

# ***Eternal Sunshine #5***

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**Quote Of The Month** – “I apply my personality in a paste.” (Clementine in “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”)

I have returned for yet another issue of **Eternal Sunshine**, the only Diplomacy subzine which is both a violation of the Geneva Convention and the Kyoto Accords. Even though response to this rag continues to be a bit anemic and limited, I plan on chugging along month after month. Eventually one of these game openings will fill! And in the meantime, at least we have the first two rounds of By Popular Demand for your enjoyment, not to mention the usual boring nonsense from yours truly. What more could you ask for – other than a good swift kick in the shin?

Since the last issue of **Eternal Sunshine**, Jim Burgess and I finally put out the latest issue of **Diplomacy World** – my first issue since I returned as Lead Editor. If you haven't gotten around to looking at it yet, please check it out and let us know what you think. The issue has something to offer just about anybody, from opinion to convention reports (fun and personable ones, with photos) to a variants roundtable, and lots more. **Diplomacy World #97** (in pdf format) can be found on my website, or in the **DW** Yahoo group at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/diplomacyworld/>. We're already hard at work on issue #98, so if you have any feedback – or better yet, if you'd like to submit an article for publication – please don't hesitate to get in touch! We're not that far from issue #100 either...which is quite an achievement for which countless hobby members, past and present, deserve a pat on the back.

Okay, enough of that, time to move on to less pleasant matters....

If you remember, I wondered a few issues ago why the Dallas Mavericks couldn't seem to get any respect from the national press, while they were in the midst of a 67-win season. Now I can see why. This team is completely gutless; they have no heart, no drive, no fire when the pressure is on. Already the owners of the greatest NBA Finals meltdown in history, the Dallas Mavericks are now also owners of the greatest NBA first-round playoff upset in history. This team will never succeed in the playoffs until it has a true leader, and Dirk simply is not it. His high-profile failures prove that when its crunch time, he is not the man you want to lead. Maybe he can be a very useful piece of the puzzle, but he will never lead this team to a championship.

In addition, the highly-touted depth this team was supposed to have is really useless. Aside from Stackhouse, who is far past his prime, it is a lineup of spares. Austin Croshere and Gana Diop are the only other two Mavs to show the slightest bit of effort, drive, and willingness to get physical. For months local sports “experts” have told Dallas that this team has shed its “soft” image. Well, guess what folks? It's back, and it SHOULD be! I don't know why any of this surprises me, when all season long I'd watch our

opponents, see their leaders play, and ask aloud "Why don't we have somebody like that on our team?" When you ask that over and over, you know there's a problem with your team.

To steal a line from a local radio broadcaster who warned after game one of the Mavericks-Warriors series that this was doomed to failure – "Not a good year for Dallas. Cowboys out in the first round, Stars out in the first round, Mavs out in the first round...and the Rangers out of it in the first week." I can't make heads nor tails of this Texas Rangers team. The pitching doesn't surprise me, not in the least. What I can't understand are the constant errors, mental mistakes, and base-running gaffs. This team hasn't been "good" for a number of years, but the same players who have built a reputation of smart, effective defense are dropping balls left and right this year. Between that, their inability to hit at all (especially with runners in scoring position), and their seemingly conscious refusal to work the count against young or tiring pitchers, I am just about ready to stop paying attention for the year. Maybe we can try to put together a few interesting trades towards the end of the year, not to win anything but to build youth. Dump Teixeira, Gagne, Lofton, and Sammy Sosa – all free agents after this year except for Tex, who has one additional year left but uses "Satan" Boras as his agent. This season is such a tremendous disappointment, especially because the West is a very weak division this year, and ripe for the taking if the Rangers could have just started hitting and catching the damn ball! Too late now – time to SELL SELL SELL!

You wouldn't believe the apathy that surrounds the Rangers down here. After 35 years, people are simply tired of it, especially when they realize how low the payroll is compared to what it once was. Tom Hicks, the owner, may care, but you wouldn't know it – he's too busy with his share of the Liverpool soccer team. Then he mentions that he wishes Ranger fans were as passionate as the soccer fans. Passionate about what, losing? Trading away our best prospects for nothing? A near-empty farm system, as depleted as a dustbowl field tended by some poor sharecropper? Oh well. At least the Yankees are suffering too – I can always enjoy that. Poor Yanks, they can't catch a break. Their number one prospect comes to Texas and no-hits the Rangers for 6 1/3 innings...then promptly strains his hamstring, and now he'll be out for 4 to 6 weeks. Ouch, when it rains it pours. If their season was constant road trips to Texas they would be undefeated. Since it isn't, they suck too. Meanwhile they're dumping over \$20 million (including luxury tax) on a 45-year-old Roger Clemens. Here's hoping that old Rog finds facing American League lineups at this advanced age more difficult than he imagined. That, or here's hoping he breaks a hip. Yeah, I'm a hater, so what?

