

YOU HUNTED

*A BLOODBORNE LORE EXPLAINER
BY BEA*

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[to be compiled in the final release]

FOREWORD

“AH FUCK. I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU’VE DONE THIS.”

-[paul wheedon](#)

“noooooo!!” i can hear the people of earth scream in unison. “not another fucking fromsoft lore guy! please god!! strike this motherfucker dead before they start talking!!”

unfortunately, i too suffer from the unique strain of disease apparently induced by playing a fromsoftware video game. there is something about these games that drives us, the players, absolutely bugfuck insane. fromsoft's idiosyncratic way of delivering its plot, ideas, and themes to the audiences flips a switch in anyone who delights in being presented a truly inexplicable mystery to be untangled. playing "dark souls" (2011) made me feel the same way i did as a child trying to make sense of the unsettling, eerie, dead world of "myst" (1993). or feeling like i was truly, truly on my own in the hostile, foreign world of "morrowind" (2002). it scratched the itch i had been chasing since first playing "shadow of the colossus" (2005) as a teen; i was given no directions and had no allies. i was expected to carve out my own path using my own judgement.

what a fucking breath of fresh air to be given a gaming experience by a group of devs who don't assume that you're a total idiot! by the time i finally played it, the first "dark souls" game was really showing its age visually, but it gripped me in a way no other video game has managed to. and so has every fromsoft game since.

this disease has some downsides. symptoms include making tenuous connections between fiction and reality, fundamental misunderstandings of the mechanics of storytelling and/or video game coding, and incessant babbling in word salad sentences like "the lake of mud is real and you can kill a secret moon presence there". "bloodborne" presents the least straightforward plot and so, consequently, it draws out the most outlandish and wild speculation to explain away its strangeness. many suffering from this syndrome will try to compile their thoughts and theories in vain attempts to make sense of the senseless. to the outside observer, these diatribes look like the ravings of complete madmen, lost in the sauce of "lore". the origin of using the word "lore" as a tongue-in-cheek joke about overthinking/analyzing individual elements of a story comes from these observable behaviors. we know. we're sorry.

in order to cope with this dreadful hunter's curse, i will be writing all this shit down in a permanent location, laid out as straight forwardly as possible, in the hopes that my attempts at explanations will be entertaining to both fellow bloodborne lore psychos and people i affectionately call “fandom rubbernecks”. i understand you. i too trawl wikis of franchises and entertainment i have no intention of playing or experiencing firsthand.

but much like how you need to first make the universe in order to make an apple pie, we must first understand the entire, sordid history of yharnam before we can even begin to try to figure out what that little scamp, the hunter, was up to.

THIS GARBAGE OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO THESE RESOURCES:

- [LastProtagonist's Bloodborne Japanese Retranslation Guide](#) – an exhaustive effort that took years of effort. i cannot even imagine lol. thanks, chiefs.
- [bloodborne-wiki.com](#) – the driest, but most technically correct informative resource on bloodborne on the web
- [bloodborne.fandom.com](#) – for quick reference with visuals in an easier format than the above wiki
- [r/tombprospectors](#) – who were exploring the chalice dungeons manually for years cataloguing EVERY chalice you could possibly generate.
- [some thoughtful translation and insightful explanatory work about boss names](#) (and great illustrations) from shetani of shetani's lair
- the time and labor intensive ps4 datamining work of:
 - [Lance Macdonald](#)
 - [Zullie The Witch](#)
 - [BonfireVN](#)
 - [Garden of Eyes](#)
 - [the many listed contributors of the bloodborne-wiki datamining page](#)
- [pear0533 \(theonlypear\) for their work on the community project, the FLVER Editor](#)
- [JKanderson for their work on Yabber, a tool for unpacking fromsoft files.](#)
- [Felixbenter for their fromsoft blender import script](#)
- daemon1 for their model and file ripping tools from the xentax forums, which are now sadly offline.
- [meowmaritus for their astounding DSAnim Studio program](#)
- [the exhaustive cataloging of blood colors from val-of-the-north via tumblr.](#)

i recommend reading this with [the great map](#) by hypn0tyk hosted on bloodborne-wiki open in a tab so you can try to keep locations straight. try being the operative word. [these fextralife maps](#) are more granular for each individual area.

in order to make it clear which bits are non-canon, *i will post pure speculation in italics and important nouns/concepts in bold.* i am peppering this with as many wiki links as possible to back up my claims. not gonna lie this looks like a fucking MAD magazine editor went to town on it, or like i wrote the worst *house of leaves* fanfiction ever, or like the timecube guy submitted a guest article. but its the best system i have to make clear what is editorial, and what is canon.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

- **backstep/dodgestep:** with no shields, a bloodborne player has to depend on the most reliable means of avoiding damage: not getting hit in the first place. instead of dodge rolling (as in previous dark souls games), bloodborne hunters keep on their feet and move quickly by hopping and jumping around. spry little guy.
- **badges:** key items picked up by the hunter during their adventure that identifies the holder as a member of an organization or a workshop. each additional badge adds more items to the store associated with that faction. however, these factions are largely defunct by the time the game begins, even if the items they produced are still available. can be enlightening, in terms of plot.
- **blood echoes:** points gained from killing enemies that can be spent to level up. the re-translation project clarifies that the english localization of "blood echoes" was originally 血の遺志 chi no ishi, "dying will(s) of blood." blood echoes are accumulated dying wishes.
- **canon:** objective and verifiable information about the plot and lore directly from the text itself. typically also includes information gleaned from interviews.
- **caryll rune:** a gameplay mechanic that permits the player to swap out bonuses and buffs. the player must return to the hunters dream and use the memory altar in order to change their current set of runes. you can have three runes active at once, plus a **covenant** rune. within the fiction, a caryll rune is a transcription of the voice of the great ones. caryll is just some dipshit. pronounced like "carol".
- **covenant:** an online play mechanic. players can swear their allegiance to in-game factions (the titular covenants) to collect enemy drops or enjoy some PVP play. there are only 4 online covenants in bloodborne: vilebloods, executioners, the league, and hunter of hunters. the covenant system of bloodborne is especially limited and poorly implemented. each faction encourages different PVP or co-op action. details later as we become members of them all.
- **damage types:** a unique source of lore tidbits, the type of damage that an enemy is most/least vulnerable to and the type of damage they can deal can be very informative...if you know what the damage types even are.
 - **physical damage** is self-explanatory; it is non-elemental damage. it can either be its own type of damage or one of these two sub-types:
 - **blunt** is what you think it is. a funny bit of trivia is that the top hat has the best blunt protection lol

- **thrust** is typically associated with spears, pointed weapons, and visceral attacks.
 - **blood damage** is caused by firearms and specific weapons/enemies.
 - **arcane damage** comes in a few different colors; blue, red, purple. but it's all arcane. if its magic, it's probably arcane damage.
 - **fire damage** is fire. you know what fire is, asshole. strong against beasts.
 - **bolt damage** refers to both the blue bolt damage seen throughout the game and the yellow lightning from the DLC. strong against kin.
 - **slow poison** aka purple, murky poison. found in snakes, poison pools, infected enemies, and vomit.
 - **rapid poison** aka red, dirty poison. found in women, scorpions, and those riddled with vermin.
 - **frenzy damage** is, essentially, a more damaging version of rapid poison mechanically. however, in the fiction of bloodborne, it is induced by certain kin attacks or by simply looking upon something horrible...or having something horrible look at YOU.
 - **kin and beast damage** are additional bonuses that can help identify the "species" of an enemy. HOWEVER: "beasts" in bloodborne includes the mundane, including dogs and crows.
 - **serration damage** on the other hand, is a secret damage bonus that ONLY applies to "true" beasts.
 - **righteous damage** is another secret bonus that can be found in silver church weapons that does bonus damage to ghosts and the remaining residents of forsaken castle cainhurst.
- **dev:** developer
 - **DLC:** downloadable content. the only downloadable content for bloodborne is "the old hunters". it is probably bar none the best DLC ever released by fromsoft.
 - **drop:** items an enemy drops after death. in fromsoft games, an enemy's "drop pool" (the list of items that can be dropped and the chances of that drop occurring) is limited by the type of enemy and where the enemy is located. the same enemy may have a drastically different drop pool depending on its location.
 - **ENG:** english translation.
 - **EUR:** european translation.
 - **fauxsefka-** early in the game, a character by the name of "iosekfa" is quietly replaced by an imposter whose real name is unknown. this a fan nickname given to distinguish between the two.

- **flag:** a condition in a video game that can be turned on and off. for example, a certain character may only appear when specific conditions are met. these conditions are flags.
- **from, fromsoft. from software:** the video game company responsible for the creation of "bloodborne". it is a terrible game company name.
- **gesture:** a selectable player character animation used in online play to try to impart information to other players. gestures are learned from NPCs. bloodborne's animations include basic gestures such as waving and pointing but also more complex emotions, such as a triumphant roar or attempting to communicate with extraterrestrial life.
- **great ones:** unknown and unseen beings who harness knowledge and power beyond human ken. they are largely dead, sleeping, or too busy to meet with us.
- **the hunt:** a tradition in yharnam stemming from ancient tradition in which the citizens hit the streets and kill as many beasts as they can find. draws tourists. like the whacking day episode of the simpsons.
- **item description:** fromsoft's signature means of delivering information to the player. every item in bloodborne (and every fromsoft game) is accompanied by a short, descriptive blurb that often raises more questions than it answers. these descriptions are from the point of view of someone within the fictional universe and thus they will not stop to explain concepts that the player character would presumably already know, even if the players themselves are clueless.
- **JPN:** japanese translation.
- **new game/new game plus/NG+:** after completing bloodborne once, the game (and the hunt!) begins again from intro cutscene. however, you keep your stats, most items, and your progression in the chalice dungeons. this is new game plus. this way, the hunter becomes familiar with the game through repetition with the purpose of encouraging further exploration and seeing a new ending.
- **NPC:** non-playable character.
- **phantasms:** invertebrate mediums of the great ones. also called "augurs".
- **phase:** a signaled change in a boss fight alerting the player that things are about to heat up. almost always coupled with a dramatic change in the soundtrack and the addition of new attacks and hazards. most bosses have two phases. some have three.
- **rally:** a mechanic unique to bloodborne. rally rewards high risk/high reward game play in opposition to the "play it safe" play style encouraged by dark souls; after taking damage, a majority of the lost health can be recovered by successfully landing retaliatory hits on enemies.

- **soulsborne:** a general term used for the dark souls and bloodborne game series, due to their similarities in game play. does not typically include "sekiro", as the fighting style is significantly different, even if the plot elements and storytelling conventions are the same/similar.
- **stagger/parry:** a well timed shot can cause an enemy to be momentarily stunned, presenting an opening for a visceral attack. a successful stagger is recognized by a distinctive sound and a unique animation. sometimes i accidentally call it a parry because i forget i'm not playing dark souls.
- **summon:** one of the most central concepts to every fromsoft game is that you don't have to do it alone. you can "summon" other players to join you on the hunt. under specific circumstances, you can summon NPC hunters to come fight with you.
- **visceral attack:** a special attack executed after a successful stagger that does massive damage. a visceral attack is a type of thrust damage.
- **workshop:** a place where hunter tools are made. there were once competing workshops, but they are all gone now.

THE HISTORY OF YHARNAM

PART ONE

PTHUMERU, CAINHURST, AND THE FOUNDATION OF BYRGENWERTH

in order to make sense of the world of bloodborne, one must first make sense of the from software company "house style" or, at the very least, make an attempt to recognize the recurring themes present in their catalog of RPG titles. each new game has helped refine the central messages core to the ethos of the dev team through repetition and reiteration. this point may make the act of playing fromsoft games sound like a monotonous experience; fromsoft sometimes iterates in expected and deeply annoying ways: there will always be a poison swamp, there will always be a shoeless babe to tend to you, there will always be a guy waiting to kick you into a hole. the appeal lies in their means of obfuscating or re-framing these ideas dependent on the setting. a transformation into a plant has different implications and intentions depending on the setting; in bloodborne, it's a desired outcome instigated to push human evolution beyond its bounds. in dark souls 3, it's involuntary; a means of returning the world to its primordial form.

and yet, if i told you that dark souls, bloodborne, and sekiro all had the same plot, you'd tell me to shut the hell up and then push me into a ravine. but i insist that these games all share one very specific message that acts as the base point for the cruel, dying worlds we explore: if we could re-spawn like in a video game, would that be fucked up or what? bloodborne is no exception.

*fromsoft's creation process involves folding in real-life history and cultural knowledge that i think is lost on the majority of the western player base. i'm not sure how much of what they reference is common knowledge to japanese players, but i do feel confident in saying that bloodborne leans on these references harder than most fromsoft's games. for example, i can reasonably argue that the history of yharnam began with the fall of a meteorite not dissimilar to the one that was found in japan in 1890. the iron (siderite) mined from this cosmic gift was used to make legendary swords; both in real life and in game to facilitate the earliest incarnations of **the hunt**.*

*and, with the arrival of the cosmos, came the discovery of **the arcane**.*

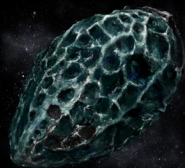




Figure 1: "hunter"

untold eons ago, a humanoid race known as the **pthumerians** served slumbering, mysterious, other-worldly creatures known as **the great ones**, "beings that might be described as gods". the great ones spoke in "in-human utterings" to those capable or worthy of hearing their speech, granting them otherworldly knowledge or supernatural strength. at least one of these voices was successfully transcribed during the course of pthumerian history, as it appears on gravestones, altars, and as decor: "hunter", a **runes of blood**. as the proliferation of the

runes might suggest, pthumerians was a society revolving around the collection of **blood**.

either as a consequence of living underground in the labyrinthine tombs, or due to their proximity to the great ones exposing them "**the eldritch truth**", the pthumerians developed a unique and startling appearance: pallid skin, black eyes, and slacking jaws. they are very tall and gaunt with unsettling proportions. they vary in size and shape to one another, but all but the most diminutive tower over the average human.

pthumerian society initially formed around tending to the needs of the "slumbering great ones", but the english translation undersells their role a bit.

the original japanese script for an item used to access the capital city uses "祀る (matsuru)" meaning "to enshrine, worship", but in the shinto sense. internalize this knowledge now: the pthumerian approach to understanding and deifying the great ones did not match the modern, catholicism-inspired attitudes. the pthumerians were shamans and channelers; contemporary yharnamites are priests and saints.



Figure 2: queen yharnam and her ring of betrothal

over time, the pthumerians settled a capital city, pthumeru, and elected a leader who took the name yharnam, pthumerian queen.¹ this ruler was given a ring imbued with special meaning by the great ones demonstrating her commitment to bear a **“child of blood”** (an immaculate conception). she still wears the ring today and waits at a bloodstained altar for the ceremony to commence. *all that's missing, it seems, is a groom.*



Figure 3: the altar at the center of queen yharnam's boss room ([source](#))

what little we know of pthumerian culture we must glean from what we find in the dungeons ourselves. their aristocracy wears red, they have the ability to spontaneously generate controllable flames, and their weapons are based on the real life meteoric iron swords from indonesia, the kris. fire paper is a pthumerian invention (obtainable by the player only after they obtain a badge for modern tomb explorers) that allows the user to create a flame without kindling. the only enemies that drop this item are pthumerian labyrinth watchers using flaming weapons.



Figure 4: the pthumerian kris



Figure 5: the pilgrim's caduceus

the serpentine shape of the weapons might be more than mere aesthetics: there are a few references to snakes (one of the fromsoft dev teams favorite creatures to fixate on) in a religious or elevated context within pthumerian culture. a "pilgrim" who traverses the remains of pthumeru in the modern day carries a rosary with a caduceus in place of a crucifix. **the hinter-tomb**, a location described as "unceremonious catacombs" without ritual significance, became a nesting ground for "cesspools of noxious snakes and insects". these twisted clumps of snakes are a source of **murky, purple slow poison**, which is harvested and used as a coating in poison knives resembling the indonesian kujang. the item description strongly suggests that the poison knife is a scalpel used in a medical or research capacity that became a hunter tool/ means of self-defense incidentally. in

pthumeru, the poison knife is used as a weapon by the labyrinth watchers; in the cosmically fascinated city of **isz**, the item description suggests that these knives were used for a greater, secret arcane purpose (as hinted at by this otherwise common item only becoming available for purchase after obtaining the late game cosmic eye watcher badge). snake venom contains a blood clotting agent that turns blood into a jelly-like substance nearly identical to an item cut from the game's final release: **queenly blood²**.

Queenly Blood: This item heals HP and temporarily boosts stamina recovery very similar to the "Blood Vial of Arianna" with same animation and aura, it was meant to be as Vileblood covenant reward as item description reads:

"Blood received from Annalise, Vileblood Queen of Cainhurst.

Vileblood hunters who offer sufficient blood dregs are allowed the special honour of imbibing this blood.

The sensually sweet gelatinous blood restores HP and temporarily speeds stamina recovery."



but THIS queenly blood is NOT queen yharnam's queenly blood. yharnam's blood is a **red, rapid, dirty poison**. this is what elevates her above the others.

when the player arrives in the ruins of this civilization, evidence strongly suggests that a civil war broke out between at least two factions. the resulting schism pushed some pthumerian aristocracy to the surface³. here, they resumed their rule over their loyal subjects and became the modern day, blue-clad royalty of cainhurst castle. the evidence for the cainhurst/pthumeru connection is strong: living and hostile cainhurst knights with more modern armor can be found in the lowest levels of the pthumerian labyrinth. bloodlickers, a mosquito-like enemy that is otherwise exclusively found in cainhurst above ground, can be coerced from their hiding places in the chalice dungeons by performing visceral attacks that leave blood splattered on



Figure 7: left: a small gold statue from the chalice dungeons; right: the same statue in marble in cainhurst castle

the ground⁴. small, gold statues identical to the large, marble ones in cainhurst castle can be found in treasure filled tombs underground.

a collection of conspicuous portraits in cainhurst (depicting the royal family, their knights, and their ladies) includes a portrait of a bell-ringing "mad pthumerian" of the labyrinth, as well as a portrait of a man with the face of the cainhurst/pthumerian labyrinth exclusive enemy "the lost child of antiquity"⁵. the antiquated armor (old enough

to be one of the few outfits unavailable to the player) worn by the man in the portrait can be found scattered en masse on the ground of specific "chalice" dungeon (an alternate name for the labyrinth) rooms. the skeletons of the pthumerians who once occupied this armor can be found piled into disrespectful heaps pierced by a labyrinth warrior's greatsword.



Figure 6: the bell ringing woman from the labyrinth (left) and her cainhurst portrait (right)

bloodborne is a game about dichotomies and divergent evolutions *and, perhaps, the first true split began here:* the cainhurst royalty and the pthumerian royalty



Figure 9: left: a portrait of a cainhurst knight wearing a unique armor; right: the same armor, abandoned in the chalice dungeons

BOTH aspire to have the mysterious and (presumably) powerful child of blood as a surrogate for a great one and both have knights in their employ that work to further this goal, putting them at odds with one another. today's cainhurst royalty maintains some of the "pthumerian look" but not to such an exaggerated degree, with the resemblance fading with each removed generation.



Figure 8: clockwise from top left: queen annalise, lady maria of the astral clocktower, arianna, woman of pleasure, and concept art of lady maria's unused (third phase?) transformation

pictured above are some examples of the canonical cainhurst royalty and their descendants in order of relation from left to right: annalise, queen of the “vilebloods” of forsaken castle cainhurst (top left), lady maria (top middle, a cainhurst knight and “distant relative of the queen”), arianna, woman of pleasure (right; she is also the most distant descendant and prostitute. her clothing identifies her as nobility but she makes no mention of her relation to the castle whatsoever, *unless you count telling a female hunter that she “doesn’t want to drag them down too” but this is so general that it could refer to anything*). the bottom image is concept art of lady maria during her boss fight with a more exaggerated look that did not make it into the game.

i’m inclined to lean toward believing that yahar’gul, unseen village and hemwick charnel lane were late pthumerian settlements on the surface. this is based on the enormous, lanky corpses in yahar’gul, the appearance of chalice dungeon pthumerians and creatures occupying these areas, and the off height of the hemwick grave women. though it can be hard to see due to all the murdering you that they’re trying to do, they too are slack-jawed, thin, and pretty pale. there’s other things that only become apparent by the time the hunter comes to visit, so we’ll hold out until then.



