

Eternal Sunshine #3

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On the web at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com> – follow the links to the **Diplomacy World** section for this subzine, old **Diplomacy World** articles (and even some full issues in .pdf format), Message Board, Chat Room, and other items of interest. Or just go there directly at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>

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. Also, any Diplomacy players in the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex should consider joining my free DFW Diplomacy Yahoo group (which I hope to use to organize occasional f-t-f games in the area) at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/dallasdiplomacygroup/>

Quote Of The Month – “Sand is overrated. It's just tiny, little rocks.” (Joel in “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”)

Bonus Quote of the Month – “I’m not sorry for whining and throwing a fit, but I **am** sorry for not saying thank you.” (Heather, in a classic Heathersesque moment)

Welcome to the third (but hopefully not final) issue of Eternal Sunshine, the official subzine of The International Brotherhood of Surly Creeps, of which I am a founding member. I’m starting to get into the swing of things again, becoming more comfortable with the publishing process. Things certainly are a lot simpler than they were back when I started Maniac’s Paradise. In those days, I was using a DOS version of Word Perfect (I think 5.0), email had to be saved to files and reopened and reformatted (cut-and-paste wasn’t an option), and the copy machine I used was one-sided and super-slow. It took MUCH longer for me to print, collate, staple, and mail each zine issue as it did to compose and format it! Hmm, any of you who read my zines back then are probably nodding your head thinking “yeah, that’s why they were so lousy!” Since I distribute this subzine by email or web for the most part (Jim-Bob does the print version when he prints his own zine), those headaches are currently things of the past. But the general process I go through remains the same as before: I take my prior issue, use it as a template for the new one, add in some notes on items I might want to include, and then wait to see what responses I receive from the prior issue (if any).

Perhaps because I do enjoy the time I spend on this little subzine, and the time I spend doing hobby activities in general, I’ve been convinced to take on a new project – or an old one, depending on how you look at it. Jim Burgess and I are working together to revive Diplomacy World for the umpteenth time. I’m really looking forward to seeing how this all works out. Since it will be a pdf publication with basically zero print/post mail distribution, all the energy can be spent on trying to collect the best possible material. That’s always been the trickiest part – trying to find people to write articles. The zine is only as good as the submissions. Besides that, all DW needs is a decent layout, publicity, and occasionally an editor’s red pen. If you’re not familiar with Diplomacy World, go to my website and read some of the back issues I’ve posted as pdf files. And if you are familiar with it, why not try your hand at writing an article? It doesn’t have to be all that difficult you know. You can cover just about anything Diplomacy-related. Strategy & Tactics has always been popular: what negotiating tricks do you have? What is the best English opening? You could design a puzzle or quiz. Relate Diplomacy to something historical, or literary, or pop-culture in some way. Anything about variants is always welcome. Attended a Con or a club meeting and had a great (or terrible) time? Tell us why. There is no limit to the topics you can tackle. If you need some direction, email me and we’ll talk about it. Length of the articles can vary. Give it a try; you may be surprised at what you can come up with! If nothing else, drop me a line when the new issues start to come out (we’re approaching Issue #100, with #97 the one we’re working on now) and let us know what you think...about a particular article or the zine as a whole!

Hmm, what else did I need to say? Before I forget, check out the Eternal Sunshine Games Section for a gamestart of *By Popular Demand*, which I decided to run now that Andy York's game in his subzine has finished up. Join in, and who knows, maybe I'll send a prize to the winner when it's all over? What's the matter, are you *scared*? I double dog dare you! Also, see the Movie Review section for the list I threatened to come up with last issue – the 100 movies I enjoy watching over and over again. Yeah, maybe I do have too much time on my hands. I think I'll start doing a monthly movie quiz of some type next issue, depending on if I get any sort of feedback or response to this rag at all – as I'm writing this I've only gotten a single letter of comment on ES besides a note from my youngest sister and a concert review from my oldest brother! Well you can't get rid of me that easily – I'm used to being ignored or making people uncomfortable. Nice try! Okay, on to my monthly ramblings and babblings.

Heather and I have developed very comfortable routines and schedules since I returned home, and each of us have specific duties we handle. I do the cooking, the cleaning, the laundry, and Heather ... well, her number one job is to sit on the couch and look beautiful and allow me to serve her! One of my most challenging tasks, however, is getting Heather out of bed in the morning. The exact start time changes every two weeks to match her shift at work, but basically the routine is the same. I get up, make coffee, and check my email and the news on the internet for about half an hour – and then the fun really begins! Heather cannot simply wake up and climb out of bed all at once; it has to be accomplished in stages, which means I have to start a full thirty minutes before she needs to be conscious.

The first step is simple: you wake her up and tell her she can sleep for ten more minutes. No further discussion is necessary at that point. Ten minutes later, you wake her up and she'll ask for "one more ten more minutes." No problem, there's time for that. The third time you wake her up, however...well, have you ever seen a child bargain with his parents to stay up for a few more minutes? Or, perhaps more accurately, have you ever seen a death-row inmate bargain for more time? Even half-asleep, Heather can come up with a multitude of reasons why she doesn't need to get up yet. "I don't have to wash my hair today; I can sleep five more minutes." "It's Friday, I can wear jeans today, that's five minutes more." "I don't need to bring my lunch today, three more minutes, please!" Of course that excuse doesn't hold since I'm the one who gets her lunch together. As her pleadings are ignored, I expect she'll become more creative in her reasoning. "I put these socks on last night, so I can wear them again, that's two more minutes." "I can run all the red lights, five more minutes." "I don't need to wear any makeup, ten more minutes." I'll have to put my foot down when she tries "I can wear this underwear one more day" or "I think it's Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day." The odd thing is, no matter what time she does finally get out of bed, Heather always winds up leaving home about three minutes late.