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Heather finally found the wedding ring she wanted. Thank goodness! This was not an easy search, let me tell you. First of all there's the fact that Heather has very particular, personal tastes, some of which are simply not shared by the general public. I don't mean there is anything wrong with her taste – not in the slightest. It is her willingness to be a true individual, to stick with her own opinion regardless of what anybody else might think, which I treasure above almost all other facets of her personality. However, because she is a unique individual with a very specific idea of what she wants, there can be no settling and no compromising. Heather wants what she wants the way she wants it, and that is that!

At first it seemed like the whole notion of a wedding ring was going to be rather simple. Heather spent a good week or evenings looking all over the internet at hundreds of different ring styles, searching for the one that spoke to her. She does not wear yellow gold, and silver was out of the question for a wedding ring in her mind (I couldn't really argue with that; actually it rarely pays to argue with Heather at all). So that left white gold. A romantic with Victorian tastes, Heather preferred something a bit old-fashioned, but not necessarily traditional, and with lots of filigree. For a stone she was tossing around the idea of an opal or onyx. Diamonds could serve as accents, but not the main stone. A cameo was also a possibility. Whatever the description, the ring itself just had to look right – slight variations could turn a perfect ring into a terrible one and vice versa.

After searching, Heather found a web site which had a beautiful classic filigree style, and an oval stone. Leaving open the idea that an onyx could work, she seemed more set on an opal for this particular ring. The site offered both – in fact it offered about 12 gem choices overall in the same ring style. Pricewise the ring was well within our budget – less than \$300. We bookmarked the page, kept looking just in case something better came along, and decided we'd order it (and my ring, a white gold Celtic style ring) in early May.

When the first of the month rolled around, I went to the site to order the ring...uh oh! The bookmark didn't work any longer, and I couldn't find that particular style of ring anywhere on their web site. I emailed and

called the company to see if it was still available – fortunately having the item number saved as part of the bookmarked web address. They gave me the news I feared most – the ring style had been discontinued by the manufacturer, and could no longer be ordered, not even at a higher price. Heather tried not to be too disappointed or anxious, but I knew this was going to cause her some sleepless nights. She's the kind of person who needs to get the big things out of the way before she can stop worrying, and the ring was the last of the big wedding things she had to figure out.

I tried to be as helpful as I could. I searched and searched and searched the internet on my own, sending her links to any ring that might even remotely be acceptable. At this point Heather had reverted back to onyx as the stone, so that really seemed to limit our options. For whatever reason, most of the onyx rings we found were for men. Still, there were a number of Victorian-style rings, some new and some antique, that we found. Before we chose one however, we made a trip to a nearby mall to visit every jewelry and department store. It wasn't so much that we thought we'd necessarily find the right ring there, but more that I wanted Heather to try on various styles so she's know better what felt natural and what might be less comfortable after wearing it all day at work. Neither of us like the mall much – Heather dreads going for anything other than a movie – so the experience left us worn out and cranky.

Finally, Heather settled on a couple of choices. One looked nicer, but it was larger and I worried how the design might get in her way at work, since she handles money and uses the keyboard and an adding machine all day long, not to mention the various contortions she has to do when using the drawer at the drive-thru window. We were going to have to spend a bit more than originally planned too. But it was the best we could find. I agreed that after the following pay day I'd go ahead and order the new ring. Everything was settled.



Suddenly a wrinkle came into the picture. While scanning amazon.com, Heather found the SAME ring she had wanted originally, with the oval onyx stone. In fact, it was being sold by the same company! Although we assumed they just hadn't updated their listings with Amazon yet, we figured, what the hell? So we went ahead and ordered the ring that way instead of directly. Amazon emailed Heather the next day to say the order had been processed and the listing company was going to send the item to her. A few days later she had a tracking number and a confirmation email. After all that hassle, could this really work out so simply?

Yes, it could. The ring arrived, she loves it, and it \*is\* the ring she wanted originally, at the original price. Why this ring is available through the jeweler's Amazon section but not directly from the company I will never understand, but I don't care. Heather has her ring, and she's happy. So I'm happy too! There you go, a happy ending. Sort of a rare feature in anything I write.

