



SPEAKING OF WITCH...

Dear Solver,

You are beautiful. I know this about you.

You are also virtuous, good-hearted and kind; this, too, is widely known to be true.

It may be, however, that you are somewhat foolhardy, or overly brave, else you'd never have ventured so deep into the dark Russian forest and fallen into the clutches of the monstrous witch Baba Yaga. Now that you've fallen under her spell, she has charged you with a number of challenging tasks. Fail in even one, and Baba Yaga will roast you for her dinner. The sad truth, of course, is that she'll likely eat you anyway.

But hope is not lost. Your kindly old grandmother, herself a Wise Woman, gifted you at birth with a small wooden doll. In times of distress, feeding the doll a morsel of food or a drop to drink will bring it to life as a loyal ally. Each of the puzzles will yield three answers, one of which will be an item of food or drink. Present that to the doll and it may give you some sage advice. Verify other answers via the Answer Check link.

If you keep your wits about you, you may be able to determine an incantation or ward that will break Baba Yaga's spell on you; that's the final answer to this set of puzzles.

Send this final answer to me at markhalpin3 at gmail dot com to score a place on the Leaderboard. The first pair or solo solver to do so will win a \$25 Amazon gift card, as will an additional solver drawn randomly from all those submitting the correct answer before Monday, September 21. At that point, I'll post hints and solutions. If you're not interested in the Leaderboard or prizes, feel free to contact me for hints or nudges at any point. As ever, the point of the thing is to have fun, so if there's anything I can do to facilitate that, please don't hesitate to let me know.

After you've confirmed individual puzzle answers, you may email those to me as well; this is not necessary and is purely for my personal interest in tracking progress. All puzzles may be printed to solve, and nothing in this intro relates to the puzzles beyond that which does so overtly. Specific knowledge of the original source material is not required. Online references might be handy, and flavor text is often clueful.

Happy Slav-ing!

Mark / Zebraboy

BABA YAGA'S YARD

Baba Yaga's yard, surrounded by a fence made of bones, is badly in need of straightening up. But with all the enchantments surrounding it, exactly how you're supposed to do that is something of a mystery.

Baba Yaga flies in a huge iron **mortar and pestle**. Left on its own, the infernal object grinds things up maliciously. For six pairs of crossing entries in the grid, the letters from the two answers must be ground up together and redistributed into two new entries to be entered in place of the originals (these entries will include a proper name and two two-word nouns). Read the Nth letter of the Nth clue whose entry is affected by the mortar and pestle for a message revealing where to find one answer.

Baba Yaga's **hut** runs about madly on giant chicken legs. Unless affected by the mortar as well, entries affected by the hut are to be entered normally, with the inevitable resulting collisions allowing you to track its movements through the yard. Read the Nth letter of the Nth clue whose entry is affected by the hut for a message revealing where to find another answer.

Treating clues for unaffected entries as a third set might also prove useful.

1	2	3	4		5	6		7	8	9		10		11
12					13									
		14							15					
16				17			18						19	
20			21						22		23			
24						25			26					
	27	28								29	30			
31					32						33			
34		35		36		37		38						39
	40				41					42		43		
44									45				46	
47								48				49		
50								51						
	52										53			
54						55								

BABA YAGA'S YARD - PG. 2 OF 2

ACROSS

- 2 Eminent university's endorsing being hugged by bear (8)
- 8 Susie's taking incomplete nap in the afternoon (6)
- 12 Avignon's river is reddish-brown, reportedly (5)
- 13 Weirdo fanned a kind of bovine beast from South America (9, 2 wds.)
- 14 World's foremost host embracing lady with great affection (6)
- 15 Mail repository holding back half of mail near the author's southern city (6)
- 16 Firstly, starry; if not that, totally dark (7)
- 18 Affectation displayed by youngsters, when one member is late (8)
- 20 Maxim describing very loud bug (6)
- 22 Isn't constant craving essentially a sign of spring? (6)
- 24 Show of nonchalance from quiet Persian, maybe (5)
- 25 Serve top bananas to avoid putting your foot in something? (8, 2 wds.)
- 28 Massive multitudes of prayers overwhelming Norse deity (9)
- 30 Osiris's consort lives in two places at once (4)
- 31 Baby bird almost is very smart (4)
- 32 Lecherous name for Travis among others (5)
- 33 Bad-sounding bottle of perfume (4)
- 34 After the last of edits, her translation is "very German" (4)
- 36 Lamebrained vet's ideas for tranquilizers (9)
- 40 Brandy that's fruity and French addled Eve. Adieu! (8, 3 wds.)
- 42 Pears or plums hollowed out, served with donut and snack chip (5)
- 44 Avocados, eggs, and the like lead to obesity and cavities (6)
- 45 Momentary glimpse of boundless elegance in motion (6)
- 47 O.K. Corral lawman schleps swimmers' gear (8)
- 48 Top-rated ad about "Man in the Future" (5)
- 50 Comic Bob's taking in Degeneres's finale ... extremely wise (6)
- 51 Arbitrarily, I located Coke Zero, say (8, 2 wds.)
- 52 Choreographed hero & elves in musical version of *Miracle on 34th Street* (9, 2 wds.)
- 53 A kind of tool used to secure line in bivouac (5)
- 54 Fool dueled inelegantly (6)
- 55 Some who become offended from chilly remarks about doing nothing (8)