Figure 10: the evolution of the "hunter" rune as seen on gravestones in pthumeru

pthumeru, and its sister cities **isz** and **loran**, rose, peaked, and died leaving behind shambling corpses of the cities they once were. though they were always a civilization of catacombs, bones, and blood, each area developed a difference single minded fascination that drove them to ruin. the careless indulgence of the blood, the maddening need to understand the cosmic, and the self-deterministic fall into savagery would all play out again in the far, far future. we are entering a cycle of stagnation. and with stagnation comes rot.

anyway: a bazillion years later or whatever. the cainhurst royals rule over a land that includes the victorian england-ish city of yharnam, named for the forgotten queen of pthumeru (this city has become "old yharnam" by the time the player arrives). the main appeal of yharnam is its proximity to a university of bold, weird research. *i don't know if it was before or after the establishment of the school, but i think yet another meteorite crashed into yharnam, opening a hole into the dungeons for the first time in who knows how long, delivering magnetic iron to the yharnamites, and introducing the hapless dopes to the arcane for the first time.*

the school of byrgenwerth and its scholars were once an archeological and historical research center headed by an older professor by the name of provost willem. during the course of their studies, *either by happenstance or the aforementioned meteorological event*, they discovered the pthumerian labyrinths. *i believe the progression that the player hunter makes in the dungeons is intended to mirror the original excavation and exploration of the tombs, meaning that that byrgenwerth, much like the player character, began their journey on the outer edges of the pthumerian civilization/tomb of the gods.*



Figure 11: the titular "fluorescent flower"

if true, then their experience must have been as confounding as it is to the player. they would have encountered the ancient pthumerians in a desiccated state, witch-y women with the ability to re-animate corpses, and, most intriguing of all, a bizarre flora/ fauna creature that defied all understanding. this alien looking creature is something special, a class of creature called "kin" that can, in ways not yet known to the scholars, tap into the arcane cosmos. this can be experienced first hand by the player when, upon death, the creature sucks itself into a cosmic wormhole leaving behind its titular glowing flower and a small, vestigial chunk of its body. this flower appears to be

the reason why these creatures can be found reliably in the large, oddly lush and well maintained gardens of the dungeons. in the concept art, the flower has a much more distinctive twist, making it the first known indicator of anti-clockwise metamorphosis⁶

the floral creature also leaves behind smatterings of a precious material called "arcane haze". but...mysteriously, ONLY the creatures being maintained in the underground gardens drop this precious resource. the sole example found outside of the dungeons, wandering the grounds of byrgenwerth aimlessly, does not.

some things only grow in the labyrinth.

the true treasure of the labyrinths, however, was not flowers or gold, but **blood**.

further investigation by byrgenwerth revealed an unspecified "**holy medium**" that would spark a pathological fascination with the ruins: *a substance called ritual blood, which does not coagulate. there is ritual blood of a presumed similar quality on an altar found near **the church of the good chalice** in old yhamam, but obviously is not THE exact same ritual blood sample from the original expedition. i believe the player was intended to intuit the connections between the ritual blood, pthumeru, and byrgenwerth by introducing these new concepts one after another during a conventional playthrough. for example, after you first read the word "byrgenwerth" and are able to ask an npc about it, you are then instructed to fetch the pthumeru chalice as your next objective (and, coincidentally, will stumble on the ritual blood needed to satiate the chalice along the way).*

*critically, i do not think the first encounter with "**the old blood**" was from an exotic source; like most ritual blood in the game, it was likely discovered in one of the many ornate coffin housing a nondescript pthumerian corpse. while "a blood that never hardens" may not be a bombastic discovery compared to "a blood that twists you into a fucked up creature and gives you super powers", all of the subtext in the game suggests that trying to understand the mystery of the blood was a process that took years of experimentation and countless lives. surely, as a bloodborne lore junkie/fan/casual knowledge seeker, you can intuitively understand the allure of incremental discovery that drove the slow downfall of the byrgenwerth scholars? is there no moment more satisfactory than the singular internal emotional rush that comes with truly, deeply understanding even just one sliver of a seemingly unknowable mystery?*

unfortunately, there was a little bit of a snag: attempts to dig into the next layer of the labyrinth (central pthumeru) were halted by the aforementioned fucked up creatures with superpowers; this was the first encounter with a beast, a significant moment in yharnam history. not just because it lead to the transcription of the first⁷ **caryll rune**, but because of the implications of the discovery that failed to impress on the scholars: “The discovery of blood entailed the discovery of undesirable beasts”. that is to say: where you find blood, you will find beasts. where you take blood,

beasts will follow. this is due to a peculiar, lycanthropic bloodborne (lol) illness: **the beast scourge**.



Figure 12: the "beast possessed soul" aka BPS aka beepis

okay, fine. there's nothing canon that says it was SPECIFICALLY the beast-possessed soul (BPS) in the labyrinth. we've been heavy with the italics this whole section. but it's strongly implied and most of yharnam history is intentionally obscure, leaving much to the reader imagination. just bear with me.

i believe the BPS was once a labyrinth ritekeeper turned by the scourge, which would have made it the first known example of a **cleric beast**. if we consider the similarity in height (when the ritekeepers stand up), the canon

knowledge that individuals with close proximity to religion (such as the clerics of the pthumerian city of loran) will transform into their own unique horned monstrosities, and that the fire throwing ability used by the BPS is unique to pthumerians, my theory doesn't seem completely implausible. if you really want to get nitty-gritty into this theory, the BPS also has pale, white skin under its fur, black nails, a slender figure, and an open, gaping mouth (er, muzzle). but the question remains: for what purpose would this introduction to this concept serve at this point in the narrative/game-play?

*if byrgenwerth's excavation mirrors the player's descent into the dungeons, they would have encountered BPS as the boss of the first layer of the central pthumeru chalice dungeon after exploring the entirety of the topmost pthumerian labyrinth. by now, the player would have almost certainly been introduced to at least one cleric-type beast explicitly labeled as such in yharnam proper and encountered multiple references to the cleric beast phenomenon in item descriptions. consequently, the player would (eventually) be expected to realize the significance of the horns on this new specimen. in my proposed timeline, the byrgenwerth scholars would have no knowledge of this facet of beasthood until it was too late. instead, this moment would spur one byrgenwerth scholar named **caryll** to begin to transcribe "inhuman sounds" into symbols and "beast", a product of this unique encounter, became the first **caryll rune**. the only BPS outside of the chalice dungeons⁸ that the hunter will encounter drops this rune. *it's his roar after all, right?**

consequently, once the power of this rune became realized, it was one of the first to become banned. in another, related rune, caryll elaborated that "beast" is a "horrific and unwelcome instinct deep within the hearts of men" but leaves the reader to infer what that instinct might be. the characters belonging to institutions that shunned beasthood became the birthplace of twisted and malformed monstrosities...yet, there are a handful of yharnamite beasts who were eager to indulge in what the scourge offered them whose transformations were far less dramatic, perhaps even enviable. one could conclude that beasthood is much more forgiving to those who accept it, BPS included. what role this deliberate beast played in pthumerian society is not immediately clear, especially as the number of beasts remaining in the entirety of pthumeru can be counted on two hands.

so what to do about undesirable beasts?

of course, cainhurst already knew all about this dog blood bullshit. the royals were described as "long time imbibers of blood" in an item description of a weapon that has been around long enough to inspire other, shittier hunter weapons by the time you arrive on the scene. they already have a special class of servants (knights) who take care of any signs of beasthood bubbling up under their ranks with discretion. closer inspection of the knight's garb reveals a blood red gemstone⁹ sewn into the cravat revealing cainhurst already had access to something the rest of yhar-nam was only beginning to discover: blood gems, little crystals that could be used to imbue weapons with greater power.



Figure 13: the strange, wormy canyon

whatever process causes the body to produce blood gems after death occurs nearly entirely in the chalice dungeons; there are hardly any blood gems to be found in the over-world *unless they are in proximity to a dungeon entrance*. blood gems become stronger the deeper one heads into the labyrinth, terminating at "abyssal" blood gems.

*cainhurst's access to the dungeons might be in plain sight; there's a weird valley at the entrance of the cainhurst map full of the worst enemy ever in the world, parasite larva, that dead ends in a strange way; its like a cave that collapsed. at its entrance is a corpse with a (unremarkable) blood gem to be looted. *perhaps this was once the entrance used to access pthumeru for blood and trinkets (and 8000000 statues, apparently), as evidenced by this body that has developed a weak blood gem from having died so close to the tombs. or maybe its just the royal worm pit. for the worms.**

or, the site of a meteor crash.

the miraculous abilities of the “**old blood**” in the labyrinth became the sole



Figure 14: hanging corpses in pthumeru

subject of fascination and research at byrgenwerth. at this point in time, the student body was appropriately wary of the substance. the overwhelming and horrific thirst for blood in pthumerian society is hard to ignore when there are corpses stacked haphazardly in enormous pools of stagnant red slime and rooms where exsanguinated bodies still hang from the ceiling in a loose pose that clearly evokes the

"dangling, upside-down" nature of the [hunter's rune](#). this symbol from pthumerian society is a depiction of a body in the process of exsanguination. the quickest way to exsanguinate something is to cut a large artery, flip it, and let gravity take over. butchery 101.

its unclear if byrgenwerth was responsible for some/all of the central pthumeru bloodlettings or if they just learned the technique here. the potential benefits of collecting blood lead to the earliest incarnations of "hunters" as we know them. this rune would eventually be [branded](#) in the mind of anyone who pledges to become a hunter. if you think about the rune's shape too hard you die and lose all of your blood. like when i try to do math.

1. the re-translation project's re-translation of the pthumeru ihyll chalice item description states that the name "yharnam" is inherited by each queen.

2. [source](#)

3. the translated names at the bottom of [this page](#) identifies the rooms with empty cainhurst armors (number 10 in the list, arena) as "remains of a battlefield site". this is literally the only interesting fact about chalice dungeon room names.

4. [source](#)

Confirmed enemies tied to Bloodlickers spawn:

- Labyrinth Ritekeeper (tall)
- Watcher's Gravedigger (Hook & Lantern)
- Watcher's Gravedigger (Pickaxe)
- Watcher's Gravedigger (Rifle, Hook & Lantern)
- Labyrinth Madman (Corpse)
- Labyrinth Madman (Sickle)
- Labyrinth Madman (Twin Sickles)
- Labyrinth Warrior (Crossbow & Sword)
- Labyrinth Warrior (Greatsword)
- Labyrinth Warrior (Morning Star)
- Labyrinth Warrior (Sword & Shield)
- Merciless Watcher (Mace)
- Merciless Watcher (Saw)
- Merciless Watcher (Scattergun, Club & Lantern)
- Watcher Chieftain (Club & Lantern)
- Watcher Chieftain (Heated Club & Lantern)

5. a rare, truly lousy translation. should be "bastard of cainhurst" (imo). as in the most dictionary definition sense of the word bastard as a child out of wedlock. the re-translation suggests "ancient bastard".
6. see page 83 for more details on the "anti-clockwise" rune.
7. *the english release says "one of the first" but the japanese is more direct: it's the first official rune that caryll transcribed. "hunter" and the hunter's mark may have been grandfathered in as such later. or not. what do i know.*
8. this didn't fit well, but the BPS is an extremely odd character/creature and the game goes through great pains to demonstrate this. it appears only three times in the game and the story chalice dungeons: once in yharnam, once in central pthumeru as the first layer boss, and once in ailing loran as the first layer boss. that's it.

BUT: using root chalices, there is a chance to spawn a special BPS as a roaming encounter who attacks not only you but other enemies as well. it can be healed with an item used to heal co-operators. was this once a hunter?
9. this item is not found in cainhurst in the released game, but its location in game files indicates it should have been.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

despite my best efforts trying to keep this analysis of bloodborne limited to the contents of the game and its development, fromsoft incorporates a great deal of japanese folklore, superstition, mythology, and common knowledge that flies right over my, and evidently most people's, heads. after the [shetani's lair](#) video series about "sekiro" wrapped up, i realized i didn't know shit about anything. there was absolutely no way that i wasn't missing enormous chunks of cultural context out of ignorance. the game might take place in pseudo-victorian england and draws heavy inspiration from catholic rituals and iconography, but it would be literally insane to suggest that the devs solely took inspiration from western culture.

armed with the benefit of hindsight and the release of "sekiro", a game which was much more explicit about its real world influences, we are able to better identify ideas that were toyed with in bloodborne that came to full fruition in later games. however, research into literally any of this was a task easier said than done. it turns out there's not a lot of english language research about japanese shamanism and esoteric buddhist practices. also i can't read japanese, which makes trying to read it very difficult. the best i can offer you is what little research i have available that i can confirm with my own two eyes. there is a lot of misinformation.

this is the purpose of these annoying author's notes. i'm going to assume you have approximately the same amount of knowledge that i do during these explanations and not bother to translate words excessively.

anyway: [shinshi](#) are animals who act as divine messengers for the kami and are revered as such at shrines. relevant to bloodborne and this upcoming chapter: insects and invertebrates can be shinshi; one of the seven lucky gods, [bishamonten](#), is served by [centipedes](#)¹. the godly great ones of bloodborne are more like kami than the old testament god; they prefer to use terrestrial beings to communicate their will. but what does it mean to be a divine attendant...a celestial emissary...a messenger? and why would someone want to become one? who benefits the most in a relationship between a god and those that care for them?

how does it differ from parasitism?

1. [an incredible resource](#) about mukade symbolism in war

PART TWO

THE OLD HUNTERS, THE FISHING HAMLET, AND CARYLL'S RUNES

the discovery of blood entailed the discovery of beasts, and the discovery of beasts necessitated **hunters**.

the original group of hunters, colloquially known as "**the old hunters**" to differentiate them from the common riff-raff, were shaped largely by the efforts of **the first hunter**, a man named **gehrman**. it is unclear what gehrman's role was prior to his work as a hunter, but he was likely a student, as he still uses the title of "master" to address willem. we know he was a close associate of a student named **laurence**, that he had an apprentice named **maria** who was once a knight of the castle cainhurst, and was a practitioner of an art called "quickenning". his focus on agility and maximizing the amount of blood spilled laid the foundation for all hunters to come.

gehrman is the inventor of the "trick weapon", the first of which was a simple magnetic lock and hinge that changes the burial blade from a one handed knife to a scythe. the magnetic force was inherent to the iron used in the creation of the blade; the burial blade and its sister weapon the blade of mercy were forged from siderite and take advantage of the magnetic force to "transform". these, the oldest weapons of "the workshop" (gehrman's workshop), served an additional purpose: these astral materials contain traces of the **arcane**. *it seems that these two weapons are the only weapons that would be capable of severing a hunter's connection to the great ones and, by extension, the boons that come with their attention.*

not that those boons have been sought or discovered yet. the arcane world was only just becoming known to the students of byrgenwerth. as of now, the explicit purpose of the burial blade was to end the seemingly endless lives of the pthumerians and beasts for good. the blade of mercy appeared to have been created as a contingency plan in the event that gehrman went beast mode and was entrusted with a foreigner who could take a comrade's life graciously...or at least thoroughly.

the old hunters are a bunch of freaks. only a handful are still alive in modern yharnam. otherwise, the player will only experience them by calling them as summons for boss battles. the in game lore for the mechanics of the summon system clarifies that summonable hunters have "long since passed" but will answer to the siren call of the hunt.

some old hunters the player will encounter as major characters or boss encounters. others appear to be nondescript nobodies...at first, anyway.



Figure 15: the pthumerian elder's fire blood gem

gehrman could have drawn inspiration for his transforming weapons from two encounters in the chalice dungeons: the pthumerian elder and the pthumerian descendant, who both wield "trick" weapons. gehrman's workshop has a bench where the hunter can "knead" blood gems into a weapon to make it stronger or give it different elemental properties. the use of blood gems to enhance a weapon may have been an intentional attempt to replicate the elder's use of a fire blood gem in his transforming cane. both of these encounters would have, in my theorized chalice dungeon timeline, occurred soon after the encounter with the beast possessed soul

in central yharnam.

in this time, the researchers would have also encountered an elite tomb guardian with a masterful manipulation of fire, a second disgusting amalgamation of flesh and blood reshaped into a form that can be weaponized, a rotting, exsanguinated, feral beast of undead bones and skin, and, worst of all, a pthumerian intentionally parasitized by a worm or slug. we know its intentional because the enormous squirming parasite is busting through a stitched up scar on the back of its head. this "brainsucker" monster would have posed a new threat to the school and its hunters, who now had to protect their gray matter (the brainsuckers can steal a hunter's **insight** for sustenance) as well as their blood. in addition, they faced a new form of arcane magic that would constrict and bind its prey before they would be consumed. in the process of killing a brainsucker, it's also almost impossible not to notice that there's something off about this creature, even by bloodborne standards: it bleeds a shimmering grey slime.

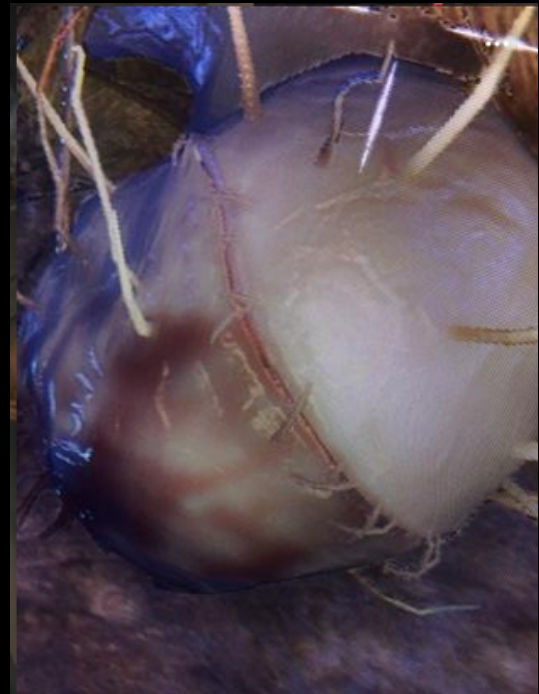


Figure 16: the sutures of the brainsucker

the discovery of the brainsucker lead to another massive leap forward for study at byrgenwerth: **blood defines an organism.**

every chalice dungeon (save the last one) connected to the story has a secret, fully functional, but cut fourth layer that only became accessible to the player base once hex-editing the game was possible. several corpses on the fourth layer of the **hintertomb**, home to "cesspools of noxious [...] insects", can be looted for evidence of unusual creatures harboring arcane power. the mysteries presented by these invertebrates captured the attention of a separate faction within byrgenwerth, sparking the study and collection of "**phantasms**" (the school's name for these insect intermediaries) present (or were once present) in the labyrinth. the discovery of the augur of ebrietas, a slug (*snail? the empty phantasm shells could be reasonably assumed to have belonged to the augur*) that summons flailing tentacles of unknown origin and the arcane properties of pearl slugs drove the school's continued plunges into the depths in spite of the perils faced. part of this research involved discovering the potential beneficial parasitic qualities of these creatures, which could inhabit soft tissue, like eyes, and be used to harness bizarre abilities.

while continuing to investigate the ruins, byrgenwerth became aware of a

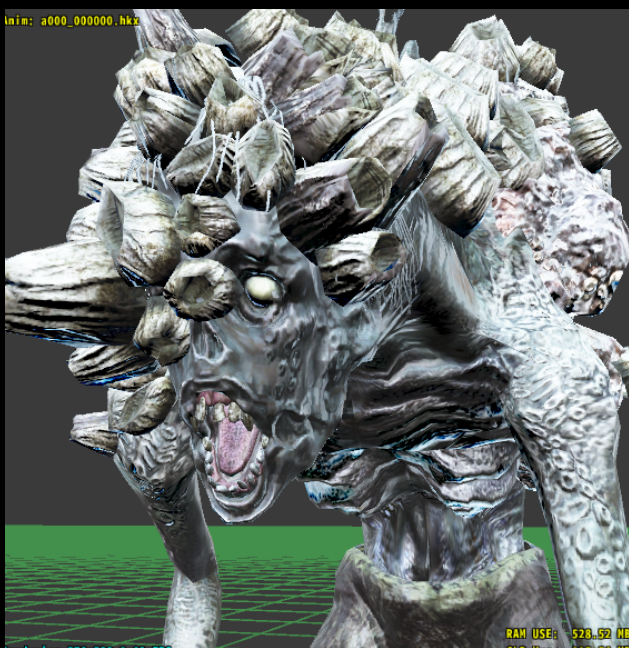


Figure 17: a fishing villager, with several layers removed

pthumerian fishing village where a washed up carcass of an oyster/globster monster teeming with otherworldly parasites carried a stillborn fetus¹. these so-called "kos parasites" (named after their host) resemble barnacles without the shell, and judging by the appearance of the villagers, these barnacles have made themselves at home on *formerly pthumerian* hosts. its unclear if the fishing hamlet's residents were transformed against their will or deliberately cultivated the look, but the result is a gaggle of fish-like monster people with physical appearances echoing the monster lying dead on the shore. *whether of their own accord or because its the will of the creatures that have taken them over*, the villagers actively cultivate millions of odd slug-squids for mostly unknown purposes;

we do know that they are used as lamp oil on a day to day basis².

upon arrival to the village, the school and its hunters helped themselves to a little bit of genocide just for fun. villager's heads were cut off and "trepanned" open by forcibly removing the barnacles from their skulls as part of a gruesome search for "eyes on the inside". the monstrous corpse was desecrated by the byrgenwerth researchers who took its unborn child and the "**third umbilical cord**", a string of flesh (resembling one produced by mammals) lined with eyes. *it is NOT a literal umbilical cord, the orphan still has that attached to his body, but a translation hiccup muddied the waters on the initial understanding of the nature of the "umbilical cords".*



Figure 18: slug farming in the fishing hamlet

the NA translation is "one third of umbilical cord" leading people to erroneously believe that it's one umbilical cord split into three parts (made even more confusing by the existence of four umbilical cords in the game). the EUR release got it right: it should be "third umbilical cord". the NA release calls it a "precursor to the umbilical cord" which makes no sense in or out of context. the re-translation project provided a much more comprehensible alternative: "Only infants have [third umbilical cords], even in Great Ones. Calling it an "umbilical cord" comes from that". as in, they are not literal umbilical cords, but they are LIKE umbilical cords in that they are only found in infants.