I listed a bunch of books I enjoy rereading last issue, and then mentioned other books I have been reading recently for the first time. The last two books I've finished as I type this are Magical Thinking and Possible Side Effects, both by Augusten Burroughs. Augusten Burroughs is just about my favorite writer of the moment. He is also seems to be the reason I rarely write anything of my own these days.

I can't remember exactly when I first heard of Burroughs. I think I saw his memoir "Dry" on the windowsill in the stairwell of prison, and I considered reading it up before changing my mind and putting it down again. I guess I was a little burned-out on the idea of digesting yet ANOTHER memoir about addiction or recovery – I'd just finished "A Million Little Pieces" and my participation in the Residential Drug and Alcohol Program (RDAP) made drug and alcohol use the major topic of almost every day. I didn't even bother to open the book and read a page or two. If I had, I probably would have read the book despite my feeling of overkill. Certainly I didn't get another chance – books left on the windowsill rarely made it more than an hour or two before they disappeared.

Perhaps a word of explanation is in order. In the prison I did most of my time in, there were two "libraries". The first was the official Prison Library. This is where you went if you wanted a newspaper – assuming when you say "newspaper" you mean the classified section from three weeks ago for the Buffalo or Cleveland area. It's also where you went when you wanted to look something up in an encyclopedia published before the moon landing, or if you wanted to read one of the wonderful volumes kept there, donated by libraries instead of throwing them away...you know it's a bad sign when many have a red "Throw Away" or "Destroy" stamp inside the front cover. The library did have a wide selection of Motocross magazines, courtesy of the head of the so-called Education Department. I imagine he enjoyed reading them, and figured it would be cheaper to use the meager prison library funds to do so then to subscribe to them himself.

I don't mean to make it sound like the nonexistent selection of books was all the fault of the prison system. No, as it turns out there were a number of inmates who were equally responsible. Early on I would bring my personal books down to the library when I was done with them, figuring if I donated them other inmates could enjoy them after me. What I didn't realize was that there were a few odd and utterly selfish inmates who spent their time scanning the bookshelves looking for any new books, especially hardcover. Why? Because they'd pack them up in boxes and mail the books home to their families so they wouldn't have to buy them, and so they could try to sell them on eBay or trade them in at used book stores. I guess the idea of going to the library in their home town was out of the question? I don't know, I never fully understood it, especially as it wasn't all that cheap or easy to send big packages out. But it happened, and it was always a problem. About the only thing you could do to make a hardcover book less tempting was to deface the cover in some way so it wouldn't be considered sellable.

The windowsills were the *real* library system, especially when it came to paperbacks. When you finished reading a book, you just left it in the windowsill on the main stairwell. At least 100 times an hour somebody would walk by, and within an hour or two the book would have found a new reader to enjoy it. If it stayed longer than a day, somebody might bring it to the library themselves (I often did that on the way to breakfast) or in the end it would be thrown away by an orderly. Obviously there isn't a lot to do in prison, so even people who rarely read at home can find themselves avid readers. Most popular were books by Dean Koontz, or similar authors who can write an intelligent story and churn out a new book every year. The wealthiest inmates would have them sent by families using Amazon as soon as hardcover versions were published – it was considered a status symbol not to wait for the paperback. Second most popular were books on how to buy real estate with no money down. It seemed half of the inmates were convinced THIS was how they were going to get rich. I always thought it odd, since many of them had never had a real job, had no credit history, and were left with little or no money in savings. Their projections for price appreciation and income were always a little suspect too – I'm no expert, but do most houses go in price up by 50% a year, offer a ready list of problem-free tenants to pay rent, and never require material repair or upgrade? One clever inmate suggested he could make his OWN fortune publishing a book called "How to Make Mega Bling Bling in Real Estate" because that title was guaranteed to attract every inmate's attention, and consequently sales would be massive.

The other books which were hugely popular were the True Crime books. I always told Heather that when she was sending a package she should throw in a few used True Crime paperbacks if she didn't have other books to send. A few friends like Elaine would send "care packages" of four or five books twice a year. Those books were like heroin to most inmates – if they saw you reading one, they'd ask to get it after you...and usually that reading list would be two or three names by the time you finished the book. It was a rarity to find a True Crime book on the windowsill, and if you did odds were high it was one you read yourself at least six months earlier. Serial killer books were favored, but it seemed to me that there didn't even need to be anything especially unusual for a killing to warrant its own book; all it needed was enough press coverage and court records for the author to throw a book together without too many personal interviews. That and a catchy title or gruesome photo or cover artwork.

