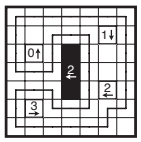
30th Birthday Surprise
by Prasanna Seshadri
Theme: The Journey

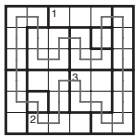
Castle Wall	Country Road	Balance Loop
Inner Cave	Tapa-Like Loop	Slither-link
Masyu	Maxi Loop	Yajilin

Draw a single non-intersecting loop that can enter/exit each of the nine subgrids any number of times so long as it follows the specific rules for each type given below *(special notes given for combination puzzle in italics).* Some letters are given in each subgrid. Within each subgrid, identical letters must have identical loop path characteristics (i.e., follow one of six possible paths, or be an unused / shaded cell). Across different subgrids, identical letters must have different loop path characteristics. The letters G and J (which appear just once each) are to be considered together and must have different loop path characteristics. A chart is given with the puzzle to help track this information.

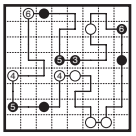
Castle Wall: The subgrid contains bordered or colored cells that cannot be part of the loop. Black cells must be outside the loop; white cells (with heavy borders) must be inside the loop. Numbers and arrows refer to the total sum of the lengths of loop segments in the given direction *up to the border cells of the Castle Wall subgrid; loop segments passing the bold edge of the subgrid do not count.*



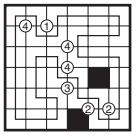
Country Road: The loop must enter and exit each bold region exactly once. If a number clue is given in a region, that number indicates the exact number of cells used by the loop in the region. Unused cells cannot be orthogonally adjacent across different regions *within the Country Road subgrid (this no unused cell adjacency rule does not apply to cells in subgrids adjacent to the Country Road).*



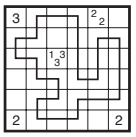
Balance Loop: The loop must pass through all cells with circles; the loop may either go straight or turn at each circle. All white circles must have loop segments of equal length extending from both sides of the circle before turning. All black circles must have loop segments of unequal length extending from both sides of the circle before turning. Numbers, where given, indicate the sum of the loop segment lengths on both sides of the circle. (Note that the total counts are not affected by other circles being crossed before turning *and include any segments that cross the subgrid border.*)



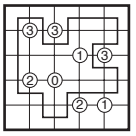
Inner Cave: (Variation of "Cave" puzzle counting) The loop must pass through all cells in this subgrid except for any blackened cells. An Inner Cave numbered clue represents the total count of full grid lines seen in all four directions from the clue, *including lines that extend past the bold borders into other subgrids*. Circle clues can be either inside or outside of the loop.



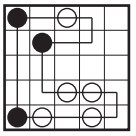
Tapa-Like Loop: Clues inside the subgrid represent the number of neighboring cells visited by the loop; if there is more than one number in a cell, each number should be represented with a separate loop segment. *Clues do include the count of loop segments for cells outside the subgrid.*



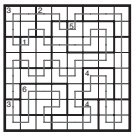
Slitherlink: Numbers inside a circle indicate how many of the cell edges touching that circle are part of the loop. (This is a grid-based reformatting of the familiar Slitherlink style to make compatible with the other styles in this puzzle.)



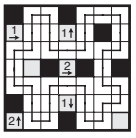
Masyu: The loop must pass through all cells with circles. The loop must go straight through the cells with white circles, with a turn in at least one of the cells immediately before/after each white circle. The loop must make a turn in all the black circles, but must go straight in both cells immediately before/after each black circle. *These turning rules still apply if the loop path goes outside the subgrid.*



Maxi Loop: The loop must pass through all cells in this subgrid. If a number clue is given in a bold region, that number indicates the total count of cells passed through by the largest connected loop section(s) in the region.



