



GRAFFITI ON THE SPHINX

December 2018

St. Louis is a dozen grapefruit.

#324

HARD, REFERENCE, AND FAVORITE FLATS:

My last flat sols were 29, 17, 55, 5, 4, and 19, with 9, 23, and 24 holding out. Of those I have, I think 8, 35, 46, 56, and 61 are hard even with modest research, including Lucifer. Besides the 'Nig easy list, I found 32, 40, 41, 43, 45, 47, 53, 54, 60, 66, and 69 fairly easy. I used references (including MW) to get 4, 7, 8, 11, 15, 17, 27, 28, 29, 34, 35, 37, 39, 46, 56, 61, 62, 67 and 68, and think 3, 29, 34, 35, 39, 56, 58, 61, and 62 may call for them; also 4, 8, 11, 15, 28, 40, 46, and 47 for some. Source-tagged and freewheeling flats that can be solved without refs: 5, 14, 18, 30, 40, 42, 45, 48, 53, 57, 59, 60, and 64. My current favorites include 2, 17, 18, 20, 34,

43, 44, 50, 68, F2, F6, X8!, and X9. Singables and pastiches: 7 - 'We're Off to See the Wizard', by 'Yip' Harburg and Harold Arlen. 18 - *Ma'oz Tzur*, by some 13th-century Mordechai. 'Ma'oz Tzur Yeshu'ati,/lekha na'eh leshabe'ah.' 21 - 'Sumer is Icumen In', possibly by W. de Wycombe in the mid-13th century. 23 - ??? 45 - [censored]. 63 - 'I Like Traffic Lights', by Monty Python.

GotS SOLUTIONS:

27.11.3bSSB: STAtable, LEitmotiv, MAster, TEtrapod. 27.11.6a a.a.: magnetic field. In vitro fertilisation. Healthcare professionals. Miss Venus Williams. A dirty old man. Politician. Aspirin. Acet-

Graffiti on the Sphinx (Vol. 27, no.12, December 2018) is published monthly by Treesong (Philip M. Cohen, 112 Oak Lane, West Chester PA 19382-5435, tree.song@verizon.net), generally within two weeks of the latest Enigma's arrival by mail. It's online in two formats at <http://www.enigma.puzzlers.org/gots> until I find a way to do booklet format again. GotS hardcopy may someday be available if there are enough hardcopy subscribers to make it worth the work. Softcopy in Word Perfect X5 or PDF format, e-mailed, is free, or you can find the PDF on the NPL website. This is not an official publication of the National Puzzlers' League; opinions herein are strictly those of the editor and/or contributors, and are not to be taken as authoritative, unless you're the type who'll believe anything. Editorial interpolations within contributors' comments are set off by [brackets], I try to warn of material that might serve as a hint by enclosing it in (* these dojiggers *), Google and Lucifer searches are in <angle brackets>, and ¢ = 'comment (on)' (plural '¢¢'). The noun and verb 'Lucifer' mean 'research using the solving tools on the NPL webpage, which were programmed by Lucifer'; 't.c.' = 'thesaurus.com'; and Roget7 = *Roget's International Thesaurus*, 7th ed. References of the form 'm.n.p ¶ q' mean 'volume m, issue n, page p, paragraph q'; 'a'/'b' on a page number means column 1/2. These references have previously referenced the 2-up/booklet versions but I'll try to make them match this 1-up version in future. Minor editing (such as changing noms from all-caps, ± a comma, replacing with a synonym) is done several times a month without notice, even in direct quotes; major rewording is in <angle brackets>. Anything sent to me is considered usable in GotS unless marked DNQ (Do Not Quote); you can tell me to consider all your letters DNQ. I have an agreement with Quicksilver to get comments sent with sol lists, if any, so let us know, if you send any.

aminophen.

THE SPHINX LOOKS BACK:

Each flat number marks a change of commenter; if no new one's given, it's me.

October: **CF2** - I think I got this, though my notes on the puzzle sheet show a blank for the last word (and 'pekoes' below it). **CF4** - 'quart' seemed obvious, but removing it from 'Quoth the raven' didn't help one bit. Enquotes, no question, triple quotes, liters, liquids, double quotes/quarts, bah. Dischorran: Poe? quart? pint? friend beware? poison? **CF13** - we know Ouija boards work by users' unconscious guidance of the planchette, so we can conclude....

2 - I never got the idea; I was trying to work with things like 'social life' and 'free time'. Loki-5: I suppose I guessed the 8, possibly with the help of thesaurus.com, which has 'revenue' as a synonym of 'income'. My WordFind program can search for transposals with wild cards, to get the 10. [As can Lucifer.] Alt sol: transigent earnings. DelphiRune: I think I started with the idea of 'unearned income' and looked for synonyms for both terms. Welded transposals are often frustrating, but this one had more clues than your typical Wrybosh creation. **5** - I built up the Google search <"rear mast" "rigged fore and aft" "three masted"> and the fifth hit's text had 'bark'. **6** - 'din' isn't an 'alarm' suffix, but I imagine there's no better way to make a PEACH. **7** - I Baused from 'adjudicate' to 'arbitrate' to 'appease' and 'mediate' (admittee?) to 'referee'. No joy. Much later I thought of 'doubter'. **11** - fren, frenetic? Naah. Nice of him to use 'climact-' to point to the right model. **12** - (giant) rat, Sumatra? No, 'tra' isn't a metathesis. 'Provincial' stuck out and led me north to the sol. **14** - Googled 'style-wort', found 'Stylidiaceae', moved up to the order Campanulales (unclampens?) to no avail, looked it up in NI2 and got the synonym 'Candollea', whence 'candolleaceous', and Lucifer gave the rest except for 5 1 3 7, which I knew and whose clue stood out once I got it. **16** - I lazily e11Ced 6 9s and scanned quickly through the 312 hits. **17** - I was surprised to read in online 11C that lower-case 'internet' is

