

Eternal Sunshine #171

August 2023

By Douglas Kent - 911 Irene Drive, Mesquite, TX 75149

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Quote of The Month – “People always end up the way they started out. No one ever changes. They think they do but they don't.” - (Mark Weiner in “Palindromes”)

Welcome to **Eternal Sunshine**, a zine hurtling to a fold. It's summer, it's hot, and I have nothing much to say. No major life events since last issue, just more of the same.

I guess that's it from me for now. See you in September!

Game Openings

No game openings, as the zine will fold when the currently-running games are completed.

Standby List: Current standby list who are qualified to standby in *More Than Ever*: Harold Reynolds.

The Dining Dead – Eternal Sunshine Movie Reviews

Barbarian (Hulu?) – A horror film written and directed by Zach Cregger. I went into this blind, just vaguely remembering that a few people mentioned they liked it. Tess (Georgina Campbell) is in Detroit for a job interview. But when she arrives at the rental she booked online, she finds it has been double booked and is occupied by Keith (Bill Skarsgård from *It*). With no other option, she agrees to have them both stay there, despite her misgivings. There's also a separate storyline about AJ (Justin Long), an actor accused of sexual misconduct with a costar. As you might expect, those stories eventually come together, along with another I won't reveal. While a lot of this film is boilerplate, I really appreciated the clever and unexpected twists the plot took. And I also like how *nearly* always the Tess character shows intelligence and perception in her actions. If you like suspense and horror, it's worth seeing. Unfortunately I can't give you any more of the plot than I have without making the film less enjoyable.

Palindromes (DVD) – A film by Todd Solondz that came out while I was a guest of the Federal government. It didn't do that well – and was controversial – so I never got around to seeing it until now. Solondz brought us the brilliant **Welcome to the Dollhouse**, and the nearly as brilliant but very disturbing **Happiness**. This film ties into the **Dollhouse** universe, giving us a bit of an update on Dawn “Weiner Dog” Weiner and her family. But the main focus is Aviva, one of Dawn's cousins. Aviva is a 13-year-old girl who is determined to have a baby. And she will do just about anything to achieve that goal. Along the way we encounter topics like abortion, religion, and pedophilia. It's a dark movie, with equally dark humor, but the laughs don't come as often or as easily as in the other two films. Part of that may be the tone Solondz sets, but it's also because he made the decision to have Aviva played by eight different actors of various ages, races, and genders, switching back and forth through various segments. It's a bold choice, and it works in some ways. But it also makes it more difficult to build up a rhythm within the film. The longest segment – dealing with a family of Christians who take Aviva in after she runs

away – features Sharon Wilkins (an adult African-American woman) as Aviva. Her performance actually feels the strongest, but in part that may be because it's the longest continual appearance in the film. It's an interesting movie, and I liked it overall, but if you've never seen **Welcome to the Dollhouse** it may not have the same appeal. Hard to tell.

Infinity Pool (Huhu) – The third film from Brandon Cronenberg (son of David). Married couple Alex and Em (Alexander Skarsgård and Cleopatra Coleman) vacation in an exclusive resort located in the impoverished seaside country of Li Tolqa. But after meeting another couple (Mia Goth and Jalil Lespert) and having an accident, they learn of the bizarre system of justice Li Tolqa has...and the alternative available for those rich enough to pay the price. Two things I really liked this film: the atmosphere, and the creative idea used to drive the plot. And as usual Mia Goth is great. But it gets bogged down in delirium and goes on for far too long. Bringing the universal truth of "one justice for the rich, one for everyone else" to an absurd level works. But building that into a cohesive movie must be more difficult than it appears. Now I am left to wonder if Cronenberg's other two films – **Possessor** and **Antiviral** – suffer from the same "great idea, less that great result." It was worth watching, if only to give me some interesting things to think about afterwards.

Knock at the Cabin (Amazon) – The latest thriller from M. Night Shyamalan. A couple (Jonathan Groff and Ben Aldridge) and their adopted daughter, while vacationing at a cabin in Pennsylvania, find their home invaded by a group of four strangers, who try to convince them that the apocalypse is coming and only they can choose to stop it...or let it happen. The acting is pretty good, and there's a near-constant level of eerie tension throughout. And that's with almost no blood and only a low level of on-screen violence. The story goes about where I thought it would, which in some ways was a bit disappointing. But still, in the end, it was better than my generally low-level expectations. And it does provide some interesting things to think about.

