

Eternal Sunshine #21

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On the web at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com> – or go directly to the Diplomacy section at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>. Also be sure to visit the Diplomacy World website at <http://www.diplomacyworld.net>. Check out <http://www.helpfultobytoby.com> for official Toby the Helpful Kitty news, advice column, blog, and links to all his available merchandise! Links to all of the books and DVDs reviewed can be found by clicking on the Amazon Store button in the main menu of the Whining Kent Pigs website.

All Eternal Sunshine readers are **encouraged** to join the free Eternal Sunshine Yahoo group at http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/eternal_sunshine_diplomacy/ to stay up-to-date on any subzine news or errata.

Quote Of The Month – “Adults are, like, this mess of sadness and phobias.” (Mary in “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”)

Welcome to Eternal Sunshine, the only Diplomacy publication that gets more depressed when they see the Cowboys win a game than when they see their favorite team – the New York Football Giants - lose one. Obviously a lot of that has to do with living in Dallas, and the pleasure I get in seeing the Cowboys lose. That is true this year more than ever, as so much of the sports press has anointed the Dallas Cowboys as the NFC representative in the Super Bowl despite the fact that they haven't won a playoff game in over a decade. Go figure!



So September is done with, and we move on to October and the wonderful fall weather...except that we don't get much good fall weather down here. At least, as it gets colder, there's hope that Heather's ankle will be well enough to let her walk around in some sexy black boots. In truth, her ankle has never been fully healed from the injury she suffered a few weeks before our wedding. She was going to go to an orthopedist a few weeks ago, but then it stopped hurting, so I suppose we are on a wait-and-see approach at the moment. Hopefully it will hold up...because there is almost nothing sexier than a woman in black boots. Heather is fully aware of my opinions on that subject, as I put them in my on-line ad through which we originally met! Well, technically we met through her on-line ad, but she saw mine too. One of these days I'll let you gentle

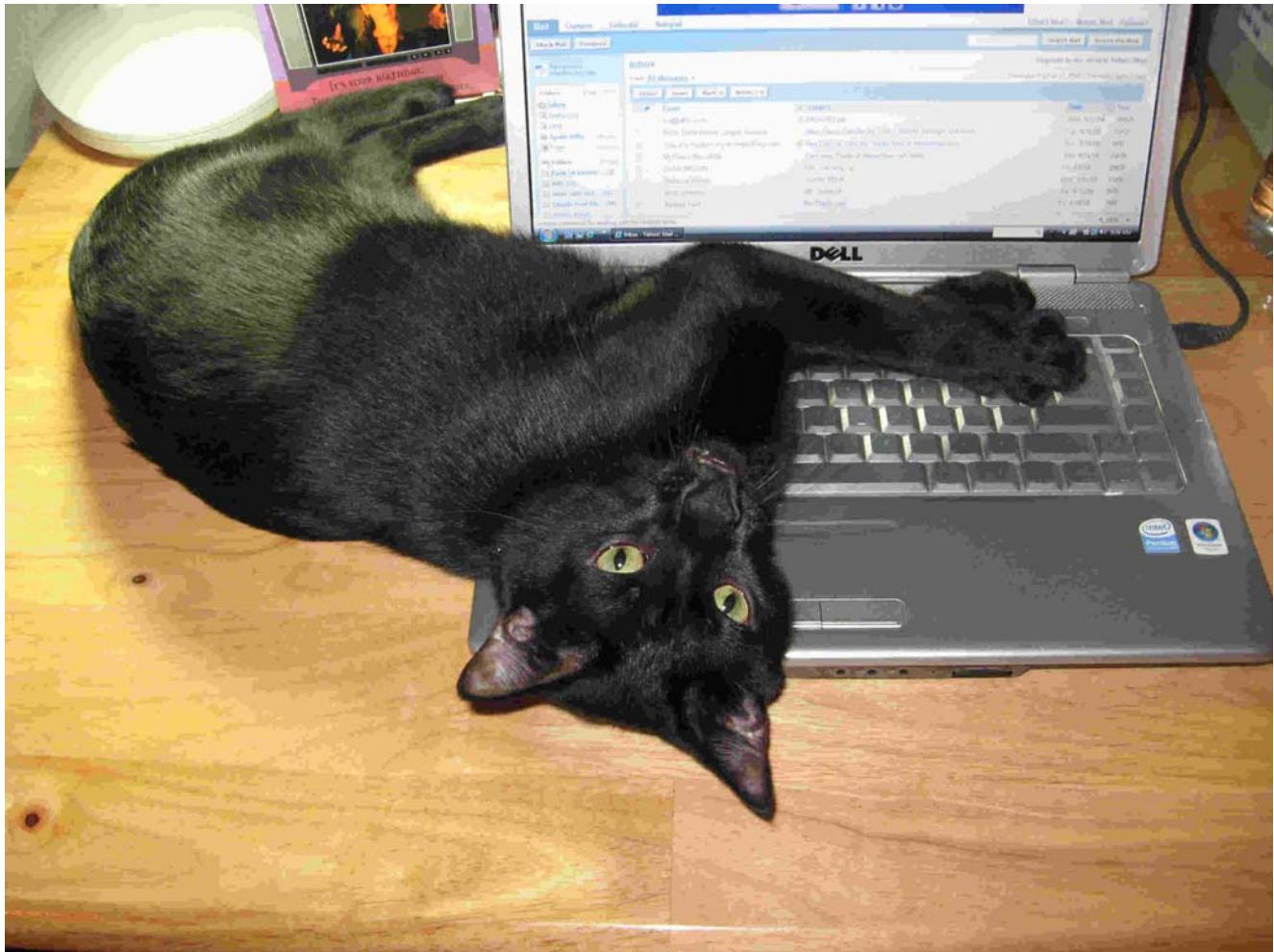
readers suffer your way through the play I wrote about how we met and the beginning of our relationship. Fortunately for you, that “someday” isn't right now!

Instead, you'll find more of the usual junk in this issue; letters, movie reviews, games, and some more of the “Grab a Shovel” story. At this moment I've got nearly two pages done of that saga, but I may find time to write additional material before I publish. Remember to check out the Game Openings section, as we've got a bit of progress for the next Diplomacy game, as well as a new opening in Woolworth II-B (rules and map in this issue, in case you've never played it). Woolworth is a 10-nation Diplomacy variant, but with only five players. Each player controls one nation publically, and one secretly. It makes for an interesting but simple variant. If you want to sign up for Woolworth, be sure to send along a nation preference list!

I also want to urge all readers to join in the Hypothetical of the Month. You can write as much or as little as you like for each month's question or questions...but the more people who respond, the more fun. Besides, if we can't get a decent level of reader participation, how can I ever hope to run a game of Sea of Despair?

Heather's schoolwork is going very well, and she's enjoying her classes. By that I don't JUST mean she is enjoying the time she spends with the animals; she is enjoying the classes themselves, and everything she is learning too! Of course, in typical Heather fashion, she is falling in love with every dog and cat she sees, and has been bugging me about this black and white female cat she has her eye on. All the animals have standard

numerical designations: C1, C2, C3 for cats, D1 and D2 for dogs...but you just KNOW Heather has to name every one of them in her head. Well, the cats and dogs; not the goats or horses or cows. You'd think she has enough love and "help" from Toby and Sanka to deter her from trying to cram a third cat into our apartment (and our lives). Speaking of which, here's a photo of Toby (The Helpful Kitty – www.helpfulkitty.com and www.cafepress.com/helpfulkitty) "helping" with Heather's laptop. Isn't he the sweetest thing? So handsome, and EVER so helpful!



Before we drift off into the usual foolishness, I wanted to give you an example of today's version "customer service." Back in February, when Heather was trying to get her class schedule set up in such a way that she could complete all her prerequisites to the Veterinary Technology or Veterinary Assistant program, she was having a lot of trouble getting enrolled in a particular math class, because the class one level below that one (which she was already taking) hadn't ended yet. Phone calls were doing to good, so in an effort to get a faster and more efficient response, I used the school's preferred method of communication: email. Here is the response I received, a few days ago:

Subject

Prerequisites

Discussion Thread

*Response (Debbie *****ison) - 09/23/2008 03:26 PM*

We apologize for the delay in responding to the question you submitted through DCCCD's "Ask a Question" online form. Our goal is to respond to every question promptly, but that did not happen in your case due to technical and process issues that have now been resolved.

We hope that your question has already been answered by someone in DCCCD. If you still need an

*answer to your question, please reply to this e-mail so that we may help you now. If you need immediate assistance, contact us at 214.***.2135.*

Once again, we apologize for any inconvenience this situation may have caused you.

Customer (Douglas Kent) - 02/20/2008 03:17 PM

I have a question about prerequisites. Here is the situation. My wife needs two classes in order to qualify for a program at Cedar.....

Not bad, huh? It only took them **SEVEN MONTHS AND THREE DAYS** to respond! This is the email equivalent of being put on "ignore" (which is the term I use for when a customer service associate puts you on hold for more than five minutes). What is your worst customer service experience? I'd like to hear about it (and obviously, **this is not** the worst one in my lifetime, just a recent amusing example). Oh, and as a late follow-up, Heather received a similar email two days later, responding to an email she sent three days before mine! I guess they are working their way backwards.

While we're on the topic of customer service, I pre-ordered a book on Amazon back in March, which was another installment in a series Heather really enjoys. It arrived this week, and they charged me the full cover price instead of giving me the 50 cent discount for pre-ordering. I was going to just let that go, but then I realized they were now selling the book for 40% less, three days after it was released! So I got in touch with their customer service department and let them have it...as a result of which, they gave me the money back. Then – and this is the part that bugs me – they tell me that they have a 7-day guarantee on pre-orders so that if they offer the book for less within seven days of release, you get the difference...but **ONLY** if you ask for it! That means I have to check on the price of every pre-order I do after the fact! Oh well...**that reminds me, if you want to do something to help support the cost of the www.whiningkentpigs.com and www.diplomacyworld.net web sites without costing you anything extra, any time you want to order something from Amazon.com you should go to one of those two web sites and click on the Amazon ad at the bottom of the page. That brings you directly to Amazon.com**, but because you came via our web site link we get a tiny commission on whatever you buy (unfortunately it doesn't apply when *I* buy stuff!) We've earned like \$20 over the past few months from those links, and every little bit helps, because those sites are not free! If anybody remembers to do that, I hope you know we really appreciate it!

