

A858 IITBHU

By cheeky-otter-199

The A858 IITBHU Challenge was announced in the evening of 12th September.



WizardSea 12/09/2025 20:58
@everyone

Ever heard of the most enigmatic Reddit mystery of all time? The cryptic stream of numbers and hidden codes from **A858** left the internet puzzled for years. Some called it art, some called it a message, others called it the greatest unsolved riddle.

This year, the mystery unfolds right here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmoRowBRZvY&ab_channel=ChillFuel



A858 IITBHU — Coming Soon...

Are you ready to decode the unknown?

With exciting rewards....

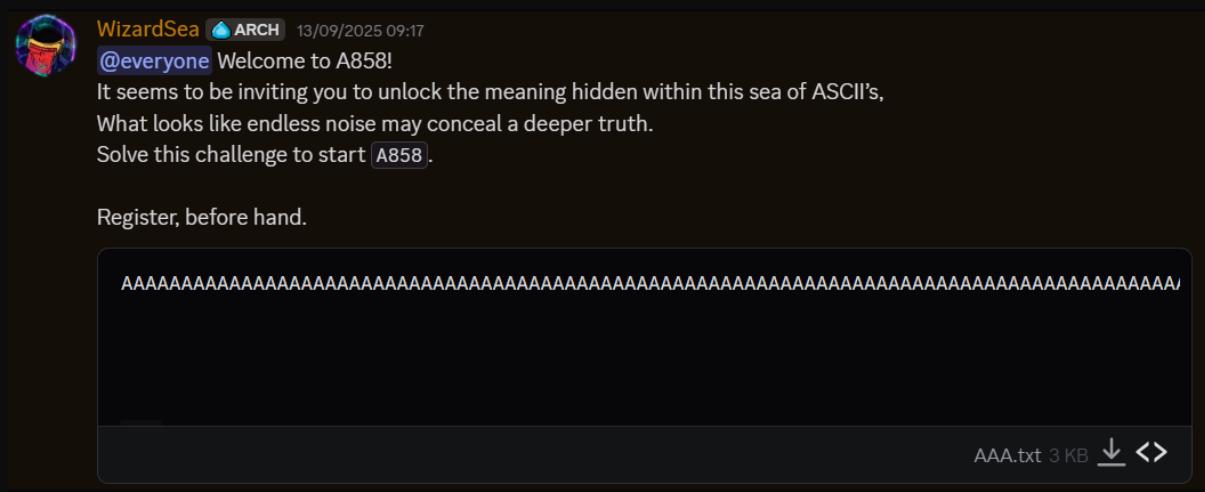
Allow me to be **your guide** for how my team **solved this challenge** and what were the things we faced along the way.

Links are *attached to texts* in many places for your convenience.

Be ready because this journey is going to be **CRAZY**.

THE CHALLENGE BEGINS

The challenge began in the morning hours of 13th September with the first challenge.



WizardSea ARCH 13/09/2025 09:17
@everyone Welcome to A858!
It seems to be inviting you to unlock the meaning hidden within this sea of ASCII's,
What looks like endless noise may conceal a deeper truth.
Solve this challenge to start A858.

Register, before hand.

```
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
```

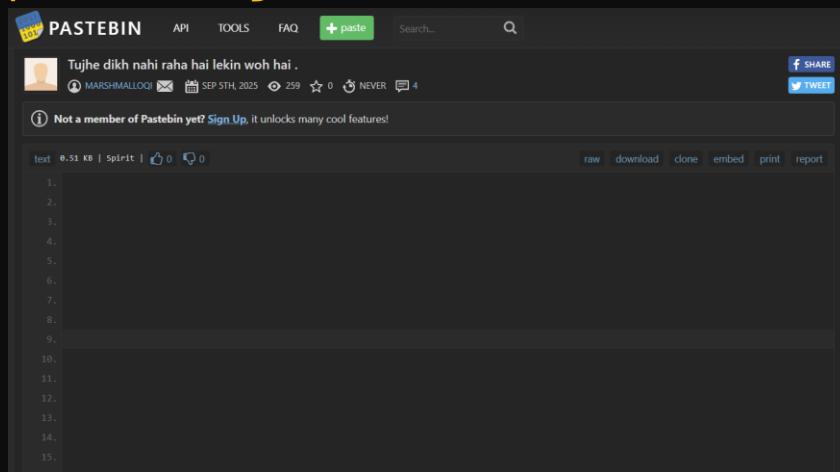
AAA.txt 3 KB [Download](#) [Share](#)

This file contains varying strings of the letter 'A' separated by spaces. As we can take the help of AI's for this challenge, we can use it to decode this file.