Older Movies Watched (that I've seen before, sometimes many times) – Blackmail, Memento, The Devonville Terror, The 39 Steps, Barney's Version, The Illusionist, The Spanish Prisoner, Raising Arizona, The Witch.

Out of the WAY #59

by W. Andrew York
(wandrew88 of gmail.com)

Howdy!

First off, two bits of housekeeping regarding the games. First off, England has NMR'd in the Gunboat game and I have no available standbys. Presuming the English player fails to submit orders again, the first person who submits standby orders will take over the position. If no eligible orders are received for England, the country will stand in Civil Disorder for the remainder of the game. If you do submit standby orders, presuming they aren't used, and are willing to go on the standby list for the game in the future, please note that.

Secondly, there was a question about the Hangman game and whether it would continue to its end. That is my intention, to finish out the remainder of the words in the game. However, if both Diplomacy games end, I may move it to an Email flyer format (including anyone who wants to "just watch") to close it out. In that case, I'd probably try to run it a bit faster than once a month (maybe weekly?).

The two Rangers games were enjoyable and it was good to catch up with my step-brother and our friend. I don't get the opportunity to see either of them that often (though I do see the friend from San Angelo much more often as he doesn't live in Michigan). I'd been to the park a couple times before, and it certainly is a major upgrade from the previous stadium. Not only is there a roof, but there is much more space to move around on the concourses, with entertainments and other things to occupy your time before/after the game. That said, I do like the older style ballparks built just for baseball – more conducive to enjoying the game and concentrating on the experience. But, in today's world where stadiums need to be used more than 81 days for ballgames (plus playoffs, etc.), making the space open to other events, concerts and such makes economic sense.

On a side note, the Rangers didn't tear down the old stadium. It's still there and is being used for other events such as (from what I understand) graduations, smaller concerts, non-MLB baseball games (college/high-school), bull-riding/rodeo and other such things. That's a good thing as it was an excellent facility with the biggest issue, especially as the Texas summers get hotter, being the lack of a roof. It would have been a sad day to see it torn down (with a somber nod to Tiger Stadium where I enjoyed a number of games growing up).

Last weekend was the annual ArmadilloCon here in Austin. It's a literary science-fiction convention geared towards writers, illustrators, publishers and the like. They also have a science track, some gaming and, of course, lots of fun panels. The

biggest difference from most SF conventions these days is that there is no specific media programming with actors or studio hype. That's not to say that there wouldn't be a panel discussing the "best" starship (the Millennium Falcon bested the White Star in the bracket faceoff) or one on the legacy of 60 years of Dr Who.

I listened in on a number of panels, some of the writings ones that I enjoyed most were in creating a theology/religion for your planet/civilization and one on amateur historical research in writing historical fiction. Two of the science panels were a JPL presentation, by one of their Ambassador program members, on the first two years of the Perseverance lander (which included a proof of concept bit on the Mars Sample Return Mission, as changed by the success of the Ingenuity copter).

The other was by one of the lead trainers for the manned NASA space flight program. He brought a number of scenarios that they use in the actual training as well as a couple based on "sci-fi" lore. That brought up some animated discussions of what is the most serious situation from a list of three, whether an oxygen release valve failure during your moon walk is a serious problem and, most interestingly, what animal should you be ready to confront during a simulated moonwalk in at Johnson Space Center (based on a real life situation from the previous week!).

One of the more fun panels was the annual "Fans vs. Pros" Fannish Feud (aka Family Feud style game). Folks attending ArmadilloCon are polled for their answers to a number of questions such "Name a Streaming SF Show" or "Name a Published Author attending ArmadilloCon this year". No one category was fully revealed, partially because folks answering sometimes are confused on whether their response is actually from, say "Star Trek" instead of "Star Wars"...or from misreading the question. Lots of laughs, with a few groans. Always a good time!

On the baseball front, the Express were doing quite well until a couple weeks back. They were in contention for the best record in the PCL (Pacific Coast League) for the second half of the season to go into a playoff against Oklahoma City (Dodgers) for the best PCL team. However, that two-week road trip was a disaster, going 2-10 for those two series and falling back to middle of the pack. But, now that they're back at Dell Diamond, they have exploded – winning the first three games by scores of 10-5, 10-6 and 15-1. Now they are just 3 games shy of the first-place team.