October #17, continued

gaining ground on 'Internet' and is the usual British form. **19** - phoneticity accounts for \d\ being spelled 'eau' but not for \ät\ being spelled 'att', or? **20** - can you recant a book? **21** - I got the wrong idea altogether, trying things like 'infused' and 'spliced'. R/EDS: My penultimate hole. My daughter finally put me onto berries and it still took a while. **29** - a pall, fog, cloud over this country? Seems like a natural topic, but doesn't seem to connect to the marsh. I e11Ced <?????? tree> and got coffee, fringe, mastic, planer, rubber, sorrel, but couldn't transpose any of them. Never suspected that the marsh was the land. Loki-5: I spent a lot of effort guessing 4 was 'tree' or 'pine'. I think I eventually guessed the right 4, then searched allwords.txt. DelphiRune: What else would be standing in a marsh? (Yeah, probably lots of things, but that wading bird was the first that came to mind for me.) **30** - Dischorran: original note on solving: 'this better not be a correct answer.' **32** - I'd have expected 'It's just a DAY' to come from Ma. **33** - LEFT and LEFFT share the -uncle diminutive suffix. **42** - can a talon be a finger, not a fingernail? 11C says so. **47** - prison lover? Naah. R/EDS: I might have gotten there faster with a straight 6 5. I got hung up on tiles for the longest time. **48** - sever, split, shear, slice. Lucifering the last one worked. **49** - one can write 'the Nineties' to mean a decade with a distinctive characteristic but it doesn't seem right for 'the Nineteen-Nineties', particularly here, where it's just an undistinguished run of ten years. When I Google <'the nineteen-nineties'> I see numerous cases where it's capped, but all that I checked are cases like titles where even lowercase words get capped. **51** - ptomaine, appointment? Clashes with 'won't see me' and has the answers in the wrong order. Should have thought of 8. I don't see why a psychic appointment would be much cheaper unless it was worthless. (Which it would be, of course, but then why get one?) You're paying for expertise and time more than for tongue depressors and examination gloves. The Village Idiot: I am shocked by your inclusion of 51...I was surprised it wasn't on the easy list. It was one of the first things I solved, while flipping through the Enigma when it arrived. Just

Oct #51, continued

goes to show that one man's meat is another man's tofu. Loki-5: I guess it helped that I got an annual 'physical' in August. Scare quotes because all the doc did was auscultate my chest, fondle my ankles, and have blood drawn for tests, no disrobing. The nurse had taken my BP and weight. DelphiRune: Took awhile till I thought of it, but 'time for my next...' suggested 'physical'. **52** - less easily inferred than most, but it's a real (and more classical) alternative to 'tardyon'. **53** - I figured he tried to pin on a corsage, but I couldn't find a synonym that fit. Bud aches, bud reels, panaches. Scissors. Eventually I thought of 'bro'. New spelling to me, but it makes more sense than the standard one. **54** - I broke in with 'young turkey'. **55** - Tyger: Ick! VOID the water, not the finished product. **56** - puff, rough, tough...oh, wait, it's wool, not wood. **57** - roger, over, wilco, rasher, flitch, gammon, Hormel. I got nothing. Interpreting her plea as 'you know how much I like bacon' kept me on the wrong track. Maybe if I'd thought of other radio responses besides those first three I could have gotten it. Loki-5: Google 'I like my bacon' and the auto-complete offers 'I don't like my bacon crispy'. DelphiRune: 'Crispy' leaped to mind instantly; the rest took longer to divine. **58** - I was surprised that uncapitalized 'google', with no 'trademark' tag, was in later 11C; I'd have expected legal troubles, as with 'xerox'. Maybe Google is too big to care. **59** - head, top, fore. Baised 'front': lead, focus, van, start, tip, apex. Comprehensive, exhaustive, complete, capacious. t.c.'ed 'verbose: prolix, lengthy, wordy. 'De__ed' looked good...detailed! **60** - intercommunication, connectedness. Interrelatednesses, disaltern, foo. intercod-direction + S = directions. Lucifering letter banks of that gave the answers; 'direction cosine' didn't seem to fit, but it was mathy. **66** - FIRST was easy but I had to ref the refuge. **74** - I had kudized it but decided that DM was an arranger, not a divider.

F1 - reffed 2b Ac, 1 Dn. **F2** - reffed 1-3 Ac, 7-8 Dn. Whew. Dischorran solved it but didn't figure out CKSTR = 'Cook's Tour'. **F9** - almesca, almécega, almiscar, white pitch. I got 4Ac and the idea, got 4-5Dn (reffing 5), and looked up acou- in NI3.

October C3, begun

C3 - I guessed 'to the' and somehow from that got 'belong'. **C4** - this is the flavor text for 'Now I Know My ABC's', an enchantment card that says 'At the beginning of your upkeep, if you control permanents with names that include all twenty-six letters of the English alphabet, you win the game.' I wonder how often that's been used. **C5** - if I'd taken the title seriously I would have had this at once. If I'd taken IDT to be 'the' rather than 'she' (whyever didn't I?), I would probably have gotten it. As it was, I quipqiup'd all of C5-7. **C7** - Dischorran: wrong end and wrong Donald.