Yajilin: Blacken some white cells so the loop passes through all remaining white cells. Blackened cells cannot share an edge with each other. Some cells are outlined and in gray and cannot be part of the loop. Numbered arrows in such cells indicate the total number of blackened cells that exist in that direction in the grid. *Numbered arrows only apply to cells within the subgrid, and blackened cells have no effect on cells outside of the subgrid.*



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From Prasanna: *“This puzzle is meant to be a culmination of 10 years of authoring puzzles. I want to especially thank GMPuzzles for accommodating these special puzzles every year even if it may not have fit the regular schedules. I also see this puzzle as a "reset" of sorts, and I'll get back to simple ideas to celebrate my next few birthdays, and then see where that takes me. These last 10 years have been a fantastic experience and I'd like to take this moment to thank the puzzle community as a whole for being a huge part of my journey.”*

The subgrid letters represent the last 9 birthday surprises from Prasanna:

2012 = TWENTY-ONE PUZZLES
https://prasannaseshadri.wordpress.com/2012/03/02/puzzle-no-62-82-my-birthday-puzzles/

2013 = KNAPP DANEBEN TAPA
https://prasannaseshadri.wordpress.com/2013/03/02/puzzle-no-313-knapp-daneben-tapa-birthday-special/

2014 = STATUE PARK
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2014/03/statue-park-prasanna-seshadri32/

2015 = BIRTHDAY LOOP
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2015/03/birthday-loop-prasanna-seshadri/

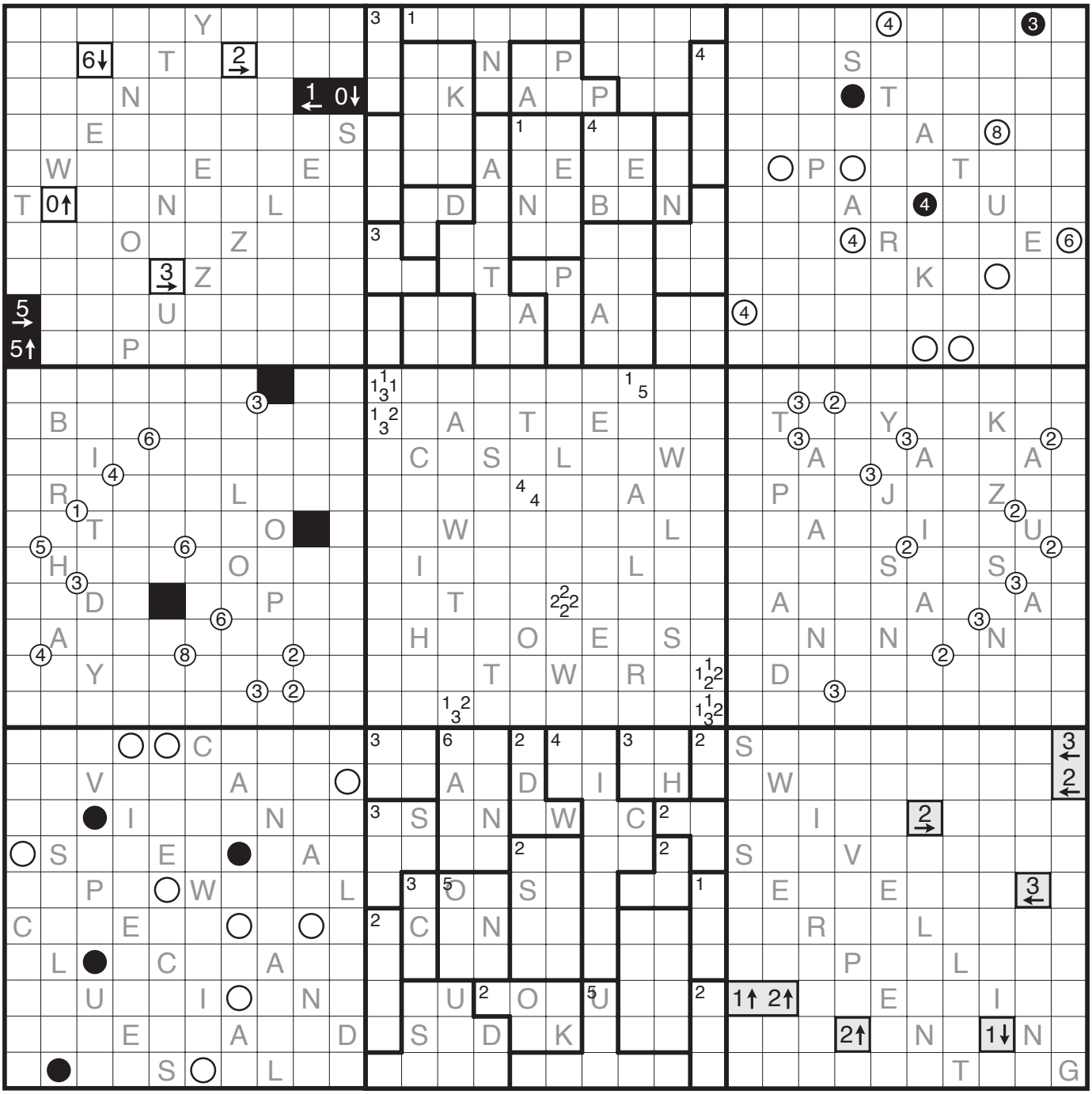
2016 = CASTLE WALL (WITH TOWERS)
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2016/03/castle-wall-with-towers-by-prasanna-seshadri/