Here's a question I came up with last night while Heather and I watched a DVD about animal rescue: if you are a person who believes in healing by faith, to the extent that you will not go to the doctor or receive a blood transfusion, will you bring your pets to the vet? (There's no punch line; I'm legitimately curious). My guess is yes you will, because a person who follows such a belief system likely does not believe that the animals have their own souls, and that God only heals humans. Does anybody happen to have an answer, or know someone they can ask?

Grab a Shovel – Part Two

Even though I had volunteered for Landscaping, Burger kept me on a short leash initially. I did have two inmates who vouched for me, which meant Burger was willing to generally give me the benefit of the doubt: there was Smiling Sal, the New Jersey con man and thief who had some ties to organized crime, and Chuckie, a very funny and loud little guy who was in prison for white collar securities fraud of some sort. Chuckie lived across the aisle from me in our building, and he was the inmate who gave me the nickname "Lucky." Unfortunately for me, he didn't mean that as a compliment, but as a backhanded insult. Chuckie and I would play gin quite often, for "meats." "Meats" were pouches of tuna, mackerel, and salmon which were one of the accepted currency forms in the prison system (besides stamps). They cost about \$1 each at the time, and anybody on a weight-lifting or workout program, or a protein-heavy diet, would eat a ton of this stuff. They'd mix it with mayo, or with instant rice, or even make tacos out of it. You could always find somebody willing to buy meats off of you for 70 or 80 cents on the dollar in piles of ten pouches; you give them the meats, and they would buy you what you wanted from commissary in exchange. I love fish...except for mackerel, tuna, and salmon, that is. So I never ate the stuff; I would just buy it for currency, or to trade or give a barber for a haircut.

Chuckie considered himself a very good gin player. I happen to be one as well, a skill which my father proudly taught me. I have some very fond memories of playing gin with my father for a penny a point. He never took it easy on you or let you win, but he would point out when I started playing in predictable fashion or making really stupid moves. So by trial and error I learned to play quite well. But for some reason, I didn't NEED to play well against Chuckie, because I was always so incredibly lucky against him (hence the nickname). It didn't matter who was dealing, or what the stakes were. On two out of three hands I would seem to get dealt a beautiful gift

of a hand, and instead of being greedy I would always try to knock quickly and rack up some easy points. It was quite demoralizing for Chuckie to deal a hand, and after we'd each played a card or two stare in disbelief while I knocked with three. "You're not even a good player!" he'd scream at me. "That's just fucking LUCK!" then he'd retreat to his cube and hurl the meat pouches at me one at a time as hard as he could, hoping to smack me in the face. Sometimes he'd take his deck of cards and rip them up, tossing them out the window or in the trash. "Fuck you Lucky, I am never playing gin with you again. You fag! Faaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaag! I'm just kidding, I'm just kidding....you faaaaaaaaagggggggg!"

But, time and time again, he'd come back to play...usually within 10 minutes. "Okay Lucky, that's it, let's double the stakes this time. I'm going to kick your ass, you fag! I'm just kidding, I'm just kidding."

"I'll knock with six."

"You motherfucking lucky bastard! Fuck you!"

...and the cards fly out the window again.

Smiling Sal, on the other hand, carried himself like a true Wiseguy. He never got depressed and rarely got angry (he preferred to get even). There wasn't a single racket going on in the prison which Sal wasn't somehow involved in. Cigarettes had been banned for some time, but somehow there seemed to be a constant supply for those who were willing to pay for them (upwards of \$4 for a smoke). I am certain Sal was involved, but I never asked in what way. He would have told me though, because he trusted me to keep my mouth shut. Sal was also the main prison bookie, willing to take bets on any pro or college game, for meats or stamps. On occasion he'd have to get rough with somebody for not paying, but usually the people who bet were regulars and paid eventually. Every once in a while they'd drag him up from to the Administration Office to accuse him of one infraction or another, and to let them know that they were on to his scams. But Sal never backed down, and never admitted anything, because he knew that if they could *prove* anything, they wouldn't waste time talking to him about it. He went so far once to deny knowing anything about gambling or being a bookie, and then as he walked out the door, offering the staff 3 to 1 odds that he wasn't involved in that kind of thing. Sal was a good guy, and full of funny stories.

Despite the dusting of snow we'd received the day I signed up for Landscaping, as luck would have it the real snow wasn't going to start for a week or two. In the meantime, we spent our days raking leaves. There were always tons of leaves to rake, and if we couldn't find any on the compound itself, Burger would send us into the nearby woods to rake them from the ground. In many ways this was mindless busy work, but I didn't mind it at all. I was getting fresh air, exercise, and time away from the housing units. Plus there was the added bonus of listening to the lazier inmates bitch and moan about what a waste of time this detail was...and enjoying Burger's responses to their complaining, or when he caught them slacking off.

Sarcasm was Burger's favorite weapon, or outright insults if that didn't work. During one of my first days raking leaves, it had started to rain, but Burger wasn't showing any signs of bringing us back to the Landscape garage. After a few minutes, one of the grumpier inmates piped up.

"Yo, Burger, it's raining!"

"Well, how about that, you figured that out all by yourself without a college education?"

"Well how hard does it have to be raining before we can stop raking these stupid leaves?"

"A lot harder than this!"

Insults were usually reserved for special occasions, but sometimes he liked to mix sarcasm and insult together. One day he was yelling at an inmate, telling him to get his "lazy Mexican ass out of that chair and into the truck!"

"Yo Burger, I tell you, I not from Mexico, I no Mexican. I am from Guatemala!"

"Okay then...Southern Mexican!"

Pretty soon, the inevitable snow arrived, and the real fun began. In the winter, the Landscape detail gets divided into three pieces. The regular day shift basically stays the same, but they also create work details (by pulling inmates off of other details like Orderly or Rec duty) called Landscape 2 and Landscape 3. Those details, hated as they are, are still just about the easiest jobs in the whole place. If you're on Landscape 2 or Landscape 3, you're assigned to a particular area like Front Sidewalk, Front Circle, Unit E Walkway, Unit F Walkway, and Staff

Parking Lot. If it is snowing heavily, or icing up, and the staff at the Medium Security facility decides to call out the snow crews, a CO comes by and finds you (or wakes you up). Landscape 2 was responsible for snow and ice from 4pm until midnight, and Landscape 3 from midnight until 8am. But with counts every few hours at night, the worst these guys could expect would be to get called out once or twice in an evening, and even then only once or twice a week...and, with no CO's watching them, they could do the absolute minimum amount of work, push a shovel or a street broom around, throw down some dirt, and go back to bed. And that was it; they had no responsibility during the day at all. But MAN did they bitch and mown when they had to work for ten minutes!

Actually it was Landscape 2 that had it easiest, because Landscape 3 had a habit of being called out right after the 5am count, so they could clear the walks and put dirt down before the day staff started to arrive. And Burger lived only a few miles away, so he had a nasty habit of showing up at 630am and – if he didn't like the job they had done – having the Landscape 3 crew called back out to work again. Still it was a joke of a job. They didn't get paid anything (12cents an hour for hours Burger thought they actually were called out to work, which meant a buck or two a month), but they didn't have to DO anything either. They'd spend their days at Recreation, watching TV, or doing anything else they felt like.

Landscape 1, the day crew...we were the real workhorses. 8am to 4pm, seven days a week if necessary, we were the ones they called on to deal with the snow and the ice...and there was a LOT of it!

Hypothetical of the Month

Last month, I posed the following: You're out with your significant other or spouse, and another couple. You have your dinner in a booth at a noisy Irish restaurant where there is a live band playing, but you're seated in a booth with walls so there is some privacy. The waitperson has to get in close to hear everything. The meal is a social one, with lots of talking and joking. The waitperson gets involved here and there, making physical contact with you gently a few times, grabbing your arm and so-forth. Probably innocent, and you think nothing of it. You're the only one not drinking. You've decided to treat the other couple to dinner without telling them, so you excuse yourself to "use the restroom" and find the waitperson so you can settle the tab before anyone is the wiser. When you do so, the waitperson offers you their phone number as well as the check, with a sly smile. How do you respond? What specifically do you say or do?

Melinda Holley: Well, first I'd be flattered *g*. But I would explain (with a smile) that I'm currently in a relationship with someone and very happy. And hand the phone number back with a 'but thank you for asking'.

Tom Swider: Because there's a lot of joking going on, I think it's okay to difuse the matter with humor as that is already the mood. I'd tell the waitperson, "Did my SO put you up to this?", and joke a little. I'd then explain that although I'm flattered, that I'm already seeing somebody and that I'm monogomous. I'd then disclose the matter to the group AFTER the check arrives at the table and the waitstaff says that it's "your treat" and leaves. I'd say something along the lines of "you won't believe this, but ..." Maybe suggest a 5-some or something absurd so it's clear that it's a joke, and then suggest moving on to the next bar for another round.

Allison Kent - I take their phone number and go back to the table. When we get in the car, I tell James. Just because I know he will remember now that I am still attractive to other men. Plus he will say something stupid about how the waiter was such a dork and then ask me seriously ten minutes later if I found him attractive. Then, he will ask me where I put the number because he wants to call him and I will tell him I left it on the table..... but I really didn't. It is in my drawer with the other numbers. I look at them once in awhile to remind myself that I am not as ugly as I think I am....

My answer was to say "I am really flattered, and if I wasn't happily married I would definitely give you a call." Heather, however, seems to think that my response is way too forward, and offers some kind of false hope. I don't get it. Why is it wrong to explain that the lack of interest is not due to a lack of physical attraction, but rather due to the fact that I am married, happy, loyal, and faithful? If I just did what Heather wanted, which would be "No thank you, I'm married," it sounds more like I'm rejecting them because of THEM.