The logic used - The length of each string was counted and as the hint suggested, their corresponding ASCII characters were written.

This forms a Pastebin link - <https://pastebin.com/kKTxgzFn>

Upon visiting the link, we were greeted with a rather peculiar sight -



PASTEBIN API TOOLS FAQ + paste Search... Q

Tujhe dikh nahi raha hai lekin woh hai .
MARSHALOO SEP 5TH, 2025 259 NEVER 4

SHARE TWEET

Not a member of Pastebin yet? Sign Up, it unlocks many cool features!

text 0.51 KB | Split | [0](#) [0](#)

1.
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raw download done embed print report

No **visible text** at all! Very confusing!

Upon examining the comments however, we notice that some **tools** can be used.

Comments

MARSHMALLOQI 2 DAYS
text 0.05 KB | 0 0
I think the white spaces have some clue, but who knows

MARSHMALLOQI 2 DAYS
text 0.04 KB | 0 0
I think I should check out the tools, provided

The tools in question -



Aerex 13/09/2025 10:26

Some tools that will be needed to complete some challenges in this Event are
Dcode
<https://www.dcode.fr/en>
Cyberchef
<https://gchq.github.io/CyberChef/>

dCode - Online Ciphers, Solvers, Decoders, Calculators

dCode is the universal site for decipher coded messages, cheating on letter games, solving puzzles, geocaches and treasure hunts, etc.



CyberChef

The Cyber Swiss Army Knife - a web app for encryption, encoding, compression and data analysis

The Pastebin file, upon being examined by the **cipher identifier tool**, would let you know that it is a **whitespace cipher**, and once deciphered, would provide the link for a subreddit -
<https://www.reddit.com/r/858A/>

THE TRUE CHALLENGE BEGINS

The subreddit has many posts, each unique in its own way. We need to follow a systematic approach to ensure that no useful information is missed by mistake!

(The Pepe at the profile picture for the subreddit is into some rather suspicious activites, but let us just leave it alone.)

Starting with the pinned post -

←  r/858A • 3 days ago
WizardSea454

Dashboard

Submit your solutions here

I hope you can help me find the link to the dashboard. 🤔

Up 4 Down

0

Share

This dashboard requires some credentials to access it.