November:

/dev/joe's Kudos Kount for August

There were 30 solution lists representing 62 solvers, an average of 2.1 per list. There were 1556 solutions for the 60 flats, an average of 51.9 per list and 25.9 per flat, or 86.4% of maximum. Forms: $284 / ((30-3) * 11) = 95.6\%$. Crypts: $196 / ((30-1) * 7) = 96.6\%$. Extras: $131 / (30-1) * 4 = 92.2\%$.

The hardest flats, each solved by 18, were #22, Wrybosh's welded transposal on 'serpentine stripe' (in which the entire flat was simply a picture of such a thing) and #55, Newrow's rebus on 'four, throw her under the bus' (fourth row, HER (in 'Another') under the BUS (in 'REBUS')). In the latter, the clue is that the entire verse is indented—just enough to make that placement occur. Four flats tied for easiest, solved on all 30 lists. They were #13, A. Chemem's reversed curtailment on rebus, Uber; #21, Loki-5's phonetic reversal on kiss, sick; #59, Noam's anagram of 'charisma'; and #60, Wrybosh's anagram of 'beheaded'. There was one complete killer. [Quicks?lver: That was #23, A. Chemem's first-letter change on moth, both. I was sorry to reject Lyric & Munro's answer of clue, blue.]

The hardest forms, each solved by 24, were F3, LeXman's left star in which the flat type is given as answers to the double square F2, and F7, a vowel-less pyramid by Ai. The easiest, each solved on all 27 lists with form solutions, were F4 and F8, both double squares by Witz. The hardest crypt, solved by 24, was C6 by Griddle, while the easiest, each solved on all 29 lists with crypt solutions, were all of

C1 through C5. The hardest extra, solved by 25, was X4, a shuffled quote by LeXman. The easiest, each solved by 28, were X1, an anaquote by Drauk, and X2, a multipart quip by Vroo (a longer quote broken into 3 anaquote and vertical anaquote puzzles).

30 favelists gave 152 kude to 50 of 60 flats for an average of 2.5, 28 kude to 9 of 11 forms for an average of 2.5, 12 kude to 4 of 7 crypts for an average of 1.7, 1 kudos to 1 of 4 extras for an average of 0.3, and 1 kudos for the Convention Reminiscence article. Counting 2 single-item favelists as bangs, 18 bangs were given to 9 flats, 1 form, and 1 crypt. [#43 was given as 19/3 but was on four kudos lists; the numbers above reflect the fix.]

The top flat, with 11 kude and 4 bangs, was #9, Aleph's rebus on left guanine (left GUA [spelling AUG], nine, which allowed August 9 to have AUG 9 as rubric). This flat, which suggested that you 'left guanine out', gave the punny cause that you used a CAT scan to take a DNA test (referencing the other three DNA bases). Two flats tied for runner up, each with 8 kude. They were #30 (also with 2 bangs), Treesong's heteronym on '*Taxidea taxus*' (the scientific name for a badger) and 'tax idea: tax us'; and #55 (also with one bang), Newrow's 'throw her under the bus' rebus, which was also one of the hardest. The top form, with 10 kude and 4 bangs, was F5, al dente's hollow pygmy hourglass. The top crypts, each with 4 kude, were C3 (also with one bang) by Drauk and C6 by Griddle. The top extra was X2, Vroo's multipart quip, with a single kudos, the only one given to an extra. Submit more extras so we have more stuff to kudize!

[A few words on alternative August solutions: 1 - accepting l/f-air is generous; elephants don't lair. 12 - what's a tread guy? A downtrodden one? 41 - curs have bite but curry don't shake like that. 23 - tricky one! NI3 has wasp beetle, fly, and spider for wasp imitators, but no wasp moth. Lucky for me, I knew it from somewhere. 29 was tough; I settled for the wrong answer, though it ignored all the humor clues, figuring that an inductor could be 'one who inducts' people into puzzledom. Alas.]

A SURVEY OF CURRENT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSE-PUZZLE MAGAZINES:

Congratulations to the new Board!

Purely personal puzzle poinsettias: Rines I'm disapprovin', in alphabetical order: brochure/sure (identity rhyme), covered/othered, plan/scam, preserved/deserved (identity), Tzur/her (assuming rhyme was intended). **1** - R/EDS: Cute and subtle. Rates a kudos. **2** - R/EDS: Very clever. [And elegantly carried out.] **7** - there's a place called 'Hagåt-ña'? Weird. But helpful. **10** - like any right-minded diner. **14** - nice job of connecting the parts. **15** - never heard of FOURS. **17** - I shouldn't have needed to ref this. **18** - not hard, but I missed some cluing (there's lots) until after solving. **19** - argh. Is *6 what H/h-am hasn't given us, or what hasn't given us a lot? R/EDS: Definite LOL. **21** - or as Ezra Pound put it more rudely in 'Ancient Music', 'Winter is i-cumin in, Lhude sing goddamn!' **26** - I don't think NOTE is covered by the Guide definition. R/EDS: I remember first coming up with 8 in a Toronto hotel room back in the mid-90s. I didn't have any refs with me, but I just knew it was right. I was surprised to find 42 hits for this letter combo on the website. **29** - never heard of *4 or Mr. Big (except as Boris Badenov's boss's boss). **30** - amusing, clear cluing. R/EDS: Wow! Nice find. **33** - good going, HM. **34** - great find, funny cluing. I see *5 *6 is also a movable feast, not that that helps. **36** - mm, ales and poo. Er, sorry. **37** - I expected 4 5 to be a plural. R/EDS: Uc seems to find lots of neat LBs. **40** - non-limerick meter, OK, but line 5 doesn't go with 1 and 2 unless you say 'recentLY ionic'. **42** - R/EDS: Now, this is a classic transposal. I love it. **44** - mis-transliterated; should be '*spl̥ir̥k̥*'. At least, that's what's in the μ Columbae visitor's guide. **47** - this is Icelandic; Ovid makes it clear that he was always careful to obtain a preravishment agreement. **50** - a delightful collocation of the group, and I like the group clue. R/EDS: This was all completely new to me. Apparently there was a gap in my literary pursuits. **53** - arguably ^7 *7. R/EDS: an Uc write-in! Isn't that an oxymoron? **54** - another feat: seven cuewords fitted naturally into twelve lines. **55** - but just look at the grins on their faces! **58** - first line is indeed absurd. **59** - what a perfect pair! **61** - really don't think ONE works here. Work from TWO. **63** - sung to a contender for most boring song ever