Lastly, I'll touch on the Texas heat. Yes, it's another scorcher summer here. We aren't close to the 91 days over 100 degrees we recently had, but we're nearly in second place and there should be no reason we won't end up well ahead of third place. Where we are leading is in days over 105 (already!) with at least 7 more days at that level in the coming week. We've also blown past the consecutive number of 100+ degree days and may nearly double the previous record before this is over.

Fires, due to the dry conditions (we only had a trace of rain, third lowest, for the entire month of July with none in August so far, and none on the forecast), are a serious concern. A few days ago, there was a fire a few miles down the street in an adjacent suburb that had a wildfire reach into an apartment complex, destroying one building and damaging others. There have been a number of fires around Austin and many more expected. Burn bans, cancelled firework shows, watering restrictions are becoming the expectation rather than the exception. One well-known nearby swimming hole, Jacob's Well, had to close late last summer due to low water, and this year it is even lower.

Well enough from here! I hope your summers have been enjoyable and that you're ready for the fall fun that is ahead! See 'ya next month.

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Letter Column

(always welcome, send them in!)

(if something shouldn't be included here, clearly mark it as a personal comment)

[Doug Kent] – I still have my original paperbacks of Robert Adams' Horseclans series, or the first ten books anyway. They've been out of print for a while, but once or twice they've been reprinted in bulk. I liked a lot of things about the series: the development of various groups after the apocalypse because they sailed to what once was North America, the fear/hatred by some parts of the population of the Undying, the culture of the Horseclans and the detail to which he explains those plans, and the mindspeak with some animals. The first three books in the series are my favorites, and my paperbacks (originally bought from drugstore book racks) are suffering from heavy reading wear. There are some things which new readers might find objectionable, especially when viewed through modern lenses. **[WAY]** - So much of the pulp paperbacks of the '60-80s can suffer through a lens of today's sensibilities. Thanks for the additional background on the series, I'll keep my eye out when I'm in Half-Price Books (not that I need MORE to read!).

[Kevin Wilson] – Well, after our exchange I pulled a couple of the Horseclans books from boxes in the basement. I re-read the first, The Coming of the Horseclans, this weekend. None are that long of a read, most being <200 pages in MMPB. But, I did notice that I'm now at the age that with smaller print, like these, lighting is critical. Too little light and I tire easily reading. Good light and I can get through many, many pages. Most of my reading these days is on a device so actually holding a book isn't as common for me as it once was. Now, I'm trying to decide how to proceed. The series was not published in internal chronological order. Should I read in the order published or the internal chronological order? The

first, *The Coming of the Horseclans*, is in the middle of the internal chronology. I may read from that point in internal chronological order then jump to earlier or later. Interesting choice. [WAY] – I generally read in the order published as the development of the storyline in the books is better suited, as well as the skill of the writer and their comfortability in the universe they created. Reading in chronological order has, at time, left me a bit disappointed with a book that was written much earlier by the author.

[KW] - As a note, in the box where I stored the series I also found all 11 books of the John Carter series and almost the entire John Norman Gor series. The former you'll recognize. The later is a bit "different". It's similar to the John Carter series in that the primary character is from Earth but ends up on a counter-Earth, Gor. The author was into some strange stuff and the sex at times is fairly graphic. I read it for the sword/sorcery adventure but apparently there is/was a robust bondage sub-culture of fans of the series. Not my interests personally but interesting from an academic view into society perspective. I may have to redo the Barsoom books as it's been years (way too many to consider) since I looked at those. [WAY] – As memory serves, and I well could be wrong, the Gor series tried to play off the popularity of the Carter series and went for the same general audience, though as you mention, it is a tad "racier" in the narrative. I've not read either series, except maybe for a one-off or a short story set in the universe published in *Analog* or in a "Best of..." compilation.

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Mini-Book Reviews (finished since last issue)

Growing Slowly Wise by David Roper (2000; 160p).

This is a study guide on the Biblical book of James, subtitled "Building a Faith that Works". Each of the nineteen chapters takes a section of verse from James and builds a discussion/lesson around that passage, eventually covering the entire text. It is very readable, each chapter easily being tackled on a daily basis, and gives the reader a solid insight into the writings.

The only complaint is the writer's background is from a strict, fundamentalist, faith that sometimes comes through in a bit of a disconcerting way. However, that is only a niggling issue as book, as a whole, is a worth reading...if this is something that interests you. [July 2023]

The Sequel Season by Dan Flaherty (2021; 382p).

