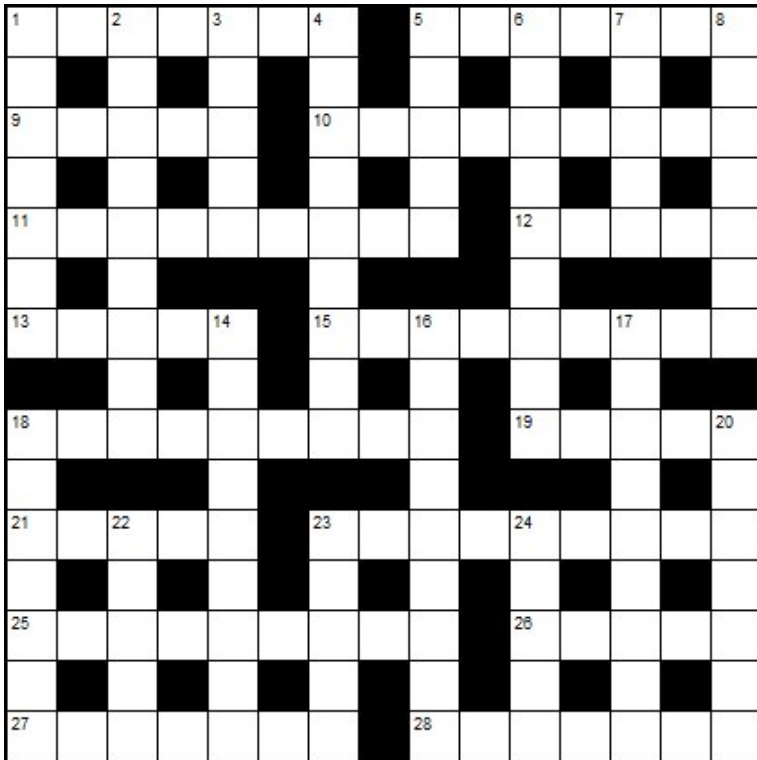


Puzzle by Widdersbel

Widdersbel's setting technique is masterly: he uses a full palette of tricks to produce a set of exemplary clues. The puzzle is on the difficult side, but the scrupulous fairness of the clues means that you don't have to be an advanced solver to enjoy the puzzle. Favourite clues: 18 and 21 across, 18 down.



ACROSS

- 1 Filthy tramp loses coat, tantrum ensues (7)
- 5 Cut fairy queen slice from "Cake of the Gods" (7)
- 9 Only partially trust a rotten fortune teller? (5)
- 10 Old judge has Widdersbel locked up – or let off (9)
- 11 Drummer, short of cash, to take second job (9)
- 12 Show would be more extravagant if extra leading character added (5)
- 13 Comes close to being under arrest, but nothing odd in that (5)
- 15 Dine out on chicken stuffed with dove's heart, somewhere in Europe (9)
- 18 "Wild pony?" mused Widdersbel. "Possibly!" (9)
- 19 Wearing an old hat decorated with mah-jong pieces? (5)
- 21 Could yonder _____ be houndsberry? (5)
- 23 Liveware puts short verse into computer language (9)
- 25 Spooner's protective ring for hat shows craft (9)
- 26 Artist rejected scrap of thermal fleece (5)
- 27 You can see their family jewels/nether regions! (7)
- 28 Ed Sheeran could be leader of the Labour Party? (7)

DOWN

- 1 Turkish cat adopted by climbing organisation (7)
- 2 Put original in storage, arranged substitute (9)
- 3 Late crowd standing up to applaud (5)
- 4 Always sickly-looking, never dying (9)
- 5 Hawk eating river fish (5)
- 6 Brute tech deployed as siege engine (9)
- 7 Raised capital to acquire hotel for Colleen (5)
- 8 Switzerland puzzled over Spain's far-right element making V-sign (7)
- 14 Camp fires providing mutton chops? (9)
- 16 Schedule trip to the north, packing half of meat counter (9)
- 17 Loved one's useless, having injected advanced drug (9)
- 18 Pub employee sips head of stout – he'll get the sack! (7)
- 20 Singer scratching head over online media event getting cancelled (7)
- 22 Breastfeed regularly – it's recommended (5)

23 Former vicar no longer devout (5)

24 Disguised chlorine-free character of some wines (5)