DOWN

- 1 Children's author's loony dress engrossing us (7, 2 wds.)
- 2 Paradise, lacking woe, ultimately is a place of refuge (5)
- 3 We sort out a big doggie's name (6)
- 4 Clark Kent's girlfriend brought up to be fastidious (4)
- 5 One's kinfolk wrought fiery metal (10, 2 wds.)
- 6 Under control, like a dog (also, hen, strangely) (7, 2 wds.)
- 7 Someone harshly criticizing "Red Rice Stew" (7)
- 9 Sanitarium accommodating one Pointer Sister (5)
- 10 One is to counterfeit coins north of the border (7)
- 11 A fitness-booster's motivation: not too shabby (7)
- 17 A fantastic surge, or boring pieces? (6)
- 18 Drunken, in a stupor, act all hoity-toity (9, 3 wds.)
- 19 Episodic narrative Cap'n Crunch perhaps delivered orally (6)
- 21 Kirk's navigator frequently nearly left kind of a cloud (7)
- 23 I arrive having traveled Saint-Tropez and thereabouts (7)
- 26 Taking seriously digs about questionable hygiene (10, 2 wds.)
- 27 A revolutionary pointed towards four o'clock, it's said, before being shot (6)
- 29 Squash is left rotting (6)
- 34 Horrifically sad opus, or something bubbly? (7)
- 35 Chief of renegade tribe recalled beginning of historic comeback (7)
- 37 Stupidly build bunker initially housing male moron (7, 2 wds.)
- 38 The sixth hotel employee brought up an Israeli city (7, 2 wds.)
- 39 Poet's written anew about ... about ... a pair of work boots' features (7)
- 41 Medusa's frightful smiling and giggling (6)
- 43 Rodin labored around back of studio, not *alfresco* (6)
- 46 So Mr. T is recast in *The Tempest* (5)
- 49 Care unhealthily for a parcel of real estate (4)

LENTILS AND PEAS

Baba Yaga scatters handfuls of lentils and peas in the ashes of her fire, demanding that you separate them all before nightfall. The disembodied hands that float around Baba Yaga's kitchen only make things worse, as they're too busy mischievously switching things around and playing with the spoons to help sift through the fine, pale powder.

Article of faith	•	•	a total nervous wreck	•	•	A legal claim
Be dearly fond of any of	•	•	ham hocks, chülins, etc.	•	•	Aspect of oneself
Crying Hogwarts ghost	•	•	shelled ocean - dweller	•	•	Clashes petulantly
E.g. Bozo, when	•	•	device for sawing angles	•	•	Coffin
Emplacement for a	•	•	ships deployed during the Cuban Missile Crisis	•	•	Earthen walls, etc.
Extremely hard question	•	•	a kind of manta	•	•	Historically in Egypt
Fetish - filled	•	•	building at the heart of a Catholic community	•	•	Hunters' pet weasels
Lapin that's smothered	•	•	hold extra-tightly	•	•	In cheese on toast
Old sandbags and	•	•	they're used to feed kitties	•	•	Numerous bony fishes
One chomping	•	•	KenKen or TomTom, but not really Sudoku	•	•	Opening for bullets
Rather droll and clever	•	•	psittacosis	•	•	Orgiastic behavior
Richly prolific and	•	•	they may help you learn "joie de vivre"	•	•	Original precipitation
Steed's offspring made	•	•	luxurious fur garment	•	•	Residing in a soup bowl
Trail's	•	•	slogans on one's auto	•	•	Ring around a castle
Trey's spots used to make	•	•	shallow carving on a frieze	•	•	Rubbishy music style
Twenty - four hours for	•	•	all over the metropolis	•	•	Somewhat wet
"Yardbird" Parker's	•	•	cash-stashing accessory	•	•	Teases cruelly
You can use one to vex	•	•	where to get dings fixed	•	•	Tight necklaces

4, 6 → 9

5, 4 → 4, 4

• = ? • = ?