Login

Enter your credentials to access your account

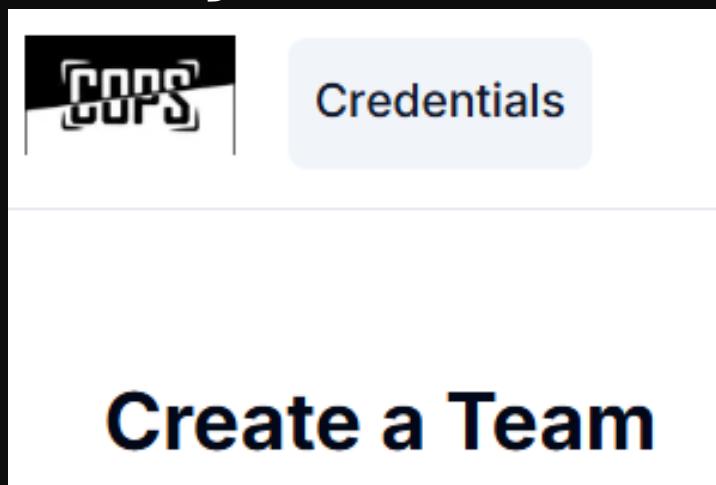
Email

Username

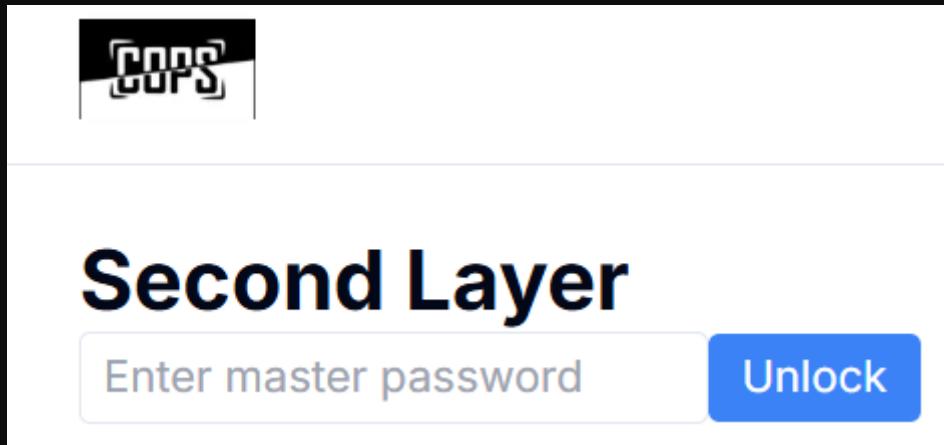
Password

Login

These credentials were hidden rather **sneakily** in the registration website.



Upon clicking the '**Credentials**' button, a new webpage opens which asks for a **master password**.



This master password was hidden in the website itself in a **rather conspicuous red box** where the text was the same colour as the background. (*Text selected image attached below*)

COPS, IIT(BHU)

The master password required for seeing the credentials is "A858"

A858, 2025

Using the master password, the **unique login credentials for each team** could be generated. Upon accessing the dashboard, we can see that we have to **solve 4 challenges** in order to **unlock the final challenge**.

Moreover, these 4 challenges can be **solved in parallel**.

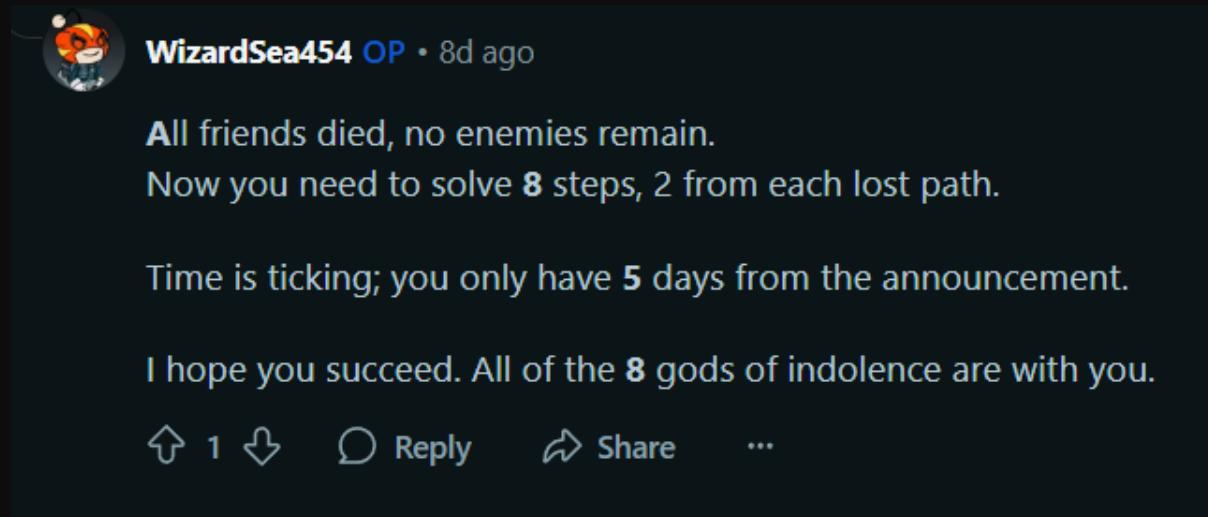
Time to take a **deep dive** into the real battleground so **strap in** your virtual seatbelts.

EXPLORING r/858A

There are a **total of 12 posts** on **r/858A**, the dashboard post being one of them.

Let us go through them systematically. I will start with the posts that gave us **more information** about the **challenge** or **its rules**.

1. In the post titled ‘[Heaven](#)’, this reply to a comment could be found.



A screenshot of a Reddit post from the r/858A subreddit. The post is titled 'Heaven' and was made by user WizardSea454. It contains a single reply from the same user. The reply text is as follows:

All friends died, no enemies remain.
Now you need to solve **8** steps, 2 from each lost path.

Time is ticking; you only have **5** days from the announcement.

I hope you succeed. All of the **8** gods of indolence are with you.

Below the text are standard Reddit interaction buttons: upvote (1), downvote, reply, share, and more options.

This suggests that each challenge has **2 steps** and there is **limited time** to complete it, only **5 days**.

2. The post about [the thief](#) and its comments lets us know that some obvious rules are in effect. (Also, do we just ignore the **ominous warning** about them always watching us??)