My poor old cat Tigger is simply not doing that well. I am not surprised though. After all, Tigger is now around 19 years old, which for a cat is ancient. I actually didn't think she would live long enough for me to see her again at all. The way I figured it, she'd either die or have to be put to sleep by Heather before I came home. So while I am very sad to see her feeling lousy, I am on the whole extremely grateful to have been given this past year to see her every day.

Heather and I couldn't be sure if she would even remember me. In general, Tigger has been a skittish cat, afraid of strangers and prone to hiding. But since she became the only cat in the household, I suppose she has grown to be friendlier, more tolerant, more brave



in a sense. Instead of running away from the vacuum cleaner in fear as she used to, now she just hops on the bed of the couch. When I first came home and walked through the door, Tigger hesitated, looked at me, and then walked right up and started to whine. Three years and she only needed about ten seconds to remember me – I started to cry right then and there. She was the fourth cat Mara and I ever got (the first two came from Mara's parents, and all the rest like Tigger came from animal shelters). But Tigger is the only cat I've ever adopted as a kitten – we always took adults since they were harder for the shelter to place; Tigger was at the shelter during a very crowded time, and they couldn't give her much longer before they had to put her to sleep...so we went in empty-handed and left with a kitten in a cardboard box.

Tigger hasn't been specifically diagnosed with anything, but from prior experience I believe she has developed Feline Chronic Renal Failure. In particular, her epilepsy-like head tremors are a very telling and familiar symptom. Our favorite cat (and Tigger's best friend) Ubber developed the same thing back in the early 90's when we lived in New Jersey. The treatment isn't a lot of fun – in the more advanced stages you need to inject the cat with subcutaneous fluids in order to help wash out the toxins from their system, but that process can cause additional kidney damage too. Eventually CRF is always fatal, although younger cats can sometimes survive for years. Ubber only lived about 8 months after he was diagnosed (he was five years old at the time, by our best guess). And he HATED getting the fluid treatments – he would cry and whine and try to jump and run, even if we warmed the IV bag to a more moderate temperature before the injection. So it was an emotional and expensive treatment, one which left us with real questions later as to whether we should have done it at all. Maybe it would have been kinder simply to put him to sleep right away?

That's where we are left in Tigger's case too. Being so old, and so set in her ways, I simply can't imagine putting her through any such treatment would be worthwhile, for her or for us. Even if it did prolong her life, how many extra months could it provide? Three? Four? Wouldn't it be better to simply let her live out her last weeks (or months) in peace, and then put her to sleep when her condition deteriorates? Especially since she gets terribly out of sorts for a few days after any trip to the vet (or any time in a moving car for that matter)? If any readers have had experience with CRF, I'd love to hear your thoughts. In the meantime, we will continue to discuss it amongst ourselves and consider the options...and for as long as I can, I'll enjoy the time I am lucky enough to spend with Tigger.

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As this issue of Eternal Sunshine covers the month of June and the Father's Day period, here is a piece I wrote a few months back on my blog about my father and when he died. Let me know what you think.

### **I Miss My Father By Doug Kent**

I've been sitting here at home on this Sunday afternoon watching "Big Fish" on DVD, which we got from our internet rental service over a week ago. For whatever reason, Heather and I hadn't gotten around to watching it until today. She actually saw the movie while I was locked up. Like so many other films I am simply trying to catch up on everything I missed while away. Being Sunday, Heather dozed off early into the film and then retired to the bedroom for one of her classic multi-hour naps. That left me here with Tigger the fur-ball snoozing next to me. Alone with my thoughts and my crates of guilt and regret and self-loathing, I watched the rest of the movie. Sitting here crying like a baby, the tears are mixing with my aftershave, creating burning rivers down my cheeks. Now they itch - I hate that. And I need to blow my nose badly or spend the rest of the day breathing through my mouth.

Heather should have warned me about what I was about to watch. She knows me well enough to realize how easily things slither into my brain, then my heart, and finally settle in the pit of my stomach. Had she been awake I am sure she would have said something, or at least reached out and given my hand a squeeze when necessary. The movie is basically about how Albert Finney's character is dying, while his adult son tries to reconcile the tall tales his father told about his life with whatever the truth might be. It didn't grab me at first, but the further along the story got, and the sicker his Albert Finney became, the more it made me think of Dad...and how much I miss him...and how I never got much of a chance to say goodbye to him.

It's hard to see the computer screen with blurry eyes, you know, so maybe you'll forgive any typos.

