

Surprise Twist

by Ucaoinmhu

Happy birthday, Sue! In keeping with the surprising nature of this party, this puzzle contains a startling amount of tagging. But that's not all. Half of the answers must be altered before being entered in the grid, in one of the following two ways::

(1) Adding an extra letter. (One of the new words formed this way is NI2.)

(2) Combining a series of consecutive letters into a single character. These consecutive letters may or may not have to be rearranged for this.

When the grid has been filled, lightly shade in the squares containing the extra letters from (1) and the single characters from (2).

For the other half of the answers, take the centers of the middle words of the corresponding clues. The centers for Across clues, in clue order, will form a natural sequence; manipulate the grid so that each element of this sequence is changed into the next one. The centers for the Down clues, in clue order, will say what you have thus succeeded in doing.

ACROSS

1. Stop one giant
5. Mr. Kilmer from the cinema has turned Russian, perhaps
9. Binge is swell when it takes place
10. Odd bits of poetry in *Pollux's Circumnavigation* [NI3]
11. Navigation aid employing new data concerning macroeconomics (*abbr.*)
13. We heartless misers upset waterfowl
14. By force, obtains possessions of Mr. Lowe's

16. Took care of museum pieces scoundrel had initially damaged
17. Wrapping up hash canine gulps [NI3]
22. Say, "Enter a password Cobb voided, please"
23. Following a bit of meowing, a mouse is timid
24. After one, we bow sternwards for a second time
25. Men beheaded creatures in *The Lord of the Rings*
26. A very captivating magical country around an Asian sea
27. Resembling a kind of liquid plutonium Selinker originally extracted
28. Pen I, Sulu, destroyed with a single electromagnetic wave [NI3]

DOWN

1. Mayhap lust really involves ornament on a ship's stern [NI3]
2. Left dock space
3. Recalled ways to get unsatisfac-

- tory stud to start to be carnal
4. Innocent V will keep this country, internally, about as unstable as a volcano
6. Confine within a boundary line at one Cambridge college
7. Amazing marks made by chimps, perhaps including large semicircles (*hyph.*)
8. Due, at last, to marry
12. Trashy literature claiming ERs detest S₂O₈ salt [NI2]
15. Divinely comedic, and wrongfully at an end
17. After reflecting, pipes up: "Lo, muesli contains a genus of beetles" [NI2]
18. Flower will be colorful, primarily, and smell
19. Around watering holes, eat rolls (*2 wds.*)
20. She's beginning before getting dry
21. Jacob's son is emptying luggage before six