"A great relic, also known as the Cord of the Eye.

Provost Willem sought the Cord in order to elevate his being and thoughts to those of a Great One, by lining his brain with eyes. The only choice, he knew, if man were to ever match Their greatness."

additionally, the cord is a play on words in the original japanese script: the writing suggests that the "cord of the eye" refers to the metaphorical "third eye".

careful inspection of the umbilical cord's art reveals that it sits in a puddle of silver liquid. the villagers chant: "a call to the bloodless, wherever they be".



Figure 19: mother kos. or, as some say, kosm.

but this wasn't just any ol' pile of fish goo they were fucking with! it was the corpse of a true **great one, kos!** kos' wrath and retribution would come in due time, as this event birthed a powerful curse: the creation of a surreal plane of torment known as **the hunter's nightmare**. the hunters responsible for the massacre and those who become "blood-drunk" (a physical malady stemming from, ironically, blood-thirsty behavior) would be snatched away into a never-ending hunt taking place within a warped, twisted facsimile of yharnam and the fishing hamlet. blood-drunk hunters, *who sustain themselves entirely by imbibing blood*, could be identified by their rotting eyes. *as a result, hunters would begin to cover their eyes (primarily with cloth bandages) while out on the hunt; not to obfuscate their status from one another, but to hide from a higher power seeking revenge.*

"Lay the curse of blood upon them, and their children, and their children's children, for evermore. Each wretched birth will plunge each child into a lifetime of misery."

but that all comes much later.

sweet and empathetic [lady maria](#) could not tolerate her role in the fishing hamlet massacre. she threw [her beloved, bloodless weapon](#) into the fishing village well when she could no longer tolerate the memories it stirred. she, with others, joined **laurence**, the medical student, when he split from byrgenwerth to found **the healing church**. *its not explicit that the fishing village massacre was the reason for the split, as there were ideological differences brewing that also came to a head, but a one sided genocide SEEMS like a matter that would cause a splinter between one faction that is notoriously ruthless in its methods and another that tries to be in the business of healing.*

the schism at byrgenwerth came down to this: **willem** refused to use the blood until they understood it better and instead developed the *frankly bizarre* notion that the great ones were the blueprints for the next stage of human evolution. byrgenwerth students were having to gulp down vials of ordinary [human blood](#) in order to counteract the **frenzy** inducing effects of exposure to the **old blood**. willem's philosophy was steadfast and semi-reasonable, if not needlessly cryptic:

"...We are born of the blood, made men by the blood, undone by the blood. Our eyes are yet to open..."

laurence, on the other hand, recognized the blood's potential as miracle medicine...*and perhaps its monetary value*. the instantaneous healing powers were too enticing for laurence to ignore, but willem was steadfast in his belief that humanity was not yet ready to reckon with whatever it was that was happening here; one must "**fear the old blood**". willem's distaste for use of the blood is so firm that it is mentioned off-hand in [the rune workshop tool](#) description.

caryll runes side note for newbies: caryll runes are a gameplay mechanic that give you buffs you can switch in and out by using an iron brand on your consciousness. or something. the runes themselves are the previously mentioned transcriptions of "the inhuman utterings of the Great Ones". all but a handful of the runes were discovered/transcribed by **runesmith caryll** and some were explicitly secret ones, hidden from public knowledge.

almost nothing explicit is known about caryll except they were a student of byr-
genwerth. the workshop tool named for them is found on a dead hunter tied to a
chair as the reward for surviving the witch of hemwick boss fight. *people will try to
tell you that the schmuck in the chair is caryll but that's fucking stupid. caryll was not
a hunter and there's no reason why caryll would have the means or motive to pilfer
their own tool from
the hunter's dream. i
don't know why this
guy has it. maybe
he's just an asshole
and stole it from the
dream to be a dick.
who knows. he's just
griefing us lol. classic
trolling.*



Figure 20: the hunter holding the rune workshop tool

by the way: did
he fall through the
ceiling into the
chair?? what the
fuck is this lmfao. its

like the witches found a way to make an interrogation room lamp without electricity.
do you think they went in the room above and jumped up and down until the floor
broke.

all three translations agree that caryll runes "do not rely" on using blood, so its
significant when blood DOES start to appear in the runes. *one could read this as in-
dication of caryll's transition from byrgerwerth to the healing church after deciding to
follow laurence, like most of his peers.* some covenant runes are filled with unknown
goos and liquids, all of the runes relating to a mysterious **great one named oedon**
(whose existence is only made known through the descriptions of "his" items) are
bleeding or "contain a nuance of 'Blood'".

i suppose we should do a quick oedon sidebar before he becomes VERY plot rel-
evant. **formless oedon** is a great one who "lacks a form, existing only in voice". we
know very little about him except he has a chapel in his name in yharnam that we
use as a central hub/safe zone and he likes blood and broads. hell, who doesn't.
he's a man (?) of taste.

according to the linked caryll rune, blood is the essence of oedon and oedon is always looking for good blood. the thing about oedon is that you might be a part of that process and not even know it; the "inadvertent worshippers, surreptitiously seeking precious blood" (as they say).

willem sought "eyes on the inside", which drove him and the others to defile the great ones. but what the fuck was he on about?



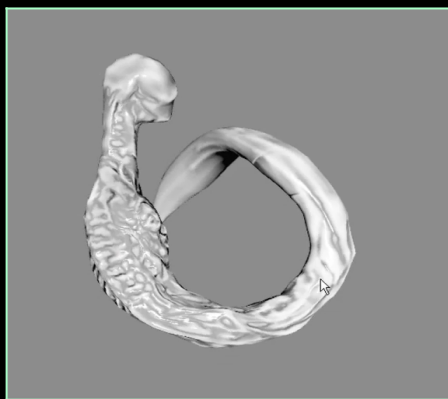
Figure 21: the consumable item "great one's wisdom", depicting cosmic slugs erupting from a warped human skull

in one sense, to gain "eyes on the inside" is a cutesy way of describing "**insight**", or the ability to see **beyond the mundane**. but the scholars were also being quite literal; in order to think on higher planes they were putting slugs in the heads of their test subjects.

if we do some reading between the lines on the description for the "spark hunter badge", "a style of inquiry that [...] closely followed the methodology of Byrgenwerth" is almost certainly "expose yourself to it" or "use living specimens" based on, well, everything they and their proteges do.

what happens to byrgenwerth after this is hazy. we'll hop back in occasionally, but it too suffered from the fromsoft editing hack and slash. so trying to make concrete sense of it is a fool's errand. let's focus on the foundation of the healing church for a while.

1. [this video](#) provides a look at the model of black mist emitting from kos' corpse after the final boss fight of the DLC. this is probably what they took from the fishing village, not a huge old man baby who shoots lightning and jumps around like a frog on a skillet.



2. [source](#) which leads to [this image](#)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

i didn't really intend for these indulgent notes to interrupt every chapter, but i'm realizing that they're going to be the easiest way to impart huge chunks of information that otherwise completely derail the trains of thought i'm trying to conduct. in this case, i found myself needing to get specific about the intended fromsoft player experience in great detail to explain what otherwise might come off as wild leaps of logic or, as they say, "cope"; thin justifications for my pet theories with little substance or merit. this is not an uncommon phenomenon in lore discussion. no one is safe, me included (especially!).

look, i'm biased as a clearly insane superfan, but i am going to tell you the objective qualities of a fromsoft game without any fandom hype or bullshit: fromsoft games ARE brutally hard and deliberately cryptic, but they are never impossible or completely devoid of logic. there is a steadfast internal refusal to compromise on making the contents of their games easily accessible or immediately comprehensible to the casual player; they expect you to adapt and keep up. by design, a fromsoft game is never experienced in full the first time; the new game plus system exists for a deliberate reason! armed with better weapons and the basic knowledge of the game's setting gleaned from the first run, you can now re-tread the known world and interact differently with NPCs.

for example: when you first arrive at "firelink shrine" (the central hub area) in "dark souls", there are three routes open to the player. one, the intended route, is a challenging, but achievable, trek into an undead city. following a different path will send the player in the direction of the catacombs, which are significantly more difficult unless you have a divine weapon to keep skeletons from returning to life. and if you're really feeling adventurous, you can try your luck by taking an elevator down to new london, a flooded city swarming with ghosts the player can't hit without a special item (or status effect). unless you are very dedicated and willing to die a lot, you are unlikely to get very far in the catacombs or new london.

however, on a new game plus, the player probably has a divine weapon they've picked up on the course of their adventure or a stockpile of temporary curses. taking a different route will inevitably lead the player a secret that shatters the known narrative up until that point¹. characters who revealed themselves to be villains can now be stopped before they carry out their missions. others who were destined to be imperiled can be averted from danger. retrospectively, you begin to make sense of your place in the dead world you occupy and how truly dire the situation is.

but, even after a new game plus...it would be extremely unlikely for a player to have discovered everything the game has to offer. in every fromsoft game, past or present, there will be hidden areas, character events, item drops, bosses, and esoteric secrets that could only be discovered as a consequence of the fanbase pooling its time, knowledge, and resources to throw every single possible piece of spaghetti at the wall until something sticks. in nearly every other video game series on earth, it would be objectively bad game design to have mechanics so obtuse that they require you to hit a wiki in order to experience the full game. but this is the intended fromsoft experience. its bad, uh, on purpose. lol. ok fine it's a little bad. happy?

this is an objective truth about fromsoft games no matter what anyone says: you are expected to look for outside help. it's a point of pride to solo a fromsoft game, but the mechanics of the game strongly indicate that you are intended to call for assistance. the covenant system in soulsborne games encourages these interactions by having at least one branch dedicated purely to co-operation: if you need help clearing a boss, you can call out for help and almost always receive it. hunters can leave each other notes across worlds guiding one another to secrets and safety. co-operation is, critically, a vital cornerstone of the fromsoft game experience.

fandom co-operation is the sole reason why we have any insight at all into the bizarre complexities of the fromsoft dev mindset. mechanics that were once thought to be incidental turned out to be intentionally coded and animated. enemies would be revealed to have bizarre, lore related weaknesses that one could only pick up on if they were reading carefully or cracking the game's code. if not for the collective contributions of fans who started theorizing years before i picked up the game myself, i wouldn't be here giving my own way, way too complex take on the matter.

i swear to god i have a point: sometimes we can anticipate what the devs intended by collective fandom understanding of the patterns inherent in every fromsoft game. the devs expect you to experience the game more than once, to try everything, and to seek outside help when you get stuck. when you understand these basic principles then, and only then, will you understand why the stupid crown of illusions is fucking like that. seriously! what the fuck!

1. if you don't care about "dark souls" spoilers, read on: at the end of a "dark souls" playthrough, the "chosen undead" (you) must sacrifice themselves in order to extend the dying "age of fire" to save the world from succumbing to the darkness, just as the great god gwyn once did...or not! a character from the dawn of creation named kaathe tells the chosen undead the truth: the age of fire was never intended to last, but was artificially extended by gwyn as a last ditch effort to extend the reign of the so-called "gods". the "age of dark" or the "age of man" is part of the natural cycle of death and creation. by interrupting this cycle and continuing to subjugate man, gwyn has introduced stagnation and rot into the world. so, chosen undead, why not let the flame expire? are you afraid of greatness?

PART THREE

MARTYR LOGARIUS, FORSAKEN CASTLE CAINHURST, AND PTHUMERIAN SAINTS



Figure 22: "corruption"

before the founding of the **healing church** (or in its infancy), but after caryll began to transcribe runes¹, the residents of **cainhurst castle** were nearly completely annihilated. the inciting incident involved an **unknown scholar** who "betrayed his fellows at **Byrgenwerth** and brought **forbidden blood** back with him to Cainhurst Castle". this mysterious blood "threaten[s] the purity of the Church's blood healing", putting the precious resource at the center of the fledgling church into jeopardy. as a result, the church sent a **band of "executioners"** lead by a man named **logarius** to eradicate every last "**vileblood**". but **queen annalise**, having gained immortality through her consumption of the forbidden blood, could not be killed by any known means. logarius martyred himself to ensure that annalise could not escape. today, he sits on the roof, continuing to keep vigil against those who might be tempted by her corrupted veins.

or so they say.

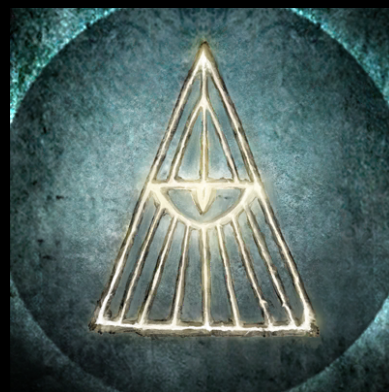


Figure 23: "radiance"

*everyone and their mother has a completely baseless and improbable theory about who the dastardly blood thief was, or if there even WAS a rat at byrgenwerth, so, of course, so do i: it was **caryll**.*

*the two runes associated with these factions have a crucial difference in their item description that was fumbled in translation; the EUR release fixed it but the USA one did not. "**corruption**" is a "secret symbol left by caryll, runesmith of byrgenwerth". the rune of the executioners, "**radiance**", is simply "a caryll rune that transcribes inhuman sounds". radiance was "adopted" by the executioners and appears on the hands of an astral clocktower later in the game (notably, "corruption" does not). *it was a pre-existing rune that was repurposed for a covenant. it sounds like caryll bet on the wrong horse.**

or, perhaps, it was intentional. after all, consider how easy it would be to locate your targets once they're all sporting the same, newly invented symbol. besides, everyone would know that it was caryll who made the rune, right? he's THE rune guy.

as for WHAT caryll brought them...well, we do not get to see much of cainhurst nobility unless you go out of your way to look at the cut content; their skin has taken on a tinge that ranges from blue to silver to white and their proportions are beginning to become...alien.

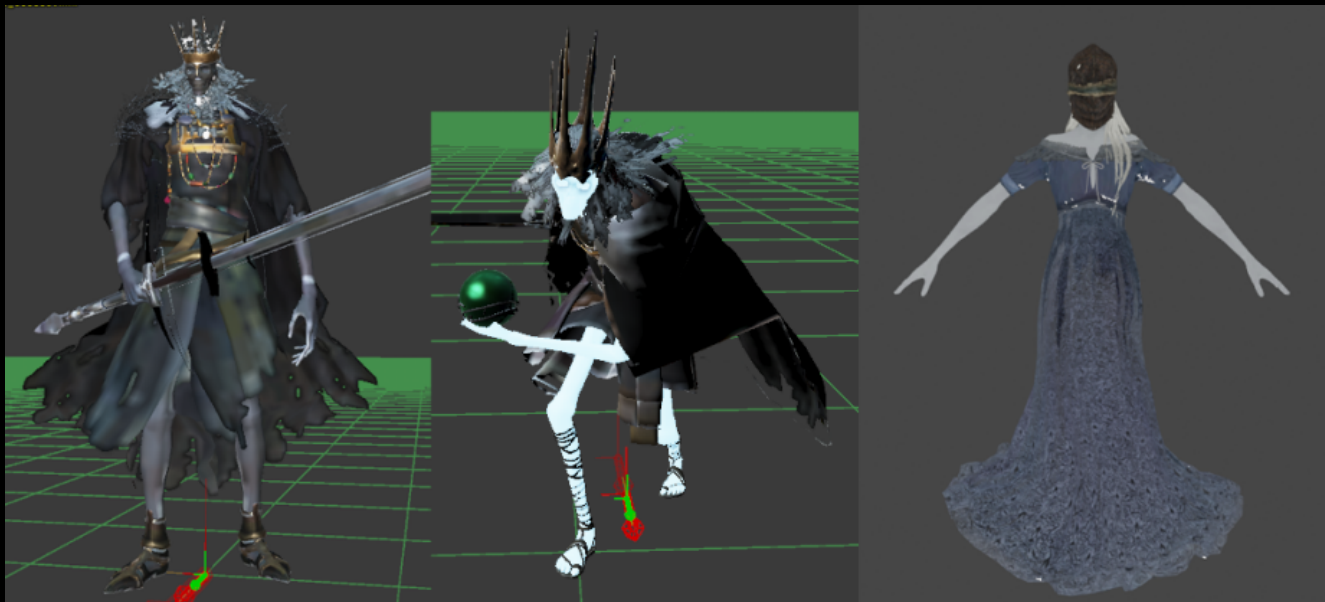


Figure 24: left: the "king in blue"; middle: the "king ghost (low class)"; right: queen annalise

but, more importantly: this shit doesn't make any sense.

most people agree (or can at least see the argument) that it might not have gone down the way our only source on this conflict, alfred, believes. alfred wasn't there himself, so what the hell does he know? i think he only knows the version the church told the public, which is contradictory and confusing once you set eyes on the alleged "martyr" logarius himself.

first of all, there's a lot of cainhurst cut content we need to address: there were knights and horses, that queenly blood as a covenant reward, a "king in blue", and a gaggle of skeletal phantom kings (with weapon variants) named "king ghost low class". they had a shit ton of stuff planned here that never made it to the final cut and what they did have, they shuffled around and redistributed across the game. pity. it helps connect a lot of dots.

logarius himself is labeled "king reaper" in the game files; an appropriate moniker for a man who looks like a piece of jerky wielding a scythe. he's decked out in gold chains and is wearing an impossible to miss bejeweled crown. this look is in near complete diametric opposition to the statue of him where you meet an, er, executioner *fanboy* named **alfred** at the beginning of the game. the statue is clearly NOT logarius. he doesn't look like that! the only thing they got right was his height. logarius should have been shooting hoops.



Figure 25: left: martyr logarius; right: "martyr logarius". alfred for scale (he is kneeling)

he might be in bad shape from being freezer burned, but it's not a leap to assume that logarius is a pthumerian based on his appearance. besides the slack jaw and tall, thin frame, his clothes have a lot of visual overlap (color excluded) with the pthumerian elder and pthumerian descendant; note the ornate patterns on his flowing silk robes. it makes one wonder: why the fuck was he throwing down his life for the healing church? like, what's his motivation to do any of this? what's with the shitty, useless crown that only opens up one wall? and, even if he couldn't kill annalise, why didn't he smash her into bits like alfred, destroy the crown, and brick up the wall?? is he STUPID??? (GAME THEORY???)

i've been pecking away at this and i feel like i've carved out a semi-agreeable interpretation that kinda holds water. this is REALLY reading into tiny details and reading back on it, i sound fucking insane. it's predicated on the idea that EVERYTHING the church said about cainhurst was a lie, which might be too much of a narrative stretch, even for an organization that (within the fiction) is known for bending the historical record. one point in my favor is the weird quote that the executioner's garb attributes to logarius; if he's a pthumerian, he didn't fucking say that. what he probably said was "HURRAGH" or "HAUGHH".

anyway, consider this: every time the game refers to the executioner covenant/church group, it capitalizes it. Executioners. i don't because i'm lazy. this is consistent across every item description and all of the in game dialogue². so there's truly only one item that sticks out because it does NOT capitalize the word "executioner". multiple times. the executioner's gloves:

"One of the secret treasures hidden in Cainhurst. The gloves of an executioner from a faraway land.

Passed from executioner father to executioner son, these gloves can be used to summon wrathful spirits of the past by smearing them with blood.

It is said that the nobles found in immeasurable delight in the dances of these vengeful specters."

the gloves erupt with red **arcane** magic skulls when used; a stark difference from the majority of the bright blue, cosmic, arcane magic we see in the rest of the game. this is a rare and unique form of arcane magic, **a blood curse**, and can be found only four places in the game: the gloves, as a chalice dungeon buff, logarius himself, and the breaking wheel that was named for him.



Figure 26: executioner's gloves

so, with that in mind, could these not be logarius' own gloves? they match his outfit for one. perhaps he was the ROYAL executioner and named his hunters after his own role in pthumerian society. but for which queen? again, his clothes and weapons would suggest he came from the pthumeru chalice dungeons. pthumeru, surely, could



Queen Killer 7160

Figure 27: oh wait he's already captioned. don't read this

be considered a "far away land". plus he's also not the only Executioner (with the capital e) directly associated with the labyrinth: meet "[queen killer](#)", a friendly boss summon in pthumeru who you can call for help killing...[queen yharnam](#)! remember, from the beginning? they named that city after her.

yes, ok. queen killer IS a reference to the classic fromsoft NPC enemy "naked guy with a big weapon" that's a staple in every game. but he's also secretly a pthumerian (or as close to one that can be made in the character creator) under the strange headgear worn by the executioners, the gold [ardeo](#)³. he is a distinct outlier in the wide range of (mostly) healthy looking humans who can be summoned. additionally, queen killer does something no other hunter

NPC does: upon death, he has a chance to drop a **blood gem**. he's been in these dungeons for a long, long time if he's growing those.

were all of the executioners pthumerians? no idea. like alfred, i wasn't there either. mysteriously, the executioner garb is emblazoned with the ancient **hunter** rune and is draped in what becomes known as the "**holy shawl**", a universal symbol of the healing church. the [wheel hunter badge](#) does little to expand on their workshop of origin, stating that it was only a place of **arcane** mystery and shining **righteous** justice.

for now, let's operate under the assumption that martyr logarius, at least, IS pthumerian and came from the chalice dungeons. if his wardrobe and his overall physical appearance didn't convince you, consider that everything from his neck up bears an uncanny resemblance to the chalice dungeon material [sage's hair](#), right down to the ostentatious crown.



