



LUKE

I, Barien, Master of Challenges, Knight of the Long Road, Lord  
of the Cross Roads,  
Host of Hosts, the Keeper of the Revels  
do hereby challenge you to complete the following task

DEFEAT ILLARCH PHAEDRUS IN DEBATE, ON THE TOPIC  
OF VIRTUE AND THE LABYRINTH

Illarch Phaedrus is an Axou of some high standing in the Halls of Maykop. They are an avid philosopher, especially on matters of death, and are keen to match wits with someone of equal standing. Your challenge is to see if you are able to match and exceed Phaedrus' level in a formal debate.

You may bring 3 others with you as witnesses. You may confer, but they may not address Phaedrus or any other Axou in debate formally.

The question at hand is "The labyrinth and reincarnation are malign influences on the human spirit." You will take the opposing view, and both of you will have a chance to make a brief opening statement of a few minutes before back and forth debate. The debate will be chaired by the Axou summer mage who has made this connection possible. I trust their impartiality implicitly.

Arranging this challenge has been a challenge for a number of reasons - I am relying on a conjunction from your Empire's sentinel gate to allow it to proceed, and thus cannot guarantee a time. Your civil service tells me it is not possible this summit, but I am hoping for good news in the spring. Of course I will let you know when the moment is imminent. Alternatively my lord may arrange a chamber in the Summer realm, if Phaedrus acquiesces.

Good luck, questor. We will speak again in the future.



RILLIAN DE GAUVAIN

I, Barien, Master of Challenges, Knight of the Long Road, Lord  
of the Cross Roads,  
Host of Hosts, the Keeper of the Revels  
do hereby challenge you to complete the following task

“COMPLETE THE TRIAL OF THE VAULT OF BAZURKAL”

Dear Ambassador,

A little treat for you, all the way from Faraden. A little butterfly flew into an office and copied this, and I have my suspicions about who wrote it, and I would very much like to catch up with them.

MAROX|ATEGF|WDYZQ|JBZBM|WBKOR|HIQMU|AXAF

The code is uncrackable by our methods, and so I imagine there is another half floating around somewhere. If you manage to find out what it says, send a message off to my good man Nyamzul Ganbatar, who can be found at the Red Monarch Trading House, Pelabuhan, Menendram. I believe you've met. Needless to say, the Liege will find a way to reward you.

Khojin

*Five things in fives, bar one  
An auspicious number for an auspicious occasion  
Crowned by the storm that whips across the plains  
By the wind that sweeps from our nation to yours  
And back again.*

*May your reign be long and prosperous, in good fortune.*

*Tchinua Ganbatar, Liege of the Five Winds*

## **The Gorget of Jen, Martyr of the Silver Thistles (Silberdistel)**

This gorget is one of several relics belonging to the known martyr Jen, who hailed many years ago from the nation of Trassau, now a territory of the Commonwealth, but at the point of Jen's story an independent kingdom on its borders.

Trassau was infamous at the time for its brutal caste politics. The lowest levels of society were effectively indentured to the service of the warrior clans who ruled the nation. Jen was the child of a merchant family, who had come into contact with Commonwealth ideals through travel and sought to bring those ideas back to their homeland. The concepts of freedom from forced servitude took hold, and soon Jen and others who shared their values formed the "Silver Thistles" (Silberdistel) who sought to spread anti-slavery philosophy and spark intellectual debate. The Silver Thistles held closely to the view that reason and empathy could together overcome the horrors of slavery without resorting to, as they put it, crude violence, and the group gained traction.

Unfortunately, the ruling clans did not take kindly to this. The group was proscribed and their materials confiscated; when Jen and the rest persisted in expounding their views they were forced to flee and holed up in the fortified town of Landvogtei. They were accepted in by the mayor, a relative and sympathiser to one of the group, but when castle guards attempted to capture the Silver Thistles at the behest of the clan lady a riot broke out, and the Silver Thistles along with the townsfolk ended up killing many of the guards and taking the city and castle.

This state of affairs could not be allowed to stand. The clan leaders brought swift and brutal punishment on Landvogtei and the Silver Thistles, who made a last stand at the castle with whatever weapons they could get their hands on, but few survived, Jen being one of the many hanged publicly as an example and warning. The few that did flee headed towards the Commonwealth with their story; so moved were the General Council by this tale that the armies of the Commonwealth moved into Trassau to crush the clan lords and abolish the caste system in the land for good. Upon reaching Landvogtei the bodies of the martyrs were still in their gibbets, and in honour of their bravery were interred as the heroes they were, and their relics and stories preserved to pass down through the years to inspire each new generation in the fight against injustice.



TRISTAN ACKERMAN

I, Barien, Master of Challenges, Knight of the Long Road, Lord  
of the Cross Roads,  
Host of Hosts, the Keeper of the Revels  
do hereby challenge you to complete the following task

“GO TO THE KNIGHT’S CROSSROAD AND DEFEAT  
WHOEVER YOU FIND THERE”

*The Guardian of the vault of Bazurkal was once one of Meraud's most trusted ritualists. It belonged to a coven of two mages who earned The Lord of the Lake's favour through the repeated performance of three rituals.*

*It is believed that performing any of these rituals in the presence of the Guardian would be a reliable way to impress (or distract) it - perhaps enough to gain an edge in the Vault's Trials.*

*The names of these rituals have been lost, but a clerk at the Court of Summer Stars has done research to suggest that they:*

- ~ Are definitely in imperial lore*
- ~ Have an even numbered magnitude*
- ~ Do not contain the name of another person, faction or creature (magical or mortal)*
- ~ Contain an adjective (but not a colour)*
- ~ Are useful in preparing for combat*
- ~ Affect the mood or temperament of the target in some way*

*(It may be useful to note that the two ritualists were of a power equivalent to five ranks of imperial Summer lore, and likely had the rituals mastered.)*





ARELOE LARMALLEVÉS

I, Barien, Master of Challenges, Knight of the Long Road, Lord  
of the Cross Roads,  
Host of Hosts, the Keeper of the Revels  
do hereby challenge you to complete the following task

ASSIST THE HERALDS OF THE IRON DUKE IN PREPARING  
FEAST OF THE BLUEBELLS

The Feast of the Bluebells is an important annual tradition in the summer realm, where Barien invites a number of heralds from the other eternals to attend a dinner in a beautiful wildflower glade.

As you can probably imagine, putting hot-headed beings of the realm of summer into a formal dinner and plying them with wine can lead to...tensions, and so the heralds of the Iron Duke must pay the utmost attention to the details of the feast, from seating to flower arrangements to the music.

Your task will be, at the Spring Equinox, to visit the chamber where the feast will occur and ensure things are set up appropriately. The difficulty comes in that each invitee will have sent in their own demands, and so you will have ensure there are no clashes or other cause for upset. More full details will be provided at the Spring Equinox and Vintner, one of Barien's heralds, will be there to guide you. All the necessary materials will be provided - if you wish to bring a gift this is of course delightful, but by no means required.

Sadly, we cannot accommodate you at the feast itself- suffice to say, if any guest \*does\* take offence at another, it is not a environment that is conducive to mortal survival. Revel and the heralds of Barien will of course let you know how things go and whether your taste and decorum is up to the Iron Duke's standards.

Good luck, questor. We will speak again three months hence.



BRANWYN FORRESTER

I, Barien, Master of Challenges, Knight of the Long Road, Lord  
of the Cross Roads,  
Host of Hosts, the Keeper of the Revels  
do hereby challenge you to complete the following task

“PROVE YOUR MASTERY OF DAWNISH HISTORY AGAINST  
TORCHBEARER IOCUNDUS”