 [r/858A](#) • 4 days ago
WizardSea454

When you betray somebody else, you also betray yourself | Don't Cheat!



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

 [WizardSea454](#) OP • 4d ago

"All discussion must remain within your team. No sharing outside."

We'll know when you cheat, as if we are watching you.

Remember, be honest, and do not cheat.

Discussing it outside of your team is prohibited.

↑ 1 ↓  Reply  Share ...

3. The post about [Prometheus](#) has a comment in which the [Venerable WizardSea](#) talks about [liking guides](#) (who does not?)

And indeed, the community has a [guide!](#)

The screenshot shows the r/858A subreddit homepage. At the top, there's a banner with a dog icon and a 'Join' button. Below it, the subreddit name '858A' and its tagline 'Walk on the eternal path to bliss'. It shows the creation date 'Created Sep 5, 2025' and that it's 'Public'. A 'Community Guide' button is highlighted. Below that, visitor statistics: '53 Weekly visitors' and '39 Weekly contributions'. Underneath, the 'R/858A RULES' section lists four items: '1 Brave', '2 Bold', '3 Beware', and '4 Hidden', each with a dropdown arrow. To the right, a large image of a dog is displayed with an orange speech bubble containing the 'r/858A' logo. Below the image, a message from the mod team welcomes a new user: 'Welcome u/SuperRMo7!, I hope you are ready to unravel the mysteries created by some lazy Gods.' It also lists 'Resources' like 'Tool - Dcode', 'Tool - CyberChef', and 'Solution - u found it'. A blue 'Got It' button is at the bottom, with a note: 'Access the community guide any time in the sidebar'.

Any sane person would click on '[Solution – u found it](#)' without a second thought [AND](#) would be greeted by none other than [Rick Astley](#) himself. Yes, you got rickroll'd. No, this is [not](#) the last one.



The **remaining 8 posts** are all either related to challenges or are distractions.

Keeping those aside for a moment, we **will look** at the remaining parts of the subreddit.

858A
Walk on the eternal path to bliss
 Created Sep 5, 2025
 Public



53 Weekly visitors	39 Weekly contributions
------------------------------	-----------------------------------

R/858A RULES

- 1 Brave
Be ready, you are going to explore in these challenges
- 2 Bold
Be ready to see some crazy stuff
- 3 Beware
Here everything is a clue, and everything is a distraction
- 4 Hidden
***þRnI* RnN+ñ**

More information and perhaps this runic text is a clue of some sort?

Turns out, it is message for us to keep going. This was decoded with AI rather easily.

The flags were also analyzed but they did not have any clues. Moving onto the actual challenges now.

what does this mean?

 Perplexity PRO

 Sources

The runic inscription in the image spells "KEEP RUNIN", which is a stylized version of "KEEP RUNNING" using Anglo-Saxon/Elder Futhark runes [wikipedia +2](#).

How it translates

- Each rune represents a Latin letter: K(K), M(E), N(E), I(P), space, R(R), U(U), T(N), I(I), T(N).
- Some runic inscriptions omit modern phonemes—here, the "G" from "RUNNING" is missing
[panoramaglasslodge +1](#).

QR - 3

The 'Help Needed' post by the Great WizardSea mentions about his *recent presence* in a subreddit with crazy memes.

r/858A • 3 days ago
WizardSea454

Help needed

Share ⚡ ...

Add comment

Jayesh Puri

I am working on a Notion template, and I hope I get over it soon.

These days, I am very busy as I get a lot of personal messages on Discord. Though I never forget watching The Primeagen on YouTube, but recently I have been active on a certain subreddit, the memes are crazy there, I hope I can use some for my server 😊.

I hope I finish my productivity template before the end of this semester. 🐱

Upon doing some stalking of his profile, we found his presence in <https://www.reddit.com/r/Ali3n1nva5i0n/>.

His post about parts of a QR provides a hint about what we have to find for each challenge.

r/Ali3n1nva5i0n • 3 days ago
WizardSea454

Rumor or Truth

I recently heard that if you get 4 parts of a QR code, then you are destined for something big, and you need to match them pixel by pixel to reach the final destination.

Although he is unsure here about whether this is a fact or just a mere rumour, a small scroll provides QR - 3. The string can be submitted along with the procedure in the dashboard to submit the challenge (YAY!!)



