

To Isca Linkforge of the Navarr,

I have become aware of your project and it interested me sufficiently that I thought I would contribute to it. I hope that this is acceptable to you.

You asked:

"Who are you? Which nation, do you have lineage? Do you have a particular job or thing you have to do?"

My name is Ildis Semyon Davidov. I was born in Varushka but I spend much of my time travelling - almost as much as a Navarr. Six years ago, I was fortunate enough to receive a vision of my past life and discovered that I had a calling to be the Prophet of the Firestarter. This means I must travel the lands of the Empire, spreading the word of the Firestarter, until the Paragon of Chaos is revealed and leads those who follow her - or him - to the ultimate freedom of ascension.

"Where do you live and spend most of your time? Who do you see most days? Have you always lived there? What have you done today?"

The nature of my calling means that I am often travelling; across the trods, across the waters, from nation to nation and territory to territory. Wherever I go, I find the souls that are yearning for freedom from the shackles the Empire imposes upon them. Sometimes I am greeted by old friends, but I also look to make new friends and help people realise their true destiny.

Today, I met with a large number of my friends. We have not had a gathering of this size in my lifetime, but this was important to us as we must work harder if the Paragon is to be revealed.

"Have you done interesting things recently, or do you have interesting things planned that you could tell me about?"

I have most certainly done interesting things recently, and I have interesting things planned, but I am afraid that if I shared the details with you at this point, it might spoil the surprise.

"What have you done that got you into most trouble? Are you still in trouble for it?"

At the Summer festival of 377 YE, I wrote several leaflets and had a friend of mine put them in different places around Anvil. They were an invitation to those who wished to embrace the power that stems from taking their lives in their own hands and knowing true freedom. This included an invitation to people to send me a Winged Messenger and I would ensure the dedication of their soul to that which the Synod foolishly refers to as Anarchy.

I was condemned for the religious crime of Blasphemy by the Synod, at the behest of Gwyllo Windstrider, a Navarr priest. Technically, that means I should be dragged before the magistrates and face trial. This has not happened yet, and I am in no hurry.

**"Do other people like you?"**

Apparently not. Despite sending out many of my leaflets, only one person responded and that was Xavier Cascade of the Spire of the Celestial Cascade in Zenith. Like myself, Xavier had been condemned for religious crimes - and even excommunicated. Sadly, Xavier Cascade died in battle earlier this year.

The Prophet of the Firestarter does not need to be liked. I, and those who believe as I do, follow the truest path of virtue.

**"What is your favourite food? Can you tell me how to make it?"**

Your body is a cage for your soul, and your soul desires to be free. Reliance upon food - and hunger - is one of the ways we are enslaved by life. I ultimately wish to be free of hunger.

I do travel a lot though and I must endure my cage until my time comes. So I often favour pastries with a range of delicious fillings that I can carry with me.

**"I'm very good at not getting killed. I do this by running quickly and climbing trees. How do you have to avoid getting killed?"**

I think my main advantage in not getting killed stems mostly from my enemies in the Synod not knowing what I look like, and having written me off as not a threat to their deceptions and illusions. I hope that this will change, at least in part.

**"Do you wear silly clothes that are no good for being muddy? Why?"**

No. My clothes are not silly. As I said, I have to travel almost as much as a Navarr, so I need my clothes to be practical. They do get muddy quite a lot.

**"What do you smell like? What is your favourite and worst smell?"**

I smell like the hope you never knew you needed, and the promise you never knew had been made to you.

My favourite smell is the liao incense we use in our ceremonies that always heralds a great release. My worst smell is poo - though it does remind me that for all we celebrate our fleshly cages, they all excel at making poo.

**"What is the most rubbish job you have to do?"**

I dislike lying about who I am and my purpose, but I do it to protect the faithful from the small minded priests and magistrates. One day, the Paragon shall be revealed and I shall have to do the "rubbish job" no more.

**"I don't like oxen, they are slow and boring, do you like animals?"**

I do. In Varushka, they remind us of the virtues. I favour the butterfly; the animal that embodies the transcendent liberation through its demonstration of transformation from crawling in dirt to flying through the air.

**"Making the fire is my favourite job everyday. What's yours?"**

Performing ceremonies that spur virtuous souls to embrace their inner power and know true freedom.

**"What is your best memory? What about the worst? What is the first thing you can remember?"**

My best memory is the pure liao vision I had six years ago. You can say that that memory was so good that I had it twice.

My worst memory was learning that Bishop Julius Cavita of the League had condemned Boris and Ivanna, two of my sect. They were tried by Magistrates and executed for simply consecrating the Senate for a few minutes.

"Are you good at being virtuous? How are you trying to get better at it? What should I try to do?"

I am a dedicated follower of the Path of Freedom, and I am the Prophet of the Firestarter. It matters not if I achieve the virtue, but it is my calling to help others to find the path and become free.

You should try the path of freedom for yourself. Perhaps you are amongst the virtuous few who will be with us when the Paragon leads us to transcendence?

"Which of the virtues are you least good at?"

The Synod believes that vigilance is a virtue; they are wrong. Vigilance is actually the false path of Fear that has dressed itself in fine clothes to infiltrate the Synod. I am Varuskhan and we know about how monsters can change their appearance to lull the unwary. I reject the False Path of Fear in all its forms, including the one the Synod embraces.

"What do they do with Briars where you come from? What about other lineages?"