4, 4 → 4, 4 = 7



THE THREE HORSEMEN

Three horsemen visit Baba Yaga's home at regular intervals. The first rides a white horse, and is clad all in white. The second rides a red horse, and is clad all in red, while the third rides a black horse, and is clad all in black. Baba Yaga insists that you question the riders, secretly knowing that asking them the wrong question will doom you.

You're wise enough to realize that the three horsemen are bright Day, blazing red Sun, and dark Night, so there's no need to ask them about **that**. Before you ask what you really want to know, it might be better to warm up with forty-eight basic questions first.

NUFFUNEDWITHTHETANTEOFTHEFUNGUNTHATCAUNENLOAVENTORINE(6)

LOODNAWAYTHATSKLOODNDPOLLLOODTEGENLOO**DALREFLOODNEDCORDLOODALORDELLOODCATE(6)**

STLEOFPPEAPPLLYROPLLYRITEOLLYRFLLYROTYHESNOWAN(7)

TRHCKELLVENONAVYILLACIGNESGOVDBYELUSLABYALIUM(6')

JOURNALISOSSSAW**YEOEEOOOPHOTOGRAPHEOEEARBUOUU(5)**

MARYCDNASEPLAYINWDNI**CDNELWOODDNASACDNUMWDNOSAGDNOSTLYDNARE(6)**

EIGHTEETTEREAMEEOREARIOUYEEGETATIONEYPECIALLYEENUYEOLIUMEPECIEYEERENNE(8)

FTNARFRNEKFUNMANFOIDFINTHFFINDGGEFDF**ONREHFADFUNCHFSNFINEUTFENANTFONRF(7)**

CLEPOOKVELANDHARPEANSRISONCLEPSVELAN**DARTPNHURGARPEXICANFIELDHAYPUISINEES(5)**

THRENREHTRONTSTOOGEDNALERISLAUGDNALGNELSYLLABLDNALTOCSS(4)

NUNIRUTPACNDNANUNIEITNKCYTSEVILNUNISUNANYSSALNRYNTAIRAL(6)

TTYPICLAFFINLAIIN**NIGNRROBBEETHOVESNCCHORLASSYMPHOYN(5)**

PASSSSSENGERSHIPPIPIPORRECOCOCORDALBUBUBUMINSESESE(5)

LINEMENTEINTWEENXINYGENNINDEINONNINHINEEINRIODICAINBLE(8)

ARDLOQUIALLYLIKESUPERSTANTIALMEGAMERICANABEPERARDBERT(10)

ORSBEANNBEABRRSISTCOMHCHARACTBERSUSRNAMBE(6)

INKINKANDANDO**INKERSOINKERSGOGOININONEONE(3)**

THE THREE HORSEMEN - PG. 2 OF 2

PCROS-DOESSINGPMUSIAOPNUMBRPINPSOUTPPACIOPORPSWEEHOART(5,3)

FAMILIABOGCRALTERNATMORASSCETERSWAMPFCMFOMARSHCRCONJUNCTIVITIMIRECS(7)

ECHIDNASCNARECNSOMETIMESCNCALLEDNTHISCNKINDCNFCNANTEATERSCN(5)

TRUMENT-YNSPYREDYSTATYON2NCHYSESONDTALLMENT(6,4,2)

EMANRUSFECITNYUSUJTNYUAHTNYUDECALPERARDNASYADRNNCNEHTNYUEMERPUSTNYURUC(5)

RABBTTISMATERILLISNNISAISMARGEYYISWILLIASSISBOKKIS(9)

NPEANORATIVENTERANNREFANRRRINGNTONANNUNBANLIEVERNESPANCIALLYNTONANMOSANEM(7)

ASK THE **WHITE** HORSEMAN: "WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SNACK?"