written. **68** - I reffed this but shouldn't have.

F2 - all acrosses related. **F4** - reffed 11Ac and 5bDn. I like the 4Ac clue. **F5** - I like clues 1-3. Had to look up 'D' to get 9Ac. **F6** - R/EDS: Brilliant to get all three across clues into a rectangle. **F8** - jolly good. **F11** - 3Dn was educational. I think it has an extra letter, though.

C3 - R/EDS: I simply have to spend some time on this site. [Take heed!]

X2 - Munro: the sol was on the inside of the hardcover front of each volume of my parents' encyclopedia, the only one I read as a young person in Miami, 1946?-1959. I never forgot it and often quoted it in conversations.

X8 - I finished the diagram in 49:30 but didn't have explanations for most of the acrosses; finally finished in 65:35. At one point I had all the downs except 9 and 20 but only three acrosses: puvyqera, ryirf, and vpre. A very satisfying struggle. I have an objection to 6Dn but gave this my bang anyway. Favorite surfaces in the downs: 7, 13, 15, 18, 22, and 24. R/EDS: Brilliantly clued. **X9** - finished the diagram in 57:41 but didn't understand 28 and 29 until 61:16. Favorite surfaces: almost all the surface readings are really good, but 1Ac, 19Ac, and 24Dn are my favorite favorites. R/EDS: Wonderful construction. As usual (with me) I fill in the diagram long before I understand the instructions. Nice clueing as well. May I heartily echo the sentiment expressed therein.

/dev/joe's Kudos Kount for September

There were 30 solution lists representing 63 solvers, an average of 2.1 per list. There were 1943 solutions for the 82 flats, an average of 67.0 per list (for the 29 lists with flat solutions) and 23.7 per flat, or 81.7% of maximum. Forms: $171 / ((30-4) * 7) = 94.0\%$. Crypts: $182 / ((30-2) * 7) = 92.9\%$. Extras: $48 / ((30-4) * 2) = 92.3\%$.

The hardest flat, solved by 12, was #82, Wanderer's apt letter bank on 'oganesson', the name of element 118. This is a November 2016 coinage, and those working with electronic 11Cs or other word lists [like Lucifer's] from before that date will definitely not have it. 9 solvers submitted the wrong answer 'gasogenes', the only other 11C word fitting

the enumeration and letters. The runner-up hardest, solved by 13, was #37, Ucaoiimhu's enigmatic rebus on 'wit (ha!) plates? punk night' (with a P late, spun: knight ['paladin', with the p rotated to make a d and placed later in the word to spell 'aladdin']). Two of the 13 solvers found an alternate solution, with 'styles' instead of 'plates'; this made the reading 'with a style[=la-di-da] spun [anagrammed], knight [n as in chess notation]'. Eight flats tied for easiest, solved on all 29 lists with flat solutions. They were #20, Next Lingo's overloaded phonetic deletion on nudes, news; #31, Witz's charade on açai, AC, ai; #36, LeXman's overloaded deletion on witch, with; #51, Next Lingo's palindrome beheadment on Stetson, on; #75, Around Eve's anagram of 'scoff at'; #76, Around Eve's anagram of 'apartments'; #78, Around Eve's anagram of 'breweries'; and #81, Wrybosh's antigram of 'Roosevelt'. There were four complete killers.

The hardest form, solved by 23, was F4, a vowelless truncated pyramid by Ai. The easiest, each solved on all 26 lists with form solutions, were F3, a set of three related double squares by Witz based on 'Kol Nidre', and F7, the side-by-side pyramids by Newrow. The hardest crypt, solved by 22, was C7 by raw. The easiest, solved on all 28 lists with crypt solutions, were C1 by yodaughter, C2 by Next Lingo, and C4 by Drauk. The two extras, a cryptic double crostic by Groucho/Andreas and a diagramless consonancy crossword by Ai, tied for difficulty, each solved by 24. Submit more extras!

31 favelists gave 186 kude to 65 of 82 flats for an average of 2.3 (also 1 kudos to the KU flat), 23 kude to 5 of 7 forms for an average of 3.3, 13 kude to 5 of 7 crypts for an average of 1.9, and 30 kude to the 2 extras for an average of 15.0. Counting a single-item favelist as a bang, 19 bangs were given to 6 flats, a form, a crypt, and both extras.