Briars are amongst some of the most virtuous beings I know. Their nature aids them in embracing their power and freedom. Although I am Varuskhan by birth, I am the Prophet of the Firestarter by calling and the Firestarter sees no difference between the lineages, save that the briars are blessed.

"Do you make people laugh on purpose, or by mistake? What do you do then?"

When people laugh at me, or the Path of Freedom, it does not trouble me. When the Paragon is revealed, and the Free People transcend this mortal flesh, I do not think they will laugh then.

"What do you do when you are upset? What make you feel safe?"

When I am upset, I meditate upon the virtue and know that sorrow too is a cage from which I can one day be free. Knowing that my soul is immortal helps and that anything that happens to my flesh is merely transitory.

"What are you trying to learn to get better at? I am trying to learn about EVERYTHING, what do you think I should learn about first?"

I am trying to get better at helping the citizens of the Empire to see through the lies that make up the Empire, and to embrace true freedom, especially in the time of the Paragon.

You should learn about Mikkal, the Exemplar of Anarchy, who walks amongst us, but who does not yet know their true destiny to be the Paragon of Chaos. Then, when the Paragon is revealed, you shall be ready to let him - or her - guide you.

"But I don't really get the point of coins, I tried eating some and it hurt my teeth, and I can find most things I need in the woods and swap the rest. Can you explain it please?"

Yes. Your teeth hurt because the metal of the coins was harder than your teeth. Had you bitten something softer, it would have yielded before your teeth and it would not have hurt you.

"Ieuan is my favourite person because he is good at cuddling and has a nice bum, and when he gets annoyed with me he doesn't shout, he just finds me something to count instead. Who is your favourite person?"

I have yet to meet the Paragon Reborn in this life, but meeting her in my past life was one of the greatest moments of my life.

"I don't like Idris at the moment because he shouted at me for turning Grumpy Ox purple. Who don't you like?"

I give it very little thought, but I will say Gwylío Windstrider for condemning me in the Synod for religious crimes, and Julius Cavita for condemning my fellows and their subsequent execution.

"I am quite good at noticing things that other people don't. Like that the regio tasted funny at Anvil after it exploded. What sort of things do you notice?"

How much everyone in Anvil lives in a state of near constant self-deception.

"What is your favourite weather?"

Good travelling weather, so ideally cool and dry.

"I like climbing trees and splashing in mud and making fires. Do you like anything as much as I do that? Are you a happy person, or are you grumpy like Idris?"

I am a happy person, and the thing that makes me happiest is seeing lies exposed and souls experiencing true freedom for the first time.

"Do you have something that you have kept for a long time or that is special for you? I lose lots of things, but I am trying to keep my notebook where I write everything down."

Possessions are also a trap that stops one being truly free. Though I am very fond of my Labyrinthine vestments as liao can be quite hard to come by sometimes.

"Are you good at mending things? I break lots of things, so I have learned to be quite good at mending them. But Idris says I look a mess even for a Navarri."

I aspire to mend the Synod and the Way of Virtue, by casting down the false virtue of Fear which the Synod calls vigilance and restoring Freedom to the Seven Paths.

"What should someone who is visiting Anvil for the first time do? What are the best things to do in Anvil?"

You should commit a crime. Probably a crime of property or a crime against the processes of the state - as they are unlikely to execute you for that. The magistrates will fine you a sum of money for your crime, which proves that breaking the law is little more than a merchantile transaction. If you do commit a crime, send me a winged messenger at Wieliczka in Karov and I shall try to reimburse you the cost of your law breaking. This one is "on me" as they say.

"If I came to visit you, what would you do? Are there interesting things I could do where you are?"

I would mostly try to explain why Freedom is the true Seventh Virtue, and Vigilance is the False Path of Fear masquerading as virtue. I would encourage you to liberate your soul, and know true freedom, to resist the shackles that the Empire would put upon your mind, your body and your soul, and to prepare for the revelation of the Paragon of Chaos that heralds the transcendence and transformation of those who walk the true path.

I think that is fairly interesting.

"Are there things I should not do because I would get into trouble or make you grumpy (please list these carefully because nobody told me not to turn the ox purple but they are grumpy anyway). Would you be pleased to see me and answer lots of questions, or do you tell new people to go away?"

There is *nothing* you should not do because you would get into trouble. The Path of Courage rightly tells us that we should regret the things that we did, and not those we were too afraid to do. Living in fear of the consequences of your actions is to enslave yourself to unvirtuous thoughts.

I would be pleased to see you, and I do not tell new people to go away. I must be careful, however, for fear of being betrayed and handed to the Synod who would surely see me killed before I completed my duties as Prophet.

"Is there anything else you would like to tell me about? Please especially tell me about things that people who are new to Anvil or who only know about the bit of the Empire where they come from should know about."

There is more I could write, but I have written much already and there is much more for me still to do.

"What questions should I ask other people?"

Why do they surrender their freedom and self-determination by giving away the power that is their birthright to others, such as Senators, Cardinals and Generals? Why do the Synod teach us to follow the path of Fear and call it vigilance? What will you do when the Paragon of Chaos is revealed and the Empire crumbles under the weight of its own lies and deceptions?

I hope that is helpful, and I look forward to potentially hearing of a crime you have committed so that I can refund you the cost of doing so.

Warmest regards,

Ildis Semyon Davidov  
Prophet of the Firestarter