The website said ‘INCORRECT ANSWER’ though 💀 (AWW HELL NAH).

A quick conversation with the seniors helped fix the issue; just had to reload multiple times. PHEW!! 1 challenge done! But the question remains, can we find the rest?

On a side note, *further examination* of [r/Ali3n1nva5i0n](#) revealed no additional information and no meme was digitally steganographed. Hopefully, we did not miss any brownie points here. 😊

QR - 1

As we see the majestic WizardSea **fry** his brain in his attempt to **decode a string**, we find that **he is poor and cannot afford ChatGPT Pro** he has used up all his ChatGPT tokens but still **has not been able** to decode it.



r/858A • 3 days ago

WizardSea454

...

My brain is Fried



I found a string on the web, with this Image, but I can't decode it, I hope I find a solution to it.

Who knows, I might win something crazy.

But, no high hopes.



WizardSea454 OP • 3d ago

I forgot I had to provide the string as well

"CgOiYQ12hKFiQcpJiE4V08xoelFOd+922MFAUmKaxJi8djjO8lo5ezQgVO1OCs6+uKho9tGUJdlu9tli9pHW5CFOq uSZOTvQ/7AAiNI0/BkHN/ldnN4qXMaqfeDeb5+M0ezh0cjTdjZEGrySeyAo368ptDYqPkY2QLTRZoqcYho51m+us8 2aF/Ywoe1g7/JH"

It is something strange, even ChatGPT can't get over it, and I have wasted all my tokens.

I wish I had pro...

A post by [u/Ok-Independence-3872](#) talks about a new cipher that he has made.



r/858A • 3 days ago
Ok-Independence-3872

found a new cipher! the game of secrets just got fishy!

OMG FISH MENTIONED!!?!????!?!?!!

And what a coincidence that WizardSea is here asking for the decoder; ~~He can't even use magic to decode it. What a lame wizard!~~



WizardSea454 • 3d ago

Man, this shit looks crazy.
I wish I could write a code to decrypt it.
But lol, I guess I can only sleep.

- ↑ 2 ↓ Reply Share ...



WizardSea454 • 3d ago

Though I would love to know what it is called.

↑ 2 ↓ Reply Share ...



Ok-Independence-3872 OP • 3d ago • Edited 3d ago

I put it together long back..... it's old and rusty.... but might do your work with some tweaks!
<https://pastebin.com/1giAsTCp>

- ↑ 1 ↓ Reply Share ...



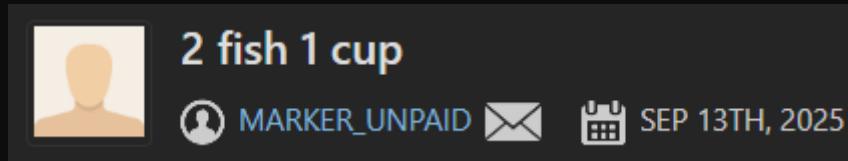
WizardSea454 • 3d ago

Oh thanks, but I vide code, so Pypy2 won't be an issue, but for someone who's new, it will be fun

↑ 2 ↓ Reply Share ...

The pastebin link with the code was titled '[2 fish, 1 cup](#)'. I was horrified of what video the code's output might lead to . But we can not back off now, can we?

We take the risk. Gambling is good.



2 fish 1 cup

MARKER_UNPAID SEP 13TH, 2025

The code required exactly 1 set of parenthesis and 1 library to work as intended.



```
from Crypto.Cipher import Blowfish
import base64

KEY = b"your_s3c5t_k3y"

def unpad(msg):
    return msg.rstrip(b"\0")

def decrypt(ciphertext):
    cipher = Blowfish.new(KEY, Blowfish.MODE_ECB)
    pt_bytes = cipher.decrypt(base64.b64decode(ciphertext))
    return unpad(pt_bytes)

if __name__ == "__main__":
    ciphertext = "your_secret_text"
    print "Decrypted flag:", decrypt(ciphertext)

from Crypto.Cipher import Blowfish
import base64

KEY = b"your_s3c5t_k3y"

def unpad(msg):
    return msg.rstrip(b"\0")

def decrypt(ciphertext):
    cipher = Blowfish.new(KEY, Blowfish.MODE_ECB)
    pt_bytes = cipher.decrypt(base64.b64decode(ciphertext))
    return unpad(pt_bytes)

if __name__ == "__main__":
    ciphertext = "your_secret_text"
    print ("Decrypted flag:", decrypt(ciphertext))
```

The secret key was A858 (DUH) and the output with the string attached was a tree. Quite literally, a Google Drive link with the image of a tree, ped.jpeg



(Why do we have to **GO OUTSIDE** to solve a digital treasure hunt? Questions upon questions but no answers in sight.)

