As Easy As 12.3
by 530nm330Hz

The 12th of March is the birthday of two my friends in the NPL. In their honor, I’ve written a cryptic, attempting the style of one of them. The other is very proud to have been on Countdown. No, not the one with Keith Olbermann.

I wanted to give each friend equal representation in the grid, so when entering answers, you will find four places where a transformation needs to occur, converting the letters of the across entry into the letters needed for the down entry. In understanding the transformation, it may help to remember which of my friends lives across town from me, and which one lives in downtown Manhattan.

Furthermore, each clue contains one word with an extra bigram. Sorting these bigrams alphabetically by their clue’s answer will yield a clue to a phrase which can be parsed three ways: (1) as the transformation needed in the grid, (2) as a transition that also happens this weekend, and (3) as a translation of the identities of my two friends. As I said, this puzzle is as easy as 12.3

ACROSS
1. Persian Jewess is wife, ultimately righteous woman with heart of hearts. Right?
5. Playwright of “Total Belief”
6. Foreordain unearthing Ed’s tin ore
8. Greater conductors from west strip endlessly
10. Mathematician isn’t excellent, violated rule
11. Rene’s replacing one in unit leads to chaos

DOWN
1. BBC broadcasts awfully bad, dark Celts (not MW)
2. Lie confounded judge in any book of the bible
3. Drink better without tight ends
4. MIT Course II grad and erotic diarist, totally depleted of ozone, miss movie about aliens (3 wds., not MW)
7. Justice’s BATF capturing large Canadian at distance (one from Quebec)
9. Defame baron, embracing servant without you