

Eternal Sunshine #128

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On Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/270968112943024/> or on the web at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>. Follow on Twitter at @EternalSunshDip. Also be sure to visit the official Diplomacy World website which can be found at <http://www.diplomacyworld.net>.

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Quote of The Month – “Oh, come on. If I've got to watch my language just because they let a few broads in, I'm going to quit. How the hell can you run a goddam railroad without swearing?!” (Fat Caz in “The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3”)

Welcome to **Eternal Sunshine**, the only Diplomacy zine that I declared dead and buried over two years ago, only to be resurrected for no purpose but to further the appearance that I have any kind of life whatsoever. (Hint: I don't, not really). When I last left you, the final games in Eternal Sunshine had properly finished and game reports were published. I guess announcing the fold of Eternal Sunshine when I did shouldn't have been that much of a surprise. I was depressed, my marriage was about to come crashing down around me, and work was terrible. The Federal Government had just come along and decided that – even though I'd been paying my restitution as ordered for ten years – they wanted any money I'd managed to save in the bank along the way. Participation in the zine was slipping, time felt scarce....in short, it was a bad time. But at least I was committed to running the games to the end, and folding cleanly.

And then when the zine finally wrapped up, we'd lost some major contributors. Richard Walkerdine was gone. Then Jim Burgess, and his zine The Abyssinian Prince. Those of you around for the inception of Eternal Sunshine might remember it started as a subzine to Jim's TAP, and then dually subzine and independent zine...eventually flipping entirely and becoming the home zine, with TAP becoming a subzine of Eternal Sunshine. In many ways, the hobby had passed the days of the postal-speed zine by. Newcomers to the hobby liked the faster schedules found on the websites, and also were used to the anonymity of such places. The entire community feel was dying.

In the more than two years since Eternal Sunshine shut down, I've struggled to keep that Diplomacy community feel alive within the pages of Diplomacy World. It's been difficult. Without Jim-Bob Burgess there to keep pushing and encouraging me, there have been many times I just wanted to chuck the whole thing and walk away. But I haven't, thanks to the long-time contributors and the new blood that's come along since then. I don't know exactly where Diplomacy World fits in the hobby these days, but we're approaching the 150th issue and since I returned as Lead Editor a reliable schedule has been maintained. If nothing else, that's something to be proud of.

One thing I have been working on is my next memoir. For those who need to be reminded, my first memoir “It's Their House; I'm Just a Guest” was released in late 2014, and dealt with my time in Federal Prison. I was unable to find a publishing house or a literary agent to show enough interest to get involved, so I wound up self-publishing through KDP and Createspace (both owned by Amazon, and now merged into one entity). I did pile up a decent number of positive reviews on Amazon, and sold a few hundred copies at normal prices (plus another 800 or so during Kindle 99 cent or Kindle free sales). I am not a fan of my own writing style, but I thought the stories in there were decent and interesting, and I think if they'd have been allowed wider exposure the appetite for the book could have been at least ten times higher. But that's just the way the world is...there are SO MANY self-published books, and so few writers with any kind of representation. Amazon has become an even bigger force now that they are acting as publishers to big authors too; Dean Koontz recently signed with them. The KDP system allows for easy and inexpensive publishing for any prospective author, but after that all you can do is pound the table and try to get some attention. I was unable to organize a single written or audio interview about the book despite my best attempts. Perhaps the subject matter limited the audience, or anyone who might have been interested were able to find their fill of prison tales in the laughably-fake TV version of “Orange is the New Black.” I couldn't even bring myself to watch that show, as so much of what of portrayed was beyond reason. Not

that there's anything wrong with fiction (and I never read her book, which was supposed to be non-fiction). I just can't watch a movie or a TV show that asks me to suspend disbelief about something I've so personally experienced.

Helplessly Hoping
By Douglas Kent
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So, as I mentioned, I've been working on my second memoir. This one covers my entire relationship with Mara (my High School sweetheart and first wife). Readers who go back far enough with me to remember my first zine Maniac's Paradise will also remember Mara. She did occasional subzines and columns in there, and her health was often a topic I'd write about. Mara suffered from a large number of physical, mental, and emotional issues during our time together. This memoir has experiences in it that very few people knew about; I don't think **anyone** but the two of us knew **all** of them. The last six months have been spent doing some rewriting and editing, and once again searching for possible representation or publisher interest. About ten people have read the manuscript in one form or another. Responses have been mixed. My youngest sister couldn't get through it; she said she preferred to remember Mara in the more positive light she'd been carrying in her mind. My stepmother simply said it was the "most depressing thing [she'd] ever read." A few Diplomacy friends thought it had some promise, but held different opinions about what needed to be changed or what the problem with the book might be.

I was a bit surprised by how deeply two female acquaintances fell in love with the book. One described reading it as being similar to eavesdropping on someone else's secret life. The other was sort of blown away by the stories themselves, and all the things we went through together. Admittedly, some of our experiences were downright insane (no pun intended).