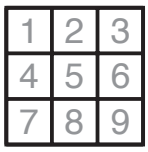
2017 = TAPA AND YAJISAN-KAZUSAN
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2017/03/birthday-surprise-puzzle-prasanna-seshadri/

2018 = CANAL VIEW AND SPECIAL CLUES
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2018/03/birthday-surprise-puzzle-prasanna-seshadri-2/

2019 = SANDWICH CONS SUDOKU
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2019/03/birthday-surprise-sudoku-by-prasanna-seshadri/

2020 = SWIVELLING SERPENT
https://www.gmpuzzles.com/blog/2020/03/swivelling-serpents-birthday-surprise-by-prasanna-seshadri/

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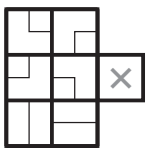
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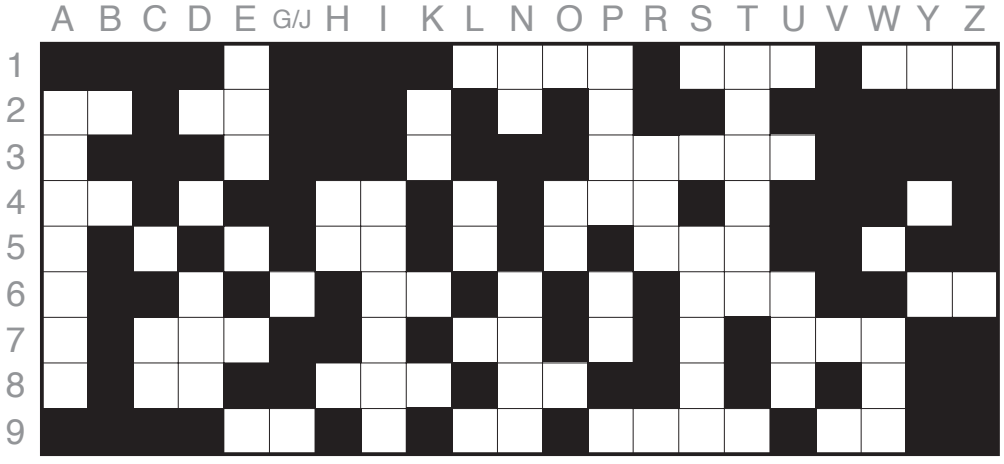
A B C D E G/J H I K L N O P R S T U V W Y Z
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