About The Puzzle…

A codebreak is a cypher-based word puzzle in which clues are given in the form of numbers, and the challenge is to find out which numbers correspond to which letters, until the entire puzzle is solved. They were my favorite kind of puzzle as a child because they were far more interesting than sudoku, and far more logical than crosswords (which usually required deep cultural knowledge). Additionally, codebreaks allow an aspect of design in the selection of a theme, and the careful arrangement of that theme's words into a totally unique lattice. My grandma and I exchanged dozens of them, usually with one word spelled out as a starting hint.

This has been an even more momentous year of my life than last year. In my professional life at SmithGroup I returned to work on hospitals, where I am most comfortable, and lead a training webinar on advanced use of Revit. I still go to swing dance regularly, and my friendships there have grown a lot deeper and better. At the LevelUp philosophy conference in Florida I taught the dance lesson, front-manned a whole concert set with a band, and finally delivered a very personal talk on overcoming anxiety that was so well received I was hired as a part time employee. I'm excited to deliver another even better lecture next year when the conference comes to Chicago. Most exciting of all is that I've designed my first house, and (fingers crossed) I will have a team pouring concrete this coming April!!!!!! Finally, Arthur Zey helped me set up a personal website. (Something I've been putting off since literally college) so if you're curious to see my philosophy content, you can go to www.seamusriley.com/content/, and if you want to see my design for my parents' house, go to www.seamusriley.com/portfolio/ and if you want to download puzzles & cover letters from previous years, you can go to www.seamusriley.com/puzzles/

We absolutely love centralized identity data.

But with great growth comes great growing pain. This has been *by far* the most difficult year of my life. I was put on a performance improvement plan at work... and I worked back into good standing. I quit my dance club, then joined back. I fell madly in love for the first time... and then had to let that love go. I packed up my beloved apartment to save money and lived in a rural shack for a period, then moved in with a roommate somewhere else. I lost old friends. I regained old friends. I have slept more times on the floor or a plank this year than I have in a bed, and to top it all off, last week I slid into a semi on I-90 and totaled my first car. Drat. Through all this tumult, I have been supported by my treasured, die-hard kindred spirits and my simple seeing-is-believing philosophy for life on earth. BUT those things alone were not enough. I sought therapy. I read about the psychology of awareness. I confronted parts of myself I never wanted to accept, and made that knowledge the central feature of my OSI content. That is why the theme of my 2025 Christmas Codebreak is PSYCHOLOGY.
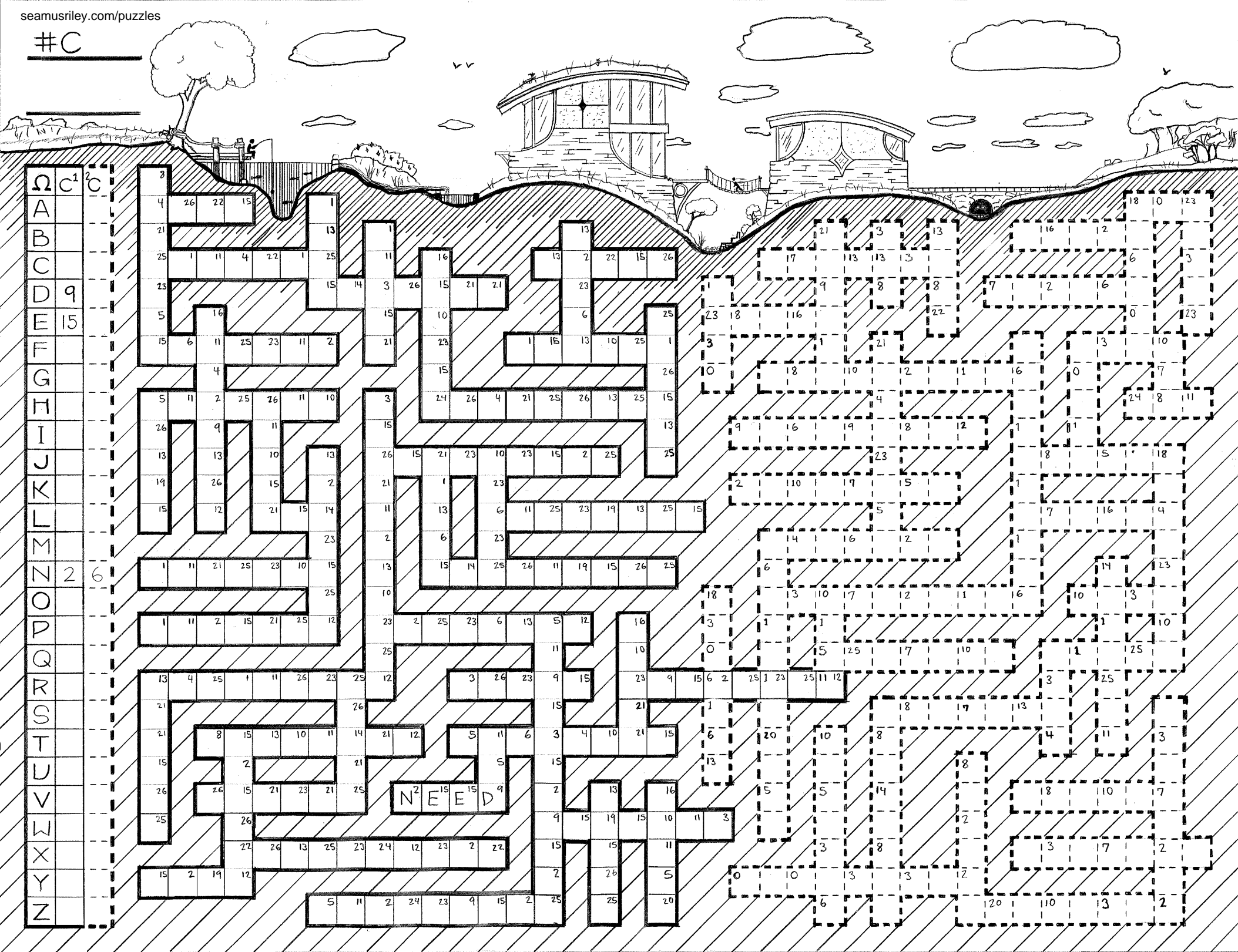
As usual, your objective is to find all the letters that correspond to each number, but!—every puzzle comes with a twist, and this year the twist is that half of the puzzle has been buried beneath the subconscious. The conscious half of the puzzle should be easy to solve, but the subconscious half will require more keen awareness of vocabulary and alphabetical frequency.

I hope you will find this year's puzzle a satisfying challenge. Still, feedback is appreciated! Text it to 1 608 843 2556 or email seamusbyrneriley@gmail.com. Puzzle retaliation is also encouraged.

P.S.
I must dejectedly admit that last year's puzzle design was a FAILURE in that it was way too difficult to start and way too easy to finish. A particularly spunky friend from dance club solved it in 20 minutes, and I think more than half of the other recipients gave up or didn't try. Those who did solve it reported that it was almost impossible to find words in the beginning, and then trivially easy once a few words were found. I also gave various people extra-hard copies with redacted clues, and sadly most of those people are no longer speaking to me. Tragic. I hope this year that everyone can AT LEAST solve the conscious half, and I hope nobody (you know who you are) solves the entire thing in under 15 minutes.

#C _____

The grid contains a letter-substitution cipher key:

Ω	C¹ ²C
A	
B	
C	9
D	15
E	
F	
G	
H	
I	
J	
K	
L	
M	
N	26
O	
P	
Q	
R	
S	
T	
U	
V	
W	
X	
Y	
Z	

NEED