

Times Crossword with Paris Hilton

John Bennett



No holds barred at the end of this word,
love and lexicon knead into the chamomile steam
we sift over with hand-cupped mugs above
the black and white letter chess.
She's the master of across, so my head nods strange
consent as I investigate the thirty-two clues up and down.

Actor Mindy of Mork & Mindy.

When she finds one she knows she knows,
she tallies spaces, then scribbles lightly in pencil,
counts again, and asks. I nod.
She excitedly crosses out the clue,
which I too find to be helpful.

Last name of novel 1984's protagonist.

The wood edge of pencil moves in,
no sharpener in sight, we switch to pen.

_____ on the Tracks, Dylan album.

Her chestnut eyes run like chasing trains
along the thin sheet of recycled paper.
Then, a subtle tension, as though I'm holding her back.

Insect born in Kafka's Metamorphosis.

Beetle, she insists, the legs, round shell. The apple.
Cockroach, I offer, knowing the letters don't fit.
We argue context and translation.

We argue syntax and conceit.
Her left leg bounces, a nervous tick brought
on by the eagerness of shuffling around in
academia's attic. Everything's where she left it.

When we hold the paper up to the light
we see on the other side of the page someone's president
is playing chicken again, and borders are shifting a few feet.
But here we are, writing with all might to make
today's headlines past. Custodians of knowing well long.