All this came about from an actual dinner we had. All of it was true, except the waitress never offered me her phone number or showed any interest in me. I simply TOLD Heather she did because she is so damn cute and possessive when she gets jealous. Actually, when she read it in this latest issue she came stomping into the bathroom while I was taking my shower, yelling "You never told me she grabbed your arm!" Clearly Heather needs some sort of therapy...why she imagines any other woman besides her would be interested in me is beyond my comprehension.

So, this month, a much simpler hypothetical question: Would you rather have uncontrollable, loud flatulence for the rest of your life, or live shrimp for nipples? And why?

If I ever find my copy of the game "A Question of Scruples" in my storage unit, I'll pull a few of the more interesting cards out and use them here too.

The Dining Dead - The Eternal Sunshine Movie Reviews

In Search of a Midnight Kiss – I've never been to Los Angeles. While I do hope to successfully get a screenplay produced someday, it isn't something I hold out real promise for. Maybe if my life had gone differently, if I'd been free to give that a shot in youth, I could have been a character in this low-budget but insightful and inspired film.

Alex Holdridge wrote and directed this black-and-white look at the fringe show business element; the actors and screenwriters who came out to the west coast with their eyes open, realizing they could easily fail, but still hoping to somehow succeed against the odds. For Wilson (Scoot McNairy – yes, that's not a typo) things did not start out so well. He rolled his car on the way from Texas, he had his laptop stolen (along with his screenplay), and now he's living with his roommates, moping and smoking pot while he laments his bad fortune.

With New Year's Eve about to arrive, they convince him to post an ad on Craigslist to try and find someone to spend the evening with. "It's too late for Myspace or Match.com, Craigslist is your only hope" his pal tells him. Through this ad he meets Vivian (Sara Simmonds), a sharp-witted and slightly unbalanced woman who is "interviewing" a number of men before deciding who to spend New Year's Eve with. The process of elimination leads to Wilson, and they begin spending the day (and night) together, in a journey through Los Angeles by foot, subway, and car.

At first, while the dialogue is effective and random, we're not sure where this story is going to take us. But soon we're led through the characters' hopes, their ability to unhappily face reality (in some cases), and their desire not to completely give up on their dreams. I imagine Los Angeles, and the desperate multitudes watching year after year slip by without any progress, to be very much the way these characters are portrayed.

The black and white imagery works especially well. A building can look beautiful one moment, and decrepit the next, as can the characters. And unlike in many typical films, each character has far more history and back-story than we will ever learn, and those memories can be driving forces in their choices and actions. Just like real people. As Vivian says, "Sometimes you just have to let the shit storm come, take out your umbrella, get out there, and dance." Life has no rewind button, and it takes a lot to find the right person; or to know when you haven't.

I am unsure if *In Search of a Midnight Kiss* is in national release yet, but if it is, go see it. I believe the experience will be better on the big screen than on DVD.

America the Beautiful – Writer and Director Darryl Roberts opens his documentary on the American fascination with beauty, and how it is defined, by admitting that he had been dating a wonderful woman, but had never asked her to marry him because he always felt he could find a woman who was just as wonderful, but more beautiful. With his former love now happily married to another man, he looks back and wonders what made him weigh about the superficial aspect of the relationship so heavily. Who decides what is beautiful, and who is making money off of that definition?

With this lofty question, he sets out to learn the answers, and the result is the film *America the Beautiful*. Roberts spends a good deal of time introducing us to Gerren Taylor, a 12-year-old runway model who for a time was all the rage in Los Angeles fashion circles. Watching her strut in clothes designed for women twice her age, with the swagger of a sexually-active adult, gives the audience some of the same uncomfortable chills that portions of *Little Miss Sunshine* might have. With the typical controlling, aggressive, live-through-her-daughter mother, Gerren is a child thrust into an adult's world, and we all know it can't end in a positive way. Someday, either during or after the film, she is going to be set up for a fall from grace.

Roberts touches on a number of other topics throughout the documentary: our obsession with unhealthy, thin models; the cosmetics industry, and how some of the products may contain toxic materials; bulimia and

anorexia, and how advertising and society can be a contributing factor; plastic surgery, to the extremes of surgery for pets, and the "designer vagina" fad; a web site devoted to "beautiful people" who need to be voted in to become members; and much more.

If the film has a flaw, it is that it tries to cover too much ground and discuss too many topics. An interview with an "expert" who has a theory on why society prefers lighter skin could have been eliminated completely; it serves no purpose other than to paint the expert as a nut, but his theory is never really explained. And some topics could be an entire film in themselves, such as the culture on Fiji and how drastically it changed – including its views on beauty – when television was introduced. But *America the Beautiful* does provoke thought and discussion. So, in that regard, the film is successful. And I think the overall point of the topic can be summed up by a woman who works with a national eating disorders group, where she said (and I am quoting from memory) "If people build a time machine and come back to look at this society, they're going to see a 90 pound girl over here, spending \$30,000 a month in a hospital getting treatment for an eating disorder, and they'll see another 90 pound girl getting paid \$30,000 a month as a model, and they're going to be unable to figure out what the difference in the girls is."

Don and Chris: A Love Story – I am generally ignorant of the writing of Christopher Isherwood, author of such works as "A Single Man," "Christopher and His Kind" and "I Am a Camera." Certainly I know the musical "Cabaret," which was based on his books, but that's all I know. And I was even more ignorant of the drawings of Don Bachardy. But neither ignorance lessened my enjoyment of *Don and Chris*, because as the title states, this is more a story of love, and of building a successful long-term relationship despite the odds.

Isherwood, having moved to California from his native England, meets Bachardy on a California beach, and over time they develop an openly gay relationship. Despite their different social classes, the anti-gay attitudes of society, and most importantly their age difference (Isherwood was 30 years Bachardy's senior – and he was a mere 16 when they first met), the two became friends, lovers, and a couple. Surviving Hollywood at a time when many actors lived life in the closet, the two rode out rocky periods and remained together until Isherwood's death from prostate cancer in 1986.

Mostly told from the point of view of Bachardy (who is now in his 80's) through candid interviews, we follow their triumphs and tribulations. In many ways, Bachardy was molded by Isherwood, to the point that a year into their relationship Bachardy had unconsciously adopted Isherwood's mannerisms and even his English accent. But eventually Bachardy had to grow into his own person, and through Isherwood's urging and support he found himself to be quite a talented portrait artist. In fact, this success was what would lead to the rockiest period in their relationship, as the self-aware Bachardy now in many ways wished to break away from the confines of the relationship.


Besides the interviews with Bachardy and some friends, we are treated to portions of Isherwood's personal diaries (read by Michael York who starred in "Cabaret" alongside Liza Minelli and Joel Grey), and of cartoon segments based on two characters the couple created to illustrate themselves in their relationship: Isherwood as the old stallion, and Bachardy as the playful kitty. The ebbs and flows of their affections are very touching, but nothing is as powerful as the last section of the film. This is where Bachardy recounts Isherwood's last year, and displays some of the countless sketches he did of Isherwood as his body deteriorated. Finally passing away one morning, Isherwood's body lay in his bed while Bachardy continued to sketch him.

A very early shot in the film shows their living room, and the two armchairs they had occupied for so many years, side by side. No focus is made of this at the time, just a subtle picture of the empty space left behind when two people who had meant so much to each other, for so long, are finally separated by death. Above all else, *Chris and Don* is a tribute to that love.


Seen on DVD – **Lars and the Real Girl** (B+, very funny but also sweet and sometimes rather sad. Good movie, as it doesn't hit you over the head with lessons or morals). **Brokeback Mountain** (B, a pretty good film, and great scenery, but I didn't find Heath Ledger's performance all that compelling). **Longford** (B, rather slow but as usual Jim Broadbent gives a solid performance). **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest** (A, a tremendous film that never gets old. Jack Nicholson at his best, with an amazing cast). **Dark Water Rising** (A-, a very moving and blunt film about animal rescue after Hurricane Katrina). **Audrey Rose** (B+, the classic Anthony Hopkins film of reincarnation, still hold up rather well). **Jesus Camp** (A-, a classic documentary look into the Evangelical youth). **Idiocracy** (D-; why did Mike Judge fall to this level? The idea gets an A, the execution gets an F, so it winds up with a 61 average). **Dexter: Season 2** (A-, aside from the generally rushed wrap-up of the story lines, this was a better season than the first). **American Gothic: Disk 1** (C-, Heather wanted to try this Sam Raimi-produced series, but the storyline is too poorly written and clichéd).





Heather's Tricks and Treats

Sharp Objects by Gillian Flynn – Very good, suspenseful drama. I like the way she writes, and I liked the subject material, even though it wasn't exactly what I expected. 4 pumpkins. 

Nocturne by Elizabeth Donald – Great buy! Two books in one. Trashy vampire romance/erotica, with a little mystery thrown in here and there. 3 ½ pumpkins. 

The Abstinence Teacher by Tom Perrotta – This book was about the struggles of one sex education teacher, and her desire to be honest with her student. Inevitably she is punished, and religious fundamentalists force her to teach their abstinence policy as punishment. The point of view leaned more towards the sex education teacher's side of the issue, but it did try to show both sides. 4 pumpkins. 

Nicholas by Elizabeth Amber – One of those books that you don't want people to see you read, because you'll be embarrassed. But it's HOT HOT HOT, and I highly recommend it! 3 ½ pumpkins. 

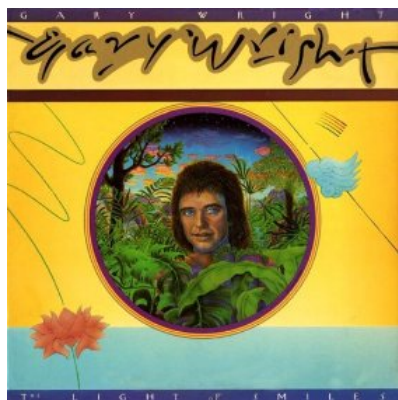
Pawprints of Katrina by Cathy Scott – Great subject matter, but was written terribly. If the subject matter wasn't so close to my heart I would have given up. 2 pumpkins. 

