

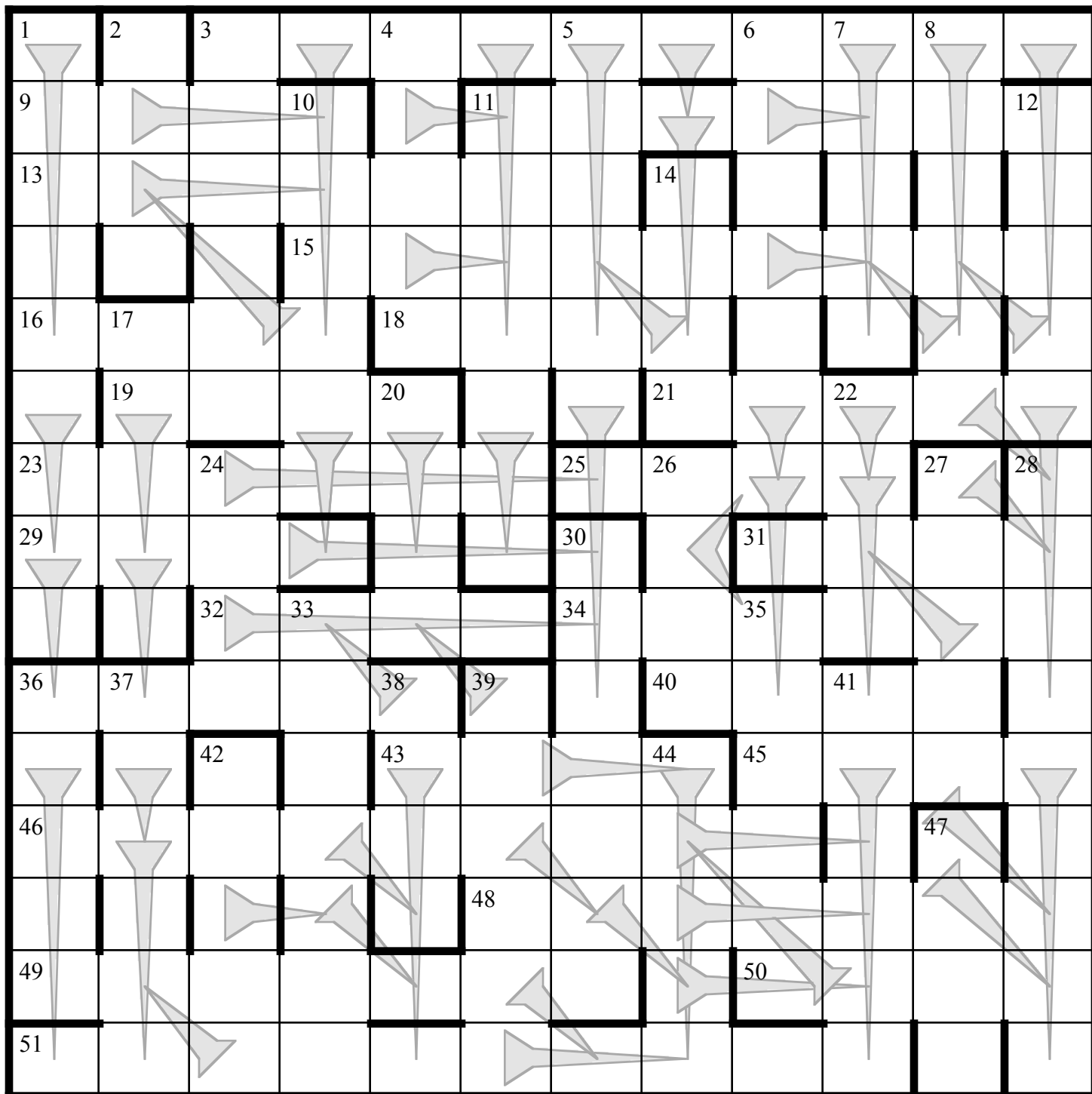
Sumer, in the City

by Ucaoimhu

On Saturday we will be deciding where to hold the 2004 convention, and as a cryptic setter I must throw my support behind every crypticist's favorite two-letter city. I refer, of course, to Ur. Ah, Ur — city of mud brick, ziggurats, and cuneiform, cuneiform, cuneiform!