Two flats tied for top, each with 10 kude. They were #34 (also with one bang), Qt-Oh's phonetic word deletion on castrate, stray, cat, a cause I expect a number of the Krewe support; and #66, Hook and Ladler (Spoon/Firetruck)'s overloaded false synonym on dad bod, father figure. The runner-up, with 7 kude, was #35, Wrybosh's transposal on stagnate, TSA agent. The top form, with 10 kude and a bang,

was F1, al dente's hollow hexagon. Keep those big forms coming, hollow or otherwise! The runner-up was F7, Newrow's side-by-side pyramids, with 6. The top crypt, with 6 kude, was C4, in which Drauk presents us with a pangram about *Jeopardy!*. The top extra, with 19 kude and 9 bangs, was Ai's diagramless consonantcy crossword. In this novel variant, each clue contains one word which is a consonantcy of the answer, while the remaining words form a straight clue. This was a bit like the experience of parsing cryptic clues, but different and new.

Quicksilver: For September, the two puzzles with the fewest solves were the complete-killers: #82 (Wanderer's apt letter bank on neo-gas/oganeson) thwarted three would-be completes, and #37 (Uc's paladin/Aladdin enigmatic rebus) foiled one.

I weighed whether to declare #82 KU. Was 'neo-gas' an unfairly hard clue for oganeson? As a group-18 element, oganeson was named with the -on suffix of a noble gas and had been initially expected to be gaseous at normal temperature, but is now predicted to be a solid. 'Neo-' can mean new and atypical, though, so I think the clue is adequate. Chemical elements don't meet the 'not widely known or easily researched' qualification of a KU puzzle either; even if it's a recently-named element, oganeson was found by 12 solvers, as opposed to 9 who answered 'gasogenes'. I also considered whether to accept 'gasogenes' as an alternative sol. Meaningwise, I think 'gasogene' can fit 'neo-gas'; though 11C's two senses for 'gasogene' both refer only to it being a device, NI3 adds the subsense of the gas/fuel produced by such a device. However, I couldn't overlook that it violated two rules for apt flats (which derive from those for anagrams, see p. 24 of the Guide): an apt flat must match its base in number (singular 'neo-gas' vs. plural 'gasogenes') and it should not include any forms of the words in its base ('gas' is in both).

[I think it's been a few years since a flat was KUed, yes? Alternative thoughts: 3 - 'R, O arow' would give 'ToROnto' by the 'capitalize by default' rule, but this deserves credit. 23 - I don't think the Captain would be impressed by white weediness, though. 37 - knights are N, not n, but again, this

deserves credit; almost as ingenious as the intended solution. 55 - I never figured out who the denier was and thought 8 should be negative like 'redlined', but only came up with a positive 8. 1 - I think 'lends a life' doesn't fit well, quite aside from freewheeling. 29 - nice try. 58 - well, 'reticence' fits, at least. 82 - oh well. And I made an effort to use it in an alchemism once!]

NOMPLAY:

'Auzzle' is of course a first-letter change of 'puzzle'. Also guzzle, muzzle, nuzzle, etc. Might be a second-sound change of 'awful'. I don't know what's with nameless Cousin Joe, but he's an interlock of coin, use, jo and a transposal alternade of juice, soon. 'DtheW' looks like it has something to do with 'Matthew' but I don't see what. It curtails to 'thew' and has the head-to-tail shift 'thew'd', as in Elwyn Vine's 'As from strong thew'd Nephilim' (in his *Gather'd Fragments: Poems*). 'Gnod' is a trigram curtailment of something, a reversal of 'dong', and a bank of 'no good'. 'Halcyon Trek' is a transposal of something and a transposal alternade of Chen, Katy, lor (lord, as in Cockney 'lor love a duck'). 'HalfSL' is another nom with an unclear relation to a surname; it's in a letter bank with flash, ashfall, Falasha. 'madman-omega' is a last-letter change of 'madman-alpha', banks to 'gone mad', and is a reversed interlock of agenda, mom, am. 'The Rune' is a transposal of 'hunters'. Welcome back to Ucalegon, who stole my eBay ID and is a transposal of 'aglucone', which Wiktionary says is the aglycone of a glucoside. Yes indeed. 'madman-alpha' is a last-letter change of 'madman-omega' and a reversed interlock of Alma, hand, Pam.

CYBERBABBLE:

On 3 Apr 2003 Coach posted to npl-folk what was apparently not an April fool's prank: 'From TV Guide's online "Entertainment News for Wednesday, April 2: << Miramax is developing a romantic comedy set in the world of competitive Scrabble titled Your Word Against Mine. >> The mind, um, boggles.'

Foggy: The mind, also, draws a blank.

King Frivolity: Perhaps Qaqaq and Saxifrage can

work together to write the musical version. I was going to suggest Sax should write the lyrics, but then I realized Trip'll let her score.

[A 19 Aug 2012 article on Scrabble® in the *Independent* says, 'Miramax is said to have splurged \$300,000 on a script called "Your Word Against Mine", a rom-com in which two tournament players fall in love. Presumably the rating will be U, for one point, not triple X, for 24.' Ancient history, then.]

JEOPARDY! BRAG:

A few years ago I bragged on npl-folk that I'd solved CHARACTER (9) with no letters showing. I don't know how many of ADELIRST had been eliminated by earlier guesses at that point. Others wrote of their similar feats, but I don't have the responses at hand. Around the start of 2018 I guessed TITLE (4 4 3 4 4) just from the enumeration. And a few days ago, maybe the 10th, I almost got SONG LYRIC (3 6 3 3 3 6 3 4) from the enumeration, but I didn't notice that I'd misremembered it with a 5-letter rhyming last word. Answers next month. Care to share your solve-from-nothing experiences?