In prison the whole process of phone calls is controlled, to the point of outright silliness. First you need to submit forms with any phone number you want to be able to call, filling in the little circles and spaces like some alternate-universe SAT test. When you're done, the forms need to be turned in at the front office during open house, in person, after which they can take from days to be approved. Then there are only certain times you can actually use the phone - never during the daytime if you have a "job" the way I did. They're also off-limits before 7am, after 11pm, and during count times. When

you want to make a call, you get on line and wait your turn...and it's usually a very long line, as there is only about one phone per 100 inmates. Calls length is limited, as are total minutes per month, and they are very expensive – worse if you call collect. When you finally get to take your turn and make a call, assuming somebody is home and you don't get a busy signal, you are interrupted every 5 minutes with a reminder that "this call is from a Federal prison." Between the aggravation of the horrendous and chaotic line-waiting, the warning messages, the realization that every conversation is being monitored (and likely taped), and the distinctive background music of inmates arguing over who is better, Whitney Houston or Mariah Carey, it is next to impossible to lose yourself in the outside world. But that's what you try to do anyway, to forget just for a few minutes where you are and why you are there.

I used to call home and talk to Dad and my stepmother Barbara when I could, once or twice a month, just to let them know how I was doing. In the beginning Dad was always trying to be upbeat, his normal self...but it didn't take very many months before I could hear such terrible defeat in his voice. It sounded like life had completely worn him out, and the mere act of being alive was a burden for him. It was hard, painful, unhappy and tedious work for him - not unlike some of the more unpleasant tasks I had to perform in prison. But in his case, there was no release when his sentence was over - just the promise of continued unhappiness until life came to an end. Being an atheist (or so he told me), Dad was left with the choice between unhappiness and nonexistence. I like to think that he found strength in the love he felt for, and got from, Barbara and his children.

Like me, the last thing he wanted to be was a burden or bother to the people he loved. I had become just that when I went to prison - and now trapped in the prison of his body, Dad was suffering a similar but more tortuous fate.

In the end, what with playing bed round robin - moving from physical rehab facility to hospital to nursing home and back to a new hospital, I don't think I was able to speak to him for a long time before he finally died. I'd send cards and such - I remember sending a long letter for my sister Allison or Barbara to read to him personally, but I don't know if they ever did or if he said anything to them in response. By that time there was no way he could have written something with his own hand. I still have the last letter he did write, in a nearly illegible scrawl which might have been funny if it wasn't so sad. So any communication between us had to go through both the prison system and our family. Like so much else, I missed my chance to say goodbye either in person or on the phone. I just hope he wasn't too worried about me.

I remember the first time he came to visit me in prison. It was my first visit from anybody, and I wasn't sure how the system worked. They paged me to the visiting room, and after I was searched and allowed in, there was Barbara and my youngest sister Allison sitting in the stiff plastic chairs...but no Dad. Apparently somehow my warnings about not being allowed to wear shorts to the visiting room were overlooked, and the guards hadn't been allowed to let him inside. Instead, at their direction he drove to a nearby Wal Mart or K-Mart to buy a pair of long pants. Fortunately he didn't buy khaki-colored ones; at that facility the inmates wore khaki, and he once again would have been denied entry.

When Dad finally returned, he tried to come inside carrying a framed photograph of myself and my five siblings, taken years earlier when we all lived together. Barbara went outside to stop him and to explain that he couldn't bring it in, while Allison and I sat stone-faced and watched, trying to hide our own anguish. All I can remember is the look of dismay on his face, and the tears rolling down his cheeks...just like the ones rolling down my cheeks now. He wanted to comfort me, to do what he could to help me get through my depression and unhappiness...but he felt helpless, and confused, and at that point he was close to breaking down physically as well as mentally.

We got through the visit, and I think it was more important for him than it was for me at the time. He could see things weren't as terrible as he had feared...I wasn't facing constant danger, or living in squalor, and I tried my best to project a positive mental attitude. Things could be a lot better in prison, but they also sure as hell could be a lot worse. The simple advice he gave me served me pretty well. "Behave yourself." I met a lot of interesting people, and some of them really very decent and helpful. Lots of scumbags too, but you meet them everywhere in life.

When Dad finally died, I guess I knew it before anybody told me. Barbara had tried to keep the details of his constant deterioration from me, waiting until a few weeks later to tell me of each stroke or hospitalization. But one morning I was sitting in my cubicle and a fellow inmate came and told me "Hey dude, they just paged you to the front office." And I knew, all of a sudden I knew. I walked down that long hallway to the office and as I neared it, the counselor stuck his head out to look down the hall, saw me, and waited. I came into the office and he asked "So, how are you doing?" Nobody in the front office, nice guy or not, is going to ask that of an inmate. So I let him off the hook - I looked at him and said "My father died, didn't he?"