As usual, I've gone off on a tangent, so allow me to return to my original subject – Augusten Burroughs. In one of her packages, Heather sent me his most popular book, Running With Scissors, and wrote in an accompanying letter that his stories reminded her somewhat of my own childhood tales. I'd worked through a few David Sedaris books in the prior months, Naked being my favorite, and this looked to be the same sort of thing. Only it wasn't – it was much better. Burroughs tells his tales with such matter-of-fact delight, while reflecting the understanding that as children so many of us didn't have the experience or the point of view to realize how odd or unusual our circumstances really were. Within his pages I found stories not so different than my own – well, except for his homosexual exploits with a pedophile at age 13 which I was somehow lucky enough to skip in my life. But many of the other elements sounded all too familiar: the crazy mother, the manipulative psychiatrist, the filth – an "alternate universe" version of my family's oddball years. And **normal** people were buying this? Literary types were *enjoying* these stories? I was shocked and inspired simultaneously. Perhaps there was hope for The Screaming Adventures of the Whining Kent Pigs after all? I've only got a few chapters written, but I've promised myself many times that I would make it a priority and finish that project one of these days.

Unfortunately, in my overwhelmingly negative outlook on myself (and much of the world), the success of Augusten Burroughs is also a reason for despair. After all, if I do finish writing my childhood stories, compile them in a book, and by some miracle get them published...how could I hope to make them as entertaining or refreshing as those Burroughs wrote? And wouldn't anything I compose simply be looked at as a rip-off, or a poor man's homage to a literary formula which has already had its potential market saturated? In the end, those who know me will realize that if I didn't want to use those as potential excuses not to proceed with that project, I'd find other ones. I'm working on my negativity, and I do think I am getting a bit better

at forcing myself to move forward without regard for those voices inside of my head – on this project as well as others – but it's a daily struggle. Perhaps it isn't all that bad though...would the world really be better off not hearing about the time my father licked something disgusting in order to stop his children from arguing? Does it help anybody to read about my mother's mental illness, or my ex-wife's for that matter? I suppose if you make the picture big enough, everything loses its focus and its meaning. I'm good at doing that!

In other personal news, wedding plans proceed in the Whining Kent Pig household. Heather designed and purchased invitations from the VistaPrint website, using a Halloween theme and adding her own touches. They're nice enough, not fancy, and certainly far from expensive; just goofy and fun which is the image we want the wedding to portray. Heather also purchased some customized magnets which we'll include in the invitation envelopes, so people can stick them on their refrigerators and be reminded of their social obligation to buy us expensive presents. Hmm, which reminds me, we need to go on Amazon.com or something and build some registry wish-lists. There really isn't any household item we need or want, so I imagine the lists will be suggestions of what kind of gift cards we like!

Being a Halloween wedding, Heather also went online and bought some cute Halloween decorations from Oriental Trading. The box arrived last week, with Halloween-style bubbles (instead of rice), a big Heather and Doug Halloween banner, some table centerpieces, and some little stuffed bears holding suckers, dressed in witch hats. The place where we are having the wedding supplies most of the decorations, but since Heather wants things to be Halloween in theme, we're buying some stuff to develop the flavor she's looking for. Since there are still seven months to go, I suspect those purchases are not yet finished. Maybe you'll all be unlucky enough to see some photos in the subzine here after the big day.

Since last issue, the final BIG piece of the puzzle - the one which had been making Heather typically frantic and manic - was put in place: we found our photographer. This was not an easy project, for a number of reasons. First there was the matter of cost – this is going to be a small ceremony and reception, with maybe 35 people attending, and we don't need (nor can we afford) one of these professionals who wants to charge you to show up and take the photographs, and then wants to own the rights to the photos too, forcing you to buy them one at a time. There won't be a bridal portrait or stuff like that. All we want is someone to take photos of the house, the decorations, and ceremony, and the reception. I figure one or two of our friends can be counted on to bring digital cameras to take some photos, but if it isn't too much money we would both prefer to have a designated, skilled photographer there to do the job. After all, we're both hoping this is our LAST marriage, and it might be nice to have some decent snapshots of it.

The initial search was difficult. Most professionals were out of our price range immediately. So Heather started calling around to make appointments with the few we might be able to afford. That's when we discovered a new problem, one which I never considered beforehand. As it turns out, down here in the Buckle of the Bible Belt, some people have a problem with a Halloween wedding. That problem is compounded when Heather explains to them that we are having a non-traditional ceremony, complete with Celtic handfasting (or a version of it that Heather wants anyway), and that our wedding officiant is nondenominational. Suddenly the more ignorant among them imagine a ceremony where we sacrifice a newborn child and drink its blood. One woman flat-out told Heather she would not do a wedding on Halloween "because it is against my religious beliefs." Ha, I bet this same holier-than-thou woman allows her children to dress up on Halloween and go to the doors of strangers asking for candy. Oh well.

In the end we made appointments to see two photographers on a Saturday afternoon. In the morning Heather had her College Algebra class, which meant all we had time to do was come home, eat lunch, and then leave again to drive the 30 miles to the agreed upon meeting place for the first appointment – an Olive Garden in Arlington, midway between Dallas and where the first photographer lived. While as recently as 2003 I lived in Arlington, I only vaguely remembered where the restaurant was, so we had to call for directions once we got in the vicinity. Being lost didn't help my mood much, which was edgy after the terrible construction-area traffic we had to fight to get there. What should have been a 40-minute drive turned into twice that. To make matters worse, when we finally DID arrive, Heather realized she didn't have the photographer's cell phone number with her, nor did she know what he looked like or where we'd find him. So we stood around the lobby like idiots, asking a few people randomly and even getting the hostess involved until FINALLY we find him and his wife in the bar area.

