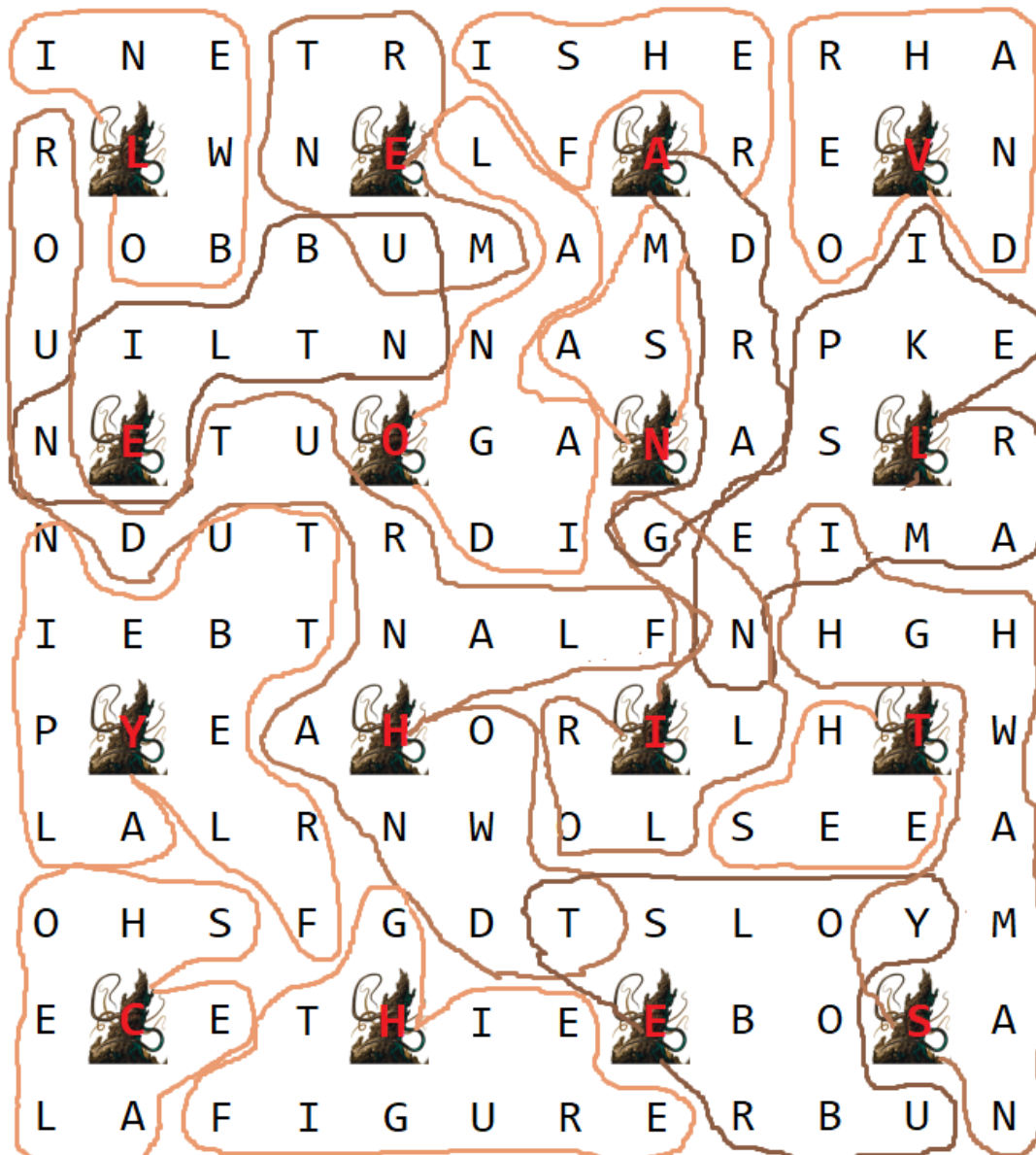


## Ropers (solution)

by Ong Kah Kien

The given grid in this puzzle is a Twisted Word Search, where the adjacent letters in the hidden words can be traced in one line (without crossing), including changing of directions. There are some visible entry points to help solvers realize this, such as the phrase “FIGURE EIGHT” starting along the bottom edge, “ROUND TURN AND TWO HALF” starting along the left edge and “FISHERMAN’S” at the top middle. These words also clue that the hidden words are all names of knots. The puzzle title and flavortext words “bind” and “lashing” hint this theme as well. The two long tendrils of each of the 16 Ropers can be extended to wrap around the set of letters forming exactly one hidden knot name, while contributing a missing letter to that knot name in its tracing order. As a confirmation, the enumerations of the 16 knot names are provided in alphabetical order, and all letters in the grid are used. This also resolves potential ambiguity of shorter knot names, such as “SHEET” being found in other places in the grid.

The image below shows the groupings for all the 16 knots in the grid (colors are for ease of differentiation).