A disappointment sums up this book, and it is not at all an easy one to read. The author takes a lengthy look into the 1978 baseball season, which ended up being a close duplicate of the previous year's outcome (thus the title). The text is laid out in a very focused manner, starting with a recap of the previous season and the key teams involved. Then, taking snippets of certain games as they were played, the entire season is retold. There are plenty of side journeys, dives into various players' backgrounds and other asides to provide some flavor to the otherwise rather dry game recaps.

I was able to enjoy it, to some extent, as I was familiar with the season, many of the players and the game itself. However, the book sorely needed an index to find previous mentions, a "cast of characters" cheat sheet and other supplemental information to make it a better book. Often, it was hard to know which player was being referenced (might use only a nickname, introduced dozens of pages beforehand, or between those with similar names). At times it almost seemed I could have gotten as much information from looking up old box scores, targeting those I was most interested in, rather than through this narrative.

Not recommended unless you really want to "relive" the 1978 baseball season. If so, I'd recommend taking notes to follow the narrative. [July 2023]

Stolen Focus by Johann Hari (2022; 345p).

I'd read a similar book about 10 years ago (which is mentioned as a precursor work) called The Shallows. Both delve into the impact our current electronic lifestyle is having on individuals and how it is reshaping society. The first book focused more on the way it was shaping the younger generation (as best I remember), while this looked more at how it is changing our attention spans as a society, and specifically how social media is changing behaviors (as well as having another 10 years of research and evidence to build upon). Also, numerous interviews were conducted and liberally referenced.

In some way, it is a call to action to reframe how we interact with technology, social media and the way in which it is presented to the public (one suggestion is, akin to the BBC model, in an effort to eliminate the incentive to mine individuals' preferences, visits and such to better aim advertising and sales pitches to the individual and, thus, protect their privacy). There is also a side commentary about the rise of ADHD and how it may be fueled by our move into an online society.

Coupled with the recent rise of AI concerns in our daily discussions, which aren't really brought up in the book, it is a chilling discussion on how our society is being reshaped by technology. You can almost come out of reading it with a concern about what will drive us in the future – humanity itself or the technology we've created to "entice" and lure us into action.

Recommended, if you want to know more about this type of topic or to better understand some of the background to what technology may be doing to our civilization, our society and to you. [August 2023]

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Babylon 5 Quote

In "Comes the Inquisitor" – G'Kar: "Mr. Garibaldo, I have been on this station long enough to know that you don't ask leading questions unless you already know the answer So, why don't we just pretend I've lied to you about it, you've caught me in your web of ineluctable logic, and cut to the point."

Source: But In Purple...I'm Stunning! by J. Michael Straczynski, edited by Sara "Samm" Barnes, copyright 2008.

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Game Section

Everyone Plays Games: Hangman, By Definition

Game Openings: None currently

Standbys: Gunboat Diplomacy (x0)

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"Round Rock Express"

(No-Press Gunboat, Game #1)

MN: 2021Crb32

DIAS Proposal Fails

ReProposed - DIAS (NVR = Yes)

NOTE – the English player has NMR'd and there are no standbys available. The first, eligible, person who submits orders for England will become the player of record. If no one submits orders, and the original player doesn't return, England will be in Civil Disorder for the remainder of the game.

Autumn 1908

Germany: retreats A bud-GAL

Winter 1908

Austria unable to build

England NRR; removes F Kie (per Civil Disorder Rule XIV.3)

France builds A Par

Italy builds A Rom

Spring 1909

Austria: F ALB s a ser-tri, A TRI-vie, A SER-tri, A BUD s a tri-vie, A RUM-gal

England: NMR; F BRE hold, F POR hold, F ENG hold, F EDI hold, F LON hold, A LPL hold

France: A SPA s a gas-mar, A gas-MAR, A par-BUR

Germany: F NTH s a bel-hol, A bel-HOL, A TYL s a vie, A UKR-rum, F NWY s f nth, A MOS-sev, A GAL-bud,
A VIE s ita f tun-mao (imp), A bur-BEL, A ruh-KIE, A MUN s a tyl, f swe s f nth (nsu)
 Italy: F BLA s a sev, A SEV s aus a rom, A VEN-tyl, F con-ANK, F GOL s eng f por-spa(nc) (nso), A PIE s a ven-tyl,
 F tun-WME, A rom-TUS

Supply Center Count

Austria: Tri, Ser, Gre, Bul, Rum, Bud
 England: Edi, Lpl, Lon, Por, Kie, Bre
 France: Mar, Par, Spa
 Germany: Ber, Mun, Den, Hol, Swe, War, Mos, Stp, Vie, Nwy, Bel
 Italy: Nap, Rom, Ven, Tun, Smy, Con, Ank, Sev
 Neutral: none

Next Due Proposal and Fall 1909

Note – Split seasons are granted when 2 or more requests are received if 4+ players; 3 or less requires only 1.