I did my best to calm down, and we started the meeting. Right away I could see this guy was not going to be the one for us. First of all, it felt more like WE were being interviewed by them, instead of the reverse. His "portfolio" was impressive enough, but strangely there were hardly any wedding photos – most of his

work was photos of animals, weather, or his wife in modeling poses. As it turned out, he had recently left a larger photography studio to work on his own, and obviously those photos he had taken while employed there were not his legally to show as samples. It's hard to describe why they weren't right – just way too stiff for Heather and me, too *normal* for lack of a better word. Our typical banter and semi-sarcastic jokes were met with polite giggles or (more usually) uncomfortable smiles. We didn't stay and eat or anything, as soon as we were done we left the restaurant and went to the car, where we both agreed they probably wouldn't work out...but as a last resort, perhaps we could settle for this guy and his wife, assuming they didn't decide that photographing a wedding on Halloween would cause them eternal damnation.

The second appointment was about 20 miles further west, on the west end of Fort Worth, at the photographer's house. It was a good omen in itself that there was almost zero traffic the whole way there. I made one minor wrong turn just before we arrived, but quickly backed out of the mobile home company I'd accidentally wound up in and figured out how to get back on track. As we slowly drove down the suburban street they lived on, counting houses and watching the numbers fading from the curbstones, we approached a residence on our right with two cars parked in the driveway, surrounded by engine pieces. The garage stood open, filled with more auto parts. Finally a truck was parked in the street, its back overflowing with a variety of front-end bumpers and other large auto pieces...and on a trailer behind it, what appeared to be a port-a-potty like those you'd find at construction sites, wrapped in flexible cord to tether it to the trailer.

I am not ashamed to admit that viewing the carnage in front of us, and realizing the mess was left that way even with the knowledge days in advance that we were coming for an appointment, I felt fairly certain that we had just found the photographer for us. Not so much because the place was chaotic, but more because this appeared to be someone who was willing to be who they are, to put on no false pretenses, and to allow the world to accept them that way or reject them entirely. An independent spirit like that was without question the type Heather was bound to connect well with.

We walked up to the open garage to come face to face with two grease-covered men in jeans and flannel shirts. Instead of saying anything, they just stood and kind of stared at us, until finally Heather broke the silence to ask if Melissa was around (the name of the woman we were meeting – as usual I hadn't even been given *that* much information). Broken from their comas, the men grunted and motioned towards the front door, where Melissa suddenly appeared to usher us inside, apologizing for keeping us waiting. The reason for her tardiness became apparent as we entered directly into the living room, where an infant lay on the rug with a pacifier in her mouth, smiling up at us.

Everything about the home and Melissa seemed to put Heather at ease. The room was decorated in what I would call Late Country Texas: license plates and other auto memorabilia on the walls and the shelves of the entertainment center, denim-covered sofa and loveseat, and a few photos of typical Texas types scattered about. Melissa sat us down, started to play a DVD of some other wedding she'd taken, and talked over the music soundtrack explaining what each person wanted, who they were, and coloring the presentation with various anecdotes. There was no doubt she would be the one – Heather was so comfortable she kept looking at commenting on the baby, which is rare for her as except for her own daughter Heather basically hates kids and wants nothing to do with them. Melissa's photos were nice, simple with a tiny bit of artistic flair. Her subjects were true Texas people, not models; some were downright homely, but the photos captured their spirit and happy mood instead of bringing out the flaws in their appearances.

Melissa and Heather talked for what seemed like an hour, about her ideas for the wedding, family, second marriages, and Melissa's work experiences (both as a photographer and earlier as a security person for a department store, tackling shoplifters). In the middle of the visit, a sleek black cat we learned was named Voodoo wandered in and we both spent some time giving her affection. I had to fetch something from the car at one point, so I missed a story Melissa told, but Heather filled me in later...it was about a woman who came to talk about having her wedding done, but seeing the house she chose not even to stop, just slowing down and leaving before she called fifteen minutes later to say "something had come up." That's just the kind of story that touches Heather's heart. Anyway, by the time we were getting up to go meet Apache the Golden Retriever and then leave, Heather had gotten out her checkbook and handed over a deposit. There really wasn't any reason to wait or to think about it. With the same certainty she'd chosen the location for the wedding, the officiant, or the groom for that matter, Heather had chosen our photographer. I doubt Melissa has any issues with a Halloween wedding, as she'd been in the bridal party for one a couple of years earlier (so she couldn't be the photographer unfortunately), and at her own second wedding had done the whole thing "Chevy Style" – which included driving up to the ceremony in a '57 Chevy, and wearing a Chevy "bow-tie" on her dress. What are a few witches and pumpkins after all that?

The Dining Dead - The Eternal Sunshine Movie Reviews

Zodiac – The long-awaited adaptation of Robert Graysmith's book "Zodiac" (long-awaited by me, anyway, having been a fan of the book for 15 years) has finally arrived. Graysmith was a political cartoonist in San Francisco when the first Zodiac killings took place in the late 1960's, and over the years his obsession with the case has brought him to the forefront of the Zodiac experts. His isn't just a story of assembling a mountain of evidence, but of personal involvement, of trying to correct the mistakes of law enforcement officials who didn't share information, and even to the point of personally solving one of the famous Zodiac ciphers which had stumped experts for years.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the case, Zodiac was a serial killer in the San Francisco area in the late 60's and early 70's. His fame came not just from the killings, but from his letters to police and the press, taunting "the blue pigs" for their failed efforts, threatening to shoot out the tires of a school bus and "pick off the kiddies one by one as they come bouncing out", and even including pieces of a bloody shirt removed from one of his victims to prove his authenticity. Zodiac has always been an enigma...nobody knows how many he killed; counts vary from eight to as many as forty. As a publicity hound he took credit for killings he may not have been guilty of. And then there were the ciphers - pages of symbols in a code which he demanded area newspapers print on the front page or else he would go on a wild killing spree.