In probably my lowest moment in prison, I had to make the call to Barbara to get the news officially on a speaker phone, with the counselor and another prison official in the office listening to the whole conversation. Something to do with new Federal security regulations, after a scandal involving a lawyer smuggling messages from an inmate to his terrorist friends, I'm not sure. So as an added bonus to my sentence, I got to talk to Barbara about my father and how he died, while I cried and coughed and felt like I was numb and being stabbed in the chest and stomach all at the same time...all the while with two prison officials sitting nearby, looking at the wall and wishing they could be somewhere else.

Watching Albert Finney get sick and die in *Big Fish* reminded me how much I miss Dad, and that I still haven't really mourned him yet. I'll miss him even more when I get married and he can't be there...but at least I know he got to meet Heather once, and he was able to see how sweet and wonderful and caring she is, and how happy she makes me. So if nothing else, maybe that helped him worry a tiny bit less about me. I hope so anyway. So many people I did time with saw the women they loved fade away while they were apart. Somehow I wound up with a woman who was willing to trade so many months of loneliness for the promise of spending the rest of our lives together. I hope it was worth it for her! And because they did meet, I know Heather can carry the memory of my father inside of her, and sometimes she'll see things in me and my behavior which will remind her of things he said and did during the evening we shared. He'll live on in that way, the same Albert Finney's character lived on through the stories he told his son in *Big Fish*.

## The Dining Dead -

# The Eternal Sunshine Movie Reviews

**Hot Fuzz** – At the suggestion of my pal and Diplomacy Grand Poobah Jim Burgess, we finally made the trek back to the movie theater this weekend to see *Hot Fuzz*, a British send-up of typical American cop movies such as *Bad Boys*, *Lethal Weapon*, or the deservedly-maligned *Point Break*. Jim had raved that it was the funniest film he had seen in quite some time, and I am happy to report that *Hot Fuzz* did not disappoint. Not even having to suffer through coming attractions featuring such talentless human refuse as Adam Sandler could lessen our enjoyment!

The film stars Simon Pegg (who also co-wrote the film) as Sgt. Angel, the star of the London police force. Unfortunately for him, he does his job far too well, making everybody else on the force look bad. His superiors transfer him to the quaint village in the countryside, where Angel's strict police tactics don't necessarily agree with the rest of the populace. There he is paired with Policeman Butterman (played by Nick Frost), the son of the chief and a general goofball. In typical buddy film fashion, Angel begins to sense something sinister in this idyllic town, while Butterman tries to teach his new partner how to lighten up and have fun.

The movie really gets going once the bodies start to drop, until we're left with tongue-in-cheek ridiculing of just about every American cop movie cliché in the last 25 years. The humor is smart and silly and just tight enough to work in almost every instance, and the performances are first-rate all-around.

Instead of blowing your money on yet another failed romantic comedy or one of the multitude of big-money Hollywood sequels this summer, take an afternoon and search out *Hot Fuzz* instead. You'll be glad you did.

**Away From Her** - *Away From Her* is a powerful but understated movie, filled with emotion and very honest, personal performances. The first movie directed by Canadian Sarah Polley, the film follows Fiona and Grant (Julie Christie and Gordon Pinset), married for 44 years and entering the twilight of their lives. They love each other deeply, enjoy their time together, and look forward to spending their rest of their lives together in their cabin on the shore of a lake, once belonging to Fiona's grandparents.

Unfortunately, life intervenes as it often does. Grant begins to notice changes in Fiona - putting a frying pan in the freezer, forgetfulness, general confusion. Immediately Fiona is better able to accept the true consequences of the symptoms than Grant. Despite his protests and justifications, it becomes clear that Fiona needs to move into an assisted-living facility where she can get the sort of care she needs for her Alzheimer's, in a safe and controlled environment.

In Meadowlake, the medical facility, the administration is effective if over-chipper, and the staff is helpful and understanding. After a mandatory 30-day period of no contact with the outside world, Grant returns to visit Fiona and finds she is no longer the same person. Her short-term memory is disappearing quickly, while those spaces are being taken up with thoughts and memories from her long-ago past. That includes the friendship she held with Aubrey (Michael Murphy), who Fiona dated once as a teenager and now rediscovers in Meadowlake. She immediately sets to becoming Aubrey's caretaker, which is met with quiet

distaste by his wife (Olympia Dukakis). Does Fiona even remember who her husband is? Or is this new fascination with Aubrey a punishment for his own indiscretions of years past? And how far is Grant willing to go to ensure his wife's happiness as she finds herself lost in her own confused world?

