I get scammed online and the clubs are rejects that never passed inspection? Should I have taken a friend's advice and gotten fitted for clubs?*

*I dub a few shots, cannot connect with the sweet spot, and even shank the ball! There are no long-irons in the set, not even my old favorite, the 5-iron—instead, hybrid clubs like my hybrid car. I skip the hybrids and choose the power club, the driver. The grapefruit-sized clubhead goes so far under the ball, I come close to injuring the golfer next to me with what I can only call a blooper! I've never had this result before, and there's no autocorrect inside me.*

*After more embarrassing bloopers, I realize I have no rhythm, no feel at all for the club-ball-sky connection. I pack up my clubs, leave a half-full bucket of balls, and cry about my broken swing.*

Bad dream, you think? No. This was the beginning of my golf comeback after a 10-year leave of absence.

I gave up the game to have more time in my life to write a novel. You might

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“Your swing is gone and your clubs are obsolete, but your willingness to play badly in front of your friends is off the charts.”

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think that was extreme, but while golf was my passion in my youth, writing fiction became my passion in middle age. My full-time job and need for a well-rounded life contributed to my decision to stop golfing. I cheated a little because in my novel, *A Tight Grip*, the protagonist, Par Parker, was obsessed with competitive golf, and the younger players upstaging her fueled a mid-life crisis. The golf action in the novel comes straight from my experience, though fictionalized, and I enjoyed reconnecting with that period in my life.

**A**fter publishing my novel, I knew I'd return to golf. Part of the reason I expected my swing to be intact was because I had been a good golfer and had always been complimented on my natural swing. Also, I had given up downhill skiing for 10 years, returned to it, and after two runs, my legs and hips returned me to slalom-mode.

OK, so I was younger, and skiing is different. But, I sure didn't expect total amnesia of golf-muscle memory!

Last March, I joined EWGA to jumpstart my comeback into golf. But it didn't happen. I only attended their pre- and postseason wine-tasting events, and met some of my future playing partners. We talked golf, books, and the regular stuff of life. That

was the best I could do while my book tour swallowed up the summer.

**O**ctober came. Feeling vexed about not playing the entire summer, and impatient with those new clubs (possibly fake) lying in my trunk, I read an EWGA e-mail promoting a winter league that would play "indoor" golf at The Swing Doctor in Kirkland, Washington. Having no idea what virtual golf was, I drove over the day before league started to familiarize myself with the large-screen simulations, and to take the complimentary lesson. Mostly to take the lesson.

The Swing Doctor had two large-screen simulations set up and several smaller practice areas to putt or hit into a small screen. The pro, Joe Brown, asked me about my golf experience, and let me hit a few balls into the screen. Right before I asked him to evaluate my fake clubs, he showed me my broken swing on the video playback. OMG my whole left side collapsed and swayed sideways on the follow-through, like some old-fashioned dance move. He helped me focus on a full shoulder turn, keeping my head still (no swaying), and pre-loading weight to my right leg.

I played every Tuesday for five weeks, and with continued guidance from the pro, my swing has hinted at coming back. Playing indoors is not my

full comeback, but it has me swinging. We have two foursomes and one player brings snacks and wine. Social golf—indoors.

I live in Seattle where the weather accommodates writers better than golfers. The cloudy, wet climate offers no bounce-and-run shots, the sun doesn't come out until late afternoon, shoes squish, mud splatters on pant cuffs and ankles. Necessary accessories here that I never needed when I lived in Phoenix: umbrella, rain gear, fleece jacket, and the rare dab of sunscreen. I will write during the fall, winter, and part of the spring, and any future book tour will not be scheduled during summertime.