Untamed by P.C. Cast and Kristin Cast – Another winner in the "House of Night" series (yes, I know this is Young Adult fiction – 16 years old or so – but I don't care). It was great, and I loved it, and I can't wait for the next book...but I have to because it doesn't come out until March 2009, which really sucks! 4 ½ pumpkins.



Smashing a Perfectly Good Guitar

The Greatest Albums You Never Bought



As expected, nobody had anything to say about my column last month. I don't think anybody actually READS the things I write! Anyway, let's travel once again to late 1976. It isn't at all uncommon for a performer or group to have one or two big hits and then disappear, more-so in the 1970's than any other time. Enter Gary Wright, who was well-known within some music circles but not to the general music audience, despite his solo works and his time with Spooky Tooth. If nothing else, he is known for being a friend of George Harrison (you can see a terrific Dick Cavett Show performance of "Two Faced Man" on YouTube from 1971 with his band Wonderwheel, including George Harrison in the background...and who among you can identify the musician standing in the middle of the stage, playing electric guitar?) Anyway, along comes Gary Wright's mega-hit album "Dream Weaver" and its two smash singles: the title track, and "Love is Alive." Riding that sudden wave of success, in November 1976, Wright releases the follow-up album "The Light of Smiles." Taking the spiritual overtones of the prior release and refining them (yes, "Dream Weaver" happens to be a spiritual song in many ways), while building on top of its keyboard strength (aside from percussion, all the music on "The Light of Smiles" is created on keyboards), "The Light of Smiles" is arguably Gary Wright's greatest achievement.

As usual, while receiving some critical praise, the album itself was generally ignored. Its sole single, "Phantom Writer," barely cracked the Top 50. But the album as a whole is a tremendous accomplishment, from start to finish. In an age when the hit single was reigning supreme, this is an album best listened to in one sitting. I was

lucky enough to have an old 8-track recording of Wright performing much of the album on "The King Biscuit Flower Hour" which for many years I was able to enjoy...sadly, my cassette copy of the 8-track has now disappeared.

My favorite tracks on "The Light of Smiles" comprise basically the entire first side. In my youth, "Phantom Writer" was the obvious choice, but these days I prefer tracks like "Who Am I" and "Time Machine." An import re-mastered CD of the album is available, but at a high price. Fortunately, early this year I discovered that Amazon has the re-mastered version available for download in whole or on a track-by-track basis. Check it out!

Meet Me In Montauk The Eternal Sunshine Letter Column

Tom Swider: Interesting issue even if you said it was a short one.

Forgiving yourself probably has a lot to do with emotional intelligence. There's been a lot of research in the past 10 years or so on this topic, tying emotions (a function of the amygdala) and higher reasoning (function of the cerebral cortex) together because both these areas were discovered to be joined together. The studies of Daniel Goleman and others have led to the conclusion that emotional and soft skills like leadership and empathy (and probably forgiving) are learned and that if you're unskilled in these areas, that you can gain skill in them.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amygdala#Emotional_learning

The Department of Defense is very interested in this sort of thing because learning about emotional intelligence is viewed as a strategy in countering terrorism. EI is viewed as "cost efficient" in terms of evolution because it helps the race as a whole survive. This new school of thinking attempts to disprove Hobbesian views of how the world works. Unfortunately, the old view is prevalent in the third world. If a person's sense of identity is not easy to identify, then the world becomes very black and white, and there's not much to live for. Religious bromides become attractive, especially if they cannot be disproved and promise unearthly rewards. So that's why you get kamikaze pilots and desperate Saudi 25 years olds from rich backgrounds but no real sense of self who turn into terrorists.

[[I remember reading some book or a few articles on this in prison. I am not a follower, but I am not a leader either. Is there a thing called "loner intelligence"? I probably would have made a good Unibomber. Fortunately – for myself and society – I am very empathetic so I don't think I could ever be a really violent person. Martyrdom is a non-violent way is more likely..]]

Philip Murphy: We haven't been in contact before but I have been reading Diplomacy World for about a year now and I'm impressed with the job you've done with it.

Anyhow, I was reading your zine, Eternal Sunshine and I just wanted to say I wish I had the guts to speak out about my own life in the way you have done. I'm a very private person when it comes to my own problems (don't we all have them, sadly!) and I admire the fact that you are able to speak about what are very personal issues.

[[I remember making a conscious decision in late 2002 or early 2003 simply not to care anymore...to just be open and honest and be myself...and to stop trying to adjust my actions to fit in better. Not surprisingly, I am happier this way and the world has treated me better. But my level of openness can shock even myself at times. I think, in some ways, I am blunt like this in order to push others way in a pre-emptive strike. It's a possibility anyway.]]

I'm intrigued by what you said in ES #20 about not being able to forgive yourself for your own failings in life. I myself sometimes find it hard to do this.

But we all fail. We all make mistakes. We're designed that way. Nobody gets it right 100% of the time. You know this of course. The fact that you can forgive others (as you said) is proof of that.

It is far far better to try and to fail gloriously than to never try. In life, in relationships, in careers, in everything. Failure is a mark of having tried, too, even if the result wasn't what we wanted!

Think of it this way. Even if you do everything right in a Diplomacy game, it is possible to be beaten. The point is to strive to do your best. Life (and Diplomacy :-)) is a compromise between what you want and what you get.

The past failings in your life are no place for your mind to dwell on.

Look instead to what you did do well. You have Diplomacy World back on its feet and looking snappy. That, at least, is a success. Your family, your friends, being alive and enjoying life.... these are the things which make it all worthwhile.

[[While intellectually I can agree with everything you said, emotionally I still have a lot of work to do on it. The realization that I am actually a perfectionist, and that it is this which causes me to beat myself up AND refuse to accept compliments, was quite surprising to me. I found it odd that someone who has felt so pathetic and out of place lal my life would be holding myself up to such a rigorous standard. But I know it to be true, and so that's one of the things I work on in my therapy. Unfortunately, I'm down to one appointment a month, but I do actually work on it anyway! I think a lot of this can be tied to my childhood, but I haven't started exploring that to its fullest yet. When I am done writing about prison, which I hope to get published, my next project will either be my first marriage or my childhood. When I write these personal events, I am forced to deal with quite a bit of emotional baggage, so in a way it is cathartic...which is a good thing, as long as I can handle it!]]

Andy York: Heather sounds like she's doing great with school! Be sure and keep us updated.

[[She's loving her classes at the moment, especially her hands-on interaction with the animals. I know this is what she was meant to do. She thinks it is somewhat silly to be going to school so she can get a job which pays less than her old one, but it isn't about the money...this is her calling. She should be working with animals, period, in some capacity.]]

Regarding your comment about "guest-GM'ing or "writ(e)"ing "an occasional (or monthly) column", as you know, I'm always available if you'd like some badly adjudicated games or lengthy drivel and rambling comments. Just let me know....

[[You're always welcome to start your "Rambling" if you get my pun. I have been rereading a lot of W. Andrew York lately, in the process of scanning and posting old zines, both as columns and as full issues.]]

Regarding your memory comment, I think that is a common thing amongst us humans. I remember all sorts of slights I committed, missed opportunities, times when I went right and I should have gone left, etc. And, I do think most people expect more of themselves than the do of others (I know I do). So, Doug, you are human (yes, really!).

[[I feel bad for the human race then!]]

I noted Heather read an old Heinlein book. Does/did she like the military sci-fi parts of STARSHIP TROOPERS (not necessarily the overtly political undertones)? If so, pick up John Scalzi's OLD MAN'S WAR, and sequels - thoroughly enjoyable, though I haven't read the latest. He was here for ArmadilloCon - great con guest and his blog is very interesting.

[[Actually, she didn't like ST at all...although it remains one of my personal favorites.]]

I presume she has read the TWILIGHT series. Is she looking forward to the movie?

[[She sort of fell out of the series just when everybody else got into it, but not in a knee-jerk reaction...she simply did not like the last installment she read at all! As for the movie, I imagine we'll see it, but she found the cover shot on Entertainment Weekly to be exactly NOT what she thought the characters should look like. So I am waiting to see the trailers, and her reaction. Speaking of movies, I am surprisingly NOT very interested in Watchmen after all these years. I fear it will be so poor compared to the original work. The only version I ever felt interested in was when Terry Gilliam was trying to get it together. But as usual, that fell apart. Hmmm, which reminds me, I want to add the Gilliam documentary about his La Mancha fiasco to our Netflix list.]]

In your response to my note last time, is "regarfing" a word combining regarding and barfing?

[[Not even spell check can fix all of MY mistakes! And I don't use it much in ES anyway.]]

Side Note - In Time magazine this week (09/15/08), they had a quote from a Bolivian naval officer aiding a UN mission in Haiti. Bolivia hasn't had a blue water coast in over 125 years and is landlocked.

[[Maybe I'll enlist? I could be the Admiral!]]

A thought on the BPD game, is there a way you could put an extra line at the very top or bottom listing the most common answer (maybe with the max possible score)?

[[I always mean to, and forget to, do such a thing. If I don't now, I **WILL** next game!]]

Dane Maslen: You mention various things you cannot forgive yourself for. One of them is "For having no fashion sense." Come, come, not only is this something that you do not need to forgive yourself for, it's something to be proud of! You have proved yourself to have an individual rather than a sheep.

OK, so I'll admit to having a vested interest in this. Not only do I have no fashion sense, but I object to the very concept of fashion. A few years ago I finally bought a mobile phone. Being terribly utilitarian in my outlook I decided to dispense with the ridiculous ring tone and make my mobile sound like an old-fashioned phone. A few weeks later I was somewhat surprised to someone else's mobile ring in the same way. Then a few days later I heard another. I mentioned this to a friend. "Oh, yes, it's a very trendy ring tone at present", he said. Oh, no! I'd accidentally been trendy. How was I ever going to live it down?