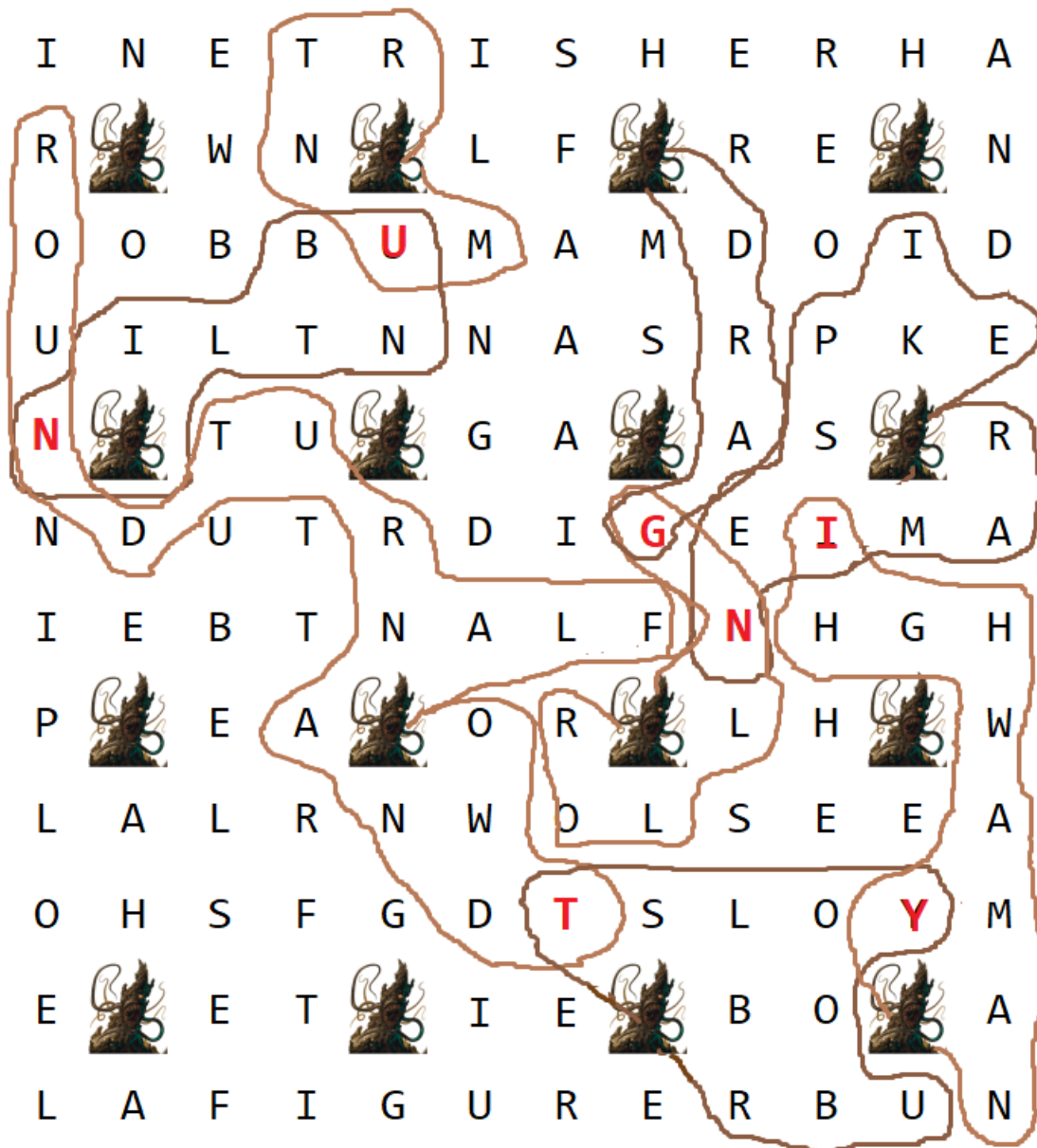
The table below summarizes the knot name formed by each Roper, the knot type and the letter it contributes:

Roper	Knot	Category	Letter
1	BOWLINE	Loop	L
2	MUNTER (HITCH)	Hitch	E
3	GARDA (HITCH)	Hitch	A
4	OVERHAND (KNOT)	Stopper	V
5	BUNTLINE (HITCH)	Hitch	E
6	DIAGONAL (LASHING)	Lashing	O
7	FISHERMAN'S (KNOT)	Bend	N
8	MARLINSPIKE (HITCH)	Hitch	L
9	ALPINE BUTTERFLY	Loop	Y
10	ROUND TURN AND TWO HALF (HITCHES)	Hitch	H
11	ROLLING (HITCH)	Hitch	I
12	SHEET (BEND)	Bend	T
13	SHOELACE (KNOT)	Binding/Loop	C
14	FIGURE-EIGHT (KNOT)	Stopper	H
15	LOBSTER BUOY (HITCH)	Hitch	E
16	HIGHWAYMAN'S (HITCH)	Hitch	S

The Ropers are in a 4x4 pattern, which suggests reading their letters in left to right, top to bottom order. This gives the clue phrase LEAVE ONLY HITCHES.

Knots are grouped into different categories based on their function or attributes. Hitches are knots used to bind rope to an object, such as a post, cable, rig or spar. 8 out of the 16 knots in the grid are hitches, as indicated in the table above. As instructed, looking at just these 8 hitches in the grid will show that they form a continuous chain, with exactly one letter overlapped/reused between pairs of hitches. This is also hinted by the word “entangle” in the flavortext. The chain gives an ordering for the 7 overlapped letters, which gives the thematic answer for this puzzle **UNTYING**.

The image below shows the groupings for just the 8 hitches in the grid, including the overlapped letters in red and chain ordering (colors are for ease of differentiation).



Constructor's notes:

This was one of the last puzzles to be written, as we had initially wanted to incorporate a physical component for this puzzle given the strong rope/knot theme of this answer. However, it turned out to be difficult to come up with a good idea for a viable physical puzzle despite spending quite long mulling over this. And one common issue of physical puzzles is that it may not necessarily require a physical component actually (could be easier solved in softcopy), or having the physical component does not really add to the puzzle. So a different approach was eventually taken, and this puzzle which is still thematic to ropes/knots is the end result.