(7) _____

ASK THE **RED** HORSEMAN: "HOW DO YOU RIDE?"

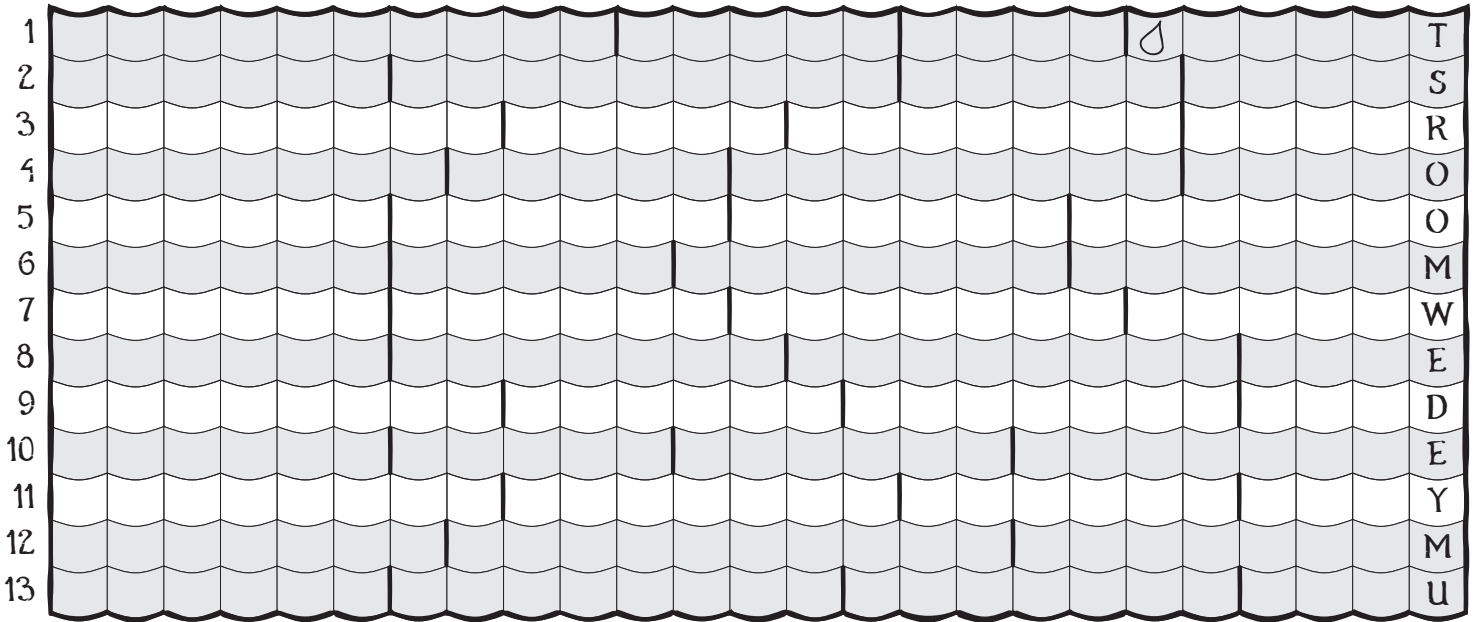
(7) _____

ASK THE **BLACK** HORSEMAN: "WHAT ARE THE OTHER TWO HORSEMEN?"

(6) _____

THE WATERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Baba Yaga sends you on a long journey to fill one vial with the Water of Life (which is found in a babbling brook) and another with the Water of Death (which is found in a still pond).