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Hangman, By Definition

This is a five-round game, with each round consisting of a variable number of turns. The winner will be the person who wins the most rounds, with a tie breaker being fewest total number of turns in those winning rounds. Second tie breaker will be the greatest number of letters guessed (by total count revealed, not by individual letter).

Each round will consist of identifying a word of at least six letters. Along with each word will be the first definition given. All words and definitions will be identified by blank spaces. Words and definitions are verified in a dictionary that was my high school graduation gift (slight hint to those who might want to find the edition).

The goal is to guess the word in as few turns as possible. Each turn, all players will submit up to three different letters to be revealed. The letter submitted by the most players will be the letter revealed in the next turn. Ties will be broken by a randomized method. Additionally, each player should submit a guess for the word. Once the word is correctly identified (spelling is important), that round will end and a new round will begin. All players who guess the word in the same turn will share in the win for the round. If the word is not guessed by the end of six turns with no letter being revealed, no one will win the round.

Along with revealing letters in the word, letters will be revealed in the definition. There are no bonus points for guessing any part of the definition, it is only there to help players figure out the word. No guesses about parts of the definition will be confirmed or displayed except by the letter revealed in that round. The letters “E” and “S” can never be chosen as the letter to be revealed.

Game 2, Round Four, Turn 2:

Letter Votes: A – 1; B – 1; D – 2; G – 1; L – 2; O – 1; P – 1; R – 3; S – 1; T – 2 Revealed: R

Words Guessed: (Firth) Laurels; (Kent) Raisins; (Lischett) Hangman;
 (Maslen) ZYZZYVA; (Wilson) Coaster

Solution:

Word: R _ _ _ _ _ (7)

Definition: _ _ _ (3) _ _ _ _ _ (7) _ _ _ (3) _ _ _ _ _ (7)

_ _ (2) R _ _ _ _ _ (7), _ _ (2) _ _ _ (3)

_ R _ _ _ (5) _ _ _ (3) _ _ _ _ _ R (7)

Never Revealed: E, S

Already Revealed: R

Game Words Correctly Guessed: Metamorphosis (Firth, Maslen, Smith, Wilson); Chromatic (Firth, Maslen, Smith); Petroglyph (Maslen)

Player Comments:

[Dane Maslen] – Having started with the alphabetically last 10-letter word in the Scrabble word list last time, I thought I'd start with the alphabetically last 7-letter one this time. I think I can be confident that it won't be right! Apparently it's a tropical weevil.

[Kevin Wilson] – I just wanted to confirm, despite Doug winding down, the Hangman game continues until either he's done or the game finishes. 2 rounds remain in the current game and we just kicked off the 4th. **[WAY]** – It is my intention to continue this game to its conclusion, even if I'll just Email the remaining players directly to close it out (presuming it is the last game standing).

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Deadline for the Next Issue of Out of the WAY:

**September 6, 2023 at noon Central US Time Zone
See You Then!**

Game entries, letters of comment and other material can be sent to:

wandrew88 at gmail.com; or by post to: W. Andrew York; POB 201117; Austin TX 78720-1117