Now if you'd said "For having no sense of what colours clash." – something that I also have to admit to - I would have had to admit that it's something to be ashamed of. My house is decorated with very bland colours because I know that it would be dangerous for me to select anything else.

[[In my case, as in yours, it is a combination of ignoring – or having no knowledge of – current fashion, combined with a decidedly damaged instinct for colors and all that sort of thing. I did LEARN a lot about it when I worked at the suit store (we sold only very high-end Italian stuff: Brioni and Ravazzolo mostly) but that was like learning how to play a musical instrument but having no talent for it. I could do the job, matching ties and shirts and suits in ways customers might not have thought of, producing very elegant and appealing results...but I had no flair for it. In our personal life, Heather chooses my clothes when we need to be semi-formal, and gets quite a laugh at my utter disregard for colors when I am casual. This is especially funny o her because in most cases it isn't that I am ignoring the "rules" but instead I think I am following them when I am not!]]

Graham Wilson: Man, just gotta love America politics. Much more exciting than Canadian politics. Our politicians are different too - of the three leaders (of the three major parties), one is a lawyer and two are professors. And you, you have Sarah Palin. Oh god I just cannot stop laughing over that one. Forgive me, but I just cannot stop...

[[As a felon living in Texas, I am currently without my right to vote...so don't blame me for the political situation, folks! I am weary of discussing the credit crisis, if only because I know all too well how government helped cause the problems, allowed them to grow, and now wants people to believe they can solve them too. It isn't a partisan issue – there's plenty of blame to spread around. They should force schools to use Irwin Schiff's long-out-of-print primer "How an Economy Grows, and Why it Doesn't" when teaching about the fallacy of present-day "free markets." Washington is completely corrupt. Anyone who wants an accurate portrayal of politics and the "democratic" election process should go watch "Free For All," one of the classic episodes from Patrick McGoohan's "The Prisoner" episode. Very little has changed in 40 years.]]

Game Openings

Diplomacy (Black Press): Signed up: Melinda Holley, Simon Gwilliam, need five more to fill.

Woolworth Diplomacy II-D (Black Press): Signed up: None. Need five to fill. Rules and map this issue.

There will be another game of By Popular Demand when this one ends, although I think I'll include a Joker this time; that's where you get to choose one category to double your score each turn. I may offer another Gunboat 7x7 soon, so keep your eyes open. In the Word Game category, I think I will offer a game of Facts in Five soon. Oh, and if somebody wants to guest-GM a game of anything, just say the word. If you have game requests please let me know.

Woolworth II-D (cb19)

by Glen Overby & Fred C. Davis Jr., 1981

Rules re-written and map drawn by Andrew Poole for Ten Best Diplomacy Variants (a.k.a UKVB Package 2). All the usual rules of Diplomacy (1971 rulebook) apply, except where amended below.

Woolworth Diplomacy is a five-player variant. There are ten Great Powers in the game, each player controls two of these : a 'public' power which is known to all players, and a 'secret' power known only to the controlling player and the g.m. Three Great Powers (Balkans, Scandinavia and Spain) are added to the regular seven. The initial set up for all the powers is as follows :

AUSTRIA: F(Trieste), A(Budapest), A(Vienna).
BALKANS: A(Bulgaria), A(Serbia), F(Greece).
ENGLAND: F(London), F(Edinburgh), A or F (Lpl).
FRANCE: F(Brest), A(Paris), A or F (Mar).
GERMANY: F(Kiel), A(Munich), A(Berlin).
ITALY: F(Naples), A(Venice), A or F (Rome).

RUSSIA: A(Moscow), A(Warsaw), F(Sevastapol), A or F(StP).
SCANDINAVIA: F(Norway), A(Sweden), F(Denmark).
SPAIN: A(Portugal), F(Morocco), A or F (Mad).
TURKEY: F(Ankara), A(Con), A or F (Smy).

All 'choice' set-ups need not be announced until the Spring '01 orders are revealed. Either an army or a fleet may start in these spaces; if the space has two coasts, the fleet may start on either.

Woolworth uses a version of the regular board with significant modifications. The Powers are assigned to players using the following procedure :

- a. Each player submits a list of the ten Great Powers in order of their preferences. Ties are not permitted.
- b. Control of the 'public' powers is decided first. Players' first choices are compared : unique first choices are granted, lots are drawn between players where their first choices are identical.
- c. Once a player is assigned a power, it is removed from all the players' preference lists.
- d. For players who failed to gain their first choices, the process as outlined in b. above is repeated, using the highest choices still available, continuing until all the players have a public power.
- e. When there are only five powers remaining, the process is repeated so as to assign the 'secret' powers.

The control of secret powers is never revealed by the g.m, though NMR's may make the relationships apparent. Players may do as they like in this regard, telling or not telling as they please.

As the game is not historically based, it begins in Spring '01 rather than the year 1901.

There are 39 supply centres on the board. The victory condition is 24 centres, which may be reached by a combination of the strength of the public and secret powers belonging to a player. Adjustments are always separately counted for each power, however.

There is a 'Direct Passage' link between Sicily and Naples. This allows units to move directly from one of these provinces to the other without in any way affecting fleet movement between TYS and ION.

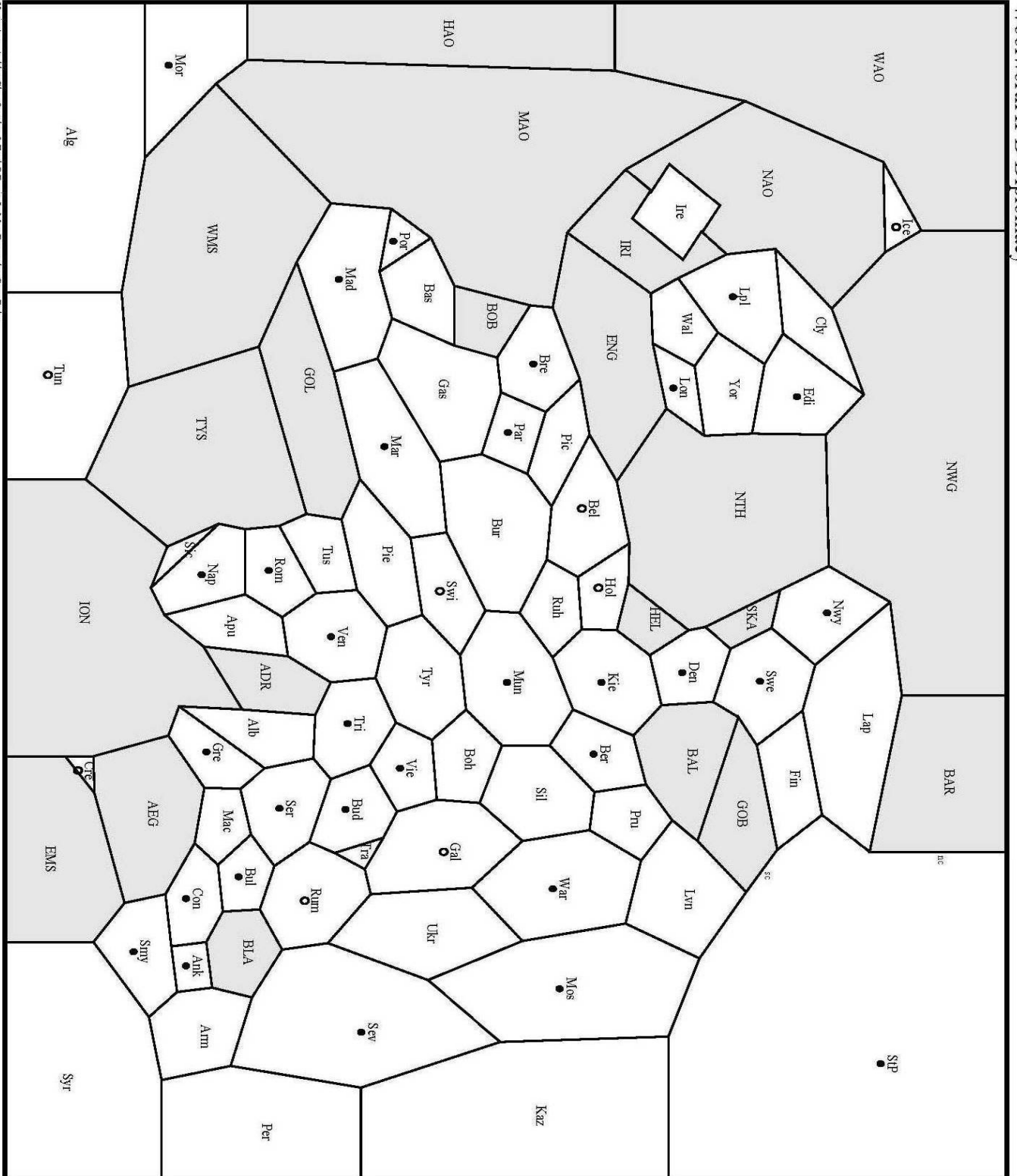
New Province Abbreviations :

Alg	Algeria	Ire	Ireland	Per	Persia
Bas	Basque	Kaz	Kazakhstan	Sic	Sicily
BOB	Bay of Biscay	Lap	Lapland	Swi	Switzerland (s.c.)
Cre	Crete (s.c.)	Mac	Macedonia	Tra	Transylvania
HAO	High Atlantic Ocean	Mad	Madrid (s.c.)	WAO	West Atlantic Ocean
Ice	Iceland (s.c.)	Mor	Morocco (s.c.)		

Notes by Andrew Poole : Woolworth Diplomacy gains its title from the shops of the same name, which originally sold all their goods at prices of 5c and 10c and were commonly called 'fives and tens'. The idea of Woolworth is for each player to be able to control both one 'public' and one 'secret' power. To allow this, the number of Great Powers was increased to ten. The three extra powers were created from groups of neutral supply centres in Scandinavia, the Balkans and Iberia.