A bit of **touching grass** and we found **the tree** near our beloved LC and most importantly, QR - 1. (TWO CHALLENGES DONE, WOOHOO)

QR - 1



ANOTHER ONE

Upon executing the **JavaScript code** given in the [Pastebin link](#) of this post with the string that mentioned in the comment of the code, we observed that the string was encoded further.

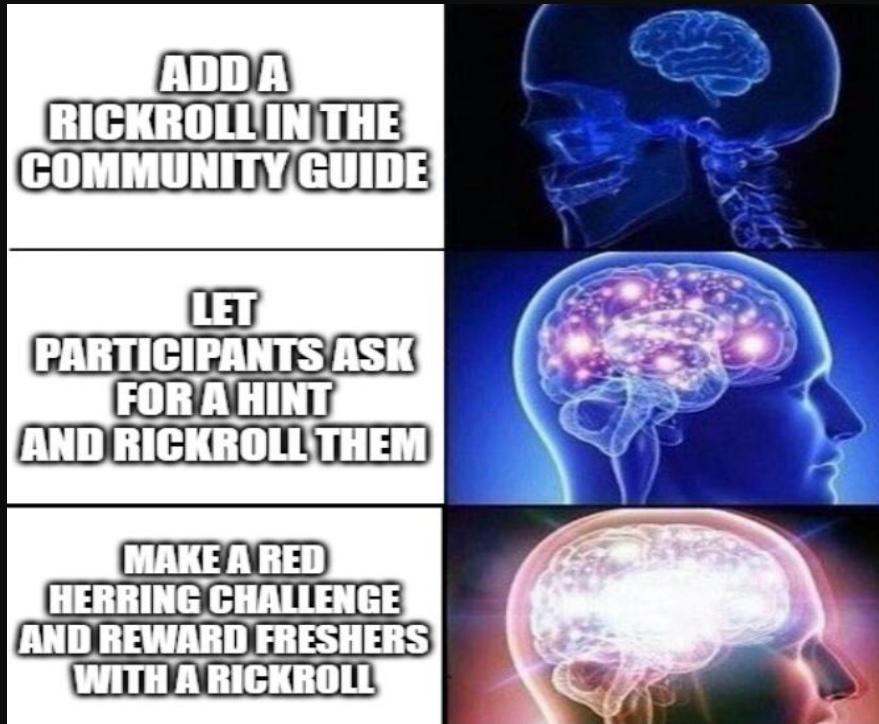
So, we took the **help of ChatGPT** and asked it to write a code that can *undo the encoding* and executed the code with the string.

 r/858A • 5 days ago
DoubleLandscape901 ...

click if you are not gay (direct answers!!)

CTFs or CaptureTheFlag challenges are a game for hackers where you find hidden flags in web app servers' code etc and one of the common areas is JavaScript which is a dynamic language used to build interactivity on web pages. JavaScript can run in the browser and manipulate the DOM to react to user input which makes it powerful but also makes it easy to hide secrets if used improperly or sometimes on purpose as part of challenges like in this CTF. JavaScript code can sometimes contain hidden clues base64 encoded strings or functions that are intended to mislead the researcher but also allow dedicated players to find the way forward solving this requires understanding how JS parses, executes and modifies content and that is something you learn with time and patience just like in life itself because learning JavaScript is like learning life where everything looks complex initially but step by step it becomes clear if you observe closely and debug your actions just like you would in a code editor and if you have gotten this far then maybe you are the eight one for this CTF challenge and your reward awaits you at the link below solve the challenge and find the truth hidden behind the code and life itself for your journey has just begun <https://pastebin.com/a7pmrD57>

Unfortunately for us, [this](#) was waiting on the other side.



QR - 2

In the 'Messi better' post, there is some classic Messi vs Ronaldo debate going on.

Then we have the mighty WizardSea who elaborates on his taste for 'lactating latinas' (Bro's digital footprint is COOKED).

He posts a QR which I would urge the reader to try scanning for a *truly life-changing experience*.

