

Halving a Blast

by Ucaimhu

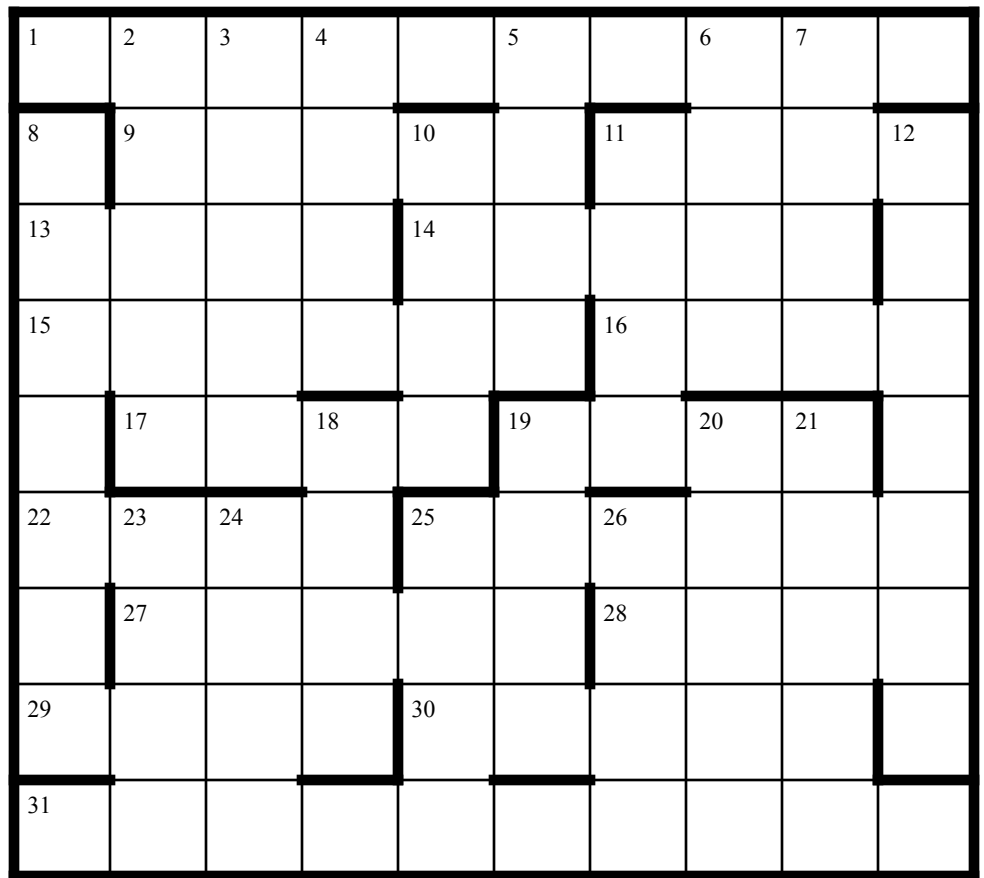
In a perhaps misguided fit of austerity, this puzzle was written for a *couple* of gatherings, one at a Mystery-Hunt-adjacent pub and one at a park where puzzle gatherings happen; both are on a certain street. It may seem perilous for the Lamplighter and Powderhouse to be put together in this manner; in the grid, eight “special” squares must each get a letter *pair* from one entry and a different letter pair from the other crossing entry, and these pairs will combine to illustrate that peril.

Fortunately, something is different in the two cases, which will be named by the left-hand and right-hand columns in the filled grid. Of the clues whose answers do *not* go through a special square, all but four have an extra letter a–i (to be deleted before solving) at some word’s left or right end; look in the left-hand or right-hand column (respectively), in the row indicated by the extra letter, and write the letter in that square next to the clue. Then:

A. The letters next to Across clues will (in clue order) give words saying what the two kinds of gathering are.

B. For each of the four other clues, the entry will be either (i) something like the answer that is appropriate for the first A word, or (ii) something like the second A word that is appropriate for the answer.

C. The letters next to Down clues will (in clue order) give a word describing the rather scant offerings of B, or two words describing what (in a certain code) the special squares form. If you want, you can counteract the austerity of this puzzle, making it *slightly* more festive, by coloring in all the special squares in the appropriate way.



ACROSS

1. Kind of quartet that would sing “Lida Arose” and hit various pubs to drink beers less energetically
9. Sri Lanka’s capital jazz band holds long whole note
11. How eland is to express grief, say
13. Bovines ignoring chic and old prefix signifying “wine”
14. *Neon* and *Hill Sirens* actor Sam
15. Adjusts as ling becomes fodder
16. Scam misrepresented what the Fr. adj. *blonde* is (*abbr.*)
17. Mantra that obstructs any personal alienation (*var.*)
19. Initially bored or baited or misled by *Super Mario* exploder (*hyph.*)
22. Gob, borne by air and water 1.12"
25. Seed inside Em’s black-fronted, archaically styled suit
27. Struck by a blow affecting 40% of chives near can (2 wds.)
28. Calf aesthetically displays wings
29. UK hoodlum put bishops into Yoo-hoo before the halfway point
30. Informally figure that some spears should be kept close to the chest
31. Meg & Ty’s somewhat repetitively reorganized check that all the parts successfully work together (2 wds.)

DOWN

2. Train expert on Ilion to begin with answer
3. Sharona instinctively embraces lordless samurai
4. Record club Sally launched
5. Vocally rambles, describing certain apples
6. Resort in part of Iberia
7. That hurts fifty-second subset of Daves
8. Where some bride and Wanda, on the outside, would obstruct Orbison
10. Lad keeps repeating, “No fair!”
11. That male meditator’s word or phrase often said on camera (2 wds.)
12. Sellers of delicacies from north-northeast Maine and Cali [NI2]
18. Shakespeare’s rude mechanical droid encounters male cat
19. Singular Jules Verne character recalled portents
20. Tormé and cummings grow
21. Ring-spinning man in musical’s displaying decorative objects
23. Blue, like a jack-in-the-pulpit?
24. Is primarily into false Roth!
25. Type of ecological community created by *Blue Moon* author
26. Wooden shoe smashed boats