Figure 28: sage's hair

*"sage's hair" is a bizarrely bad translation and should be "saint's skull"; the hair is not the important part of the item, "sages" are not a concept that appears anywhere else in the entire game (unlike "saints"), and use of skulls for **arcane** purposes is an established, understood magic system within the fiction. we'll stick to the USA translation for clarity's sake, but my point is that logarius' head has much in common aesthetically with these heads.*

sage's hair⁴ is dropped by a chalice dungeon exclusive enemy who is also the scariest guy ever, first encountered in the bug-infested **hintertomb**. the skulls they drop are "a body part of a saint, sacrificed by the Healing Church in their search for Truth"; martyrs in all but name.

it's easy to miss this, since the awful thing charges at you like you stole its wallet once it spots you, but this enemy is a **beast!** but, it's a particularly complicated one: it takes the beast and fire damage multiplier, but NOT serrated damage (a sign of "true", fully transformed beasts). on the other hand, its weakest defense stat is bolt, a trait almost universally associated with **arcane** origins. design-wise, it's a hodgepodge: they've got claws and fangs, but also a distinctly blue skin tone reminiscent of cainhurst's royalty. instead of white, straight hair like other pthumerians, the madman boasts a shock of wild black hair...or fur, really. and it growls like a dog. *it seems to be a little bit beastly and a little bit...something else.*

there's a clear answer as to what's driven these beastie boys to madness in their drop pool: a silver liquid that can be mixed with one's own blood, **quicksilver**. compare the pool of blood the sage's hair is laying in to the bright hues of the holy, undying ritual blood. the blood of these saints is...off. *mixed up and diluted with a foreign substance. it looks like the blood of the brainsucker. it looks like the liquid pooling around an infant great one's umbilical cord. it's bloodless blood that drives you mad if you're exposed to it.*



Figure 29: labyrinth madman

i can feel my own head spinning reading this, so let's back up a second and review what i'm trying to say so far: martyr logarius was in some way affiliated with the healing church, but he and his warriors came from the labyrinth. logarius has the appearance of, specifically, a pthumerian saint; we know what a pthumerian



Figure 30: the unused "broken sword" madman variant, using a broken version of a sword used by the labyrinth warrior. the red aura surrounding him indicates he is capable of rally, a trait only found in lower loran, a land of beasts.

saint looks like because there are strange beastly pthumerians holding onto pieces of them.

so, who are these bizarre pthumerian madmen carrying corpse parts resembling logarius?

the labyrinth madman wears chain mail like its more sophisticated cousin, suggesting that it too was once a knight (or an ancient version of a modern yharnam concept).

keen-eyed hunters may pick up on some uncanny and familiar behaviors during an encounter: the madmen backstep, they sidestep, and under rare circumstances they can even regain health using a **rally** mechanic like the player. *these were hunters! and not just any hunters, but hunters in service of the pthumerian royalty. if cainhurst had hunters in their employ as knights, why wouldn't the pthumerians? after all, blood and beasts go hand in hand and time is a flat circle.*

you might wonder why a hunter would carry around severed body parts, but that's somehow the most normal part of this discussion: later evidence hammers home that hunters are capable of drawing out uncanny abilities from the remains of others. frankly, you (the player) should not be throwing stones in this scenario considering what YOU carry around in your pockets.

lastly: who do the remains belong to? who are the martyrs and why does logarius look like one? like...what IS a pthumerian saint?

some of these wild pthumerian madmen carry linen-wrapped corpses and use them as clubs. these corpses are similar (if not identical) to those in the unique, gilded coffins found on every chalice dungeon layer. if they manage to bop you, they will inflict **red rapid poison damage** on you. rapid poison is an extremely rare status effect, strongly associated with pthumerian royalty (queen yharnam, for example) and ancient, **old blood**. *these corpses were once pthumerian queens and the saint parts were once pthumerian kings. both corpses have been harvested either by pthumerian society (demonstrating the ultimate fate of all who are elected into royalty) or by the school and the church.*

sage's hair, and it's companion item sage's wrist, can be used to add a little spice to your chalice dungeons experience. when used to open a chalice dungeon, the stench⁵ of the "sage" items will agitate the pthumerians of the labyrinth, cloaking them in a red haze the same color as logarius' **arcane blood curse**. this curse is, evidently, powered by the spilled old blood of dead nobility.

the labyrinth madman, with no living royalty to service and addled by the scourge and the pallid "blood "in its veins, now simply does all that it knows how to do: hunt.

was logarius a king? yes, he became one of his own volition during his church sanctioned coup.

*a coup is probably one of the few circumstances where killing everyone except a queen makes sense. the "king reaper" file name is more than just a descriptor of his physical appearance, its an internal reference as to his own origins. he "donned the crown of his own volition" after wiping out the old king, not to keep annalise at bay, but to keep her potential to have a precious "**child of blood**" to himself. clad not in pthumerian red or cainhurst blue, he is wearing a **radiant gold** signaling an alliance to neither party.*

IF the church was involved (and i suspect they must have been for many things to make sense), i would think they put their finger on the scale by sending a few hunters of their own. wearing the full body executioner's garb, how could anyone know who is who and what is what? considering the callousness of the church later, its not impossible to imagine the bridge from the mainland to cainhurst being intentionally destroyed, doing so would leave behind the would-be king and effectively put an end to ANY monarchy in yharnam. in order to justify their behavior, they concocted a dramatic tale with a clear moral designed to keep away any would be interlopers: beware the vileblood queen.

alfred's dialogue dances around it, but "master" logarius might not actually be a recognized martyr in the church's eyes the way that he is in alfred's. in fact, alfred's entire mission is to kill annalise so that logarius CAN be martyred. when he thinks he's killed the queen he exclaims:

"Well? Isn't it wonderful? Now master can be canonized as a true martyr!"

*when logarius donned the crown, what did he see? it opens an illusory wall on the roof of cainhurst castle, revealing the secret location of the throne. that's all. it opens one wall at cainhurst immediately after the fight with logarius and does fuck all else. stranger still, there are other illusory walls on every layer of the lower pthumeru chalice dungeon that do not require the crown's use. *but... maybe they should have? hypothetically, where else would this illusion mechanic have been used?**



Figure 31: the crown of illusions

*remember the secret 4th layers of the chalice dungeons, where byrgenwerth first encountered evidence of the arcane in the form of invertebrate shells? access to those layers are completely hidden behind illusory walls that, when hex-edited to be active, slowly reveal themselves to the player; not unlike the throne room wall at castle cainhurst. taking into account the author's note rant about "being expected to try everything with the help of others in a fromsoft game", this proposed scenario has SOME basis: it is possible that the player was (or, more realistically, multiple players were) expected to retread old ground searching for hidden doors that could be opened by wearing the crown of illusions⁶. this usage of the crown would have been yet another tether between cainhurst and the old labyrinth, and would account for why there is "another" crown of the cainhurst king/illusions seen later in the game. there were probably once many, many crowns belonging to the many, many corpses of the generations upon generations of nobility in pthumeru that were plundered; the character who leaves the second crown behind was once a **tomb prospector** for the church. the cut cainhurst king enemies also wear the same styles of crowns.*

how intriguing...what if the crowns of the royals revealed secret layers that could only be accessed by those who were elected leaders...or those who become leaders by force?

the remaining "vileblood", queen annalise, has been forced into an iron mask restraining her will, and now can only sit and wait on her throne for a change in her circumstances. don't get it wrong; she's not in peril, just bored, lonely, and at an impasse. *with no ruling party in yarhnam, the citizens were free to do as they pleased.*

1. the executioner's garb states: "Later became the basis for all Church attire, with its heavy draping of Holy Shawl". therefore, the church was established after the executioners are formed. the rune "corruption" was transcribed by caryll to indicate one's alliance to the vilebloods. therefore, the raid happened around this time. there would be no need for a vileblood rune if they had already been murdered.

2. fuck wait i forgot: there's a generic enemy called "executioners" but it's a case of really bad translation lol. they are supposed to be "dismantling men". this is why you find them in places where there's bodies to be hacked apart (hemwick, forbidden woods, yahar'gul) and why they're dressed in the same cape as the butcher set. do not be distracted by this guy! he's irrelevant and fits in fine with the story with that explanation!

3. despite the fact that you basically never see anyone's face clearly in the game, most NPCs have unique face data. you can scrub through this video and see a wild variety, *including a few that are supposed to impart that the character is in the process of transforming into a beast. not too far of a stretch to assume this is supposed to be read as a pthumerian.*

4. history lesson: the "sage" chalice materials are based off of the real life concept of "catacomb saints", one of the most bizarre and, frankly, funny scams ever pulled by the catholic church. they are a sight to behold, though.

5. line lost in translation. it just didn't appear in the english version but is consistent in the japanese re-translations. might not have been enough room for the entire description. it happens.

6. the insight mechanic already exists in game for the purpose of revealing secrets to the player (and other things). i would assume the crown mechanic would ONLY apply to doors.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

dichotomies! the backbone of c+ college essay papers! my bread and butter! there's nothing i love more than to take two things and go "hmm. there are many differences and similarities between these things" and get credit for it. bloodborne has dichotomies coming out of its ass; the game is a love letter to the idea that two things can exist and oppose each other. don't even get me STARTED about the stuff in the middle!

life and death, red and blue, black and white, flora and fauna, men and women, the terrestrial and the celestial, liquid and solid, hearing and seeing- these are just a handful of the dichotomies presented by bloodborne (or a list of increasingly worrying questions your doctor could ask you). from the earth springs crimson blood and skeletal beasts. the heavens delivers shapeless invertebrates and cyan meteors. should man embrace their inner beast or should humanity be shed for something higher? should you reign over yourself or serve the gods? inject blood or put a bug in your head? its so hard to choose! the options are- well, not endless. the options are two.

if your answer to any of these questions is "both", then too bad! the moral is you can't have it all. try to have it both ways and suffer the consequences by slowly rotting for all eternity or forever twisting and transforming into more and more horrifying shapes. each yharnamite that succumbs to either the temptation of blood or commits to growing "eyes on the inside" suffers for indulging their most base desires or for trying to sacrifice their humanity. the morals of bloodborne are 1. don't drink blood off the floor and 2. your humanity is a precious resource you must fight hard to preserve.

but if your answer is "neither", then turn off the game, dipshit. your hunter's going to yharnam whether you think its a good idea or not. that might not be the "correct" solution, but your hunter is not heading to yharnam for respectable reasons. they are a foreigner who came to yharnam and had to "stay out of sight, and travel by cover of darkness" with no luggage, no money, and no plan except for the brief note you left for yourself before the transfusion.

you came from afar to transcend the hunt.



sentientobject

Okay... nice dichotomy, IDIOT !! what lies outside it???

before we move on, i want to make a point to note that the color-coding of blood-borne helps to establish factions, define origins, and quickly provide a visual for the player to determine an enemy's weaknesses when facing something otherwise unrecognizable. red=beast=kill with fire. blue=kin=kill with bolt. that sort of thing. *from-soft makes a point to work their gameplay contrivances into the settings of their worlds to maintain the audience's suspension of disbelief. they are so good at this its hard to tell what is pure gameplay and what is lore.*

the result is a tantalizingly "authentic" (NOT realistic, that's something else!) storytelling experience that is unwilling to compromise its artistic presentation by marring it with clunky reminders to the audience that they are playing a game. its not like you feel so sucked into the world of yharnam that you literally believe you're the hunter, but the game does not feel like it was constructed explicitly for you to kill things for 20 hours by mashing the right trigger button on your controller. the world feels like it existed before you turned the console on and will continue to exist after you turn the game off.

in short, remember this simple rhyme:

*if its eldritch and true:
then the color is blue;
but if the blood is red,
'tis a beast ahead.
-shakespeare*

PART FOUR

LAURENCE, LUDWIG, AND THE HEALING CHURCH

"Once, a young girl had an older brother who was determined to become a doctor, and so she willfully became his patient.

In the end, this led to their encounter with the Eldritch Truth, for which they considered themselves blessed."

laurence, one of the former byrgenwerth students, is the aforementioned brother who aspired to be a doctor, which makes his blindly optimistic interest in the magical blood that comes from a hole in the ground (and cures all your ailments) much more understandable. this passion (or perhaps, cynically, a financial interest) lead him to leave byrgenwerth with some of his closest associates in order to form a research hall of his own. the purpose of this research is not entirely clear, but whatever laurence was doing, he was willing to cross most lines to achieve it: slavery, human experimentation, jailing dissidents, massacring civilians, and worse of all, he's also a shitty boss fight.

after establishing **the healing church**, laurence began to distribute *blood vials* to the citizens of old yharnam. *these vials were likely already being used by the hunters of the church, including laurence himself* and were administered via a blood infusion or, if you were on the hunt, an injection in the right leg. the act of transfusion, known as "**blood ministration**", was "invigorating" to the yharnam populace, making them healthier, stronger, and (though they didn't know it yet) maintained their youth. many would seek "successive infusions", *presumably making the sale of blood a vital source of capital for the church.*

i am confident that at least three types of blood were being studied at this point in yharnam history: ritual blood, beast blood, and quicksilver. ritual blood, the "old blood" found in the ancient pthumerians, was undying, un-drying, flammable, and bright red. beast blood was darker and murkier, but with the same general qualities of the old blood. quicksilver, shimmering and deeply toxic to humans, somehow filled the veins of those who had become parasitized and gained "eyes on the inside". oh, and i guess there's like normal human blood that's in between the candy red and muddy beastly crimsons but who cares about that boring ass shit!

the healing church workshop (separate from **gerhman's** workshop, semi-hysterically built directly on top of it) developed their own class of weapons influenced by the blood-soaked success of the castle cainhurst raid. unlike the slicing and dicing of gehrman's siderite trick blades, church weapons are typically made of silver, which does "righteous damage" against vilebloods and labyrinth fiends. silver repels bad blood and can be sewn into gloves as a means of protection. the mysterious workshop affiliated with logarius evidently had a strong influence on the church inventors; logarius' wheel appears as a design element in all of the firearms developed by the church.



Figure 32: a quicksilver bullet

new conventions were introduced to the art of hunting as the field developed. since ordinary bullets had no affect on the beasts, a new kind of bullet necessitated invention. the **quicksilver bullet**, "mixed with the user's own blood", would draw its strength from the quality of a user's **bloodtinge**. in a pinch, a hunter can jam a syringe into their leg to draw their own blood for additional quicksilver bullets.

*which is a bit odd, no? how does drawing your own blood provide you with more quicksilver to make into bullets? like, sure. every human has blood, but where did you get the quicksilver from¹? the item description in the re-translation is more accurate, fully leaning into the classic fromsoft "i said what i meant" writing style: "hunters mixed their own blood with mercury as a catalyst". they do not mean the blood and mercury were mixed outside of your body. **quicksilver repels beasts**, and for a hunter to resist the beast scourge, they must accept a transfusion of quicksilver and all the risks it entails. when a hunter pulls the trigger, they fire their own blood-drenched (quick)silver bullets at werewolves.*

this mingling of blood and poison is the true nature of bloodtinge. a hunter with "strong bloodtinge" has a surplus of mercury in their blood and is capable of dealing with it.

it was not long before the church, a collective of students, doctors, and clerics, developed a bit of a reputation as a freak show. the doctors were split into two groups, the novice black church doctors and the white church doctor overseers. the public facing doctors in black were hunters that diverged from the more ethical path paved by **gerhman**. in contrast to gehrman's view of the hunt as ethical euthanasia², the church "engage[d] in the hunt in a medical capacity" by being indiscriminate about who and what they declared "sick". the eerie silhouette of these doctors would become "synonymous with fear" and a sign of bad tidings.



Figure 33: a black church doctor's uniform

the secretive doctors in white directed the doctors in black and engaged in "experimentally-backed blood ministration(s)" to study a way to combat (or harness) the beast scourge. their unorthodox beliefs included the idea that "medicine is not a means of treatment but rather a method for research" (!?) and they, much like the byrgenwerth students, put their own bodies on the line for experimentation (aka putting bugs in their head).

as their research demanded it, both sets of church clothing have strong resistances to both slow and rapid poison, which are induced by exposure to blood. however, they were very susceptible to being driven into a **frenzy** for being unprepared for what study into the blood entails.

there was a pretty significant logistical problem facing the church: after relocating to the newly established **church of the good chalice** in **old yharnam**, access to the



Figure 34: a "ritual altar", used by the hunter to teleport

chalice dungeons would necessitate having to traverse the snake infested woods separating old yharnam from byrgenwerth. these woods provided direct access to **the hintertomb**³, but not **pthumeru**. therefore, a new system of access needed to be devised. thankfully, such a system exists. uh, probably.

this is, without a doubt, the most incomprehensible facet of

bloodborne lore: i am going to have to accept that i can find no explicit mechanics regarding the phenomenon of teleportation in bloodborne. it is consistently inconsistent- i feel like i'm doing

a puzzle and have to describe what it's a picture of but only using the pieces around the edge. the characters learned how to do this, but i don't know how when or how. with that in mind:



Figure 36: "communion". note the hunter's rune in the center.

a "holy chalice" is a coveted treasure found in the hands of the guardians of the great one's tombs.

when a chalice is satiated with blood and/or flesh and placed on a candle ringed ritual altar, a seal on the labyrinth breaks, permitting access. this process of seal breaking was known as "communion" and seeking materials and chalices for communion became the true purpose and mission of the healing church: the oldest blood in the labyrinth MUST be the strongest.



Figure 35: the eventual emblem of the healing church depicting "communion". the figures are flanked by lumenflowers.

tomb prospectors, the official healing church hunters tasked with scouring the labyrinth for blood and treasures, wore unpretentious uniforms comprised of head to toe leather and heavy fabric to prevent exposure to bad blood. the church was "aware of the ruin's true importance" and was fiercely determined to learn and keep the secrets of the old blood to themselves. caryll's secret rune symbolizing the healing church states plainly that "blood ministration is, of course, the pursuit of communion."

of course. under the guise of doling out medicine, the church was, in actuality, cultivating the finest blood possible in the yharnam population in order to reach deeper depths and stoke the flames of human evolution. most people would call this "unethical experimentation" or "using an unwitting human population as guinea pigs". the healing church would call it "innovation" and "multitasking" and then call you a little spoil sport and kill you.

there is scant, but arguable, evidence that the healing church accessed the chalice dungeons in the same manner as the player hunter. that first sample of ritual blood in the game is found on a peculiar altar in old yharnam, dimly lit by a few remaining candles. this altar is odd and out of place with its surroundings. perhaps this was retrieved from the chalice dungeons?

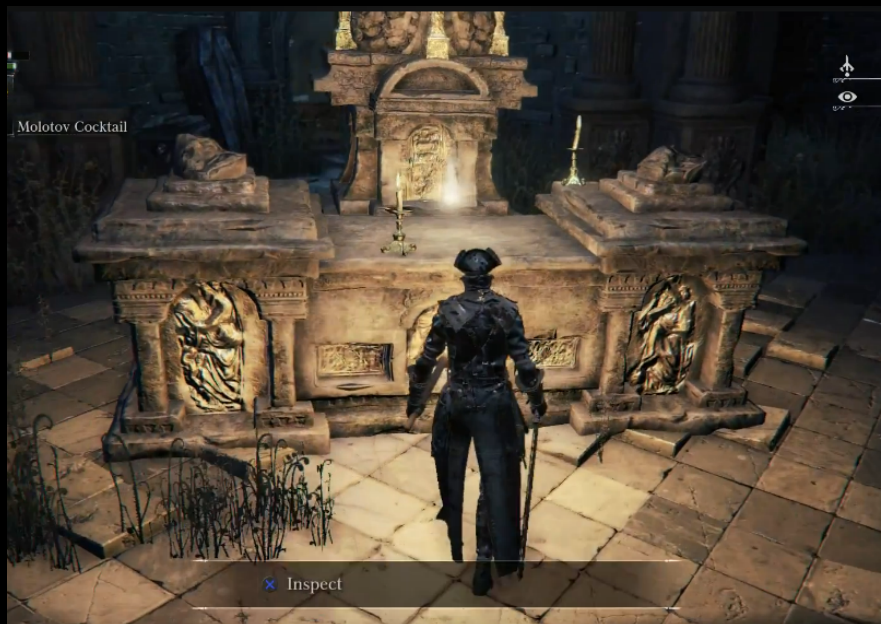


Figure 37: the old yharnam altar. note the broken columns and strange placement

many of the earliest tomb prospectors went on to become high-ranking clerics of the church. the first cleric of the healing church was **laurence**. the first church hunter was **ludwig**.