Woolworth II-D Diplomacy

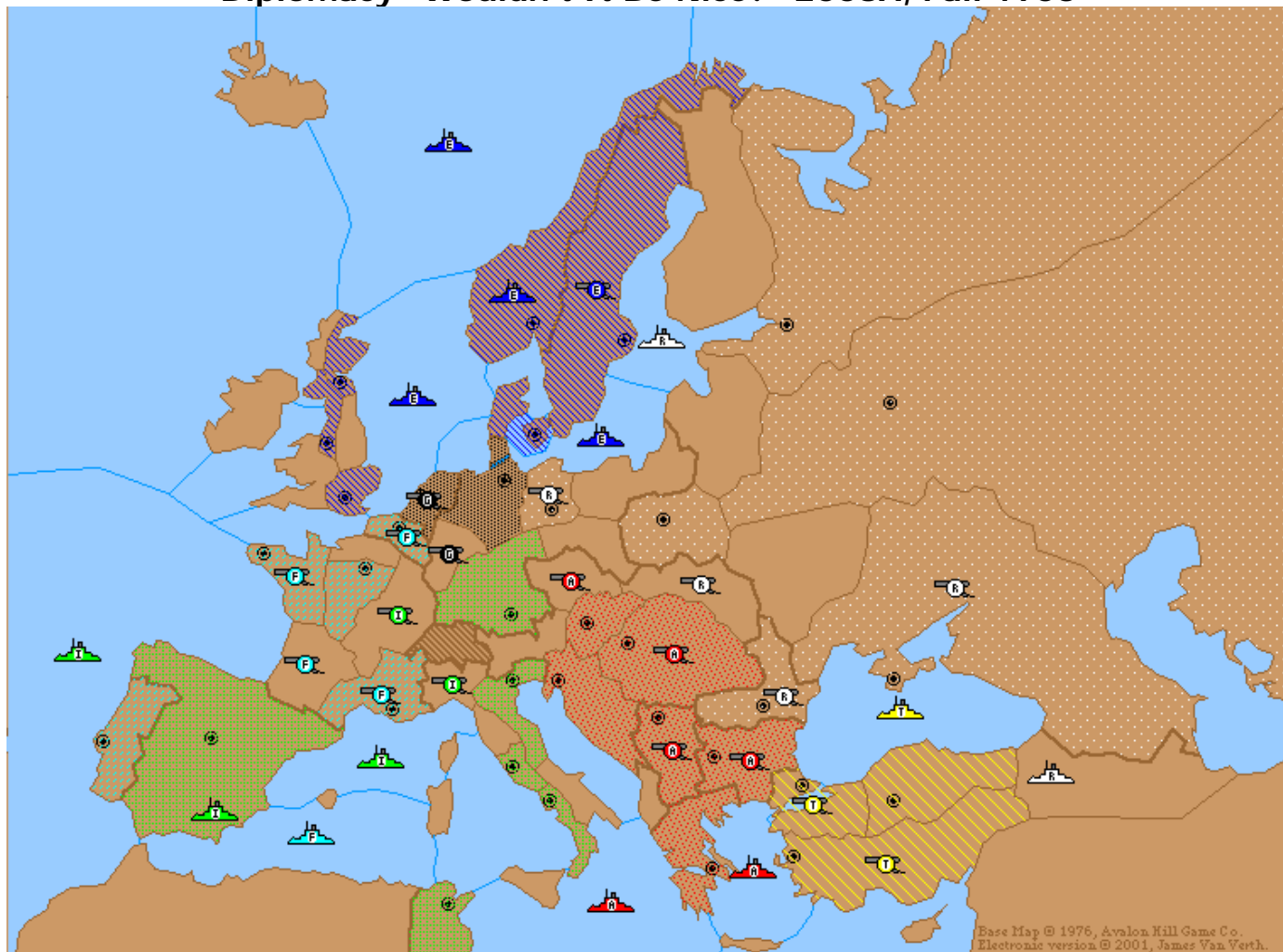
However, with the ten Great Powers, from the start of the game there is conflict. The Secret powers make it easier to start wars, whilst each player starting the game with six units make it also more necessary. The Secret powers must do all of their diplomacy through press releases, producing some interesting press. The Secret powers need careful play so as to avoid the identity of their owner being revealed, too much co-ordination between a public and a secret power may give the game away (literally!). There are sudden shifts of alliances as players try to find out who their opponents are. There have been mock wars, and a player may have his public power deliberately eliminated so as to continue the war with just the secret power!



Variant created by Gian Orselli & Fred O Davis, Jr. Map Drawn by Gary Duke
Map produced by David Norman's MapMaker for Windows via template by Gary Duke
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Eternal Sunshine Game Section

Diplomacy "Wouldn't It Be Nice?" 2008A, Fall 1903



Austria (Kevin Wilson): F Adriatic Sea - Ionian Sea, F Aegean Sea Convoys A Bulgaria – Smyrna, A Budapest - Serbia (*Fails*), A Bulgaria - Smyrna (*Fails*), A Serbia - Bulgaria (*Fails*), A Vienna - Bohemia.
 England (Jérémie LeFrançois): F Baltic Sea Supports A Denmark – Sweden, F Belgium - North Sea, A Denmark – Sweden, F North Sea – Norway, F Norwegian Sea Supports F North Sea - Norway.
 France (Alexander Levinson): A Gascony Supports A Marseilles, A Holland – Belgium, A Marseilles Hold, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - Western Mediterranean, A Picardy – Brest, ~~F Spain(sc) Supports F Mid-Atlantic Ocean – Western Mediterranean~~ (*Dislodged*).*
 Germany (Graham Wilson): A Kiel – Holland, A Ruhr Supports A Kiel - Holland.
 Italy (Don Williams): F English Channel - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F Gulf of Lyon Supports F Western Mediterranean - Spain(sc), A Munich – Burgundy, A Piedmont - Marseilles (*Fails*), F Western Mediterranean - Spain(sc).
 Russia (Melinda Holley): F Armenia - Ankara (*Bounce*), F Gulf of Bothnia - Sweden (*Fails*), ~~F Norway Supports F Gulf of Bothnia – Sweden~~ (*Dislodged*), A Rumania Supports A Warsaw – Galicia, A Silesia – Berlin, A Ukraine – Sevastopol, A Warsaw - Galicia.
 Turkey (Brad Wilson): F Black Sea - Ankara (*Bounce*), A Constantinople Supports A Smyrna,
 Turkey: A Smyrna Supports A Constantinople (*Cut*).

Russian F Norway can retreat to St Petersburg(nc) or Barents Sea or Skagerrak.

French F Spain(sc) can retreat to Portugal.

Neither unit is shown on the map!

Supply Center Chart

Austria: Budapest, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Trieste, Vienna.
England: Denmark, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Norway, Sweden.
France: Belgium, Brest, Marseilles, Paris, Portugal.
Germany: Holland, Kiel.
Italy: Munich, Naples, Rome, Spain, Tunis, Venice.
Russia: Berlin, Moscow, Rumania, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Warsaw.
Turkey: Ankara, Constantinople, Smyrna.

Austria: 6 Supply centers, 6 Units: Builds 0 units.
England: 6 Supply centers, 5 Units: Builds 1 unit.
France: 5 Supply centers, 5 Units or 6 Units: Builds 0 units (if retreat OTB) or Removes 1 unit.
Germany: 2 Supply centers, 2 Units: Builds 0 units.
Italy: 6 Supply centers, 5 Units: Builds 1 unit.
Russia: 6 Supply centers, 6 Units or 7 Units: Builds 0 units (if retreat OTB) or Removes 1 unit.
Turkey: 3 Supply centers, 3 Units: Builds 0 units.

Winter 1903 and Spring 1904 Deadline is October 28th 2008 at 7:00am

PRESS

ROME to BERLIN: Well, this plan has gone to a steaming pile of sauerkraut. Still trying to vacate MUN as promised. Good luck.

Turkey – Germany: I would say that I'll miss you when you're gone, but that would be a lie. If you had agreed to my original proposal none of this would have happened. Guys like you are why the Expos had to move to Washington.

VENICE to FADR: Whither didst you wander, my little hunka-hunka-steaming steel? Hope you kept the faith, or Russia just picked up a major ally on your western border and France gets to visit the Amalfi Coast carte blanche.

Somewhere West of the Hobby...Full of Beans - "Wouldn't it be nice if you knew what you were talking about," said Wandering Eye Wilson.

"Ah'm telling ya' yer ignarant," retorted Cookie, "Big I. Little g, little n, little brain. Ignarant. Salt and pepper are spices, not herbs!"

"I said I wasn't sure that they weren't herbs," replied Wandering Eye, his voice going up in frustration.

"Dang straight yer weren't sure," grumbled Cookie, pointing a grizzled and calloused finger at Wandering Eye, "Ah'm the cook here, I knows what I'm talkin' about. Every saddle bump of a cowpoke whose ever et a can o' beans thinks he kin cook!"

"I never said I could cook!"

"Dang straight ya' cain't cook," snapped Cookie. "Ya think them squirrels just jump into the pot all by themselves." He wiggled his fingers in the air, "they just sashay on over and jump in, a little rodent dosi-do! Oh lookit me! Cover me in lard, don't ah look good in beans. Heck no!"

"We eat squirrel?"

"Ya gotta tetch those varmint on the haid with a hammer; just so," continued Cookie motioning his hand artfully up and down, "tenderize 'em like. Boil off that fur and pull their little teeth out..."

"Gak," replied Wandering Eye.

"Slather 'em up with bacon fat, and rub 'em down with salt and pepper. Which ARE SPICES, not herbs. Ya uneducated idjit!"

"I didn't think..."

"Dang straight ya' didn't think! It takes years, YEARS! of experience to work my cool-linarie magic!"

"Magic? You're cooking beans and road-kill!"