The movie centers on three main players in the Zodiac case: Graysmith (played by Jake Gyllenhaal), San Francisco Chronicle reporter Paul Avery (Robert Downey Jr.), and police detective David Toschi (Mark Ruffalo). Graysmith comes off as a Boy Scout-type oddball who develops a feel for Zodiac and an obsession with the case. Avery is accurately portrayed as a self-destructive alcoholic who can't see past his own desire for press - "this is good business" he is heard to comment in regard to the killings. Mark Ruffalo's performance is very strong as Toschi, the famed detective who Steve McQueen modeled his "Bullitt" character after, loved by some and envied by others, about to face the biggest case he will never solve. The murder of cab driver Paul Stine suddenly evolves from the simple robbery it appears to be into the latest victim of a serial killer when Zodiac writes the newspapers and details his crimes. As San Francisco is gripped by panic (and the media goes into frenzy mode), the various police departments involved try to play catch-up. The film allows the viewer to see how chaotic the whole situation was, with no sharing of critical information between local, county, and state law enforcement officials.

Eventually Graysmith decides to write a book on the case, as his obsession costs him his job and destroys his marriage. Running back and forth between locations, suspects, archives, libraries, and police departments, Graysmith (in book and film) makes a case for one particular suspect. A follow-up book, "Zodiac Unmasked", was basically devoted to building that case. Sadly no charges were ever filed, and that suspect has since died of a heart attack. In 2004 a partial DNA sample was found under a postage stamp on one of the Zodiac letters and I believe this suspect was not a match, but nobody has really decided how to handle that. Likewise, suspects were eliminated throughout the investigation on the basis of a partial hand-print found in the cab (which may or may not have been Zodiac's) and writing samples compared to the letters. The confusion in this case helps point out how far law enforcement has come to eliminate the types of problems which plagued the Zodiac investigation from Day One.

It's hard to adapt a book like Graysmith's for the screen, especially when there is no big payoff - we all know they don't find the bad guy before you even walk into the theatre. And the case is so complex, and filled with so many tidbits, readers of the book may argue that some information should have been put in the film. Yet even with all the things missing, it runs over 2 1/2 hours. You have to stop SOMEWHERE!

I had heard lukewarm reviews of the film before I saw it, so I was delighted to learn it was better than I expected. Overall I give it a B+. Take a trip back 35 years and experience all over again a period in history when "the good old days" were ending and violent crime started to become a daily occurrence.

Color Me Kubrick - Color Me Kubrick is an enjoyable little farce, based at least partially on fact. John Malkovich plays Alan Conway, a strange alcoholic con artist who spends his free time pretending to be the recluse director Stanley Kubrick. It is my understanding that Alan Conway was a real person, and that the movie is based on press accounts of his exploits.

The film could have taken a number of directions with this material, focusing on his effect on the numerous victims of his scam, or perhaps deriving sympathy for a sad, lonely person who generally only manages to acquire free drinks or some male companionship. Instead they chose to allow Malkovich to romp through scene after scene, clearly enjoying himself along the way. His Alan Conway shows little knowledge of Kubrick's actual accomplishments, and adjusts his version of the director depending on what he thinks his audience wants to see. Sometimes he is an aloof, quiet, mysterious individual. At other times he is boastful and boisterous. But at almost every turn both Conway and Malkovich spend their time smiling.

The plot is basically the same scene over and over: Conway sets his eyes on a new conquest, settles into his role as Kubrick, and waits to see how far he can take it. Free drinks, free food, free sex...and on the rare occasion when he is tripped up, landing on his feet and moving on to his next rendezvous.

The film almost plays itself out too repetitively, but the witty dialog and minor characters keep the fun moving along, and Malkovich's hammy performance is a treat. I should add they make an effort to insert music from Kubrick movies in spots which give it a very sarcastic feel ("2001" theme as he takes dirty clothes to the laundry as an example), and there is also a mention of John Malkovich as an actor cast in one of the fictional Kubrick "my next film" descriptions, which I imagine was irresistible to the writers. The movie never takes itself seriously, and neither should you, but overall its a fun way to spend an evening. How many chances do you have to hobnob with a famous director?

The Lookout - The Lookout is one of those movies where I tried to keep my expectations low, and found myself rewarded for taking a chance on the film in the first place. Scott Frank wrote and directed this suspenseful and moving story of a young man trying to find his place in the world, and in his own head, after a serious accident from which he may never recover in more ways than one.

Joseph Gordon-Levitt (who you may remember from what seems like ages ago as the youngest child on "3rd Rock From the Sun") gives a strong performance as Chris Pratt. Once the envy of all the teenagers in his small Kansas town - jock, good looking, confident, with a beautiful girlfriend - Pratt causes a deadly car wreck one night, killing two of his best friends, injuring his girlfriend, and causing serious brain damage to himself. Now four years later he is still reeling from the guilt of what he did to himself and his friends. He also suffers from memory loss, not just of the accident but on a daily basis. Unable to keep reliable track of his daily routine, he has to keep writing in a notebook to avoid forgetting important but small details of life - things as simple as to use soap in the shower.