Figure 38: "guidance"

where the grand cathedral⁴ would come to be built lies the rotting gravestone of isz, a newly discovered wing of the labyrinth. isz strongly resembles pthumeru except that the air sparkles and shimmers with eerie blue lights and nebulous clouds. here, the tomb prospector, ludwig discovered three things that change his, and all of yharnam's, fate forever.

the first is a silver sword with a deceptively unremarkable appearance. its true power can only be coaxed out in ludwig's most desperate hours, when the sword shines with eldritch, shadowy green moonlight.

the sword's hilt would remain an iconic symbol of ludwig's hunters.

the second discovery was found in conjunction with the sword; a rune meaning "guidance" that glows with the same strange, verdant green. the discovery of this rune gave ludwig a bizarre ability: spilled beast blood would become nourishing and restorative, sparing him a fate of twisted malformation and madness. this mysterious process is **rally**, and as the name implies, it gave ludwig reckless confidence in a hunt.

and third, in the seemingly eternal darkness behind his closed eyelids, suddenly ludwig could see tiny flecks of light dancing in his mind's eye...or perhaps, in his real eye. the dlc ludwig appears in establishes that it is quite possible to have a great one's augurs infect your eyes (albeit with different result when other parasites are used). i think its worth considering that ludwig's mysterious and otherworldly "threads of light" that shook him to his core were something literal and physical, not figments of his imagination. something true, and real, and parasitic. an augur. a phantasm. a gift.

with the radiant⁵ sword hunter badge, the hunter⁵ gains access to items directly associated with ludwig and his hunters, such as a mass market replica of his sword, a rifle named for him, a flamethrower (for "cleansing" beasts), and a tomb prospector outfit. there are more items made available for sale *that one must assume, given the pattern of the previous items, were discovered by ludwig and his team as well*: pthumerian fire paper and the bone marrow of pthumerian corpses ground into dust to be used as a gunpowder additive. critically, ludwig *may have also* discovered that the corpses in the labyrinth contain more than just blood gems. they contained the more mundane blood stone shards⁶ that could be used to fortify trick weapons.

a theory i've seen that i really like, but have to admit has very little textual basis, argues that the enigmatic bloodletter belonged to laurence. the bloodletter is a truly singular device that looks like nothing else in the game and is one of the very few trick weapons that relies on a strong bloodtinge to be effective. *the weapon DOES share the quintessential gnarliness of pthumerian maces post-transformation, but given the narrative is gently steering us into looking for dichotomies, i would suggest that it originates from **loran** (another lost chalice dungeon) since its fellow DLC exclusive companion, the holy moonlight sword, is likely to have been found near **isz**.*



Figure 39: the bloodletter, prior to transformation.

however, the strongest bit of evidence in favor of this theory is recognizing that fromsoft enjoys self-reference: maces are the weapon of choice for clerics in "dark souls". who better to wield a madness inducing mace intended to expel "tainted blood" than the first cleric of the healing church?

human vessels for the highest quality blood, known as **blood saints**, were used by the church in order to deliver "alms" to the people. blood saints were universally women and are depicted in statues either as marian figures or as shriveled husks wrapped in funeral garb. old yharnam, the true birthplace of the healing church, is home to two impossible to miss statues: one depicts a desiccated saint's corpse, the other depicts the same (or a similar) corpse but as it's being prepared for burial by a young woman and her attendants, who are gazing toward the heavens.

these statues have a subtle and very, very easy to miss connection to the labyrinth and pthumerian history. the fingers of the statues in old yharnam appear to



Figure 40: the statue of a blood saint at the church of the good chalice

be broken unintentionally, but this is not the case. the statue's detached thumb matches and is meant to echo a similar deterioration of the mummified corpses of the previously mentioned presumed pthumerian queens; their hands are

crumbling into dust after their mummification is complete. women were being used as blood vessels (lol) since ancient pthumerian times and, in both cultures, these women would be drained of their blood for a greater societal use. when the practice is renewed in yharnam, it is seen as a unique honor and privilege. with enough



Figure 41: the blood saint statue blocking the entrance to old yharnam

treatment, one might even be able to achieve true greatness and hear the elusive voices of the great ones themselves.

but blood saint treatment, and the road to its discovery, was a dire, dark science. **remember: blood defines an organism.** so...what does that make an organism without blood?



Figure 43: a statue of a presumed blood saint

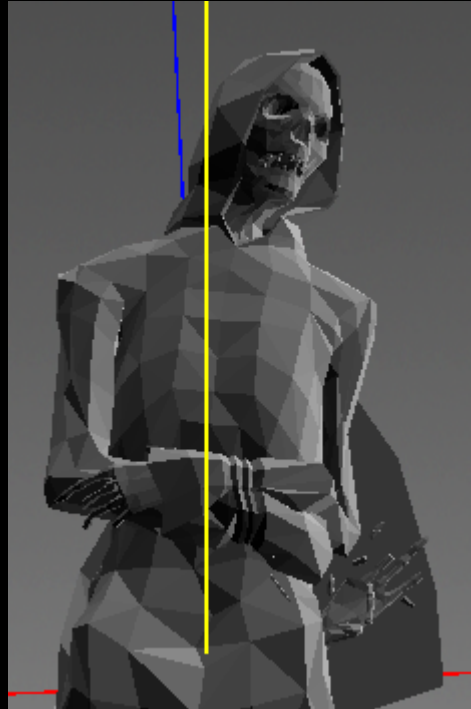


Figure 42: a presumed pthumerian royal corpse

*it is no surprise that the church became wildly successful given they were selling the promise of good health. the wealth of the church was such that they were able to build an entirely new yhar-nam to replace the old, shitty one. **the***

grand cathedral would act as the new headquarters of the church and operate from the comfort of the newly developed and ornate **cathedral ward**. towering above and behind the grand cathedral and its **astral clocktower**⁷, a **research hall** of extremely dubious morality was constructed.

1. early in development this mechanic was a consumable that was cut. its appearance strongly suggested that the "bullets" were quicksilver frozen into bullet shapes.

2. the [burial blade's](#) item description gives some insight into Gehrman's thought process: "Gehrman surely saw the hunt as a dirge of farewell, wishing only that his prey might rest in peace, never again to awaken to another harrowing nightmare". bitch, me too!

3. the forbidden woods shortcut leading from the woods to Iosefka's clinic is generally understood to be the entry point of the Hintertomb. the same maggots from the (assumed) Cainhurst Castle Pthumeru entrance are writhing in the shortcut's murky, pale, slow poison swamp. this is a very rare biome otherwise found only in the Hintertomb and the Nightmare Frontier (showing great restraint on Fromsoft's part), two locations where the tombs of decomposing great ones can be found. corpses in the shortcut swamp can be looted for blood gems. additionally, tomb mold, which explicitly grows only in the "old labyrinth", sprouts from the floor.

4. Isz would have been the home of this [cut scourge beast](#) that shares a color scheme with the other items relating to the "pale" moon both in and out of the Chalice Dungeons. it is widely assumed that the entrance to Isz is beneath the grand cathedral due to both the art book strongly suggesting this and the appearance of tomb mold on a unique statue (or corpse? its unclear).

5. *the use of "radiant" in the badge name is another nod to Ludwig's admiration for the executioners.*

6. the translation on this is so bad for some reason. its so confusing. the EUR translation fixed it to make it comprehensible:

A solid shard that forms in coldblood.

After death, some substances crystallise, but most simply harden and form blood stones.

At the workshop, these blood stones are embedded in weapons to fortify them.

7. almost certainly based off of the [astrological clocktower in prague](#). just a neat little fact for you.

PART FIVE

THE RESEARCH HALL, THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER, AND LADY MARIA

the healing church shared **byrgenwerth's** lackadaisical approach to human rights and torture: the subjects of the **research hall** are criminals, heretics, or simply "others" (*pthumerians? the bodies are the same as the labyrinth watchers*) who cry out that they're "guilty" and they "won't do/say it again"¹. god only knows what the church was doing to these people, but whatever it was, it wasn't good. i don't think there's any reversing this:

Greyish amoeba-shaped brain fluid. Wobbles and bounces. Extracted from a patient whose head expanded until that was all that they were.

In the early days of the Healing Church, the Great Ones were linked to the ocean, and so the cerebral patients would imbibe water, and listen for the howl of the sea. Brain fluid writhed inside the head, the initial makings of internal eyes."

there's a lot of info packed into this little description. first, since **kos** came from the ocean, the reasonable assumption was that all great ones came from the ocean. second, an amoeba is a type of invertebrate and augurs/phantasms, as we know, are invertebrates. *these grey amoebas would turn out to be the key factor in the successful communication between a great one and humanity. Q.E.D., these blobs are augurs/phantasms.* third, "imbibe water" is a shocking innuendo for what appears to be "pouring dirty, organism-filled, ocean water inside of the skulls of the unwilling". this research methodology required a lot of catastrophic failures before they could eek out anything even remotely resembling success. this is how the healing church began its scientific inquiry into the phenomenon of **kin**, *organisms who could be cultivated for use in communication (and "communion") with the great ones.*

here are the clocktower (or research hall) patients, a catalog of those failures²:

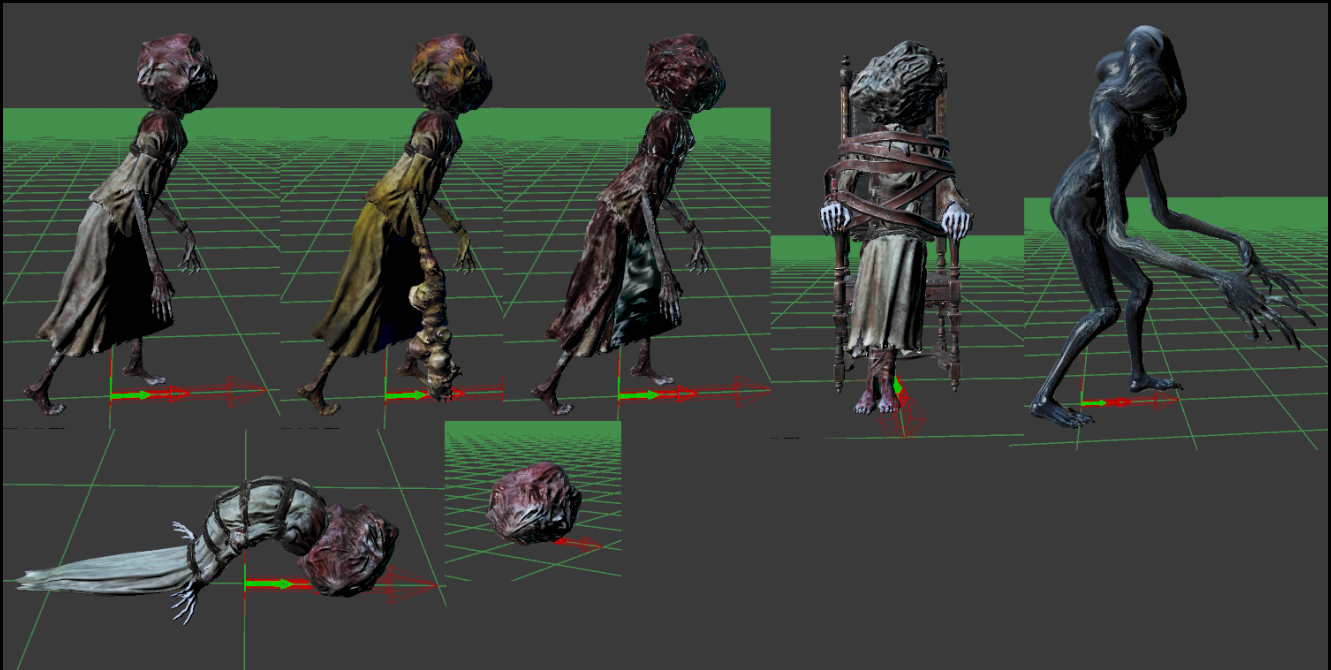


Figure 44: from top left to right: a "quicksilver" blood patient, "poison" patient, "old blood" patient, saint adeline, and a living failure
 bottom: a crawling female "quicksilver patient" and an autonomous "quicksilver" head.

the three models on the top left are all re-skinned labyrinth pthumerians. they swipe at you with large, clumsy swings and yowl like wild animals when attacking. some enemies in the game can pick up the **blood echoes** dropped when you die, causing their eyes to glow a faint purple; if a research patient lifts your echoes, this will reveal that the leathery, undulating lump that was once someone's head is now home to far more than the human standard of two symmetrical eyes. despite this, they rely on their sense of hearing to detect threats, *suggesting that the eyes do not belong to the host.*



Figure 45: concept art illustrating the described mechanic

the "quicksilver" patient is the most common enemy encountered in the research hall, far outnumbering the other patients by a wide margin. they demonstrate various states of lucidity and some are even non-hostile (and chatty!). as a consequence of their experimentation, they have high **arcane** defense, a property all kin share. the ambulatory patients appear to be all male. giant versions of the "quicksilver" patient who wield their transfusion stands as weapons will drop strong **bloodtinge** bloodgems. in some instances, a silver-stained head of a clocktower patient gets separated from their body, both halves operating independent of one another. all "quicksilver" patients drop blood vials (*i assume this is a gameplay mechanic; they are not LITERALLY dropping blood VIALS, but you are harvesting their remaining blood into vials for later use*) and it can be reasonably presumed that they are one of the sources of the healing church's blood supply.

the separated heads are in the final stage of some sort of dreadful transformation. they will defend themselves with a flurry of flailing, pale, bloodied tentacles and by spitting a dark blood that causes one to enter a state of **frenzy** (madness induced by exposure to the eldritch truth). the heads have absolutely

bonkers physical and blunt defense, but are very, very weak to thrust. don't pop them! the autonomous heads have extremely unique drops: madman's knowledge (these are their bug filled skulls, presumably) and a strange, ominous blue liquid. this liquid is only available for purchase by the player (as opposed to having to farm for drops) after they obtain the previously discussed, late-game cosmic eye watcher badge, making it one of the most precious church secrets. and for good reason, this liquid's primary use is as a "brain-numbing" anesthetic but its secondary function is turning hunters (or those with a similar internal blood cocktail) invisible for a brief period of time. the blue elixir can otherwise only be found sparingly in places where experiments are or were once conducted on human guinea pigs.



Figure 46: the research hall poison pool

the crawling patients are fully restrained from the waist up, and there are versions of this model with the legs tied up as well. however, unlike the leather belts restraining the rest of their bodies, the legs appear to be tied up using a length of rope, suggesting that the patient was once hanging upside down *for a bloodletting*. when the player arrives in the version of the research hall in the hunter's nightmare, it is in a state of disrepair. the bottom floor soaked in a pool of silver, **murky, slow poison** leaking out of the pile of patient corpses littering the area. these enemies attack with the same tentacles as the removed heads, but they sprout from their *slit* necks. these enemies drop quicksilver bullets, mercury, upon defeat. they do not drop blood vials. judging by the voices, all of the crawling patients are female.

the "old blood" patient crawls on all fours and claws at the player as though they are scourge beasts. they are coated in a dark maroon blood and, while they have the



Figure 47: the unused model of the "crawling" patient with rope

same high arcane defense as their brethren, their strongest defense stats are the physical stats and their **blood** defense. they drop blood vials upon defeat and,

shockingly, blood gems! whether this is an effect of the blood itself or the location where you encounter this enemy (underground, near the labyrinth³) is uncertain. these enemies are unique in that they react the same way as other dog enemies (like, actual dogs, not werewolves) by being knocked over instead of parried. actually, i guess that's how dogs work in real life too.

the "poison" patient has a big rotten right arm and have a sickly saffron yellow skintone. these are strange enemies; besides their slow poison inducing right hook and dark blotches on their heads instead of silver, they are very similar to the quicksilver patients. the only difference is their bizarre drop pool: murky, slow poison blood gems and quicksilver bullets, but no blood vials.

this leaves us with two remaining models to discuss at length: the living failures and adeline. research hall patient.

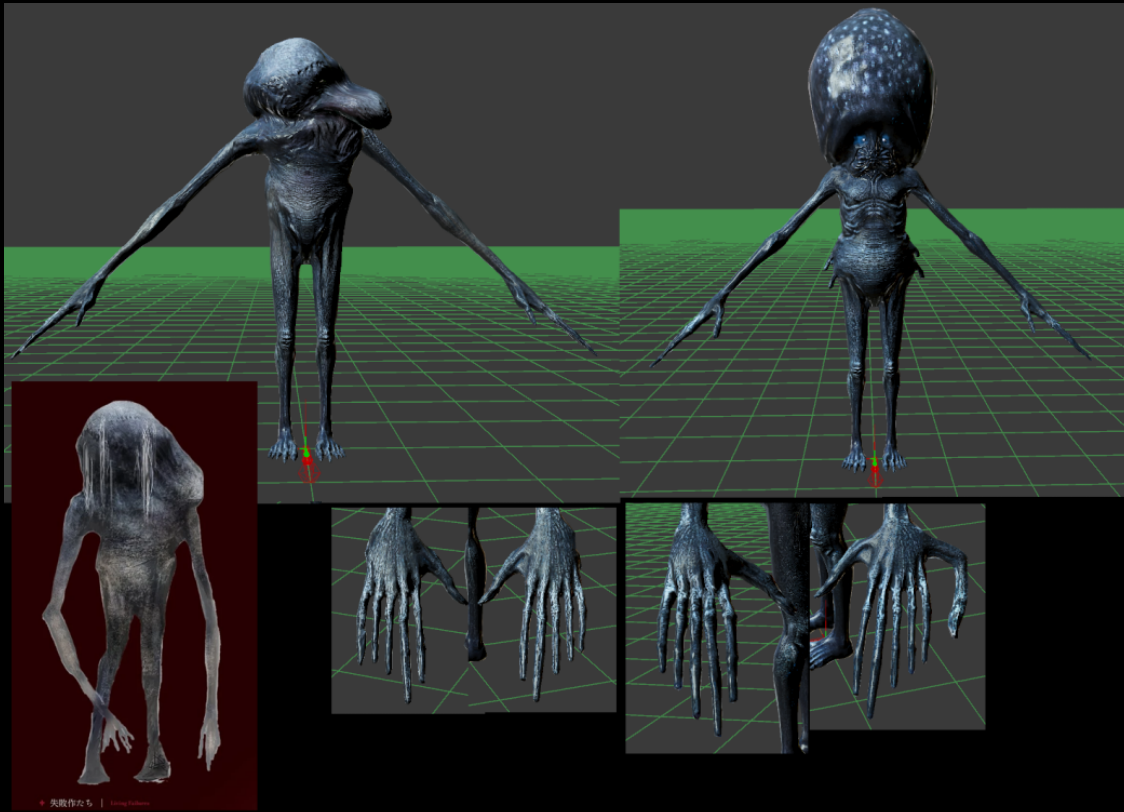


Figure 48: top left: a living failure; bottom left: concept art of the living failure with worms emerging from its head; bottom middle: comparison of the hands of the living failures (left) and the celestial emissary (right); top right: a celestial emissary

as the name implies, the "living failures" are the surviving remnants of the unsuccessful clinical trials. the name suggests that their primary unique trait is simply that they survived in opposition to what must be an unfathomable number of scientific martyrs. by the time the player meets the living failures, they are almost certain to have already met their intended result: the celestial emissaries, who are cultivated in secret high above the grand cathedral. at some point, the church seems to have refined its methods in order to produce a seemingly unlimited number of emissaries to be plucked from the ground as needed. however, at this point in yharnam history, they were still churning out duds.

in order to avoid getting too "in the weeds" (ha ha) over the celestial emissaries, i'm going to focus solely on their relationship to the living failures. the emissaries do not appear until late in the game and their existence relies on context provided by later events in yharnam history.



Figure 49: the nasty blood of a living failure ([source](#))

unlike the wobbling, self-supported, glowing heads of the emissaries, the heads of the failures are unformed, collapsed, and barely stirring with frail life. because of this, these two bosses have near-equal defense stats in all categories except for thrust damage; *the fragile membranes holding together whatever is inside the emissary's heads can apparently be popped with ease*⁴. both have developed similar cerulean skin tones (signaling to the audience their proximity to kinship), but the skin of the emissary has a noticeable healthy sheen that the failure is lacking.

celestial emissaries bleed the same grey blood found in many other kin enemies. the failures bleed a strange, unique, almost black, muddy blood.

the third, desperate phase of the celestial emissary boss fight reveals that their head is host to neon glowing worms responsible for the emissary's ability to cast **ar-cane** magic. *the concept art of the living failures includes these worms in their design, but they are limp and can be presumed to be dead*⁵. perhaps this is the source of their failure; for whatever reason, they were poor hosts for the worms.

these (radiant eel) worms operate as a hivemind; the successful emissaries cast laser-pointed cosmic rays of death and if the "true" emissary is killed, all the other emissaries will die with it. in contrast, the failures' magic is uncoordinated and slow. all of the members all take pooled damage and have no central leader they can surround and protect. worst of all, their most powerful defensive attack turns the entire sky into an open wound in the cosmos, spilling arcane meteors onto anyone unfortunate enough to be in their way.



