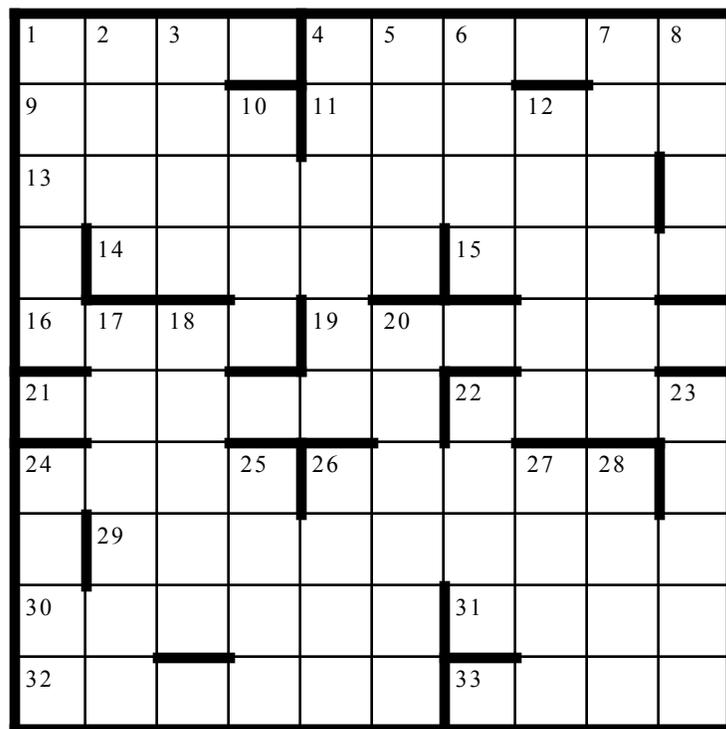


On Da-sh/nc-er! by Ucaimhu

'Tis the night before Christmas, and all through the grid,
 Ere you enter twelve answers, in each I must bid
 You replace one lone bigram (it's one of just two)
 With another (the same in all cases). Each clue,
 If its entry does not have that last letter-pair
 (By replacement or just 'cause it's naturally there),
 Has a wordplay part yielding one letter that's ext-
 Ra; in order, these say where to look for some text
 In the grid, for the first step. The second you'll get
 If you do the replacements you've found. Better yet,
 Take the answers where pairs got replaced; for each one
 If you note the position in which this was done
 And observe, in the *clue*, what two letters you spot
 In that place, all those bigrams will tell you what (not-
 Quite-traditional) thing the first step yields. If then
 You perform the same task for the answers I men-
 Tioned that naturally have "that last letter-pair," *those*
 Pairs will give the (exotic as well, heaven knows)
 Thing the second step is. (And that's it. Out of sight!
 Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!)

ACROSS

1. Dry NPR host Glass left Washington (4)
4. Badly direct soy-paste-tossing actress Farrow (6)
9. Cab alternative initially contains metal (4)
11. Scottish children of the author/nurse that wears bi-
kini tops . . . (6)
13. . . . and, within Vienna, has the captivating Mr.
Weasley removed from power (9)
14. Active people finally learned Old Gaelic (5)
15. What work may be done on a piece of scaffolding
maintained by an oil cartel (4)
16. Offered grub to that creature, for a change (4)
19. Like Louis XIV, say, making an inquiry (6)
21. Agitated efts sporting chic tops (6)
22. ET leaves Ms. Funicello a penny, perhaps (4)
24. Craves insects (4)
26. Odd letters from painters near German city (5)
29. Tin and cobalt pinched by reflective English guys
for profit (3 6)
30. Adjust the relative rating of disheartened rower by
one thousand (6)
31. Opalescent decorative elements adorning, initially,
ancient concert halls (4)
32. Inheritor of a crown, reportedly, or artwork (6)
33. Rial held by Mr. Diddle's siblings, briefly (4)



DOWN

1. Arizona certainly is blue (5)
2. Unfinished set is studied (4)
3. Oona primarily follows nonsense in an old newspa-
per's pictorial section (4)
4. Toast computer company's revolutionary instru-
ments (6)
5. Bedlike couches not occupied by Victor Fleming's
namesakes (4)
6. Edna gutlessly bathed in small, small bodies of water
(4)
7. East of West Flanders, or north, is a capybara-like
creature (6)
8. Manuscript about water that is frozen for 1/60,000
min. (4, *abbr.*)
10. Have extramarital sex with guitarist Atkins (4)
12. Source of phrase replacing "time" in fashionably
nostalgic copy (5)
17. Shifty nerd or boring speaker (6)
18. Nameless, more fastidious consumer (5)
20. Bit of sorrel-leaf extract on Kay's beef dishes (6)
22. French waiter rejects new oil company (4)
23. Flattens stoves found online? (5)
24. Papa supports semi-anarchic seniors' org. (4, *abbr.*)
25. Comedian Laurel (gasp!) stripped to sunbathe (4)
26. Owned animal that devours a kind of moss (4)
27. Denial precedes 551 complications (4)
28. Erroneously typed, "I'm an African despot" (4)