Working as a night janitor in the local bank, Pratt unwittingly becomes friends with a group who plan to convince him to help them rob the bank. Between his mental problems and the desire to regain a sense of the friendships that surrounded him in the past, Chris is drawn into their plans and becomes a willing accomplice. But how willing will he be when the time comes, and can the group succeed at all? More importantly, how does this new direction of his life change who he is and how he feels about himself, the world, and his place in it? Those questions are left for the film to answer.

Jeff Daniels does a wonderful job as a blind man sharing an apartment with Chris. As a man who has learned to live with the sad state he put himself into, his character tries his best to lead Pratt into the world of acceptance, where he can deal with what he did and try to make the best of the life he is left with. His character is a powerful reflection of the potential still living within Chris, if he can only find it.

Writer/Director Scott Frank keeps the suspense throughout the film. Much in the way of Hitchcock's "bomb in the drawer", often in the film the viewer knows tragedy is about to strike, but the characters remain oblivious to the impending danger...just as people in real life would be. Yet how the suspense will exactly play out is always a mystery until the next step reveals itself.

With broad comedy and family animation topping the box office this week, do yourself a favor and search out this gem of a movie instead. Learning to forgive yourself not just for what you've done to others, but for what you've done to yourself, can be terribly difficult...I know that as well as (or better than) anybody. In the end, that is this movie's message: whatever situation we've put ourselves in, it won't get much better until we learn to accept it, forgive ourselves for getting there, and then try to make the best of it.

Seen on DVD - The DaVinci Code (D - wooden acting and cardboard dialogue); Love Song for Bobby Long (B-, the last 30 minutes make up for the slower pace of the rest); The King of Comedy (C+, what I originally found to be incredibly funny when the film first came out just didn't hold up so well, now that we're in a world of instant celebrity status); March of the Penguins (B+, beautiful cinematography, moving storytelling my Morgan Freeman, and an honest study of the awesome struggle Emperor Penguins go through to mate);

Smilla's Sense of Snow (B-, I saw it when originally released, and the vast spaces of snow are much more impressive on the big screen).

And now for a special feature, which I promised last month – the list of the 100 movies I enjoy watching over and over. Some of these can only like to watch once or twice a year, others I could probably enjoy every two months! Of course, time constraints prevent me from watching as many movies as I'd like to, but that doesn't stop me from making dumb lists like this. I'd love to hear your feedback, and if you want to email me your own list (Top 5, 10, 20, 100, whatever) I would be interested in seeing it. Remember, these are not necessarily the 100 movies I most enjoyed in my life, or the 100 *best* movies, just the 100 I am able to enjoy again and again.

The Eternal Sunshine List of 100 Movies I Enjoy Watching Again and Again – In Alphabetical Order (Ranking Them Would Be Too Hard)

1776	Eternal Sunshine of the	Reversal of Fortune
12 Angry Men (the original)	Spotless Mind	Salem's Lot (the original with David Soul)
12 Monkeys	Fargo	Seven
A Clockwork Orange	Fast Times at Ridgemoor High	Shallow Grave
A Few Good Men	Fight Club	Shawshank Redemption
Absence of Malice	Fletch	She's Having A Baby
Adaptation	Frankenstein (with Boris Karloff)	Shine
After Hours	Gettysburg	Silence of the Lambs
All The President's Men	Ghost World	Sleepless In Seattle
Amadeus	Glengarry Glen Ross	Sling Blade
American Beauty	Goodfellas	Snatch
American Splendor	Groundhog Day	Stand By Me
Animal House	Halloween	The Big Picture
Apollo 13	Harold & Maude	The Evil Dead
Being There	Heathers	The Fugitive
Best In Show	Heavy Metal	The Godfather
Better Off Dead	High Plains Drifter	The Great Escape
Bill Cosby, Himself	In The Company Of Men	The Maltese Falcon
Bottle Rocket	Interview With A Vampire	The Princess Bride
Braveheart	It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World	The Taking of Pelham One-Two-Three
Casablanca	Jaws	The Usual Suspects
Charade (the original)	Lethal Weapon	The Verdict
Chasing Amy	Man on the Moon	The Wall
Chinatown	Memento	Titanic
Chitty Chitty Bang Bang	Monty Python and the Search for the Holy Grail	Trading Places
Creepshow	Moulin Rouge	Trainspotting
Dark City	North By Northwest	Unstrung Heroes
Dawn of the Dead (the original)	Office Space	Vacation
Defending Your Life	One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest	Waiting For Guffman
Dial M For Murder	Ordinary People	Welcome To The Dollhouse
Dirty Harry	Papillon	When Harry Met Sally
Dog Day Afternoon	Rain Man	Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (the original)
Dogma	Reservoir Dogs	Yellow Submarine
Drop Dead Gorgeous		
Dune (David Lynch version)		
Election		

Books in Boxers

Eternal Sunshine Book Reviews

In general this won't be a long section, just brief grades or reports on the books Heather and I have been reading. When things aren't too busy we burn through a book a week each, depending on what else we need to accomplish. I can't tell you how wonderful it is, for BOTH of us, that we are in a relationship with someone who understands how enjoyable it is to read...as opposed to prior relationships where we often got feedback like "when you read you aren't being **with me!**" or worse, "if you're reading so much it must be because you are trying to escape from our life together."