The screenshot shows a Reddit thread with the following comments:

- WizardSea454** • 5d ago
I love lactating latinas
(-) Up 2 Down Reply Share ...
- DoubleLandscape901 OP** • 5d ago
Messi better
(-) Up 1 Down Reply Share ...
- Impossible_Fee7948** • 3d ago
more total career goals, no doubt Ronaldo is the GOAT
Up 1 Down Reply Share ...
- Pitiful_Bed_6282** • 5d ago
SEE AAR SEEBAN ke fans iss comment ko upvote kare
Up 2 Down Reply Share ...
- DoubleLandscape901 OP** • 5d ago
Suiiii
Up 1 Down Reply Share ...
- WizardSea454** • 5d ago
Messi fans, Qr bhej raha hun,
scan to get Messi's private pics 😊


The **keen-eyed** would have noticed that the **profile picture** of [u/Impossible_Fee7948](#) resembles a partial QR code. Indeed, **that is QR - 2.** (THREE QUARTERS OF THE WAY THERE, **HELL YEAH!!!!!**)



Impossible_Fee7948
u/Impossible_Fee7948
Apr 6, 2024

1 0
Post karma Comment karma

QR - 2



Gg64)pzer1

QR - 4

This QR was arguably the **HARDEST** one to find and there were **multiple distractions** but here we go.

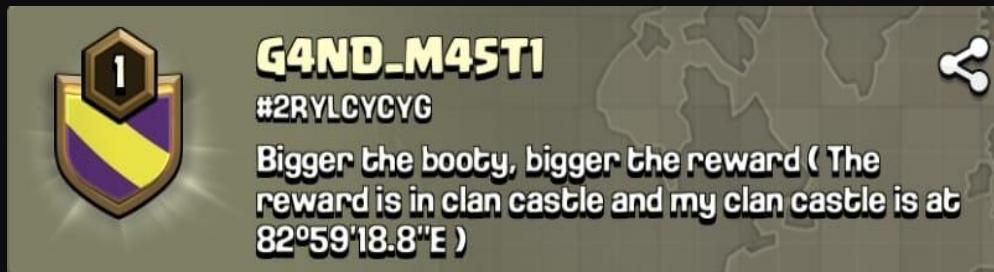
The wise WizardSea loves **4Chan** (is anyone even surprised??)

A screenshot of a Reddit post from the subreddit r/858A. The post was made 3 days ago by the user WizardSea454. The title is "I love 4Chan". Below the title is a link to "boards.4chan.org" and a button labeled "Open". A comment below the link says, "This website is crazy, I wanted to share another link, but couldn't iykyk."

He mentions a **mythical clan** in the comments, a clan that can provide us with '**whatever we want**' to quote the **wizard** himself. Alas, even a clan with this much power is unable to provide him with a **girlfriend** 🌟.

A screenshot of a comment from the user WizardSea454, identified as the OP (original poster), posted 3 days ago. The comment reads:
Some people still can't get over coc
I heard there is a clan which gives whatever you want.
Clan Code - #2RYLCYCYG
I wish they could give me a girlfriend.

The name of the clan is **rather interesting**, to say the least.



A quick glance at the clan description reveals a longitude coordinate. One half of this challenge is now complete.

The remaining half of the challenge is the real hurdle in this challenge.

At this point, only 2 unused posts remain in [r/858A](#). Starting with the post about the Demon Slayer movie (crazy animation, Ufotable ftw).

We are also in the **FINAL PHASE** of the challenge.



r/858A • 3 days ago

Aerex_Walker_

...

Just saw this movie and it's crazy. Who's gonna join me for a second run??

THE FINAL PHASE

The words "the final phase"
keep crossing my mind.



Less gooooo

Aerex wants some people with whom he can watch the movie again. Is anyone surprised that the awesome WizardSea is in the comments here as well??



WizardSea454 • 3d ago

I wish I had enough money to buy a ticket.
I saw a cat on top of this subreddit. I guess it might help



1



Reply



Share

...

~~I CALLED IT!! HE IS BROKE AND CAN NOT AFFORD A TICKET!!!~~ He thinks that the cat might be able to help him with his financial issues.

r/858A • 3 days ago
WizardSea454

How do I transfer game data from one PS5 to another?



Personally, I doubt that the cat can help him but let us check it out.

I just recently bought my own ps5 and want to get my game data from my account on my wife's PS5 (secondary account) to mine, and I'm not sure how to do that. Two games were bought on that secondary account so they seem to be on my new play station already as it says "download" and not buy.