Figure 50: the living failures' meteor shower signaling the beginning of phase 2

this meteoric, blue, arcane magic shows up semi-frequently in the game and is evidently an ability held by several kinds of kin. the failures, the emissaries, and a unique "quicksilver" patient enemy type wields variants of this power⁶, which is made possible by the same parasite that grants the hunter the blacksky eye ability (the tool is looted from a corpse of a nondescript "quicksilver" patient whose companions are capable of firing a barrage of cosmic death rays and missiles at the player, making this connection explicit).

these three kin share an unusual point of overlap: the hunter interrupts them while they are busy tending to the strange gardens of the research hall. the sickly **lumenflower gardens** were pruned by "quicksilver" patients whose experimental results were favorable. in modern yharnam, this same garden (in better shape...sort of) is the domain of the celestial emissaries, who cast the same bright blue bullets as



Figure 51: lumenflowers of the cathedral ward



Figure 52: a wilting lumenflower found in the nightmare frontier/loran.

lets as their predecessors. the failures, however,

are tasked with maintaining the **lumenwood gardens**, a deformed and mutated variation of the lumenflower. as they are clearly modeled on sunflowers, we can intuit that these are "moon"flowers (or "star"flowers. depending on translation).

the lumenflowers of the garden, at this point in yharnam history, are wilted and sickly, just as they were when they were, presumably, plucked from the swamps of loran. we'll get to that after this.

despite their physiological differences, the failures and the emissaries both move in a manner that evokes the clumsy attack patterns of the clocktower patients characterized by awkward, blind swings and open palm slams. while the research hall patients and failures depend on echolocation to find the hunter, the emissaries do not. the emissaries developed "eyes on the inside" by being amenable hosts for the bizarre blue worms, while the failures did and could not be. like the emissaries, the failures appear to sprout organically from the ground; a thematically appropriate action, given the whole gardening thing.

additionally, they have one final, strange, overlapping trait: they have 5 fingers and a thumb. however, the emissary has an additional thumb-like appendage on its left hand opposite the real thumb.

there is little else to say about the failures until we reach the creation of the celestial emissaries. so, what of adeline?

Once, a young girl had an older brother who was determined to become a doctor, and so she willfully became his patient. In the end, this led to their encounter with the Eldritch Truth, for which they considered themselves blessed.

adeline seems like a real sweetheart. once a distinguished blood saint, now a willing test subject, adeline is deliriously ambitious and longs to blossom beyond the shackles of her humanity. *though they never mention one another, it must be assumed that **laurence** is her older brother.*

adeline is considerably paler and...well, bluer than her peers. what was she experiencing? male characters⁷ who wear the "enlarged head" will periodically hear a peculiar sound...plip...plop...like a basin overflowing, but just barely, "gently, like little droplets". drip...drop...the NPC research hall patients talk incessantly about the sound when they aren't being smothered by an all-enveloping damp darkness that terrifies them. those who hear the sound are serene and at ease. those who can't, aren't.

it's unclear if adeline ever managed to "achieve greatness" before meeting the player character. it seems that she was in a transformation limbo until the hunter rolled up and fed her three doses of "brain fluid" found by "killing" (they die for a moment before reviving, seemingly unaware that anything happened) two rambling, female bloated heads. these heads differentiate themselves from the other non-hostile patients by speaking about what they hear and "see" with reverence and wonder.

Splish, splash, splish, splash⁸...

Have you heard how curiously the sea churns?

Like a storm, but like the rain, only gentle, like dripping water...

It bellows, from deep inside of me...

Here it comes, up through my insides...

But gently, like little droplets...

the dialog of one head reveals that their prospective evolution is not occurring as one might expect.

"I'm a robin. Will I ever curl up and become an egg?"

rather than evolution envisioned as an eternally upward trending line toward "greatness", it seems the goal was to return to a fetal state in order to be reborn anew. *this is, by all intents and purposes, a type of reincarnation at least partially inspired by esoteric buddhist dogma, a favorite subject of the fromsoft devs.*

but what was it that they were transforming into? the church appeared to believe that they were hastening the pace of discovery toward some great eldritch truth. only a few were privy to the true "nature of a celestial attendant". because adeline could hear the voices of the great ones, she experienced a taste of the eldritch truth in the form of a new rune: milkweed.

Those who take this oath become a lumenwood that peers towards the sky, feeding phantasms in its luscious bed. Phantasms guide us and lead us to further discoveries.

milkweed is a plant that is cultivated exclusively so it can be consumed by another being⁹. insects, specifically. when "milkweed" is equipped with the kos parasite, the hunter takes on a bizarre transformation.



Figure 53: the hunter after equipping both the kos parasite and the milkweed rune.

okay, it's a reference to the movie matango, but it also turns your ass into space broccoli for parasites to eat. the hunter moves jerkily like the parasite is piloting them ratatouille style; we can assume the brainsuckers and other creatures in the world of bloodborne operate on similar principles: the parasite operates the host.

strangely, one of the moves used by the kos parasite spews **murky, slow poison**. *the same substance, perhaps, as the research hall poison pool*. the "head" of the transformed hunter emits a faint white glow.

We fail to realize our own latent potential, until the moment it is lost, and we sense its absence. Ironically, this is the very nature of insight, like the moment one licks one's own blood, only to be startled by its sweetness.

following the events of the fishing hamlet, **lady maria** abandoned the hunters and took up residence in the astral clock tower above the research hall in order to tend to the suffering residents. while beloved by the patients for her compassion, she was unable to do anything to ease their pain and was driven to despair. when the hunter finds her in the hunter's nightmare, she is forever living out her final, horrible moments. her wrists are slit, and still dripping with incoagulable blood. plip...plop...plip...



Figure 54: detail of lady maria in the hunter's nightmare; using the spyglass, players can see wet, fresh blood slowly drip from her wounds.

one last note: during the time of the research hall, the church prospectors found something in isz that necessitated the use of a novel invention: the loch shield. prior to its use by the tomb explorers, it was used for an unknown "sacred Healing Church ceremony" and offers protection against the three elements of the chalice dungeons: fire, bolt, and arcane. they were going to need it.

1. depends on the translation; the re-translations decided on "I won't say it again".
2. the nicknames used here are unofficial and are being used for clarity's sake. they are all universally known as "clocktower patients" in the guides and art book.
3. tomb mold grows underground in the labyrinth. the nightmare is covered in tomb mold. do the math!
4. top: the living failures; bottom: the celestial emissary (large). lol at 30 thrust defense.

Location													Required	
Research Hall Lumenwood Garden	20646	22000	239	273	102	171	256	92	71	250	180	-	X	No
• <i>Main Story</i>														
Upper Cathedral Ward	2784	22400	235	261	26	130	233	82	61	300	180	-	X	No

5. See page 113 for more notes on the "radiance" rune.
6. ha ha, okay. look. these cosmic spells are functionally indistinguishable from "homing soul-mass" and "soul spear" from "dark souls". i mean like they're the same color and everything. when i say "fromsoft reiterates on the same ideas over and over", i really mean it.
7. no idea why only men hear it. mistake? on purpose?
8. the re-translation clarifies that the original japanese script uses an onomatopoeia used to indicate dripping blood, specifically. for more information on how japan uses onomatopoeia see www.google.com
9. see page 116 for more notes on the "milkweed" rune.

PART SIX

LOWER PTHUMERU, ROM, AND THE BLOODLETTING BEAST

*here is a recap of the state of affairs when it comes to the chalice dungeons: **byr-genwerth scholars** discovered the **pthumerian underground labyrinth**, wherein they discovered the holy medium **ritual blood** and the pthumerian labyrinth chalice (which was being worshiped in **old yharnam**). by combining these items at an altar surrounded by candles, a process called "communion", they were able to enter deeper parts of the labyrinth.*

by receiving communion from the labyrinth (not "taking", specifically the language used across translations makes it clear that the act of communion is bestowed), church prospectors could explore deeper into the dungeons in order to restock on **the old blood** and rare materials. these materials facilitated better communion with the great ones, leading to better dungeons deeper into the earth, and so on, and so forth. the healing church doled out healing blood to any hunters willing to explore the dungeons for them and assist in opening deeper and deeper seals in the labyrinth. this process of doling out alms, known as "blood ministration" is, of course, the pursuit of communion.

*after being temporarily sidelined by beasts in central pthumeru, the church and the scholars (who presently still appeared to be working together in some capacity) rallied, carving through the remaining layers. more chalices and labyrinths were discovered, such as the **hintertomb**, a peripheral dungeon of lesser, more informal graves. they also began to excavate isz gravestone, which "lies in contact with the cosmos". the timeline of events from this point out is even more unclear and muddy than ever before.*

hunters with an interest in the arcane also passed through the lower pthumerian labyrinth at some point and left one of their tools behind.¹ upon reaching the third (and USUALLY final) layer of the lower pthumerian dungeon, the tomb prospectors ran into one of the most inconvenient lore discoveries of all time: rom the vacuous spider. *we should talk about what little we know about rom here because i think it might be relevant to the current point in the timeline. i'm not going to pretend like i totally understand rom though. she² is one of the least straight forward aspects of the story by a wide margin.*



Figure 55: the rom in the chalice dungeon, surrounded by her children

no one likes that rom exists in the chalice dungeons, me included. not only because she's an absolute slog to fight (made worse by the fact that the fight takes place in a broom closet with stone pillars that block your swings) but like, why is she even here. she's in the game later as a (equally annoying) non-optional boss battle that drops the game into its third act and ends up probably one of the most consequential encounters in the entire game. her narrative importance in the actual game makes it weird to think there might be more than one vacuous spider named rom.

so, here are some observations:

*one, "yharnam" is a named passed down from generation to generation for every queen selected by the pthumerian population. so, why can't "rom" be a similar title? besides the rom in the base game and the chalice dungeon, there's potential evidence of a third rom who is already long dead, to the point of being covered in tomb mold. perhaps there are (or were) many roms; rom is a **kin**, and was likely to have been mass produced to facilitate communion, like other kin in the game.*

two, there's nothing that indicates that the chalice dungeons are a nightmare/dream/the results of time travel, or that the great ones have a separate "consciousness" that exists only in the tombs (a common, but very lame reasoning for the repetition). perhaps the purpose of the repeat fights is a more direct and unsubtle part of the process of retracing the historical journey taken by the first tomb prospectors. in this way, the game is trying to establish where the healing church poached the base game monsters³ and what society they originated from. rom came from pthumeru; this is the information the game is trying to deliver and here is how its going to do it. inelegant, but we've had worse and more contrived reasons for fights in fromsoft games.

i greatly dislike the explanations people come up with for the chalice dungeons that involve discussion of the "consciousness" of great ones or "different planes of reality" outside of the dream/nightmare. its more intellectually honest just to say that that these segments were subject to the chop shop treatment given to all games during the fromsoft dev cycle than it is to just invent a new plot mechanic out of thin air. in the end, what we should be extrapolating from this stupid encounter is that rom, or knowledge of how to "make" rom, came from the pthumerian labyrinth.



Figure 56: a profile view of rom, the vacuous spider

hmmm. yuck. what the hell are we looking at? unfortunately, we're going to be asking that a lot while playing this game. let's try to break down rom's appearance bit by bit. many of the images of rom for this section come from her base game encounter in the **moonside lake** because the lighting is incredible and the glow effect is a striking part of her appearance. the reflection of the lake also completes rom's appearance and drives home her visual inspiration: she resembles a single lobe of a human brain. once you get past her isopod-like silhouette, she really does look exactly like an oversize brain lined with eyes and glowing white with *celestial* vegetation⁴.

a spider is a type of invertebrate. *we can presume that the rom found at byrgenwerth was being studied as part of their research into "phantasms"*.

speaking of vegetation: starting from the left, her tail has a superficial resemblance to the fiddlehead ferns⁵ found around yharnam, specifically **old yhar-nam** and **yahar'gul**. i don't recognize the plants that are growing out of her "body" / carapace; i don't believe that they appear anywhere else in the game. although her



Figure 58: the unused "bottled plants" item

flora demonstrates a healthy shine, rom



Figure 57: a close-up of rom's tail

herself appears cracked, gray, and shriveled. her bloated body is more reminiscent of a waterlogged corpse than something brimming with life. in fact, despite the deceptive lighting of the moonside lake, the entirety of rom's body is actually very pale.

there are deep, round, irregular holes on the sides of her pale body above her tiny legs. at a certain point her body takes on a segmented appearance, and those segments are peppered with eyes that dapple her calcified, pale, rock-like head. these eyes are dark (but have distinct pupils and irises!) and whirl around wildly in her skull in no particular direction. her mouth is a gaping hole lined with fangs like a lamprey. her nose, while askew, can be discerned with careful observation.

the holes on her body could be one of two things:

1. empty sockets where something (eyeballs or, less likely, flowers) were harvested
2. empty leg sockets

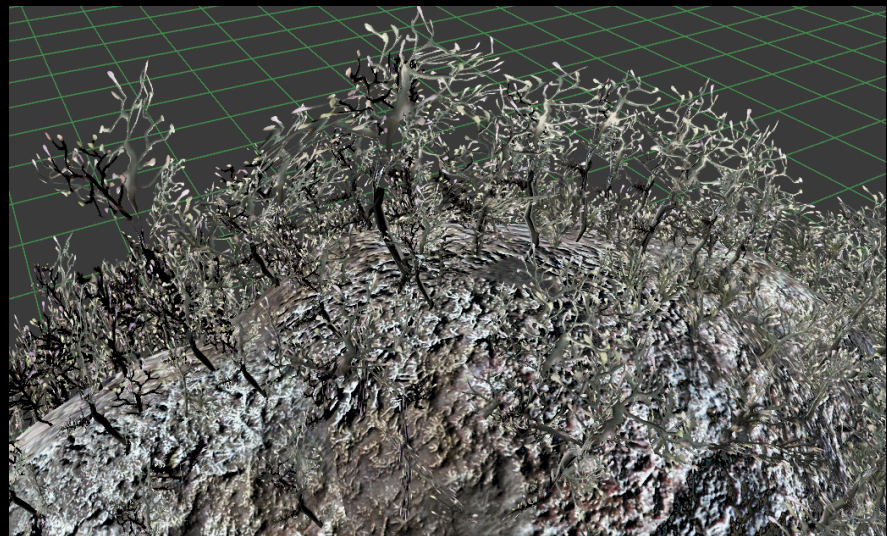


Figure 59: a close-up of rom's flora

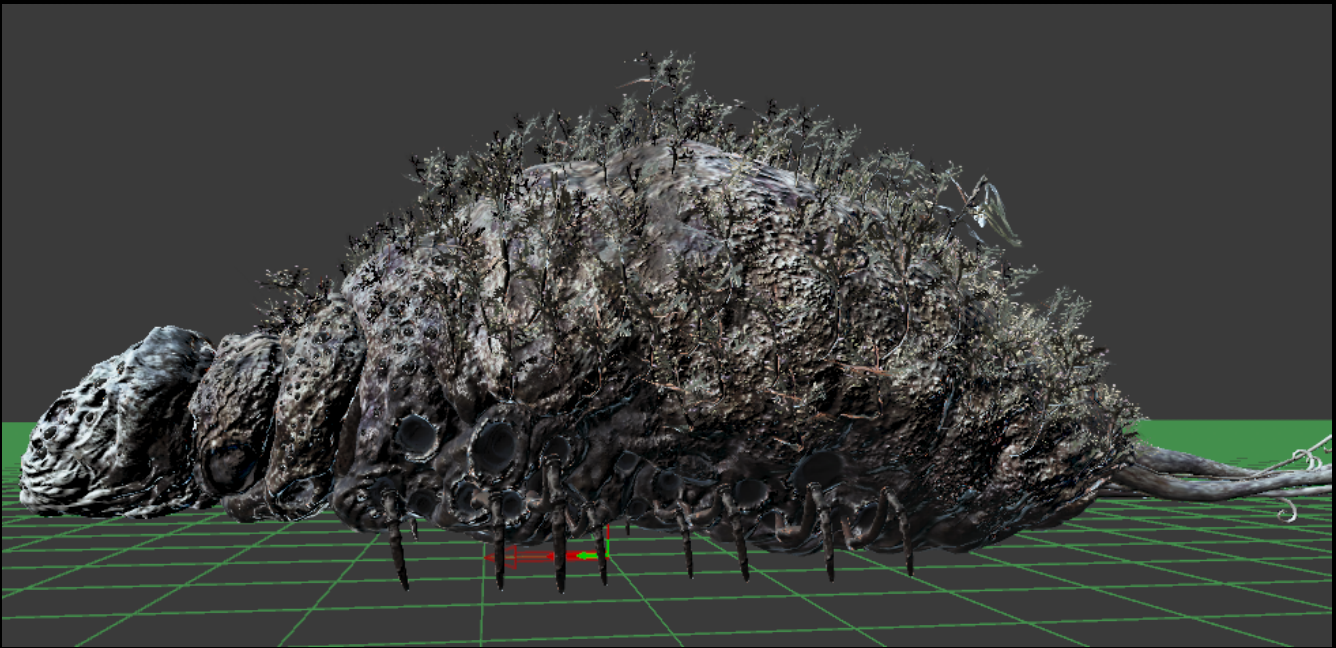


Figure 60: rom's surprisingly pale body, note the holes.

its really a toss-up as to which is correct (if any of them are at all). *let's assume that there's more than one rom; one lives in the moonside lake at **byrgenwerth** and the rest live in the lower pthumerian chalice dungeon (literally the only place where she can generate as a random boss).* option 1 makes sense contextually: byrgenwerth wanted eyeballs and evidence points toward their research taking them in a direction where they would grow them in living gardens. even the ancient pthumerians had their own class of eye collectors for whatever weird shit they were up to. eyes were used in communion with, explicitly, the nearby hintertomb⁶. cut voice lines from a certain byrgenwerth NPC also underscores that the focus of the research was obtaining "more eyes".

rom's waist-high spawn, her "children of rom" (COR), also have the empty sockets higher up on their backs. the COR have no eyes growing on their "bodies", only in their calcified, shriveled heads. *presumably, this difference is why rom can cast spells and the COR are limited to physical attacks. all the usable eyes were harvested off the COR.*



Figure 61: a child of rom, note the holes and the large legs



Figure 62: the calcified corpse of a rom, note the mold and the size of her legs.

however, looking at the COR brings up a question: where the hell are rom's legs? there's (what initially appears to be) a statue beneath the grand cathedral (presumably very close to the entrance of isz grave-stone⁷) that looks like rom, but with the big legs still attached! *theories run rampant about this statue for reasons that cannot be discussed until we reach the actual plot of the game, but two things are certain. first,*

this is no statue, this is a calcified corpse undergoing the mysterious process that leads to blood forming blood gems and bloodstones⁸. second, this is not the rom from earlier in the game, as many have come to believe. otherwise we need to address how and why the rom from byrgenwerth teleported after exploding into a shower of blood right in front of our eyes and then was crushed by falling debris after growing legs, mold, and new powers. its easier and less complicated to accept that this is a second (third?!) rom.

why take rom's legs? your guess is as good as mine, but they're clearly missing. to prevent escape, perhaps? but how would she even escape her boss arenas?

one final note on rom's appearance: her "spider" half does not resemble the other spiders in the game at all...but its odd that the nightmare apostles are spiders with human heads stapled on, given that rom is a spider (?) with a pthumerian (?) head affixed in a similar manner.

here's the TRUE CANON on rom: **she is NOT a byrgenwerth scholar!!!!!!** this is an early theory that everyone ran with for years until very recently when it was pointed out that literally nothing says or implies this at all. *if anything, given her location in the pthumerian dungeons and her appearance, the evidence points toward a purely pthumerian origin.*

rom is kin. i'm putting my trust in the brave soldiers of the bloodborne-wiki who are willing to crunch the numbers⁹ that i really do not want to do on my own. however, rom has an unusual quality for a kin: most kin we've encountered (and will encounter) bleed that gray slime/mercury/quick-silver. rom bleeds gray from her head...but her body bleeds red! this split bleeding phenomenon is not unique to rom, but it's extremely rare.

further and more explicit proof that she is kin and not a great one (a common misconception): she drops "[kin coldblood](#)" upon defeat. the COR (also kin) drop "[madman's knowledge](#)". they are truly less vacuous, i suppose. they actually have skulls with shit in them to collect.



Figure 63: rom's...distinctive face. note the nostrils above the mouth, to the right a smidge.