In particular, Julie Christie gives a fabulous performance, complicated and deep. Who is suffering more, Grant who is losing his wife, or Fiona who is losing her mind? The situation causes everyone involved to evaluate the summation of their lives, what matters and what doesn't, what was important and what was trite and meaningless. Sarah Polley gets the most out of her strong cast, and maintains a quiet acceptance to the inevitable end of life. As Olympia Dukakis says in a tender moment, "We never know how anything is going to turn out. But we sort of know." You can plan to spend the rest of your days with someone, but life can easily get in the way and alter those plans in unrepairable ways.

Its a great film, and certainly an emotional one. Bring your handkerchief (Heather had mine sopping wet by the time it was over...fortunately she anticipated the tears and wore no eye makeup).

**Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End** – I didn't see this film, but Heather did (with her daughter and ex-husband). I figured I should pass along her review. All I'll report is she came home, climbed out of the car, and exhaustedly said "That's three hours of my life gone." Make what you will of that!

**Chalk** - Chalk is the sort of quiet comedy which can be an enjoyable way to kill 90 minutes, but not much more than that. A mockumentary, the film follows the teachers and administration in Harrison High, a suburban high school, as the new year begins. Unlike some more sharp-tongued films such as Drop Dead Gorgeous or the Christopher Guest Waiting for Guffman/Best in Show genre, Chalk has genuine affection and sympathy for the teachers and the difficult tasks they are faced with every day. This isn't surprising, as the film was written by two former teachers, Chris Mass and Mike Akel. In fact, Akel directs the film, Mass is one of the stars, and the student body is comprised of former students of the pair.

As the film opens we are introduced to the cast of characters. Chris Mass plays Mr. Stroope, a 3rd-year teacher who is committed to winning the Teacher of the Year competition and who admittedly doesn't quite know the difference between building a teacher-student relationship and making friends. Troy Schremmer plays Mr. Lowrey, a new teacher who has no authority and no idea how to control his class - I've seen substitutes given more respect. Janelle Schremmer plays Coach Webb, a pushy but positive PE teacher who is looking for a relationship and whose best friend, Mrs. Reddell (Shannon Haragan) has been promoted from choir teacher to Assistant Principal.

I read that most of this film was improvised, which I can believe as most of the dialog seems more authentic and less scripted. There are some laughs throughout, most notably at how awkward and hopeless Mr. Lowrey is and how self-centered Mr. Stroope is (to the point that he privately asks one student not to guffaw when he makes obvious mistakes, as she clearly knows more about history than he does). From my point of view, the affection the cast and crew hold for the characters is the major flaw...anyone who suffered through High School remembers at least one or two teachers who were long past the point of caring or trying. I can only imagine that in today's world of cell phones and students driving cars that cost more than the teacher makes in a year, those cases have only been magnified. Yet in this film there is none of that - the teachers all care, all try (even if it is ineptly), all strive to be good teachers and to connect with their students. I can buy that from most of them, but there should have been the exception, if for no other reason than to build a contrast.

If you're tired of the sequels of sequels this summer, you could do worse than to spend an evening with Chalk. just don't expect too much – like High School, it can be worthwhile but it'll never be the be all and end all of your life. I'll give it a B-, with a comment circled in red pen saying "I know you are capable of better work than this."

**Seen on DVD** – Shaun of the Dead (C+, done by the same people as Hot Fuzz but not nearly as funny); The Office Special (A-, great wrap-up of how the BBC version ended, with an update from 2 years hence. Heather cried at one point, and you actually wind up feeling sorry for David at times – which in the first season was basically impossible). We're also finishing up the first season of Six Feet Under, which we both love. I plan on trying to find a copy of the second season sometime in the future, but not until after we've gotten caught up on some of the other television series we have piled up waiting for us to watch.

# Meet Me In Montauk

## The Eternal Sunshine Letter Column

**W. Andrew York:** Regarding traffic reports, you might try your City's website. Austin keeps a page (last time I checked) with the current info reported through their dispatch center. I have to agree about reports on the radio, always behind the times and inaccurate. Fortunately, I work flex time and go in before the traffic gets bad and head back once it starts slacking off.

*I believe we have some traffic cameras set up around the city, but it seems the web site is down on those occasions when I want to check it. Or maybe my firewall blocks it for some reason?*

As for someone looking at what you write, I've had a little experience editing a couple of books (one a mystery and the other a historical report by one of my college professors). Both thought that my comments were helpful, so if you're so inclined, I'll be happy to give things a once over.