On the other hand...for months I've been playing the 'Wordscapes Uncrossed' app, in which you're given a batch of letters and have to make words from them, including at least one using them all. I'm currently at a level where you get seven letters, and usually I can get the 7s at sight, but a while ago it took me more than an hour, spread over three days, to unscramble PTILOOC. And now, at level 1052, I've taken even longer with CEMOOPT. I got the 7 easily enough, but as often happens, getting all the subwords is harder. I have 'comet' and 'tempo', but not the word between. I do have many bonus words (acceptable for bonus points but not for finishing the level): compo, compt, comte, ocote. Also stuff that isn't even acceptable for bonus points: copet (when you have more than one of equal status), Epcot, metoo (it's 11C), moote (NI2: moot), metop (a truncated metope), mopeo (a competition among emo C&W singers), mopet (a beloved moped), pooem (scatological verse by a pooet), octop (a truncated octopus), pecot (obsolete spelling of 'peacoat' and 'Pequot', I betcha), *pomoc* (Polish for 'help'), ptooe

(var. of 'ptooey'), etc. PS: After going through that list I gave up and Lucifered 5-letter ^[cemopt]*\$ and there it was. Tsk! I could have used one of my six accumulated hint items but I wanted to at least recognize it rather than have it handed to me.

ALT.ANAGRAMS:

These are anagrams from the alt.anagrams newsgroup, 1 to 20 Mar 2009. @ = antigram, @@ = ambigram, ~ = not necessarily apposite but fit together well, T = topical at the time, ♥ = try this if you just want to do a few. Composer abbrs. from 27.1.5b ¶ Ω. Answers next month.

A toke on a cig has harmed my lung! (7 3 6 4 6) (HSP).

Tout nice visual gore; vicious anger outlet; vicarious glee to nut; true contagious evil (10 8) (JP).

Lo! Army utilisation (1 8 8) (MT).

Meyran Kraus does superb long anagrams on lengthy bases, like complete poems, often with extra constraints. See <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/alt.anagrams/b0iJBzABdy8> for one my favorites, based on 'My Favorite Things'.

Worth a look, but too British, contrived, inapt, unfamiliar, unspecific, R-rated, or otherwise unsuitable for solving: @@Microsoft's Help and Support site ~ had pointless tips for computers (MK). I read love is blind, but a marriage can redefine that very bad vision! (Anonymous) = Love is a canvas furnished by Nature and embroidered by imagination. (Voltaire) (MK). Not worth fire engine (?); ignite, frown thereon (JG) = *The Towering Inferno*. Slamming to arouse us = simultaneous orgasm (JG). 'Worries? Hun, we're above them!' = 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' (?). Apt topic: liars lie! = political parties (MT). @@I am lost (had improper charts); pilots: 'more tarmac hardship' = Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. Tooting, then soil = sitting on the loo (JG). When you translate 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.' ~ see set message occur: 'not much new shall actually happen'! (HSP). T'He's led me far in debt', I frown = Bernie Madoff the swindler (biz). T@@@s: Rib premier Downing St. moron; resign, demon Briton! RIP worm...; need to imprison/rib Mr. Wrong = Prime Minister Gordon Brown (JG). Meet phoney oaf Le Pen = an enemy of

the people (MT). **T**ransitory? It's moribund! = Britain's motor industry (Tony Crafter). Ah, formatting manager! = the art of anagramming (MT).

TALES FROM THE NPL CHAT ROOM:

As usual in games, the last clue or other material before revelation is ended by '❖❖' for easier play at home.

On 2 Apr 2003 we had our semiannual April Fool's/Halloween masquerade in Babylon Chat because it was too hard to log into AIM, our usual chat app, with fake e-noms. And to see if we might want to move to Babylon Chat. The idea is to figure people out based on idiosyncrasies, but this time there was hardly any attempt to guess who was who until BC bounced everyone out and we had the unmasking in AIM. It was on 2 Apr because 1 Apr wasn't a regular chat day.

One thing in Babylon that no other NPL chat-room has had was a 'canvas' where any chatter could draw with a mouse, using a thirteen-color palette. So we played Pictionary Pyramid with it. Obviously we couldn't use the usual esoteric categories. I couldn't save the pictures but I did get the categories: Heavy things (guesses included polyhedra, death by pyramid, and Egyptian gangland slayings; seems to have involved unlabeled cartoon hectopound weights). Things on flags. Things that are Irish (presumably an n-leaf clover). Things that are transparent (guesses included things in a haunted house, Jimmy Carter). Seafood (not things with water, things with arms, things with stripes, or parts of a robot. There was sushi).

Pseudonyms included Social Choice, Anna Anna Anna Nimiety, Flagstaff, Aida Lottapasta, Landlord, Pompeii, FeastWith2000, 36 mois, Joe vs. the Volano, Nemo, Zebraboy, Call Me Ishmael, Rocky Raccoon, and Ana Novick. You might be able to guess one or two of these.❖❖

A man famous for his theory of social choice was K(enneth) Arrow, and Kray used K-> as a nickname. Neat! A couple of people guessed AAAN was me, because they used my trademark pre-they gender-neutral pronoun 'tey', but no; sneaky Gabby. 'Anna Nimiety was a play on "anonymity", and

nimiety means "excess" or "redundancy".' Fl = Jangler for no clueish reason. Jangler guessed that AL = Toonhead because they drew so well in Pyramid (despite drawing lefty). A cazique is a Philippine landowner (NI3). /dev/joe was Pompeii because at the time he was playing a lot of the game Lost Cities online. Mostly with me, but that didn't help me guess. Toonhead guessed FW2 = Foggy because of the two Gs, despite not knowing that 'foy' = '*chiefly Scotland* a farewell feast or gift'. Ucaoimhu was 36 mois: 'A consonantcy. A cmh (centimeter hour) = 36 ms (meter seconds).' Zowie. Jangler guessed that JvtV = /dev/joe; Volano was a chat client he was notoriously unfond of because he got booted every two minutes. I was Nemo; no clue, just spur of the moment. Kray guessed Zebraboy = Tyger (stripey). Endgame started as Call Me Ishmael (someone thought that was Maelstrom), bounced, and returned as Rocky Raccoon (who thus was not stripey-tailed Tyger). The biggest surprise was Ana Novick, a non-NPL bar waitress and friend of Tahnan, who had told her of the chat; we welcomed her helpfully and nobody guessed that she was in fact T McAy, who as AN had asked Tahnan to play along.