Eternal Sunshine Game Section

Diplomacy, "More Than Ever", 2021A, W 09 Seasons Separated By Player Request

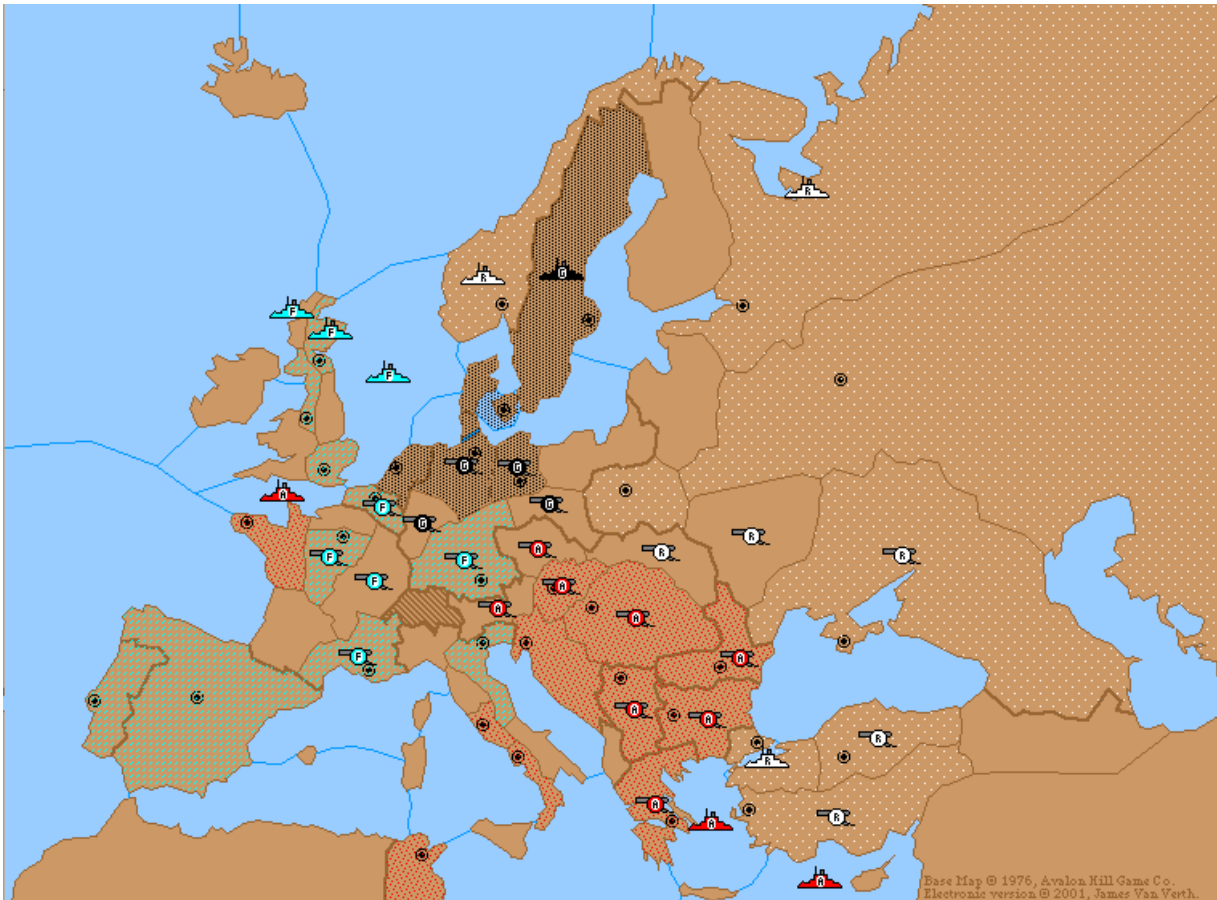
Austria: Andy Lischett – andy@lischett.com – Retreat A Galicia - Budapest..Remove F Albania..Has F Aegean Sea, A Bohemia, A Budapest, A Bulgaria, F Eastern Mediterranean, F English Channel, A Greece, A Rumania, A Serbia, A Tyrolia, A Vienna.

France: Brad Wilson - fullfathomfive675@gmail.com - Build A Marseilles..Has A Belgium, A Burgundy, F Clyde, F Edinburgh, A Marseilles, A Munich, F North Sea, A Paris.

Germany: Andy York – wandrew88@gmail.com - Remove F Yorkshire, A Denmark..Has A Berlin, A Kiel, A Ruhr, A Silesia, F Sweden.

Russia: Graham Wilson - grahamaw@rogers.com – Retreat A Rumania - Sevastopol..Build F St Petersburg(nc).. Has A Ankara, F Constantinople, A Galicia, F Norway, A Sevastopol, A Smyrna, F St Petersburg(nc), A Ukraine.

A/F Draw Fails



PRESS

None.

Deadline for S 10 is September 9th at 7am My Time

Deadline for the next issue of Eternal Sunshine is: September 9, 2023 at 7am My Time (U.S. central time) – some games and subzines earlier