*It seems like this new medication has taken some of my creative energy from me – I haven't done much writing at all over the past month. I really need to push myself and get working on at least one of these projects. Now that we're just about done with my boss' new book (which I had to do a ton of editing on, and some outright writing) maybe I'll find my juices flowing again.*

**Cal White:** I was reading what you wrote in the subzine. Pretty heavy stuff. I think it would be cool if you and I could sit down over a beer sometime. I've dealt with some of the things you're going through and I come from a large and pretty unruly family, so I've seen it in others as well.

*Well I don't drink anymore, but I'd be happy to buy YOU a few if you ever get down my way! In the meantime I'm always happy and grateful to hear about your opinions and experiences, whether here or privately.*

My only advice for your problems about rewarding yourself is to remember that these problems likely stem from some sort of chemical imbalance the docs are trying to correct with pills. If you have problems rewarding yourself, maybe you could remember that, with such a raw deal dealt to you by genetics, a little reward here and there is just some "evening up". Try it, you'll like it... <G>

*I do try, I find it hard but I figure that at least I am aware of what I'm doing to myself, so that's an improvement. Now that I recognize the way I'm thinking, I can concentrate on trying to change those patterns. It is just so darn engraved in my brain that it takes a lof of effort. The simple act of taking a Ginger Beer (mmm, so spicy) out of the fridge is a battle. "This cost \$3.50 for a 4-pack, I shouldn't waste it, I'll wait until I really did something to deserve it." That's the wrong attitude, but it comes so naturally. I'm working on it though!*

## Game Openings

**Diplomacy (Black Press):** Graham Wilson, Brad Wilson, Chris Babcock, needs four more.

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

**Colonia VII\_B (White Press):** Fred Hyatt's worldwide variant. Signed up: Jim Burgess, Graham Wilson, David Partridge, Brad Wilson, needs 5 more. Rules and map on request.

Suggestions for Diplomacy variants or other multi-player games are welcome. Maybe a quick Dip variant like The Italian Wars?



# Eternal Sunshine Game Section

## By Popular Demand

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 1

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.

<u>Player</u>	<u>Dog</u>	<u>Beatles</u>	<u>Confederate</u>	<u>Comic</u>	<u>Metal</u>	<u>Turn Score</u>	<u>Total</u>
Allison Kent	Labrador Retriever	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Peanuts</b>	<b>Silver</b>	36	36
Brad Martin	Poodle	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Doonsbury</b>	<b>Silver</b>	36	36
Chris Babcock	Collie	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Peanuts</b>	<b>Silver</b>	36	36
Cal White	Golden Retriever	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Doonsbury</b>	<b>Silver</b>	36	36
Kevin Wilson	Golden Retriever	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	Dilbert	<b>Silver</b>	33	33
W. Andrew York	Collie	White Album	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Doonsbury</b>	<b>Silver</b>	31	31
Dane Maslen	<b>German Shepherd</b>	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	Texas	<b>Peanuts</b>	<b>Silver</b>	31	31
David Partridge	<b>German Shepherd</b>	White Album	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Doonsbury</b>	<b>Silver</b>	31	31
Joakim Spangberg	<b>German Shepherd</b>	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	Texas	<b>Peanuts</b>	<b>Silver</b>	31	31
David Burgess	Labrador Retriever	Let It Be	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Peanuts</b>	<b>Silver</b>	30	30
Melinda Holley	<b>German Shepherd</b>	<b>Sgt. Peppers</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Doonsbury</b>	Platinum	29	29
Jamie McQuinn	Poodle	White Album	<b>Virginia</b>	Dilbert	<b>Silver</b>	28	28
Martin Burgdorf	<b>German Shepherd</b>	Let It Be	Mississippi	Garfield	Chromium	10	10

Most popular answers in bold. Highest Possible Score – 39; 4 players score 36, nice job!

Selected Comments by Category: **Dog** – Joakim "My personal favorite is Dobbermann Pinscher. Beautiful creatures especially with its tail and ears intact. Docking and ear cropping is illegal in Sweden."; David Partridge "German Shepherd, Not my favorite breed, but we're hoping for popularity, not what I'd actually own."; Kevin Wilson "Golden Retrievers are supposed to be the most popular breed in the U.S. Let's see if they are popular with your readers."; Andy York "lots of choices here, but who wouldn't love a `Lassie'?". **Beatles Album** – Dane Maslen "It was tempting to go for 'The Beatles' for number 2, but rightly or wrongly I decided that 'Abbey Road' and 'Sgt Pepper's' were the more obvious choices." **Confederate State** – Kevin Wilson "I think I read somewhere that 80% of the battles in the Civil War were fought in Virginia . Since it saw a lot of action then, maybe it will see a lot with this game."; Andy York "Personally, I'd go with Texas, but the most popular would have to be Virginia - many major battles, capital for most of the CSA's career, home state of Lee, etc. Second would have to be Confederate state #1 - South Carolina)." **Newspaper Comic Strip** – Andy York "I don't read that many of them, my favorite being Opus. I'm glad Breathed returned the strip to the papers, even though I'd like it every day!" **Metal** – David Partridge "Word association with Gold should bring [silver] to the top I hope."; Kevin Wilson "With a hint like "other than gold" silver ought to leap to the mind of most everyone. We'll see."