So then it was 7 Apr 2003 chat. Story asked for help with a planned crossword in which certain words in clues would be reversed.

Story: For instance, the clue BURGLAR'S TOOL would be entered as SWAG. [Not GAWS.]

[I felt that good clues would be ones that could be mistaken for regular ones, unlike, say, 'decal with liquor' = 'spiked', so I omit some of the ones I find particularly unmisleading. Ucaoimhu had it down.]

Codex: Golden tressed (4)

Story: Give spit (6)

Cazique: Etna part (4)

Story: It gives you straw, supposedly (4)

Gabby: Gateman word (5)

Treesong: Money reward (4)

Fuldu: Made relative (5)

Gabby: Strops blades (6)

Shaken: Sans serif? (4) [neat]

Story: Sleep off (6)

Treesong: Meet with (6) [not quite...]

Endgame: Repaid wearer (4)
 Endgame: Lager topper (5)
 Kray: Peek in, as a child (6)
 Treesong: Prep action (4)
 Fuldu: Pan noise (5)
 Ucaoimhu: Maker of maps (6)
 Treesong: Product to plug (4)
 Codex: Time a TV show (3)
 Ucaoimhu: They come before six (3)
 Ucaoimhu: They follow the sun (3) [bang]
 Treesong: Mouse trap (3 or 4)
 Treesong: Pupils in class (5) [my favorite of mine]
 Shaken: Orb relative (3)
 Ucaoimhu: Sore in Rome (5)
 Treesong: Reviled speech (3)
 Ucaoimhu: Baby step (4)
 Ucaoimhu: They make tons (5)
 Ucaoimhu: Bus stop (4)
 Ucaoimhu: Like drinking Tab? (8)
 Ucaoimhu: They complement shad (4)
 Ucaoimhu: Kind of horn that's attached to a deer (7)
 Endgame: Spar with a boxer (5)
 Ucaoimhu&Fuldu: Mate for bird (4)
 Charts: bad doom (4)
 Ucaoimhu: Denim material (3)
 Treesong: It calls for a nip (3)
 Ucaoimhu: Nib installed in a pen (6)
 Foggy: AOL preceder (5)
 Ucaoimhu: Que sera sera? (7)
 Ucaoimhu: Peed blue (4)
 Ucaoimhu: Fierce eel (5)
 Ucaoimhu: Inscription on door (4) [nice]
 T McAy: Place for Mexican spider? (5)
 Ucaoimhu: It may be faced (6)
 D. Ness: part of a spider? (3)
 Ucaoimhu: Brag about nun (5)
 Ucaoimhu: Cram in two Shakespeare plays (6)❖❖

I'll rot-13 the answers so you can look at some without spoiling others. For hand-decoding:

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
 nopqrstuvwxyzabcdefghijklm

Parens are my ideas when the cluer didn't reveal.

Syna, (nqivfr), puvc, gbnq, uryyb, gvyv, Tbhqn,
 fxngrf, pbyq, fgevcf, nobhaq, onol, pebja be gvnen,
 tebhaq, jnyx, (faber), Ubezry, fbqn (be orre, rgp.),
 (nve), ahf, kvf, rne be onyy be pbeq be gnvv, obare

be yncfr be reebe, fvf, Phcvq, fnl, chcf be xvgf,
 abfrf, cbeg be qryv, inzcvvp, qnuf, Ratyvfu, onexf,
 qeno, shax be favg, ber, NGZ, znatre be gebhtu,
 Znhan, Znegvna be znegvny (not given in 2003; this
 is Caoimh's best guess, 15.7 years later), anil,
 Oehpr, VAEV, fnyfn, pbssrr, jro, unovg, Nagbal.

While this was going on we also started a Pyramid game:

Endgame: ***'Don't Worry, Be Fiery'

Foggy: Bobby McFire tunes?

Endgame: ***Another Night in Hades

Gabby: Devil music.

Codex: evil music?

Qaqaq: Songs that really do have satanic messages

D. Ness: songs from the musical 'Hell'

Qaqaq: Songs where the satanic message is forward, not backmasked

Codex: songs that, if played backwards, encourage piety

Kray: Possible answers to 'live music' in Story's crossword.

Treesong: Or *Hell Dolly*

Endgame: *** 'Eine heisse Nachtmusik'

415 lb of snake: songs on the 'Hot List'

[At this point Lunch Boy came in, and he was the 21st person in the room. Those were the days. I'd asked Fuldu to stick around so we could break the record of 20, but still.]

Foggy: Bobby McCharon songs?

Foggy: Bobby McFerryman songs?

415 lb of snake: Bobby McFireman?

Endgame: ***Manana Ignita

Qaqaq: And that's Manana Iguana ... so yeah, it's definitely McFerrin somehow

Ucaoimhu: Bobby McSatan?

Jangler: *** 'Here is a song I see, it's about reaching 212 degrees.'