Magical Thinking – Augusten Burroughs – This book gets an A-. More of his essays on life, work, relationships, alcoholism, and mental illness. Some are laugh-out-loud funny, while some (including the one he gets the book title from) are more quiet and meaningful. A lot of this book deals with his growing relationship with his partner, as they fashion a family unit out of the two of them and the dogs which act basically as substitute children in many ways. Burroughs is the same wreck he has always been, but at the same time it is very sweet to read how finding someone who accepts him for who he is makes him want to be a better person.

Possible Side Effects – Augusten Burroughs – I'm giving this one a B+, because while it made me laugh more than Magical Thinking overall, it has one or two chapters which didn't really do anything for me at all. Still a good read. Portions of this book are more melancholy than Running With Scissors; I would have said "darker" but you can't get much darker than that book. Reading his references to his odd childhood still semi-inspire me to get back to work on my own family's stories. The only book of his I haven't enjoyed much is his first book, the farcical novel Sellevison. On the other hand, Heather laughed so hard at that book I thought she was going to pee her pants, so I suppose if you like his writing style you might want to give it a try too.

I Love Everybody and Other Atrocious Lies: True Tales of a Loudmouth Girl – Laurie Notaro – I haven't gotten a chance to read this book yet, but Heather has, and I haven't seen her laugh that loud or that long since the first time she saw me naked. I've since been "convinced" (in other words, forced) to order Heather another three books by Notaro, which she enjoyed just as much if not more. Her humor sounds dark and sarcastic, focusing on family, relationships, her unnatural disdain for children, and her husband's fascination with Kate Winslet. Do what Heather says and buy this book (or borrow it from the library) or she's liable to get angry and give me "the shoe" again.

A Working Stiff's Manifesto – Iain Levison – A sarcastic, fatalistic, simply fun ride. The subtitle should give you an idea of the kind of sarcastic humor this book contains: "A Memoir of Thirty Jobs I Quit, Nine That Fired Me, and Three I Can't Remember." Levison, owner of a useless degree in English, tells us about numerous terrible jobs he's had, from moving man to fish cutter in a gourmet store to heating oil deliveryman. His worst jobs are in Alaska, working first on a fishing ship and later a crab ship. Levison manages to reveal the true-life combination of inept management, low wages, and apathetic workers which create the most awful jobs in the universe. Some real funny stories, and a very fast read. Anyone who has spent time as a bottom-rung working stiff, doing terrible work and barely getting by, will identify with these stories.

Currently Reading: My Friend Leonard by James Frey (his sequel to A Million Little Pieces, which for me was a great book regardless of the fact that most of it was fiction, or fictionalized). I'm also flipping through the first 10 or so Zippy Quarterly issues whenever I am tired and ready for bed. They're always good for a laugh or two.

Meet Me In Montauk

The Eternal Sunshine Letter Column

Allison Kent: re Jack "The Sack" McHugh – I think he lives right near us! We live in Pennsauken; right across the bridge from Philly too. And one of my accounts is Cooper Hospital. I handle their insurance. Of course, he doesn't work there anymore, but still. You could come visit both of us! I know how much you like to fly!!

I wouldn't hold your breath to see me flying anywhere soon. Speaking of holding your breath, now that you know Sackiepool lives near you, that should provide you a hint of where that odor of stale beer and Ballpark Franks is coming from when you're downwind of him.

Paul Kent: I saw the Pat Metheny and Brad Mehldau concert last week at Cal Berkeley's Zellerbach Theatre on Wednesday. It appeared to be a sell-out, despite being during the school's spring break. Most of the audience was over 35.

Essentially, it was Brad's piano trio integrating Pat Metheny and doing duo and quartet music from the present, but not their pasts (they have 2 albums out, one mostly duo, the more recent focusing on the quartet). Pat addressed the audience a couple of times and mentioned that he feels the Mehldau Trio is one of the great piano trios of all time, which surprised me, because that means Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett territory.

The styles included up beat Latin, swing, fast blues, rubatto duets, acoustic 12 string and six string guitars in standard and other tunings taking the lead, sometimes backing up the piano playing, and Pat's standard hollow body and Roland Synth set ups. Things generally came off very well, with some great moods, textures, melodies and moments. This material was much more immediate (less arranged) than the PM Group work, which left a lot of room for improvisation and listening between the players, which translated means that they were all learning about playing with each other in all aspects of the music. There were times when Pat responded to challenges with a lot of fast licks and tried to paste them to the music. I was much more satisfied when they were really in the moment and succeeded in being melodic and narrative in the improvisations. The drummer Jeff Ballard was very exciting and scary to watch, he moves the beat all over the place, but Brad seems to follow him really well. The drum solos were audience favorite that night.

Of course, I would recommend this 2 hour program to any music fan, but I didn't love it as much as PM Group concert I saw in 2002 or 2003. As the young players from the 60's and 70's get older you never know if you are going to see them again, and as a matter of fact, the Mehldau Trio grew up as fans of Metheny, and the different generation was audible and visible in the music, body language, ways they addressed the audience, and other approaches. I will try to see Metheny and the others from his generation every chance I get (Tony Williams and Mike Brecker are already gone, e.g.).

I guess that is the trade-off as these artists get older. You want to see them because you never know if you'll get another chance, but on the other hand you don't want any flaws in the performance, and any deterioration in their skills, to obscure how incredible their full body of work is. And I still have to remind myself that Tony Williams is gone, for whatever reason I forget and feel surprised when someone points it out.