### Round 2

1. A brand of laundry detergent.
2. A musical instrument.
3. A Steve McQueen film.
4. A member of Monty Python other than John Cleese.
5. A country in Africa.

<u>Player</u>	<u>Detergent</u>	<u>Instrument</u>	<u>McQueen Movie</u>	<u>Python</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Turn Score</u>	<u>Total</u>
Chris Babcock	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>The Great Escape</b>	<b>Palin</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>39</b>	75
Cal White	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>The Great Escape</b>	<b>Idle</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>39</b>	75
Allison Kent	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>The Great Escape</b>	<b>Idle</b>	Egypt	34	70
David Burgess	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>The Great Escape</b>	<b>Palin</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>39</b>	69
W. Andrew York	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	The Magnificent 7	Chapman	<b>South Africa</b>	33	64
Dane Maslen	<b>Tide</b>	Violin	<b>The Great Escape</b>	Gilliam	<b>South Africa</b>	30	61
Jamie McQuinn	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>The Great Escape</b>	<b>Idle</b>	Sudan	32	60
Joakim Spangberg	Surf	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>The Great Escape</b>	<b>Palin</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	29	60
Kevin Wilson	<b>Tide</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	Cool Hand Luke	<b>Idle</b>	Egypt	27	60
David Partridge	<b>Tide</b>	Piano	The Magnificent 7	Chapman	<b>South Africa</b>	29	60
Brad Martin	Omo	Piano	The Magnificent 7	<b>Palin</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	20	56
Melinda Holley	<b>Tide</b>	Piano	<b>The Great Escape</b>	Chapman	Somalia	27	56
Martin Burgdorf	<b>Tide</b>	Piano	The Cincinnati Kid	Gilliam	Egypt	21	31

Most popular answers in bold. Highest possible score 39, 3 players score that awesome mark!

Selected Comments by Category: **Detergent** – Dane Maslen “I found an article on the internet that stated that Tide was the top-ranking American brand. We used to have Tide over here too, but I don't recall having seen it, or any ads for it, in recent years.”; Andy York “Tide is the only thing I've used since I can remember....wait, one time I had a coupon and tried something else that was forgettable....so back to Tide. I prefer powder over liquid, but I currently have liquid due to a Costco coupon.”; David Partridge “Although I'd never, ever use [Tide]. It's got so many chemicals and perfumes in it that it actually causes an allergic reaction in my wife.” **Musical Instrument** – Andy York “Guitar is something I've never played, being primarily a trombonist in high school, self-taught piano player and a smattering of other Instruments, though virtually nothing since my Air Force basic training's drum and bugle experience.” **African Nation** – Andy York “My first choice was Egypt, but folks think of that in relation to the Middle East. Sudan's in the news, so that was also on my radar. Other than that just about everything else muddles together.”

### **Round 3 Categories – Deadline is July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

1. A mixed drink other than a martini.
2. A type of bird.
3. A type of cookie.
4. A city in Japan other than Tokyo.
5. A piece of clothing.

## **Diplomacy Zine Plug**

When I left the Diplomacy hobby for a while, one of the postal zines I was really sorry to lose touch with was Brendan Whyte's Damn the Consequences. Fortunately it is still with us, so if you don't receive DTC can I ask you why the heck not? Costs are 35 THB in Asia, 45 THB in Oceania, and 50 THB in Europe and America (THB is the Thailand currency). Aside from the multitude of games running or on offer – from Diplomacy to Sopwith to Britannia to Golden Strider to RoboRally and much more – Brendan writes wonderful travel diaries from his many trips. Recently we've seen him move to Israel, and now to Thailand. If you've never seen the zine and would like to, send him an email at [obiwonfive "of"@hotmail.com](mailto:obiwonfive@of@hotmail.com), or drop Brendan a postal line at:

Brendan Whyte, 448 Suriyat Rd., UBON RATCHATHANI 34000, THAILAND

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**Deadline For The Next Issue of Eternal Sunshine:  
July 5th, 2007 – See You Then!**