Two concerns have arisen from the comments I received so far. The first is that - to some people - Mara simply does not come across as a very sympathetic character. That does bother me, because as I lived those years, I always felt she had no real avenue to overcome her problems or exorcise her demons. Without question, there are many people who have gone through much worse and climbed the mountain, refusing to allow their past to define them or hold them back. I just never believed Mara possessed the tools she needed to do that. And when she would begin to work through one issue or recover from a physical problem, it always seemed something else would get dropped in her lap. I might be guilty of making excuses for Mara (I'm certainly guilty of enabling her at times during the relationship, whether or not I realized it). But for whatever reason, I just never saw a road to full recovery for her. We tried to enjoy our life the best we could, but her issues were so intertwined that trying to conquer one only revealed the hidden ones in the next layer.

But the biggest problem is one I just can't really fix: the questions about why I stayed with Mara through the worst times, when life was so miserable that I didn't care if I lived or died. I even have a chapter in the book entitled "Why I Stayed" in an attempt to explain at least **part** of my mindset. Looking back, it's difficult to remember all the thoughts and feelings. Maybe I felt this was all I deserved, or the best I could ever get. Maybe I felt responsibility. And certainly, I loved Mara, and that was a major part of it. And I know that in some ways this ties in to my relationship as a child with my mother, and the similarities she and Mara shared. I'm simply reluctant to delve too deeply into that angle, since my next memoir is supposedly going to be the book I've been promising to write for decades: the one that tells the story of my family, and the childhood my siblings and I shared. I guess if there's going to be clarity on this topic derived from understanding my mother, it will have to be found in that memoir instead of this one.

If you know anybody who is a Literary Agent that might want to look at a synopsis, or someone in publishing, feel free to let me know or connect us. I figure I'll keep searching for a few more months, and then if nothing comes of that, by the summer "Helplessly Hoping" will become my second self-published memoir. And at that stage you can **all** read it and tell me what you think...or just leave reviews on Amazon 😊.

Game Openings

Diplomacy (Black Press): Signed up: None, needs seven.

Balkan Wars VI (Black Press): Fast-paced six-player variant. Rules on request. Signed up: Brad Wilson, Jack McHugh, Kevin Wilson, needs three more.

By Popular Demand: Coming soon.

Where in the World is Kendo Nagasaki?: Coming soon.

Coming Soon: Aside from what is listed above, I'm open to suggestions but we'll have to see how it goes. I don't want to start too many games too quickly. I enjoy the natural expansion of a zine.

Standby List: HELP! I need standby players! – Current standby list: Andy York.

Eternal Sunshine Game Section

Gamestart!

Diplomacy, "Indestructible Machine", 2020? (I assume it will be 2020A)

The Players:

Austria: Rick Davis – redavis914@aol.com
England: Mark Firth – Mark.firth2@capita.com
France: John David Galt – jdgalt@att.net
Germany: Tim Haffey – trhaffey@aol.com
Italy: Toby Harris – toby@responsiva.biz
Russia: Bob Durf – playdiplomacymoderator@gmail.com
Turkey: Jack McHugh - jwmchughjr@gmail.com

Black Press is permitted in this game (you may write press from any location, as may any other player or non-player). Seasons separated on three requests, but Winter 1901 only requires two requests.

This is American-style, which means no predictive adjustments needed. You submit Autumn and Winter with Spring, and Summer with Fall, unless separations are granted.

Draws must include all survivors, and they must pass unanimously. Voting is secret. NVR = Yes.

ALL Players Must Be Signed Up to the ES Mailchimp List at
<https://mailchi.mp/45376bbd05df/eternalsunshine>

Deadline for Spring 1901 Moves and Press is: February 18, 2020 at 7am My Time (U.S. central time)

New Zine Announcement!

This announcement came in from Simon Langley-Evans:

Excuse the contact out of the blue, but I am getting in touch because at some point in the last few years I have either played against you or GM'd a Diplomacy game via the Diplomatic Corp website. I would now like to offer you a new venue to play Diplomacy games, as I am launching a new venture called Last Orders!.

Last Orders! will be a monthly-ish publication which has the main objective of running Diplomacy games with a turnaround of about 3-4 weeks per main turn. It will include Standard 7 player games and also Intimate games which I don't think are offered by any other venue at the moment.

If you would like to take a look and maybe sign up as a subscriber or player, then the first issue of Last Orders! is available here: <https://sway.office.com/FDpAl3mAe9sxXcWM?ref=Link>

Meet Me in Montauk The Eternal Sunshine Letter Column

I did get some nice notes from people expressing excitement or congratulations on resurrecting Eternal Sunshine, but I don't think any of them need to be published. I'm just putting this section here to remind you that letters on any topic are welcome. With luck we'll have a few to include in the next issue?

**Deadline for the next issue of Eternal Sunshine is: February 18, 2020 at 7am
My Time (U.S. central time)**

See You Then!