D. Ness: Songs Bobby McFerrin sings in hell?

Foggy: Bobby McFahrenheit❖❖

Jangler: Ding

Kray: so many good alternate answers...

[Endgame categorized Foggy, and:]

Foggy: *** 'Hi, I'm a killer Wald.'

Jangler: Things an Orcaoimhu would say

Qaqaq: Things Uc-anny would say

D. Ness: things more evil than Uc?

Codex: things members of the Nautical Puzzlers League would say

/dev/joe: what a bunch of mad German ents would say

Lunch Boy: Things Ucaoimhu would say if you asked him to

T McAy: Things Uc would say if you replaced his heart with a homicidal broom [reference to a notorious killer category, 'parts of an elephant whose heart has been replaced by a broom']

Foggy: *** 'For my next trick for all you tourists, I'll write a flat involving 'Orcinus orca'

Jangler: Things one sees at KevinWorld. Or Uc-World. or something.❖❖

Codex: Things Shamuc would say

Qaqaq: Things Uc-Shamu would say

Foggy: Ding, Qaqaq

D. Ness: or Ushamu

Lunch Boy: I prefer 'Shamucacaoimhu'

Treesong: Like 'Parts of an elephant whose heart has been replaced by a Brume.'

Jangler: Enrico Caruso and Orcinus orca is a pretty nice transdeletion start...

Codex: UcShamu, Shamucacaoimhu, orcaimhu—there are a lot of good portmanteaux in that concept.

Qaqaq: *** The hobbits follow a path out of the Shire, only to realize they've been following a wrong trail.

Endgame: Bilboners

Codex: events in Muddle Earth.❖❖

Treesong: Plot of The Fellowship of the Wrong.

Qaqaq: *** An all-powerful fish is transported back to the only place where it can be destroyed.❖❖

Ucaoimhu: Plot points in Lord of the Herrings.

Qaqaq: bing

Ucaoimhu: *** Nervous nellies.

T McAy: Alliterative insults

/dev/joe: things that pace

Treesong: Dubya insults.

Ucaoimhu: *** Wee timorous beasties.

Codex: Granny Award winners

Jangler: Things that are cow'ring?

T McAy: Things that are timorous

Ucaoimhu: *** Vocalists with vibrato

Jangler: Things that are -ous -ies

Codex: things that tremble

Treesong: Things that are sleekit.❖❖

Treesong: Or tremulous

Ucaoimhu: Yes, Tree.

Treesong: And as a reward I get to do a Caoimh category....

Codex: Serves you right.

Treesong: No, I got my answer without seeing yours.

Qaqaq: Had I thought of 'sleekit things' I might have suggested it :-)

Endgame: I had to memorize that damn poem in 4th grade

Charts: I'd better go eat, people

Lunch Boy: Thank goodness for that comma, Charts

Ucaoimhu: Soylent Green is lentils! It's made out of lentils!

Endgame: What's for dinner tonight, momma?

/dev/joe: Raoul

Hathor: Soy lent green is soy beans. It's soy beeeans

Codex: Mommy mommy, I hate my baby brother!

Hathor: The *other* other white meat

D. Ness: shut up and keep eating

Jangler: Two cannibals are eating a clown...

['Does this taste funny to you?']

Ucaoimhu: 'Exploring Australia' is a Cook book!

[Presumably Captain Thomas Cook, not Cook's Tours.]

Treesong: *** The scene where Yu-Yu Hakusho calls Monokami a 'tremulous tofu panda'.

Cazique: parts of anime iron chef

/dev/joe: parts of all pyramid categories so far tonight

Codex: Oy, and if I may say so, vey.

T McAy: Parts of Mikado About Nothing?

Lunch Boy: Highlights of Miyazaki movies that he was drunk while he was writing

Jangler: Highlights of Miyasake movies

T McAy: Anime-niacs?

Codex: vegetarianimation

Tablesaw: Scenes from Ramen ½.

Treesong: *** Tojo's message to Roosevelt proposing a cease-fire and surrender 'if the radishes are sufficient'.

Qaqaq: If all Japanese communications involved Iron Chef

Treesong: I'm sure Ucaoimhu had some clever idea in mind for this but I'm doing what I can.

Lunch Boy: Scenes from 'Iron Emperor'

Codex: Roots of Japanese culture

D. Ness: scenes from 'Taro Taro Taro'

Cazique: not vegetarianime, huh

Treesong: Caoimh, if you have a good one, feel free to toss it in.

Treesong: *** 'Empty orchestra'.

Jangler: Karaoke. Hmm.

Treesong: *** *Rashomon*.

Foggy: Erroneous Japanese translations?

Ucaoimhu: *** Thousand and thousand-fathom's spirit-hiding.'

Lunch Boy: Things that are Kurosawa movies or things that are not Kurosawa movies

T McAy: Parts of a ball bearing

Qaqaq: Japanese things that coalesce

Tablesaw: Japanese Animation that I NEVER WANT TO SEE EVAR EVAR EVAR!!!!1

Ucaoimhu: *** Hamlet, according to all the Kling-ons in Tokyo.❖❖

Codex: Things better in the original Japanese

Treesong: Yay!

Treesong: '...that made more sense in...'

Ucaoimhu: I was about to write 'all your base are belong to us' and then someone mentioned mistranslation, so I thought it would be misleading

Treesong: 'Thousand and thousand-fathom's spirit-hiding' being a way overliteral translation of the original title of Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. [*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*.]

CLIPPINGS:

Editing finished 26 Dec 2018. Praise **HERBIE!**