

Twelve if by Broom

by Kevin Wald

Answers to the Plummeting clues are entered vertically downwards, starting in the appropriately numbered hexes; answers to the Descending Gradually clues are entered slanting downwards in locations the solver must determine. These two sets of answers, in clue order, are as follows:

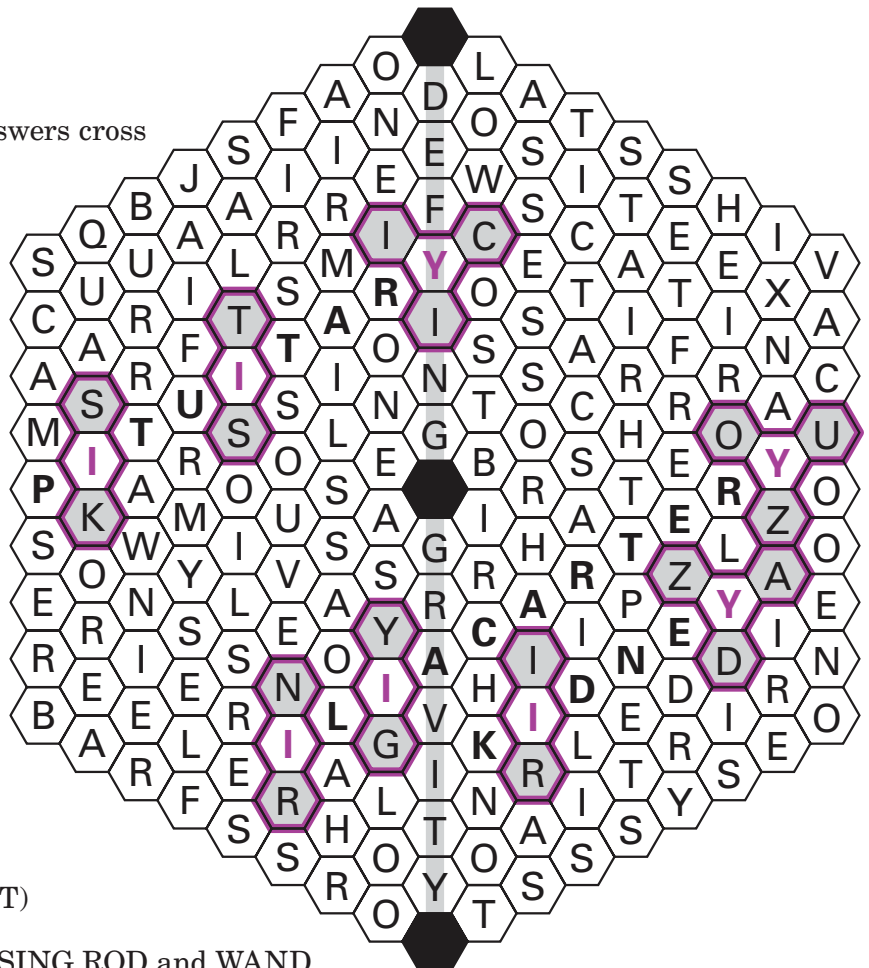
Plummeting: 1. SCAMP / SERB; 2. QUASI / KOREA; 3. BURR / TAWNIER; 4. JAI / FUR / MYSELF; 5. SALT I / SOILS / RES; 6. FIRST / SOUVENIRS; 7. AIRMAILS / SAO / LAHR; 8. ONE-IRON / EASY / IGLOO; 9 & 10. DEFYING GRAVITY; 11. LOW-COST / BIRCH / KNOT; 12. ASSESSOR / HAI / IRAS; 13. TIC TACS / ARID / LIS; 14. STAIR / HTTP / NETS; 15. SET / FREEZE-DRY; 16. HEIR / ORLY / DIS; 17. IXNAY / ZAIRE; 18. VACUO / OENO.

Descending Gradually: SURF / ISLE; ODO / SITE / EXA; LATS / SHIV; MIAMI / VAYA / HILTY; QUITTING / BRATZ / YIN; ASTRO / USSR / CIDERS; ERIE / RIALTOS; BARFS / SRO; SONS / SNL / GINAS; ANEW / SCAT / INC; SIRI / YOS / ARROYO; PKWY / LEO IV / KRIS; CARUSOS / AGRA / INDIE; REELER / HOYT; BALSAS / ONTO / STELAE; FIEF / CETI / FRAU; JAR / MRIS / SCHERZO; IHR / PEDRO.

The resulting grid is as shown.

The Descending Gradually clues whose answers cross the line are as follows:

- Deep Space Nine's shapeshifter (ODO)
- Once more (ANEW)
- Where a liege held sway (FIEF)
- Slangy greetings (YOS)
- Injury detectors (MRIS)
- Not unaware of (ONTO)
- Giving up (QUITTING)
- Resting place of Mumtaz Mahal (AGRA)
- Old realm including Russia (USSR)
- Directive preceding *con Dios* (VAYA)
- Wall-building Pope (2 wds.) (LEO IV)
- Actress Gershon, et aliae (GINAS)
- Neighborhoods with many theaters (RIALTOS)
- "Della and the Dealer" singer Axton (HOYT)



So the two types of magical item are DOWSING ROD and WAND.

As per 9 & 10 Plummeting, the "organic sources of magic" are Defying Gravity Gradually; that is, they are slanting upwards. They are, specifically, the three body parts PITUITARY, ILIAC ARTERY, and KIDNEY, boldfaced in the grid. The eight magical items "steeping" within them are Y's ("dowsing rods") and I's ("wands"), highlighted in the grid. Each Y points out the three letters to its northeast, northwest, and south; each I points out the two letters to its north and south. When these letters (shaded in the grid) are read treating the Defying Gravity Gradually direction as left-to-right, they spell the answer, **STICKS IN YOUR GIZZARD.**