Figure 64: slapping rom's bald head for gray blood



Figure 65: slapping rom's fat ass for red blood

well, sort of. i touched on the "rom" half of her name already, but the rest of her title is equally mysterious. the translation makes it explicit that she is "vacuous" meaning stupid, not empty. this might seem like a weird distinction, but in nearly every other language her name is something along the lines of "rom, the idiot spider". why are they so mean to her...?

if we understand that rom is a kin in the same way that the celestial emissaries or the living failures are, then its no surprise that rom has **arcane** powers. these powers include the already familiar arcane meteor shower and cosmic blast. when rom dies, her fight script echoes the hivemind behavior of the emissaries and the failures: all of her COR die with her. *is it a coincidence that these gardeners (if we view rom and her ilk as "gardens of eyes") have overlapping abilities and behaviors?*

some of rom's abilities are unique to her. for example, she can teleport around the map (something you can apparently do if you have a lot of eyes). she also has an ability that is not expanded upon well at all during the game and the execution of which was so baffling it left people confused as to what even happened: she hides "rituals" by obfuscating the arcane from public eye. *two different notes in yharnam accuse the byrgenwerth spider of "hiding all manner of rituals". information so nice, they repeat it twice...but how she does this is a complete fucking mystery. is she doing it on her own, or is this a machination by a larger faction?*

and...what does it mean to "hide all manner of rituals"? *is she casting an illusion?* during the events of the game, the player actively works to break down the walls separating the mundane from the arcane. if the player has enough **insight**, smatterings of evidence of these rituals can be seen and heard, hinting at something dark boiling under the surface of yharnam. rom's death drops the veil obfuscating reality and exposes the true nature of the world; rom has a narrative purpose for her existence in yharnam.

but underground, in the labyrinth, there's nothing going on. she's just the final boss of lower pthumeru, layer 3.

ah, wait. hold on. lower pthumeru is the only chalice dungeon with a fourth layer¹⁰? why is that? what's down there?



Figure 66: eek!!! its the bloodletting beast!!!!

AAAH

the bloodletting beast is a grotesque abomination cut nearly in half from the efforts of the previous prospectors. your hunter will eventually succeed where others have visibly failed; his grotesque wound does not seem to bother him outside of forcing him into a hunched posture. *bare patches of flesh hint at the origin of the beast: one of his arms is visibly paler than the other. some of his fur is silver. in addition, his mouth hangs open in prototypical pthumerian fashion. his bloodshot eyes (which look more like the eyes of the undead church giants than any living pthumerians) appear to be barely open, but he's actually blind. you can hide from him in plain sight by standing still far enough away.*

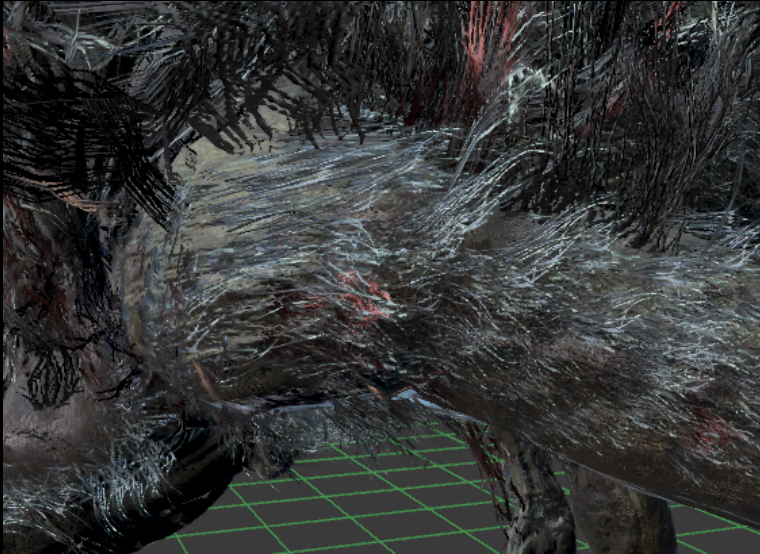


Figure 67: the silver fur of the bloodletting beast

his name in the JPN release is "host¹¹ of the beast blood". behold! **the origin of the beast scourge blood! the bloodletting beast!**

you would never be able to hear it unless you hacked the game...but the beast's body periodically gurgles as though something within is writhing with purpose...alert and alive.

who the hell is this, and why is he here? what ritual is he doing that rom is hiding? who

knows! we'll try to talk more about the implications of the bloodletting beast when the second one shows up with an even more startling appearance.

following my tenuous theory of chalice dungeon progression, defeating the bloodletting beast would have dropped a new chalice in the laps of the healing church, but communing with this one was going to be a much more miserable task. until this moment, all it took to satiate a chalice was blood. now, it wanted flesh.

-
1. it's an orbitoclast, a tool used in lobotomies.
 2. confirmed by miyazaki in this interview (pages 009-015).

Miyazaki: That's another hard one. Hmm... Which would it be for this game? Maybe this is cheating a little, but if you ignore gameplay for a moment, it's Rom, the Vacuous Spider. From the design and atmosphere to that kind of plaintive air **she** has, I really like **her**. There are some oddly cute aspects to **her** moves and modeling.

its just bc she has so many feet :\
:

3. there are several examples of this in the game.
4. see page 67 and page 116 for more on "milkweed".
5. the ferns were at one point going to be of some importance. they can be seen growing in some environments, such as yahar'gul. means jack shit to me though.



Figure 68: the fiddleheads of yahar'gul

6. see note 3 on page 57 for my evidence of byrgenwerth's proximity to the hintertomb.

7. tomb mold is once again present in this location, signaling its proximity to the dungeons.

8. see note 6 on page 57 for a translation of "bloodstone" that explains "some substances in the blood harden" after death. *it's possible rom(s) is/are comprised entirely of this unspecified substance, resulting in this statue-esque corpse.*

9. kinhunter blood gems have become the definitive standard on what is or isn't kin. if it takes bonus damage, its kin.

10. see page 28 and page 44 for evidence and theorizing on the significance of 4th layers and illusions.

11. one of the best names of all time. host as in "one who receives/carries", host as in the wafer used in catholic communion, and host as in "what parasites feed off of". knocked it out of the fucking park with this one. "bloodletting" as a translation does a solid job of communicating the religious/medical aspect of his existence. elegant translation solution.

TO BE CONTINUED

APPENDIX

CARYLL RUNES

REFERENCE AND ANALYSIS

ANTI-CLOCKWISE AND CLOCKWISE METAMORPHOSIS (RESPECTIVELY):



The discovery of blood made their dream of evolution a reality. Metamorphosis, and the excesses and deviation that followed. were only the beginning.

SHAPE: the rune is a simple set of curves that turn in both directions at once. very clever.

EFFECT: turned counter-clockwise, it boosts stamina. turned clockwise, it boosts hp.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

anti-clockwise:

- the forbidden woods, on a yharnamite's corpse near the celestial emissaries in the ravine.
- the lecture building, after talking to patches face to face as an apology present.
- lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.

clockwise:

- the forbidden woods, on the corpse of a yharnamite, curled in front of a great one's gravestone. this gravestone is near the shadows of yharnam and behind a locked gate.
- the nightmare frontier, on the corpse of a healing church doctor near the patches trap.
- pthumeru ihyll (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: no(?!).

NOTES:

a rune that represents the bloody process of transformation via what the re-translation describes as a "diseased or perverse" metamorphosis. the locations of these runes are kind of strange and all over the place. *"anti-clockwise" should logically be the cosmic/eyes alternative to the beast/blood "clockwise" relationship, but the strongest version of "anti-clockwise" can be found in loran, a land of beasts.*

following the development of "anti-clockwise" by tracing its locations, we can infer its relationship to the intentions and discoveries of yharnam academia. the first tier is found on an un-transformed corpse in the valley where fauxsefka, a choir member, has been dumping her celestial emissaries. the second tier is given to the hunter by the apostle of the byrgenwerth lecture building (patches), and the third tier is found in the land that drew the interest of the school of mensis, loran. it really feels like it should be isz for this; the best explanation i have for this oddity is pretty unsatisfactory. its all i got.

the first tier of "clockwise" can be found in the forbidden woods; *the first rune's proximity to the shadows of yharnam and its strongest iteration's exclusive appearance in pthumeru ihyll implies a relationship between the rune and pthumerian royalty.* this rune's second tier can be found close to where patches kicks you in the nightmare frontier, a location strongly associated with loran. "anti-clockwise" and "clockwise" are first discovered in the forbidden woods, both have an association to patches, and both end in the chalice dungeons. *i don't know if that means anything, but it's a neat and subtle series of parallels that truly drives home the foil-like nature of the runes. they are not opposites, they are two roads that wind in such a way that they will inevitably cross paths.*

despite the apparent age of the rune, it does not appear on the astral clocktower. there is an unusual rune that gets passed around as "twisted metamorphosis", but it doesn't actually look like the metamorphosis runes at all. it seems like a tenuous and unfounded fan-theory.

despite their origin in lower loran and pthumeru ihyll, these runes do not appear on the astral clocktower.



Figure 70: a gravestone of the nightmare frontier.

literal examples of "anti-clockwise" and "clockwise" metamorphosis can be seen in-game: the nightmare frontier headstones feature crosses turning in various directions. in addition, the depiction of the moon presence littered throughout the frontier features a familiar set of twirls.



Figure 69: another nightmare frontier gravestone.

the slime scholar of the lecture hall (anti-clockwise) and the loran silverbeast of

uh, loran and the nightmare frontier (clockwise) twist their heads in the direction of their respective metamorphosis.



Figure 71: a slime scholar with a head tilting anti-clockwise.



Figure 72: a loran silverbeast with a head tilting clockwise.

BEAST



A transcription of the roar of a labyrinth beast, the bearer of the "Beast" rune has accentuated transformation effects.

"Beast" is one of the early Caryll Runes, as well as one of the first to be deemed forbidden. The discovery of blood entailed the discovery of undesirable beasts.

SHAPE: the rune is a clawed hand with six fingers. it's an unusual number for a beast. as far as i can tell, no beast in the game has this number of fingers.

EFFECT: higher beasthood attack power; beasthood is active only when using a beast blood pellet or when transformed using the "beast's embrace" rune. also secretly negates fall damage? bizarre.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

- the cathedral ward, dropped by the beast-possessed soul beneath the abandoned workshop.
- the afflicted beggar, via iosefka's clinic.
- lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

the beast claw, a weapon intended to be used in conjunction with this rune (and "beast's embrace"), can also be found in lower loran treasure rooms.

with the highest tier of this rune, you will take no fall damage at all. you will still die from heights programmed to be certain kills, but anything that deals damage is negated.

this rune has a simple progression: its weakest iteration is found in the only BPS in yharnam, which is trapped or imprisoned beneath the healing church workshop in oedon chapel. the second tier is dropped by the suspicious beggar, who can transform at will into an abhorrent darkbeast. the highest tier is found in the lowest parts of loran. *could the beast-possessed soul have originated from loran?*

BLOOD RAPTURE



"Blood Rapture" is the raw euphoria of the warmth of blood. Restores HP with visceral attacks, one of the darker hunter techniques.

This rune resonates with servants of the Queen, carrier of the Child of Blood, who yearn for their Queen's blood with little hope of requitement.

For them, they find solace in "Blood Rapture," that serves as a surrogate for their desires.

SHAPE: the rune is an eye open wide, or a splatter of blood hitting the ground.
dealer's choice

EFFECT: visceral attacks restore HP up to 300 points.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: no (!).

FOUND:

- the forbidden woods, dropped by the shadows of yharnam.

- cursed and defiled pthumeru (root), in a treasure coffin.
- the grand cathedral, dropped by the bloody crow of cainhurst.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: no.

NOTES:

assuming that the appeal of being made a vileblood is gaining a smidgen of eternal life (based on the events in game and the HP restorative effects of the "corruption" rune), then this rune's purpose is made explicit in the text: in lieu of what the corruption rune offers, the servants of the blood queen(s) make do with this facsimile that restores health in great, bloody eruptions.

"blood rapture" is one of the runes that discusses visceral attacks as being a "dark technique". this practice when combined with "blood rapture" is evidently dark enough that it comes from the cursed and defiled dungeon, a rare place for a rune loot drop. *how does "blood rapture", or all visceral attacks, relate to curses and defilement? given the number of abandoned infant corpses in various states of development that the hunter can pick up in the deepest parts of the labyrinth, this might have an unpleasant explanation.*

despite its origin in cursed and defiled pthumeru, this rune does not appear on the astral clocktower.

this rune was "reveler" in development.

CLAWMARK



The "Clawmark" is an impulse to seek the warmth of blood like a beast. It strengthens visceral attacks, one of the darker hunter techniques.

Although the difference is subtle, Runesmith Caryll describes the "Beast" as a horrific and unwelcome instinct deep within the hearts of men, while "Clawmark" is an alluring invitation to accept this very nature.

SHAPE: its a clawmark. or clawmarks.

EFFECT: strengthens visceral attacks up to 30%.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: no.

FOUND:

- yahar'gul, dropped by the beast claw hunter in the chapel.
- central yharnam, dropped by gilbert after his transformation by the blood-moon.
- lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: no.

NOTES:

seems simple enough. clawmark is an "inhuman sound" made by hunters who are metaphorically beastly in their hunt for blood. its strongest iteration can be found in loran with the other beast items.

despite its origin in lower loran, this rune does not appear on the astral clock-tower.

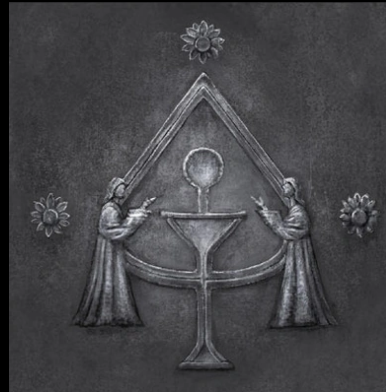
in contrast to "beast", which is banned, "clawmark" is more socially permissible.

this rune was "destroyer" in development.

when the rune is warped so that the line running through it is horizontal, it has some eerie overlap with the "lake" rune. i don't think this means anything, i think it's a neat way to maintain some internal design consistency.



COMMUNION



Several runes relate to "blood," including "Communion," which raises the maximum number of blood vials one may carry.

This rune represents the Healing Church and its ministers. Blood ministration is, of course, the pursuit of communion.

SHAPE: its complex. if we go by the healing church icon that took its inspiration from "communion", its a literal depiction of a chalice being filled. this ritual is the act of "communion", or the act of breaking seals in the chalice dungeon. the three dots orbiting the center shape became lumenflowers in the final design. the unusual, glowing center of the rune resembles the hunter's mark, inverted. or an eye. or a chalice. the white part could also resemble a leaf and stem. who knows. more importantly, who cares.

EFFECT: raises the maximum number of blood vials +1 per level

SUBSTANCE?: paleblood(?)

CENTER: orange glow...not a shine.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

- oedon chapel, after defeating the bloodstarved beast and riding the elevator behind the opened door. there is a chest immediately after exiting the elevator.
- the lecture building, in a chest on the second floor.
- iosefka's clinic, in a chest close to the nearly transformed celestial emissary.
- upper cathedral ward, dropped by the celestial emissary boss.
- pthumeru ihyll (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes. and its the largest slice on the wheel.

NOTES:

arguably one of the most important runes in the game, as evidenced by it being one of the two runes to have five tiers (the other being "formless oedon"). i don't think it's a stretch to say that oedon and the act of communion are directly related given both their runes both have descriptions that boil down to "let's make special blood".

"communion" is a rune that "relates to blood" or, as they say, has a "nuance of blood". it shares this trait with "formless oedon", "oedon writhe", "corruption", "hunter", "impurity", and "beast's embrace" (arguably, also "eye" and "milkweed").

the rune is found almost exclusively in chests rather than on corpses, a strange place for a rune to be located. they are also all found in places associated with the healing church.

tracing this rune's locations reveals more about the nature of "communion": there is the ritual act of catholic communion mimicked in the literal blood and flesh ceremonies to unlock seals in the chalice dungeon, but there is also the attempts at communication with the great ones, which became the primary focus of the church's research. the weakest tier of the rune is found in the healing church workshop above oedon (!) chapel. the second tier is found in the lecture building second floor, where there are notes making reference to the mysterious entity known only as "paleblood". tiers three and four directly relate to the celestial emissaries, whose data-mined name is "messengers of the moon".

despite representing a modern organization, it appears to be an ancient rune. tier five with the unusual glow can only be found in pthumeru ihyll.

EYE



A transcription of "eye," as spoken by left-behind Great Ones. Allows one to make additional discoveries.

Eyes symbolize the truth Master Willem sought in his research. Disillusioned by the limits of human intellect, Master Willem looked to beings from higher planes for guidance, and sought to line his brain with eyes in order to elevate his thoughts.

SHAPE: its a star with an eye in it.

EFFECT: raises item discovery up to +100.

SUBSTANCE?: blue blood, *arguably clarified to be the blood of ebrietas, the "left behind great one" in the re-translation.*

CENTER: orange shine, but more yellow. i'm going to chalk this up to color coordination issues. blue/orange is a little played out.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

- nightmare of mensis, very close to the elevator to mergo's loft. behind a rock.
- byrgenwerth, dropped by master willem after killing him.
- isz (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

it is very, very strange, knowing that this is specifically intended to be referencing ebrietas, to find this rune in the nightmare of mensis. i did not fully appreciate the strangeness until late into editing this document. that's something to chew on for a while.

when cast, the hunter's tool "a call beyond" forms stars that align into the shape of this rune above the hunter's head. this further cements "a call beyond" as originating from ebrietas.



Figure 73: "a call beyond" as seen from above, stars forming the shape of a five pointed star

the "arcane" stat is directly tied to the "discovery" stat; increasing arcane also boosts discovery. the more discovery you have, the more likely you are to find bonus item drops from (certain) enemies. the arcane elements are tied to eyes and the cosmos, so this is not a very complicated rune.

it's reasonable to assume that the blue goo of the rune is the same as the consumable "blue elixir". it's a very uncommon color in the game.

absolutely nothing in the game tells you this (*it had to be sussed by a very dedicated hunter*), but the eye rune is not the only way to boost your discovery level. if the hunter wears a discovery boosting rune ("milkweed" gives a piddly +10 and technically fulfills the requirements) while exploring a chalice dungeon with the "cursed" modifier, they will get a whopping +1000 bonus toward discovery. an absolutely bizarre, but intentional interaction. *what does "eye" have to do with curses and defilement? how many times has the desire for "eyes on the inside" lead to the death of a great one's child and a subsequent curse? what does ebrietas have to do with this?!*

"Oh, fair maiden, why is it that you weep?"

FORMLESS OEDON



The Great One Oedon, lacking form, exists only in voice, and is symbolised by this rune. Those who memorize it enjoy a larger supply of Quicksilver Bullets.

Human or no, the oozing blood is a medium of the highest grade, and the essence of the formless Great One, Oedon. Both Oedon, and his inadvertent worshippers, surreptitiously seek the precious blood.

SHAPE: oh, this is a clever one. [eagle eyed redditors](#) discovered that this shape is the red moon descending on yahar'gull!



Figure 74: the red moon of yahar'gul. the curve of the full moon is intersecting with the spires of the yhar'nam advent plaza where rituals take place

EFFECT: raises the number of quicksilver bullets up to +5.

SUBSTANCE?: blood.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

- o iosefka's clinic, dropped by gascoigne's youngest daughter after her transformation into a celestial emissary.
- o lower pthumeru (root), in a treasure coffin.
- o oedon chapel, dropped by the oedon chapel dweller.

- oedon chapel, in a chest on the upper floor.
- pthumeru ihyll (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

another doozy. like "communion", this rune has five tiers. tier one of the rune is dropped by gascoigne's daughter, *further tying him to oedon in a semi-meaningful capacity*. this drop ONLY occurs after her transformation into a celestial emissary and will not drop if she dies via pig. whatever fauxsefka does to change people to emissaries makes them receptive to hearing the voices of great ones.

oedon has been around long enough to be found in the deepest levels of the pthumerian labyrinth and is widely regarded to be the father of baby mergo, the newborn daughter of the pthumerian queen. unsurprisingly, his rune is also found in his titular chapel, but tier four is just sitting in a treasure chest overlooking the chapel's main room. like the first tier of "communion", it is in an area that cannot be accessed without defeating the blood-starved beast and obtaining the pthumerian chalice. *until you get inadvertently roped into "surreptitiously seek[ing] the precious blood", oedon will not open his chapel to you. after all, he would like you to join the "the pursuit of communion"*.

a very good theory i like involves the oedon chapel dweller's role in arianna's alien pregnancy. arianna is the only character who talks to the chapel dweller at length after they are quietly ostracized by the other yharnamites. i do not think he did so maliciously, but his worship (inadvertent or otherwise) made him a catalyst for formless oedon, who exists "only in voice", to impregnate arianna supernaturally and without anyone knowing.

this rune has the third largest segment on the astral clocktower.

this rune was "oedon liason" in development.

HEIR



The "Heir" sees sentimentality in the warmth of blood, and acknowledges visceral attacks as one of the darker hunter techniques.

Perhaps the "Heir" is a hunter who bears the echoing will of those before him.

SHAPE: *maybe a weapon piercing multiple organs?? the rune gives you more blood echoes for visceral attacks and "visceral" in the jpn translation was literally "inner organs"; i agree with the re-translators that this is a crazy good translation choice. visceral might not be 1:1 and literal, but it correctly evokes the same imagery that the original intended. "inner organ attacks" at least sort of brings some clarity to the rune's potential intent. this is a depiction of blood echoes transferring during a visceral attack.*

many of my pals have pointed out that it also looks like sutures, and while i agree and recognize stitches as a common design element in bloodborne, i'm not sure how it would relate to the effect of the rune, or its name. still, hard to ignore.