1. Structure housing Big Ben (2 wds.)
 -- imbing r--- e-'s p-----
 -- o-t and -o for-h
 -age d---

2. Any of twelve famous pharaohs
 F--- e-; -l- in Chicago
 T-----s -r ---
 Solemn ----i-es

3. Microscopic machines
 U-g-i-ly -ld --a--
 Where to view --r-o F--t
 --a- -e---

4. Hearts or watches
 S-----
 l-----
 -al of -----r--'

5. Derisive response
 --b, t- B---

----; ch--ge
 Large --ov----

6. Abduct
 --nd of --- ma-
 Si--; ---n
 S-----s garm---

7. Really hits it off
 --ods; h-----
 T-o-----
 -r-----'s -on

8. Monday birthday boy Solomon
 --o--- of a particular t-pe
 It might de--- ----
 R---a, --e-, or hu--

9. Most tranquil
 -cor-- - ----
 ---n- -n-
 ---ch or e----

10. Form a notion
 M-----s- g-lt
 Ro--- --t
 City -----t-

11. Solids turning to liquids
 -ay, --r-o- p--hap-
 F--t an- -h---
 ----p --x

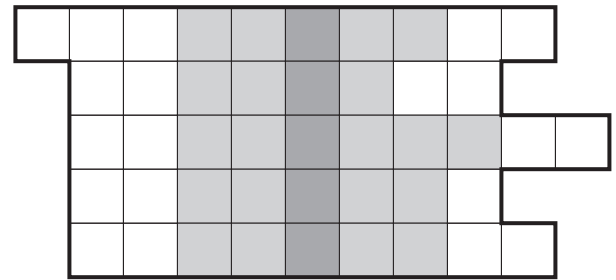
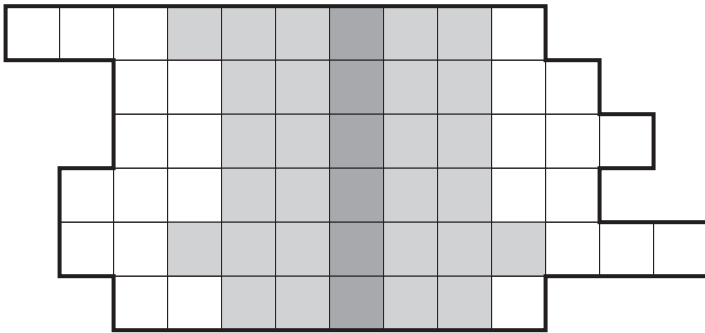
12. Giving a new title to
 --ally ch-r----- ones
 Line spok-- by
 Mi-a- K----- (hyph.)

13. A hoop or stud
 Some h-----s
 -howing h-----s
 B--ndi-h -----e



KOSCHEI THE DEATHLESS

Baba Yaga orders you to bring her the soul of her greatest rival, the evil mystic Koschei. This may prove difficult, as the wily old ascetic keeps his soul inside a needle, which is inside an egg, which is inside a duck, which is inside a hare, which is inside an iron chest, which is inside an ancient tree, which grows on an island in the middle of the sea.



EGGS

Fall flower
Gives a bad review to
Oneness
Short-lived affair
Sweetie-pie
True to life



NEEDLES

Aspen or cottonwood
Cake decorator
Catty remark?
Raptor's weapon
Space
That girl's

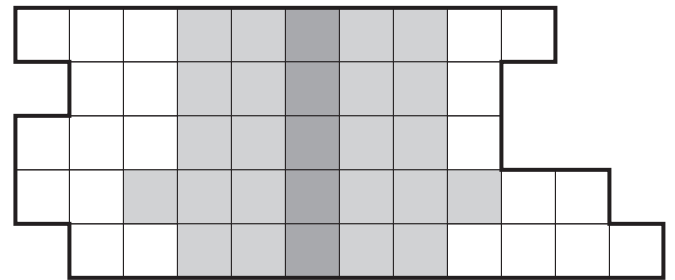
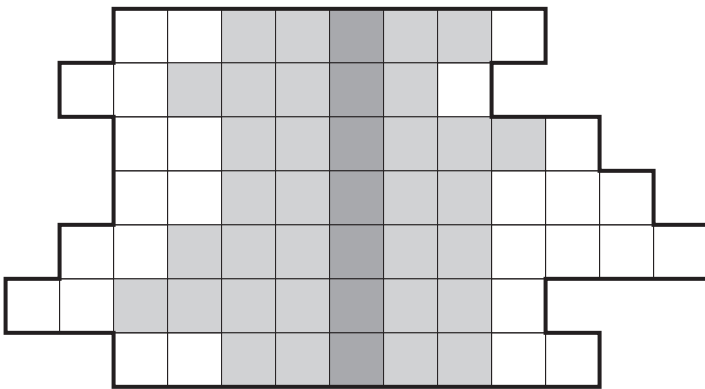
EGGS

Cobbler's relative
October birthstone
Some cheese-lovers
Tend to a plant, in a way
Tore



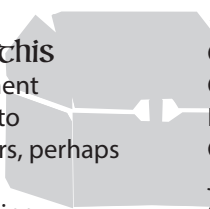
NEEDLES

A dog or its food
Bravura; brilliance
Emulate a cashier
Part of many alloys
Ultrabright, like a color