"And makin' it taste *gooooood!*"

Wandering Eye stood up abruptly, throwing his hands in the air, "that's it. I'm done." He stalked off across the bar-room away from the table.

"That's whut ah thought," grumbled Cookie, glowering at the back of the receding cowpoke, "Ignarant. Big I, little g, little n, little brain. Ignarant!"

Across the Heart of Darkness, at the bar the Duke of Death nursed a sassaparilla and talked quietly with Mosey the prospector, and S'ym the blue furred bartender.

"I'm just saying," said the Duke, "what if?" He looked earnestly at the prospector.

"She slips you a note, all sly like," asked the prospector. He ran one hand thoughtfully through the stubble of his unshaven chin. His mouth worked a little, almost as if he were chewing over the thought.

S'ym was standing in front of the two, drying a beer mug with his bar towel. He lowered one eyebrow in inquiry, "ya saying ya didn't know this girl before?"

The Duke shook his head no, "Nope. I was there eating, had my best girl with me. I was just wanting to pay the check without anyone knowing."

"And she slipped you the note?"

"Yeah. What would you do?" asked the Duke.

The Prospector tilted his head to one side and pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Was she a nice piece of ass?"

"YEEEEHAWHH!" could be heard echoing in through the swinging doors from the horse trough out front.

"Dang tetchy mule," grumbled the prospector. "I meant did she have big tits?"

"They were okay."

S'ym stopped drying and looked at the gunslinger. "They were okay, or they were OOhhh-kaay!?"

"They were nice," admitted the gunslinger.

"Bone her," said the prospector.

"Bone her," nodded the bartender in solemn agreement, and went back to drying the mug.

"BONE HER!" shouted Tin Ear Wilson from the far end of the bar!

The three turned to look at the old man with the ear horn sitting twenty feet away in the noisy saloon. The Duke looked back at S'ym, "I thought he was deaf?"

"WHAT?" shouted Tin Ear Wilson.

"YOU OKAY DOWN THERE," S'ym yelled down the bar to the old man?

"I'VE GOT A BONER!" yelled Tin Ear Wilson, "FIRST TIME IN EIGHT YEARS!"

Simon, the diminutive hunchback assistant to the Professor, immediately jumped up on a chair and held high in each hand a bottle of the bright blue elixir. "IT'TH NOT A MIRACLE! IT'TH THIENCE! And at only two bottleth for a dollar!"

Miss Kitty, who had arrived on the scene, all put back together from her tryst upstairs, confronted the midget with a glower on her face and her hands on her hips. She stepped directly in front of the midget; and he, standing on the chair, stared directly into the massive décolletage that all but silenced him.

"Merthy be...thnuggly partth," he blinked slowly a couple of times and his upraised arms, holding the blue bottles of elixir slowly lowered, without any conscious control from his mind.

"You may run a dog and pony show outside," snapped Miss Kitty, "but don't you DARE come into MY saloon and hustle MY customers. Any money in their pockets in here is MY MONEY!"

"Elephant," replied Simon weakly.

"What?!"

"No dog. Thumbelina ith an elephant," he spoke slowly, and directly into Miss Kitty's bosom, "and the hortheth are hortheth, not really ponieth. Ponieth tend to be thmaller."

Miss Kitty cleared her throat, "Uhhh-hmmmm. I'm up here."

Simon, wide-eyed continued staring into the large breasts mere inches away, and answered flatly, wholly in awe; "You're everywhere."

"MISS KITTY," yelled Tin Ear Wilson. "I'VE GOT WOOD! TEE ME UP!"

"ELANA!" yelled Miss Kitty, to the first dance hall girl she saw nearby. Elana looked up and vaguely in Miss Kitty's direction, still not wearing her glasses, "you want to take care of Tin Ear here."

"I'll be there in minute," answered Elana.

"YOU MIGHT WANT TO HURRY!" yelled Tin Ear, "I'M NOT SURE HOW LONG THIS WILL LAST!"

Miss Kitty returned her attention to Simon. "I'll get back to you later," she said menacingly.

"Pleath," responded the hunchback blankly.

ITALY - RUSSIA: It seems to me, based on all these stories, that the best holiday gift for you would be a leather bustier and perhaps some handcuffs and legcuffs. What size corset do you wear anyway?

England – Italy: Who taught you how to read a map?

ROME to LONDON: See? Now will you attack this guy?

CA to DE: Remember who you are. We do.

SANTA CLARITA to KENT, WHEREVER IT IS YOU LIVE: Are you still skulking around here in that prom dress? At least you could get matching shoes ...

Kent – Santa Clarita: No, I wasn't very happy with the color anyway. I prefer the sexy undergarments, which I still have on. And the makeup...I love the makeup.

WILLIAMS to DARK PRESSER: Really enjoying the story, Dark. If only it had some sexual double entendre. Oh, yeah, and a vampire or two. Stories always go better with vampires. And clowns. Could we get a clown in there?

Dateline Austria: The Grand Archduke would like to announce his intention to rescue European financial markets with an infusion of capital, in exchange for warrants and increased oversight over the banks and other financial institutions.

Somewhere West of the Hobby...Birds of a Feather - "Wouldn't it be nice if I could trust you," said the Professor. He ran one long, manicured finger over his waxed mustache, making sure not one hair was out of place. He sat at the rear of the Heart of Darkness, his back to the wall, at a dimly lit table. His dark top hat sat prominently on the table, and his elegant walking stick leaned against the wall. His companion sat across the table, hunched forward in his chair, his feet dangling just above the floor.

"Nice is jelly beans...and candy corn," replied the banker, "and maybe cupcakes. Definitely cupcakes. Especially the ones with the sprinkles on top."

The Professor's sonorous voice interrupted Jeremie's musing, "I meant to imply that I don't trust you. I know what you're doing in Darkness."

The banker's eyes narrowed. "You...you know?"

The Professor took one long finger and touched the tabletop, he drew the finger through a small puddle of spilled beer next to his mug and drew a circle with the liquid. "I would conjecture that the deposits of your bank would not suffer an audit lightly."

A high piercing female squeal from across the Heart of Darkness brought their heads abruptly up and around. "KITTY!"

. . .

The swinging doors of the saloon had pushed open to admit two new patrons. The man wore a vest and gray evening coat, a bowler hat atop his head. The comely young woman wore a red satin gown, with a translucent lace collar and matching ribbons in her crimson red hair, she smacked gum vociferously as her eyes assayed the crowd.

"Dey looks like a buncha rubes," she commented around the bulge of gum.

"Ah say, my good woman," retorted the man, leaning in closer to her, to speak more quietly, "rubes that can no doubt hear."

"Whose you callin' a good woman?" she smacked.

"Edith!? EDITH PAGE?!" a voice of astonishment called across the bar-room of the Heart of Darkness.

The gum smacking woman's head came up and she squealed in instant recognition, "KITTY!"

Miss Kitty, recognizing the new arrival from across the room, ran to meet her, her breasts bouncing vigorously along the way. The red-headed woman, Edith, bounced her own way to meet Miss Kitty, and the two met in a cataclysm of breasts and hugs. Breasts molding into each other and thighs, through thin satin fabric, touching.

Simon, still atop a chair, the bottles of elixir held slackly at his sides, giggled quietly to himself, "Heh, heh, heh. Lethbianth. Heh, heh, heh."

Miss Kitty placed her hands on Edith's shoulders and pushed her back so she could get a good look at her; look into the pretty face with the bright red lipstick, and heavy rouge, and thick, elongated eyelashes.

"You are just as beautiful as always," gushed Miss Kitty.

Edith, eyes bright, and a genuine smile on her face as she mashed her gum energetically in exuberance returned the compliment; "Yer tits, deys even bigger'n I remembers 'em."

"You're so sweet," answered Miss Kitty, and ran one hand through Edith's hair, softly, in an intimate gesture, "gosh, it's so good to see you. What in the Hobby brings you this far out west?"

"Dis place is surely at da' corner of no and where," answered Edith, "we hadda cross pages and pages of some really bad writing ta gets here!"

"Well, we do suffer from that, but it's not always that bad," replied Miss Kitty.

"Oh! Da' writing gets better?"

"No. Just sometimes it's shorter."

The red head looked around the Heart of Darkness, at the cowpokes and prospectors, the farmers and townspeople, then back to Miss Kitty. "So whaddya' doing inna dump like this?"

"I own it," answered Miss Kitty. "You remember Loose Lips Lindy...she left it to me."

"It's an absolutely beautiful dump," replied Edith, "love da' decor."

Miss Kitty laughed, "Well. We make do with the men we have."

"Ain't dat da' truth," replied Edith, "and dat's which is what brings me here." She said it as if suddenly remembering and turned to grab hold of the arm of the man in the bowler behind her and tugged him forward. "Dis is my paramour an' traveling companion, Webster T. Scratch, esquire! Webby," she indicated Miss Kitty with a wave of her hand, "dis is Miss Kitty Holley, gotta be one o' da top ten sluts of all time."

"Oh, Edith! You say the nicest things," said Miss Kitty. "You're going to make me blush!"

"Psssshhh," exasperated Edith, "as if ya could remember how!" Both women laughed.

"Ah must say," said Webster T. Scratch, extending his hand, "it is surely a pleasure to make your acquaintance. A privilege that is."

Miss Kitty took his hand and gave a little curtsy that gave a better view of her cleavage; as she dipped so did his head, as his eyes followed her down and then back up. It was almost as if she could hear in the background...heh, heh, heh. Lethbianth. Heh, heh, heh. She shook her head...where did that come from?

"So, how do you two...ah...ladies, know each other?" asked Webster.

The two women giggled together like...schoolgirls.

"We were schoolgirls!" they squealed together.

"We went to the University of Bang Her together," said Miss Kitty.

"It's like da' best school for whoors anyways in da' whole world," enthused Edith.

"Ah say, ah say...ah have no idea what to say to that," plodded along Webster.

"Oh, no. Really! I would in no way be the slut I am today without a solid college foundation of learning," affirmed Miss Kitty. Edith Page solemnly nodded alongside Miss Kitty.