So I've written this cryptic to try to sell you all on the joys of puzzling in cuneiform. Since a few of you may be less than familiar with this ancient writing system, this puzzle is divided into two stages:

(A) First of all, every Across clue contains an extraneous element, which must be removed before solving. These elements are of three types, corresponding to cuneiform's *logograms* (symbols representing entire words), *syllabograms* (phonetic symbols representing syllables), and *determinatives* (symbols that are themselves



unpronounced but which affect the meaning of the words they are associated with). That is, each Across clue contains an extraneous word, an extraneous pronounced syllable (which leaves a new word when *phonetically* deleted — the spelling may or may not correspond), or an extraneous unpronounced letter (a letter whose omission would not change the pronunciation of the word it is in). All Down clues are normal.

When the extraneous words are assembled, they will form a message. As often happens with ancient texts, the message is in two different languages; the extraneous unpronounced letters and extraneous syllables will identify who spoke these two languages.

(B) Now you are ready to tackle the cuneiform inscription. For solvers whose command of cuneiform is rusty, the completed grid contains a description of its contents. Even those conversant in cuneiform may have trouble deciphering the inscription, however, because it too contains extraneous parts. Fortunately, the message you assembled in (A) from the extraneous words is a cryptic clue. Its two-word solution (whose enumeration can be found by counting up the unpronounced letters and syllables, respectively) describes the message you are to find and thus identifies the extraneous parts of the inscription.

The message from (B) (which is entirely in one of the languages of the message from (A) . . . well, partly, at least), in addition to describing the author, will also tell exactly what we Krewe would do if we found ourselves in a Bronze Age city, facing cuneiform puzzle after cuneiform puzzle!

ACROSS

3. Worthy ripping into criminal Betsy's trusted (3 5 2)
9. Align at mostly free and easy pace (4)
11. Sort of cloud Vancouver with unsatisfactory, unresolved lust (7)
13. Having Lotts of DC dipped into paint, naked (5 2)
15. Kubla Khan's bard displays chord liege arranged (9)
16. Katie's one to accept a farewell (2-2)
18. Left eerie green island (4)
19. Sought back of neck-rest with energy (4)
21. You cross these work roads, carrying Odie (5)
23. One corrupt tin mixture contains iron and carbon (6)
25. Force unit to feed outspoken stager (4)
29. Strong position of feet straddling oar (4)
31. Laura in *Jurassic Park* is unquestionable nerd (4)
32. Dopey or one of the other six is back in school (4)
34. Inn finally installing the French fireplaces (6)
36. Gnaw bare crumbs left by Texan athlete (5)
40. Information about one who bit (4)
43. Heard two females in bird nest (4)
45. Rig southeastern four sixths of mill (4)
46. Like one purple insignia university has (9)
48. Widespread delay traps Renee from 3:00 to 9:00 (7)
49. Pa's unsteady gait is more thoroughly masculine? (7)
50. Speak wildly of desire when pitching scent (4)
51. Yeats laid trees out in a proverbially pleasant thoroughfare? (4 6)

DOWN

1. Flora emptied trayful provided aboard aircraft (5 4)
[NI3]
2. Swallow feathers (4)
3. They started to get into fight with Athens' leadership! (6)
4. Thanks farmer's equipment for Nevada lake (5)
5. Unrest worried key workers? (6)
6. You don't lightly cross this famous masseuse? (7)
7. Train I would empty and get rid of (5)
8. Endless nonsense on diploma is expanded (6)
10. Avoid Echidna's first and second head (6)
11. In detail I comment about hairy protozoan (7)
12. Large numbers of skids (5)
14. What's odd in garden we raised (4)
17. Be irksome one prying without scruple (5)
20. Repeat cry of mariner discovering Europe? (4)
22. Dance with perverse, lascivious look (4)
24. Wear something to hold up a G-string? (4)
26. That there fork on top for desserts (4)
27. 250,000-page fantasy? (5)
28. A Parisian is put down for lacking talent (9)
30. Scrooge embraces dead old sinner (7)
33. Attempt to grap one record in a series of three (7)
35. Something outstanding to settle after legal matter turns up (6)
36. One stops either of two presidents (5)
37. Composition by author supporting child (6)
38. New-door smell (4)
39. Hot egg salad for British sheep (6)
41. Sing after reception, in distress (4 2)
42. Open up Second Kings (5)
44. Pound twice quartered a cat (5)
47. Essentially, nonword salutation! (4)