EGGS

any font like this
Bachelor's apartment
Give a whopping to
One assigning stars, perhaps
Physique, in brief
Sculpture or painting
Simple card game

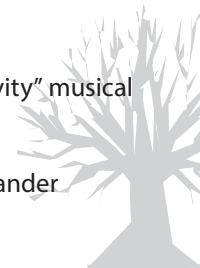


NEEDLES

Close
Coin smaller than a penny
Eastern princess
Grassy plain
Japanese noodle dish
Official denial
Rising star

EGGS

"Defying Gravity" musical
Depend (on)
Really big nail
Sort of salamander
Tilling tool

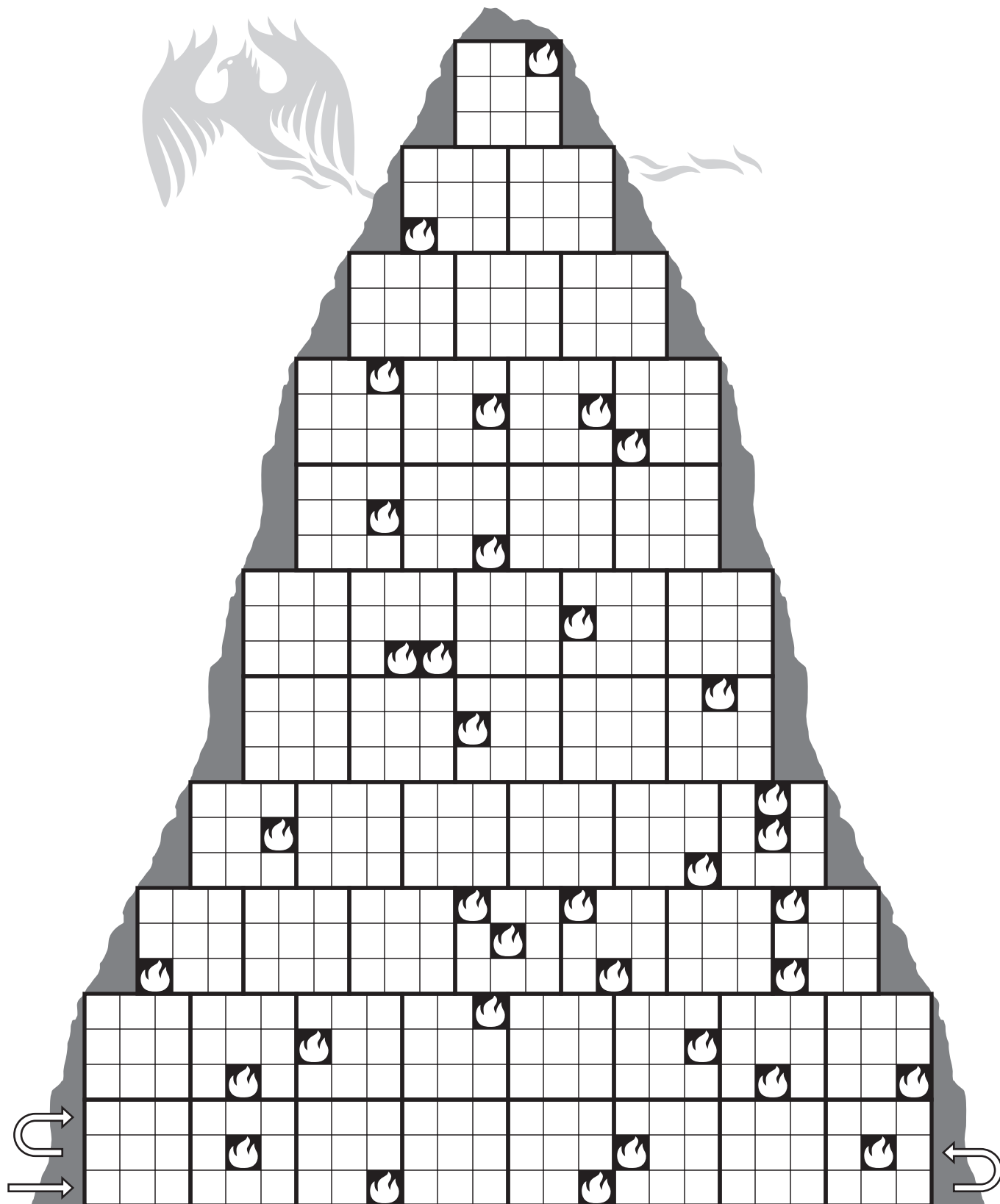


NEEDLES

Antivenoms
In such a way
Mum
Place to have a sub built
P.R. agent's slant

THE FIREBIRD

Baba Yaga sends you to retrieve a feather from the Firebird, who lives atop a distant mountain. You make your way slowly up the steep crag, sometimes singing to yourself, sometimes not, and though you know that half the flames in your path are mere illusions, you still wish you had some protective gear.