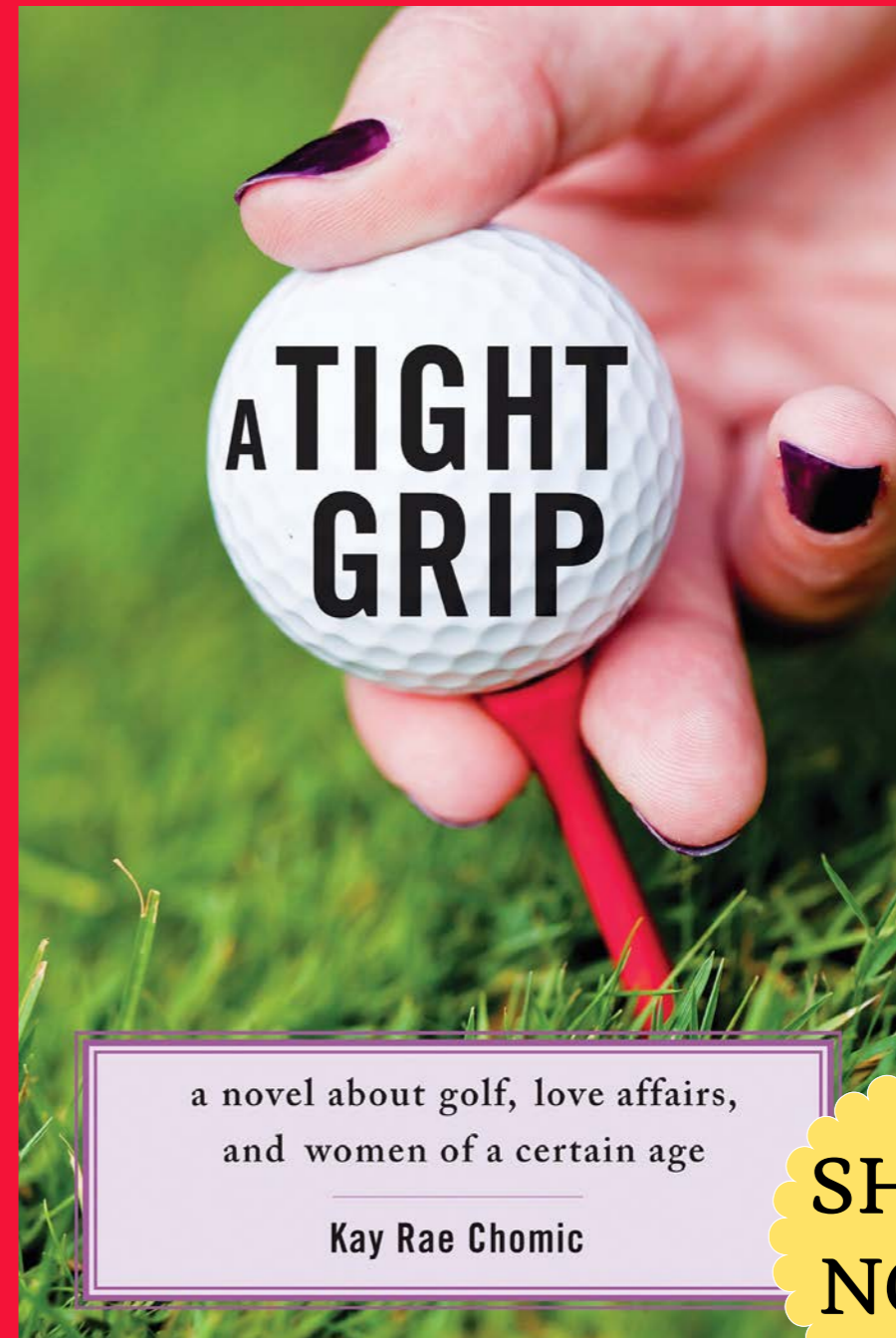
I'm counting down the days for EWGA's spring kickoff event because the real comeback happens when I tee it up on real grass under a real sky, and then walk the fairway of a real course. Golf will be how I remember it, how my main character, Par, describes it:

There are surprises in every round. Surprises like sinking a long birdie putt, skipping the ball over water, getting a favorable bounce away from a hazard, holing out a chip shot, and the ultimate—making a hole-in-one.

I've experienced all those surprises, and now I've come back for more. ●

*Kay Rae Chomic is a writer living in Seattle, Wash.*

"A HILARIOUS, HIGH-DRAMA NOVEL WITH A DELIGHTFUL ANGLE OF APPROACH TO THE INNER WORKINGS OF WOMEN IN GOLF, FAMILY, AND THE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF MIDDLE AGE."  
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a novel about golf, love affairs,  
and women of a certain age

Kay Rae Chomic

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