But if I download them, will my game data be included? Is it attached to my account?

As for Red Dead 2, which I did have to buy again, how do I get the save data from my account on her ps5 to my ps5?

I've tried to look this up but I'm not sure how to phrase stuff and I'm worried about messing it up somehow. I have over 300 hours on Hogwarts Legacy (one of the games that says download) and I really don't want to lose it. In Red Dead I likely have around a hundred or so, so I don't exactly want to start over.

(Pic of my PS5 included bc I'm really happy with it, got it for six hundred refurbished on GameStop)

Now this post is CLEARLY a red herring.

Wanna know why?

Because WizardSea talks about being *broke* and *unable to afford a movie ticket*.

Yet he asks about how to transfer game data from 1 PS5 to another where the other one belongs to **HIS WIFE**.

It is *clear as day* that this is **fake** because NO Arch user has a wife. He might have 2 PS5s, but no wife, that is for certain.



On a more serious note, he provides a tenor link for awesome cat gifs but no amount of searching is enough for the scope is too wide and solving WizardSea's money problem has quite a *low correlation* with finding a QR.

Hence, we must take a step back and look at the information we have at present, regarding this challenge. Back to the **Demon Slayer post** we go.

“Sometimes you have to take a step back to move forward” – Erika Taylor

As a Demon Slayer fan, as soon as I played the video, I felt something was off. This quality could NOT have been **Ufotable** for I had seen the **trailer** earlier.

Moreover, there were these rather **conspicuous glitch frames** in the video. I uploaded the video to ChatGPT and asked it to analyse it but unfortunately, I hit the data analysis limit and had a timeout for the next **30 hours** **💀**.

Thus, we downloaded **Potplayer** and decided to manually analyse the video **frame by frame**.

It is a crazy idea to say the least. *Quite a lot* of effort and odds are, the latitude is not even there in the video.

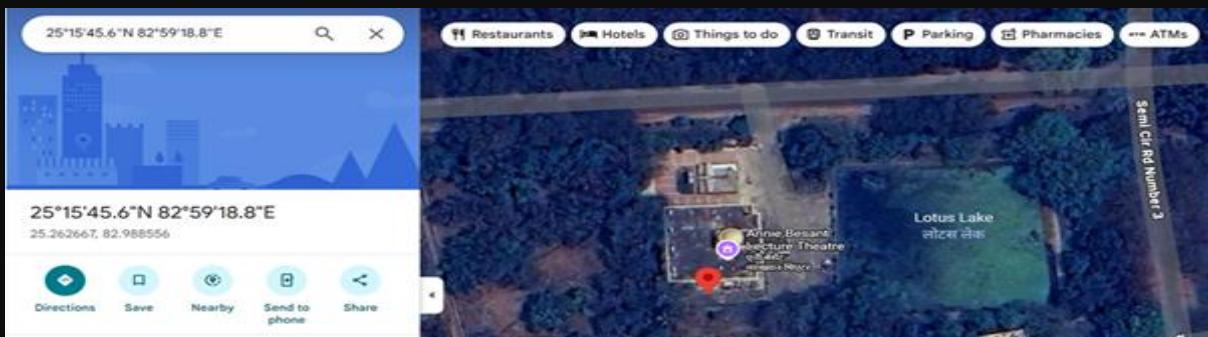
However, after seeing **over 300 frames**, **THERE IT WAS**, the **latitude coordinate**, near the bottom left corner



THE EFFORT WAS WORTH IT!!

Finally, the location was obtained by a simple search on [Google Maps](#) and the QR code to obtain QR-4 was on one of the walls of ABLT.

(Having to go outside **TWICE** for a digital treasure hunt **DEFEATS** the entire purpose of it but it was also a *rather unique experience*.)



QR - 4



56bcvbn2

THE FINAL CHALLENGE

Now, AS *all 4 QR Code Strings* were submitted, the final challenge was unlocked.

We *assembled* the 4 QR codes into the final QR (QRs! Assemble!)



Upon scanning this code, a *login page* opened up and the *final challenge string* was displayed.

Challenge 5

[Logout](#)

Welcome back team, cheeky-otter-199!

Challenge String: 2250505d2a411857354c504a6c090c01700953414c54

Submitting it *completed the final challenge* and we were done by 6:45pm of 14th September.

It was a *very fun challenge* and there were *lots* to *learn* from it.

Looking forward to all the future events of InfoSec.

Signing off