"It's not just da' piece of paper, da' sheepskin," added Edith, "it's da' knowledge."

"Actually, it's lambskin," interjected Miss Kitty.

"Da experience of goin' down dat road," said Edith, "was second to none."

"Heh, heh, heh, she said going down. Heh, heh, heh," said a small voice from across the room.

"Oh, no, no, no," said Miss Kitty, "you weren't second to none...you were second to me!"

"OH. That's right!, " squealed Edith. "I had like totally forgotten!"

"Ah say, ah say. What do you mean?" asked Webster T. Scratch.

"We graduated at the top of our class," answered Miss Kitty. "Edith graduated Some Cum Lotta..."

"And Kitty, da slut dat she is, graduated Many Cum Lotta," squealed Edith.

"We always did like being on top."

"Ah must say, you two are certainly birds of a feather," commented Webster.

"So, Mister Scratch..." replied Miss Kitty.

"Oh, call him Webby. Dat's what I do," interrupted Edith.

"Actually, Webster T. Scratch is appropriate to my stature, fame and..."

"So, Webby," interrupted Miss Kitty, "what is it that brings you and our dear Edith to darken our doorstep here in Darkness?"

"Dat's so funny you should mention feathers!" interrupted Edith, "Webby, tell her whad happened!"

"My dear. Ah should surely not burden your former colleague with such sundry, miniscule and surely boorish details," answered Webster, a tad quickly.

"I love details," prodded Miss Kitty.

"Oh, yeah. She like da' tail. I knows dat'," threw in Edith.

"You are so bad!" Miss Kitty pushed at Edith's shoulder.

"Heh, heh, heh. Lethbianth. Heh, heh, heh."

Miss Kitty looked around...where was that coming from?

"So, that is quite a drawl you have," said Miss Kitty, "are you from the south?"

"Actually, my dear. I am a favorite son of Maine. New England, that is," answered Webster.

"Reeaaaaalllllly?" said Miss Kitty.

"Sadly, it is my burden in life that our author cannot write a New England accent," said Webster solemnly, in his slow southern drawl.

"Bad writing," said Miss Kitty.

"Pages and pages," threw in Edith.

"But what is it you do," prodded Miss Kitty. Afterall, deadline was really only minutes away.

"I, my dear woman, am a Knight of the Hegemony of Need!"

"Wow," replied Miss Kitty, "that like needed rising theme music or something." Bruno jumped in and hit a melodramatic tune on the piano. Miss Kitty just looked over and shook her head; the timing was too off.

"Isn't dat wonderful," gushed Edith, smacking her gum, "he's like a knight!"

"Ah am a Knight," retorted Webster, "I am guided by a sacred light to give, to reward the worthy, to protect the meek, and to provide to the provideless, to replace the morality of right and wrong with entitlement."

"Sounds very 'Klannish' in a way," said Miss Kitty.

"Not at all," said Webster, "Need is a terrible and swift sword!"

"I think you're cribbing notes," said Miss Kitty.

Edith practically glowed, "he is sorda' a cradle robber."

"Let a man avoid evil deeds like a man who loves life avoids poison," said Webster.

"Buddha," said Miss Kitty.

"Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die," said Webster.

"McCourt," said Miss Kitty, "You'll steal from anyone."

"My good woman," said Webster huffily, "I refuse to discuss *'that'* tournament."

"I just can't believe that you were paying that much attention in class," said Edith, "that's why you were the Many Cum Lotta."

"So what is the Hegemony of Need," asked Miss Kitty, "and who are you calling good woman?"

"There is great Need in the world, even though people not be aware of it. Even people in need might not be aware they are in need. They might believe that they should provide for themselves, or that they are well off, or that the world is fair! It is our sacred responsibility, nay, our **duty** to shed the light of...enlightenment...of knowledge, of envy, to show these peoples that they are in need, they **are** entitled. Though they may know not. And then," said Webster, his voice rising, in strength, in tone, in some indefinable manner of power, "to show that it is our duty to provide for them..."

"Oh," said Miss Kitty, "you're a Democrat!"

"Ah do believe in the principles of Democracy."

"Are you a social democrat?" asked Miss Kitty.

"You get a couple of drinks into 'em and he does get a little handsy," answered Edith, smacking her gum.

"So what is it that brings you to Darkness," asked Miss Kitty?

"There is great need in Darkness," answered Webster, "and if not, there soon will be."

By Popular Demand

Credit goes to Ryk Downes, I believe, for inventing this game (although his original version had the GM supply the starting letter as well). The goal is to pick something that fits the category and will be the "most popular" answer. You score points based on the number of entries that match yours. For example, if the category is "Cats" and the responses were 7 for Persian, 3 for Calico and 1 for Siamese, everyone who said Persian would get 7 points, Calico 3 and the lone Siamese would score 1 point. The cumulative total over 10 rounds will determine the overall winner. Anyone may enter at any point, starting with an equivalent point total of the lowest cumulative score from the previous round. If a person misses a round, they'll receive the minimum score from the round added to their cumulative total. And, if you want to submit some commentary with your answers, feel free to. The game will consist of 10 rounds. A prize will be awarded to the winner.

Round 8 Categories

1. A stringed instrument.
2. A difficult school subject.
3. A poor nation.
4. One of the deadly sins.
5. A word associated with weather.

Selected Comments By Category:

Instrument – Brendan Whyte "Gee-tar. yee-hah. texan bootscootin' boogie. twang twang." Tom Swider "Hope there are enough classical music fans out there who name "violin" instead of guitar. Of course, I'm expecting somebody to chime in with "zither" or "banjo"."

Subject – John Colledge "The only thing I ever got out of calculus was the most economical size to make a tin of beans!" Brendan Whyte "I don't s'pose many of your American readers will have had experience with Babylonian cuneiform in elementary school like we did... I could never get my cunies to form up in nice rows. They kept falling over. And the teacher... I've never seen someone so ancient!" Tom Swider "I did okay in math, though I had a slump in tenth grade and trig. I got good grades because I studied hard, and the stupid teach spent more time talking about soccer and volleyball instead of doing his job. Fortunately, I regained my interest in math during college because I found statistics interesting." Philip Murphy "We just don't get along. It's strange though. I've noticed sometimes that people tend to be good at writing a composition or Maths but rarely both. Odd, I think." Dane Maslen "My answer is based on the observed fact that no one seems to be able to do simple maths any more. I've just watched a round of University Challenge (you guys have a similar programme, but I don't know what it's called) in which one question was "Take the number 666 and divide it by the sum of its digits. What prime number is the result?" Apparently not one of the eight university students present could manage this. It's not even as though they needed to do the full long division in their heads (though it's what I chose to

do). 666 divided by 18 is clearly more than 30 and less than 40. To get a result ending in 6 when multiplying by a number ending in 8, the other number must end in a 2 or a 7. 32 is not a prime. Therefore 37 must be the answer."

Nation – John Colledge "I'm sure there is an African country that is thought to be poorer, but Bangladesh is pretty near the bottom of the heap – poor souls" Brendan Whyte "Singapoor? Poor-tugal? Poor-to rico?" Philip Murphy "Those poor people are suffering so much - a bad leader, hyperinflation, food shortages. I just wish something was done." Andy York "If memory serves right, they have something along the lines of 18,000,000% inflation."

Sins – John Colledge "Gluttony- a sin that has carried over the pond to our shores big time over the past ten years or so." Brendan Whyte "Masturbation... no that just makes you blind, not dead."

Weather – Brendan Whyte "Girls! big black ones! or panties!... did you ever see the Japanese movie 'Weathergirl'?"

<u>Player</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Nation</u>	<u>Sin</u>	<u>Weather</u>	<u>Turn</u>	<u>Total</u>
Berend Renken	Violin	Math	Ethiopia	Gluttony	Report	26	247
Jamie McQuinn	Violin	Calculus	Bangladesh	Sloth	Rain	26	247
Bill Brown	Guitar	Physics	Bangladesh	Gluttony	Rain	28	245
Tom Swider	Violin	Math	Ethiopia	Greed	Storm	26	244
Brad Martin	Guitar	Math	Haiti	Lust	Hot	27	239
Dane Maslen	Violin	Math	Haiti	Lust	Rain	31	239
Kevin Wilson	Guitar	Calculus	Somalia	Greed	Front	21	228
Brendan Whyte	Guitar	Latin	Afghanistan	Lust	Rain	24	226
David Burgess	Guitar	Physics	Mexico	Greed	Cloud	18	219
David Partridge	Violin	Math	Somalia	Greed	Rain	31	207
Melinda Holley	Guitar	Algebra	Bangladesh	Gluttony	Wet	22	200
W. Andrew York	Guitar	Math	Mozambique	Lust	Hurricane	26	197
Allison Kent	Guitar	Calculus	Ethiopia	Gluttony	Precipitation	23	196
Brad Wilson	Violin	Algebra	Chad	Lust	Storm	18	192
John Colledge	Violin	Calculus	Bangladesh	Gluttony	Mixed	22	181
Gina .Teh	NMR	NMR	NMR	NMR	NMR	14	168
Jack McHugh	Violin	Trigonometry	Mali	Sloth	Sunny	14	167
Jeremie Lefrancois	Harp	Math	Tibet	Luxury	Rain	19	165
Martin Burgdorf	Guitar	Math	Cuba	Envy	Variable	22	165
Philip Murphy	Guitar	Math	Zimbabwe	Sloth	Rain	30	138
Joakim Spangberg	NMR	NMR	NMR	NMR	NMR	14	122
<u>MOST POPULAR</u>	Guitar	Math	Bangladesh	Lust/Gluttony	Rain	35	

Round 9 Categories – Deadline is October 28th 2008 at 7:00am

1. A dead musician.
2. A type of soup.
3. Someone who lost a U.S. Presidential election.
4. Any insect.
5. A disease.

**Deadline For The Next Issue of Eternal Sunshine:
October 28th, 2008 at 7:00am – See You Then!**