THE FIREBIRD - PG. 2 of 2

A		D		A		A		L		A	N	A	R	T	A	S	I
	E	N	E	A	T		W	O		S	E	I		S	N	S	N
B	H	T	A	B		G	I	R	A	L		I	N	G	D	E	G
A	T	I	B	E	S		B	G	C	I	M	C		P		D	I
K		T	O	R	I	E	R	N	H	A	R	H	Y	O	F		I
E	E	H	G		U	H	I	I	R	E	T	E	R	T	T	O	
D	O	N	D		T	D		W		E	C	E		F		E	
	I		D	A	G	E	D	O		G	R	T	U	O	G	L	N
E		T	E	X	T	E	L	R	T	H	G	R	E	S	N	M	I
E	N	N	E		N	E	O	E		F	I		G	N	H	E	L
H	T	U	R	E		N	U	R	I	C	A	Y		I	E	T	E
T	A	R	R	H	T	O	T	E	F		I	T		E	R	N	T
H		I			H		H		H	S	T	I	A	S		I	
A	K		L	O	W	M	T	P	E	E		N	T		O	N	S
I	N	L	L	F		E		U	R	R	W	N	A	P	T		Y
	L		L	L	S		M	T		N			N			N	
I	L	W	R	G		O	A	F	B	U	I	G	D	W	R	O	T
N	E	E	S	O	N	O	N	O	O	R	N	O	O	E	I	R	H
	N	R		O	F		O	F		O	N			O			R
W	E		S	U	O	U	L	O	E	N	I	U	O	M	L	S	Y
E	H	C	G		O	S		V	H		L		W	H	Y	O	I
	S	E		S	E		S		S		S		S	T			T
	N	O	T	H	E	H	O	S	M	S		T		N	C	O	
A	L	L	T	N	A	O	O	I	Y	T	C	U	R	N	Y	T	T
	T	H		T	O		U	H		W	A		Y				
F	O			E	K	F	N	E	K		U	E	O	S			
U	T	U	S	M	O	B	T	S	S	E	S	R	U	R			

Cut out 3x3 blocks along given guides. Blocks may be rotated but not reflected when placing them in the grid.



SECRET SIGNS

Your other chores completed, Baba Yaga sends you hither and yon over many leagues to collect an assortment of dark spell ingredients (or approximations thereof).

									X
X	X								
							X		
			X		X				

- a leather BELT (ICE, PAN, SILENT)
- a black CAT (CHARM, FRUIT, PAN, PLANK, RAT)
- an unlucky CHARM (CAT, RIBS, WORMS)
- a scrap of CLOTH (GARMENTS, RAT, SILENT, SPIRIT)
- a DOG'S PAW (RED-HOT)
- some withered FRUIT (CAT)
- some rendered GARMENTS (CLOTH, RIBS)
- some shards of ICE (BELT)
- a rusty PAN (BELT, CAT, TONGUE)

- a weathered PLANK (CAT, SHIELD, TONGUE, WORMS)
- a dead RAT (CAT, CLOTH, RIBS)
- a RED-HOT coal (DOG'S PAW, SILENT)
- some gnawn RIBS (CHARM, GARMENTS, RAT, SILENT)
- a bloody SHIELD (PLANK)
- a SILENT snake (BELT, CLOTH, RED-HOT, RIBS)
- a restless SPIRIT (CLOTH, WORMS)
- a severed TONGUE (PAN, PLANK)
- wriggling WORMS (CHARM, PLANK, SPIRIT)

Enter items in the map above, crisscross-fashion, with words reading left-to-right or top-to-bottom. Unlike a normal crisscross, parallel entries may be in adjacent rows and columns; ignore meaningless resulting fragments.

All intersections are indicated above. The X's already given are part of no entry.