Jamie McQuinn: First of all, I am very glad to see you out and doing well in life. Congratulations of the pending nuptials. May your wedding day be spooky... and marriage less so.... ;-))

Things can get spooky with Heather around, but only in a good way. Spooky can be sexy too!

In your TAP subzine you solicited comments on the future of Diplomacy World, pro or con, so here goes: While I am very active in boardgaming (I organize a local boardgaming club) I am almost completely out of the Diplomacy Hobby, so perhaps my comments are not useful. But, that won't stop me from expressing an opinion.... Personally, I see no future for the Diplomacy-Hobby-in-print. What can you hope to accomplish that isn't already being done on-line? Yes, I know there is a small (and shrinking) number of Diplomacy players not online... and yes, I often prefer to read articles on paper rather than on a screen... but the numbers just don't seem to make sense.

Obviously a bit of clarification is in order. DW is no longer a printed, postal publication. Oh, there might be a handful of postal subscribers still, but it is meant to be distributed electronically in Adobe (pdf) format. You're right, on-line is where almost everybody is. I do plan on printing out a few copies here and there for distribution at various gaming conventions, just to generate interest among people who have never seen it, but in practice Diplomacy World is not a printed zine...until it gets to the reader, then they can read it electronically or print it as they see fit. While both are internet-based, it differs from Diplomatic Pouch in that DP is an HTML zine.

How many subscribers do you anticipate? Who are you going to get to write these articles? Will you be competing with The Diplomatic Pouch for authors and topics.

Since distribution is free, basically no subscribers. Instead I just hope for readers. I don't really think we're in competition with DP. There are plenty of people out there who could produce enjoyable articles. The tasks are finding them, then convincing them to write, and finally making sure their efforts get out to the Diplomacy-playing public. A sub-task is giving them confidence that issues will continue to be released, because that helps motivate them to read and contribute further.

I know that many Dippers dream of the Dip Hobby having the same kind of status and following of Chess. And Chess can certainly support print magazines and journals. But I don't see that happening here. Chess has thousands of adherents world-wide. Postal Diplomacy has a couple hundred perhaps? There are probably several thousand online players of Dip, but have they ever really taken an interest in Dip World?

I can only say this: I started posting old issues of Diplomacy World on my web site about a month ago. Some issues have since been downloaded over 350 times. Remember, these issues are 8 years old or more. The demand is there for the material, we just need to get people to produce more of it, and then make sure players know it exists. Plus, with cross-promotion and friendly support between DP and DW, crossover readership will be large, so if one of us is discovered by a newcomer, they'll quickly discover the other as well.

As you may or may not recall, I actually manage the Magazine Room at the Dayton Metro Library. Print magazines are on their way out... I hate to say it. Every year I drop a few more subscriptions. Folks don't look to print magazines for information any more.

I currently subscribe to ZERO print magazines, so I concur with that view. Electronic distribution is the only thing that works for Diplomacy World. Ironically we agree about all of this – you just thought we didn't because you thought DW was still a print zine. Brilliant minds think alike!

I am not suggesting that a revival of Diplomacy World would be a waste of time. You will have fine articles that many will enjoy reading. But I wonder if you would be simply keeping a dinosaur alive for little return... mostly for nostalgia's sake.

Well, I'm the last person to deny I suffer from good-old-days syndrome! But I still hope there is some purpose to what we're doing. At least I'm having fun!

Game Openings

Diplomacy (Black Press): Graham Wilson, needs six more.

Balkan Wars IV (Black Press): Signed up: Jack McHugh, Graham Wilson, needs five more. Rules and map on request.

Colonia VII_B (White Press): Fred Hyatt's worldwide variant. Signed up: Jim Burgess, Graham Wilson, David Partridge, needs 6 more. Rules and map on request.

For other multi-player games, I'm considering offering Acquire or Kremlin if there is any interest from the readers. Suggestions for Diplomacy variants or other multi-player games are welcome.

Eternal Sunshine Game Section

Gamestart - By Popular Demand

Since Andy York has finished up his game of BPD, I figured I would go ahead and start one up myself. We'll use his houserules, stolen word-for-word: 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.

Round 1 Categories

1. A popular breed of dog.
2. A Beatles album.
3. A Confederate state during the US Civil War
4. A newspaper comic strip.
5. A metal other than gold.

Diplomacy Zine Plug

If you love multiplayer games like Diplomacy, Dune, Wizard's Quest, Kremlin, Dune, Kingmaker, Puerto Rico, Source of the Nile...finished drooling yet? All that and more can be found in Paul Bolduc's long-running Boris the Spider zine. Back in the stone ages it was a regular postal mail zine. Now you can access all that fun and excitement simply by using the internet connection you already have. Sound too good to be true? But wait, there's more. Order now and you'll also receive this charming Gagazoo Chopper, made from indestructible titanium...sorry, got stuck in late-night infomercial mode. Paul runs a wide variety of games and is ALWAYS looking for new players. I just started a new game of Kremlin there, which I am sure to lose to the genius of Mike Scott, but I'm used to that. Use the link on my site's Diplomacy Links section, or check it out directly at:

<http://hometown.aol.com/prbolduc/boris/e-Boris/p01.html>

**Deadline For The Next Issue of Eternal Sunshine:
May 4th, 2007 – See You Then!**