EFFECT: more blood echoes from visceral attacks. sorry i spoiled it before.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: no.

FOUND:

- the tomb of oedon, dropped by henryk.
- yahar'gul, on a completely random and uninteresting corpse near the second bell ringer.
- pthumeru ihyll (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: no.

NOTES:

the titular "heir" refers to hunters that carry blood echoes, which are, in the JPN script "血の遺志", "dying wills of blood". blood carries consciousness (as we know), so the hunter is taking on what the re-translation describes as "unfulfilled hopes and desires of one who has passed away". "will" is essentially a tangible force in bloodborne, like "mania", that be found within blood.

this rune is a tough nut for me to crack. i can understand that the narrative purpose of henryk carrying the rune is to imply that he is picking up whatever grim task gascoigne was embroiled in before he was killed, but the yahar'gul corpse has me stumped. henryk's life was noted to have been "tragically long", a likely consequence of a hunter necessitating so much exposure to the old blood and taking on so many blood echoes; perhaps the cultists of yahar'gul were collecting yharnamites and hunters bloated with blood echoes in order to fuel their weird ceremonies. it's funny that it's not a secret rune, though. it seems as though it was known that a hunter's work was gruesome and required taking on a sort of cosmic responsibility.

despite its origin in pthumeru ihyll, this rune does not appear on the astral clocktower.

MOON



A transcription of "moon," as spoken by the Great Ones inhabiting the nightmare.

The Great Ones that inhabit the nightmare are sympathetic in spirit, and often answer when called upon.

SHAPE: communion, but breaking.



EFFECT: more blood echoes from defeated enemies.

SUBSTANCE?: the rune is red, raw, and scarred. no other rune looks like this.

CENTER: yellow shine. communion does not have the shine and the shine color matches "eye". more color-theory based choices?

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

- yahar'gul, in the center of yahar'gul chapel on an ordinary corpse.
- the nightmare of mensis, at the bottom of the winding staircase where you chase micolash.
- the nightmare of mensis, after "making contact" with the brain of mensis.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

this is the first rune that cannot be found in the chalice dungeons at all. "moon" appears to have originated entirely in yharnam long after the fall of pthumeru. *"communion" is ancient, so its corruption and bastardization (literally??) is a modern phenomenon that was born in yahar'gul.*

obtaining "moon" from the brain of mensis requires the hunter to use a gesture learned from a petrified corpse facing the celestial emissaries in the upper cathedral ward. this corpse is baffling: it wears weathered scraps of cloth, trousers (like the ones the yahar'gul residents wear), and a relatively unblemished healing church shawl. it has shackles on its wrists and ankles; the statues in this area depict unknown, pregnant amygdala-esque/beastly creatures who bear the same shackles. *i have no idea.*

the corpse didn't even complete the gesture. if the hunter does this gesture and waits about a minute, they will slowly move their arms clockwise so that their right hand is above their head. only THEN will the brain say "moon" to you.



Figure 75: the corpse that teaches you "make contact" draped in the holy shawl.

i'm going to very cautiously offer my own interpretation of the japanese script that goes against both of the re-translators, but with the strong reminder that i do not speak japanese and this is armchair translating by the god-king of amateurs: "悪夢の上位者とは、いわば感応する精神であり" could be "The Great Ones of the nightmare are, so to speak, responsive to prayer". "sympathetic in spirit" appears to be a sort of euphemism for "telepathy" and given the catholic aesthetics of the game, i think my interpretation is a valid alternative that offers a little clarification on the nature of the relationship between the great ones and humanity.

OEDON WRITHE



"Writhe" sees a subtle mucous in the warmth of blood, and acknowledges visceral attacks as one of the darker hunter techniques.

Human or no. the oozing blood is a medium of the highest grade, and the essence of the formless Great One, Oedon. Both Oedon, and Oedon's inadvertent worshippers, surreptitiously seek the precious blood.

SHAPE: unclear. maybe a little microorganism, a phantasm. it's not the last one we'll see.

EFFECT: visceral attacks restore quicksilver bullets up to +3.

SUBSTANCE?: blood.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: no.

FOUND:

- in yahar'gul, oedon chapel, or iosefka's clinic, dropped by adella, nun of the healing church.
- iosefka's clinic, dropped by imposter iosekfa before the blood moon.

- pthumeru ihyll (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

strongly associated with women of the healing church (or pthumeru), i don't know what this little rune is supposed to be, really. i don't know where the translation got "mucous" from; the re-translated japanese is just "an oozing secret in the blood", which would be quicksilver. is quicksilver a mucous? i'm not a scientist or a pervert, so i don't know. *i would assume this rune is found in these specific women due to their previous status as blood saints.*

this rune was "lison" (without oedon) in development.

GUIDANCE



A Caryl rune discovered by the old hunter Ludwig along with the Holy Moonlight Sword.

When Ludwig closed his eyes, he saw darkness, or perhaps nothingness, and that is where he discovered the tiny beings of light. Ludwig was certain that these playful dancing sprites offered "guidance," and emptied Ludwig of his fears, at least in the midst of a hunt.

SHAPE: almost certainly a depiction of ludwig's "slivers of light", a phantasm. a parasite.

EFFECT: boosts rally potential.

SUBSTANCE?: none, but it shines with a pale green glow identical to the holy moonlight sword.

CENTER: yellow shine. color choice again?

SECRET?: no.

FOUND:

- in the research hall, dropped by a carrion crow on the top floor.
- in the hunter's nightmare, dropped by ludwig, the holy blade.
- THERE IS NO TIER THREE GUIDANCE!!!

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

this one is an odd duck: it's the only rune limited to two tiers. its clear that the third tier was INTENDED to be found in the chalice dungeons (it even appears in the official guide!), but it isn't. it cannot be obtained through any means but save-editing. the code for the item exists, but it has no drop table. weird. it was meant to be in depth 5 (indicating the difficulty, not the number of layers) dungeons, so it was meant to be a very, very late game item.

the first tier of this rune is also...broken? it's never been patched, so it's not clear. but the crow will drop this rune on repeat playthroughs instead of dropping a different item on NG+. the effect stacks. its not helpful.

ARCANE/DISSIPATING/FADING/GREAT LAKE



This transcription of the Great Ones' inhuman voices ripples like a watery reflection. This rune means "Lake," and those who memorize it enjoy reduced ____ damage.

Great volumes of water serve as a bulwark guarding sleep, and an augur of the eldritch Truth.

Overcome this hindrance, and seek what is yours.

SHAPE: it evokes the shape of a waveform, but it is a depiction of a false reflection. see notes for more details.

EFFECT: increases defenses (in order): arcane, bolt, fire, all damage, physical damage.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: no.

FOUND:

- arcane:
 - yahar'gul, after the blood moon. near where you teleport using the bath.
 - byrgenwerth, outside.
 - isz gravestone (root), in a treasure coffin.
- dissipating:
 - the forbidden woods, under the roots where the rotted corpses are.
 - ailing loran (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.
- fading:
 - the nightmare frontier, where the nightmare hunters are milling around.
 - ailing loran (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.
- great:
 - lower hintertomb (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - upper cathedral ward, where ebrietas' children look over the balcony toward her.
 - isz gravestone (root), in a treasure coffin.
- lake:
 - hemwick charnel lane, at the verrrrry edge of the broken bridge to cainhurst.
 - cursed and defiled pthumeru (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - pthumeru ihyll (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

ample evidence sourced from the game files themselves suggests that byrgenwerth was once a larger area with an upside down portion resembling the lecture hall located beneath the lake. this rune appears to represent the mechanics that lead to the (intended) state of byrgenwerth: what's reflected in the lake is obscured from reality and exists only in the reflection.

the concept of a "dissipating lake" lines up with its connections to loran; loran's destruction was in part due to becoming arid enough to generate the blue bolts of static electricity that crackle in the air. "fading lake" has similar logic applied to it; the nightmare frontier's geology bears evidence that it was once exposed to a volcanic heat that could have evaporated any water that was once present. the frontier is, of course, in some way physically, literally connected to loran.

"great lake" is strange. the lower hintertomb and isz appear to be connected somehow; they show up together frequently enough in these lists to be more than a little coincidental. there seems to be an insinuation that ebrietas has some relationship to water and lakes, but the effects of "great lake" do not reflect her stats. her arena is in a little inch of water? is that anything?

regular "lake" is pretty literal. the first one is found overlooking the lake separating you from cainhurst ("Great volumes of water serve as a bulwark[...]Overcome this hindrance, and seek what is yours"). much like the hardy, undying pthumerians and their ancestors, "lake" offers increased resistance to physical attacks. hence, the rune's stronger iterations being found only in the deepest layers of the pthumeru labyrinth.

an iteration of "lake" can be found in a cursed and defiled pthumerian dungeon, perhaps intended to be a reference to the unused "lake of mud" boss arena.

funnily enough, "lake" is asymmetrical on both the x and y axis, making it a poor depiction of a reflection.

CLEAR/STUNNING/GREAT DEEP SEA



This transcription of the Great Ones' inhuman voices depicts downreaching currents.

This rune means "Deep Sea," and grants augmented resistance. Great volumes of water serve as a bulwark guarding sleep, and an augur of the eldritch Truth.

Overcome this hindrance, and seek what is yours.

SHAPE: many sources converging into a single point. it tells you, its currents. *or a fungus root system if you want to ignore the text.*

EFFECT: increases status defense (in order): slow poison, rapid poison, all, and frenzy.

SUBSTANCE?: none.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: no (?).

FOUND:

- clear:
 - the forbidden woods, on a corpse behind a great one's tombstone.
 - the nightmare frontier, on a corpse overlooking the poison swamp.
 - lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.
- stunning:
 - lower hintertombs (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - the nightmare frontier, on a corpse in the caves overlooking the poison swamp.
 - lower loran (root), in a treasure coffin.
- great:
 - lower hintertombs (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - the nightmare frontier, inside the caves of the poison swamp.
 - isz gravestone (root), in a treasure coffin.
- deep sea:
 - lower hintertombs (root), in a treasure coffin.
 - the forbidden woods, near the two big snake balls.
 - isz gravestone (root), in a treasure coffin.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

NOTES:

it's not super clear if this is a secret rune or not. the UK version got a patch that removed the "secret" part which would make it more in line with the conventions of the "lake" runes. the UK patch is pretty good, so let's assume it's not a secret.

"clear deep sea" was once "murky deep sea" before it was inexplicably patched out. i'm not sure why, since "murky" lines up with previous use of the word to describe slow poison and specific locations.

some patterns worth pointing out: the two poison based runes, clear and stunning, originate from loran and both have a version that can be found in the nightmare frontier. we can assume the "clear" (or as it was once known "murky"), "stunning" and "great" sea in question is (or was) the nightmare frontier poison swamp before loran did whatever it did to itself.

it can be presumed that the forbidden woods is the access point to the hintertomb via the shortcut cave, and from that point tomb prospectors and students were able to access loran and isz. from loran, these parties could access the nightmare frontier. i wasn't anticipating the isz connection, but isz's connection with the lower hintertomb is less tenuous than i thought given the emphasis on how many bugs (phantasms) are running around.

"sea" is the second largest segment on the astral clocktower.

CONTRACTS AND OATHS

these runes are translated either as "oaths" or "contracts" and are brands indicating that a hunter has entered a contract with/swore an oath to a great one. *my speculation about which great ones are responsible for what oaths should be treated as non-canon musings with provided textual basis when possible.*

CORRUPTION



Several runes contain a nuance of "Blood," including the rune of "Corruption," associated with the oath of the corrupt.

Pledgers to this oath are Cainhurst Vilebloods, hunters of blood who find dregs for their Queen in coldblood, particularly in that of hunters.

Yet the corrupt are heretics in the eyes of the Church, and thus subject to the wrath of the Executioners.

SHAPE: a bloodline being refined.

EFFECT: HP +1 near death.

SUBSTANCE?: blood

CENTER: none

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND: the vileblood queen's throne room, granted by queen annalise of cainhurst upon swearing fealty to the vilebloods.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: no.

OATH SWORN TO?: oedon, as suggested by the "nuance of blood".

NOTES:

this rune is the first to recognize the fact that some runes are covered in shit and some aren't. "blood" appears to be capitalized for no reason. the re-translations don't bother to so i assume it's not a name. translation quirk.

this rune is "kegare" in the jpn translation, a specific type of spiritual impurity. it also grants you a sliver of the vileblood's power: a weak eternal life. with this rune, you will be able to harvest blood dregs from specific enemies.

the rune is was clearly visually influenced by the egyptian ankh, a symbol of life, death, immortality, late 80s to mid 90s goth culture, and so many other things.

HUNTER



This red-smudged rune means "Hunter," and has been adopted by those who have taken the Hunter of Hunters oath.

These watchmen admonish those who have become addled with blood. Be they men or beasts, anyone who has threatened the pledgers of the "Hunter" oath surely has an issue with blood.

SHAPE: a body hanging upside down during the process of exsanguination (or as a warning), or a bell.

EFFECT: stamina recovery speed up.

SUBSTANCE?: blood

CENTER: none

SECRET?: no.

FOUND: cathedral ward, passed onto you by eileen the crow if you save her life from the bloody crow of cainhurst.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

OATH SWORN TO?: oedon, as suggested by the "nuance of blood".

NOTES:

arguably the single most important rune in the game, the hunter's rune dates back to the most ancient layers of pthumeru where it can be found displayed prominently on tombstones, altars, and in decorations. when the player character "signs their contract" at the beginning of the game, the hunter's mark is etched into their mind.

the version eileen hands you is one that has been whittled down over the millennia to just the barest essentials needed to evoke the image of a hanging corpse; previous iterations included the figure's legs. hunter of hunter eileen, who passes you this rune, dresses as a crow to suggest sky burial to honor the practices of the first hunter of hunters. a "blasphemous yharnam funeral" is burying the dead in the ground; the process of a "virtuous native funeral" involves hanging the deceased upside down in the air. look around yharnam, especially hemwick lane, and you will see the prevalence of "sky burials" by people who are maybe more pthumerian than yharnamite.

the hunter's mark also describes the rune as "dangling, upside down".



Figure 76: the evolution of the hunter's rune as seen in the pthumerian dungeons.



a corpse at the entrance of the fishing hamlet with a painfully clear demonstration of the design's intent. (source)

HOWEVER: there are some strange, additional observations to make about this rune. the hunter's mark (not the rune) and [the bold hunter's mark](#) both grant the hunter the ability to "re-awaken" at the last used lamp if the hunter thinks about it hard enough. a lamp is comprised of two elements: the light itself and a set of bells.



Figure 77: a lamp, or lantern, that returns hunters to the dream.

bells play a specific function in the world of yharnam: you use them to summon things or people "across the gaps of worlds". like its respawn mechanics, bloodborne has folded the online play into the lore without simply hand-waving it off as a game contrivance. the [silencing blank](#) explains that hunters are "linked by the resonance of bells with special encoded timbres". the hunter can "cross gaps" by using the [old hunter bell](#), the [beckoning bell](#), the [small resonant bell](#), and the [sinister resonant bell](#). [the bell ringing woman](#) summons doppelgangers of common enemies to defend her using her titular bell and also uses it to summon [the one reborn](#). [brador](#) uses a sinister bell to summon a version of himself in his prime to various locations in the nightmare, but the hunter won't be able to hear it until they're properly attuned.

there are several objects in the game that make a ringing sound but are not bells, such as the burning corpses of yahar'gul or some forms of arcane magic. a ringing sound can be heard before ebrietas performs "a call beyond". [the pilgrim chalice dungeon enemy rings](#) when casting her spells.

take my theories with a grain of salt, but the mechanics of re-awakening have confounded me: if the hunter rune is also intended to be a bell (but mostly it's a hanging body, i realize that), could the bells of the lanterns be attuned to the "resonance" of the "hunter" rune, calling them back to the lanterns? after all, a rune is just a transcription of the voice of the great ones. a sound. a timbre. a resonance. "hunter" is a rune for those who are called forth to fulfill their promise.

an idea to chew on: when a hunter's contract is complete, or the mark is removed forcibly (as may be the case for the bold hunter's mark), the rune disappears and the hunter will no longer be beckoned to the dream. they are free from the hunt...for now. but what happens next time, and there's always a next time, when the hunter can no longer return to the dream and faces the hunt without a contract? man becomes mortal once again. thus, many remain trapped in service to the old blood until succumbing to madness.

this is what happens during the "yharnam sunrise" ending. as we all know, the hunter will return soon for new game plus, ready to sign a new contract. for all our hunter knows, it was all just a bad dream. the cycle continues unabated and no better than it was before.

this is the worst possible ending of the three bloodborne endings.

ancient pthumerian wedlock is described as a "blood contract" that was only permitted for people who would commit to bearing the child of a great one. based on the blood-stained altars found in chalice dungeon fights against the pthumerian queen and ebrietas, "hunter" is at least one rune associated with this pledge.

IMPURITY



This rune, discovered inside the forbidden beast eater, came to symbolize "Impurity," and the oath of the League.

Confederates of The League cooperate with hunters from other worlds, and hunt to discover vermin.

Vermin writhe within filth, and are the root of man's impurity. Crush all vermin without hesitation.

SHAPE: the least gratifying answer is a person with arms outspread dripping blood (echoes) or vermin. that doesn't feel right. so *what about a basin overflowing?*

EFFECT: raises max HP during co-op.

SUBSTANCE?: blood

CENTER: none

SECRET?: no.

FOUND: given to you by valtr, master of the league after joining the league.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes...but it's different!

OATH SWORN TO?: oedon, as suggested by the "nuance of blood".

NOTES:

there's something hinky going on here. this detail needs to be noted first and foremost: "impurity"'s appearance on the astral clocktower is different than its equippable counterpart.

REALLY different. i don't know why i assumed *valtr* and the confederates of the league were independent of the healing church; i guess because it's stressed that valtr himself was a foreigner. at least one of the confederates, yamamura, was probably involved in the fishing hamlet massacre since he winds up in forever jail in the DLC. *we've seen long, parallel lines descending from prior runes to depict a substance being poured. we've also seen the long parabola shape in oedon and blood associated runes. and the dots appear in runes that revolve around collecting something within blood. it's like a mash-up of a bunch of different rune elements we've encountered before this rune was added by the DLC.*



Figure 78: the fucked up impurity rune on the astral clocktower.

equipping "impurity" will allow you to collect "vermin" from bosses if you defeat them with a league cooperator. if you don't play online, that limits you to a handful of fights: the shadows of yharnam, rom the vacuous spider, ludwig the accused/holy blade, darkbeast paarl, the one reborn, and laurence the first vicar. your canon co-operators are henryk, the younger madaras twin, yamamura the wanderer, and valtr, the presumed beast-eater who discovered the rune. these allies are beckoned via the old hunter's bell.

the relationship between these characters, bosses, and vermin deserves more investigation in the final document; there is a lot of weird shit here to sort through and some of this information came from future fromsoft games. a quick overview: vermin are oedon's augurs that thrive in pools of bright red blood. valtr, evidently, lost the ability to see vermin long ago. yamamura "stared into impurity" and went insane. the madaras twins, who have a weird "raised by wolves snakes" origin story, discovered vermin in their snake and evidently came to fatal blows over it (the older madaras twin's corpse can be found in the hunter's nightmare, while the younger one ambushes you later in the game). it was likely that the twins were beast eaters as well given their circumstances.

there are also two super-strong, red-eyed old hunters in the hunter's nightmare that will drop one vermin each.

vermin are shown emerging from a pool of blood too shallow for it to have been hiding in. liquids appear as a means of transportation throughout bloodborne, from satiating a chalice with blood, to the moonside lake, to the mysterious baths of yahar'gul. this could be another example of this mechanism; oedon's augurs (and his inadvertent worshippers) move through blood.

this rune was originally known as "stagnation" in the JPN script. there are loose associations between the concept of stagnation, slow poison (found primarily in the snakes of yharnam), the forbidden woods, the hintertomb, and a mysterious cut location known only as "the grand lake of mud".

because of these connections (tenuous though they may be) my best guess, emphasis on guess, is that this rune and its evolution are attempts to transcribe something that was not seen directly by the player, but was heavily hinted at by characters in the game: the plip, plop, drip, drop-ing of a stagnant pool just barely...just BARELY...overflowing. little drops at a time over the edges.



Figure 79: vermin

but: that's just a guess. and why would that lead to being able to see vermin? just another classic bloodborne mystery.

please see the first addendum for too many words on sekiro, centipedes, and stagnation.

RADIANCE



The rune for "Radiance," adopted by the sworn Executioners under Logarius' command.

The executioners despise the impure Vilebloods, and no matter what the circumstances, would never cooperate with the bloodthirsty hunters who serve the undead queen, Annalise.

SHAPE: an eye bathed in a beam of golden light? the triangle shape strongly suggests that it has a relationship with the arcane.

EFFECT: raises max HP during co-op.

SUBSTANCE?: a shining, unknown golden fluid. this does not appear elsewhere in the game.

CENTER: none

SECRET?: no. the US release erroneously refers to it as such, but it was fixed in the UK version. it makes no sense for it to be secret. everyone knows the executioners.

FOUND: cathedral ward or the vileblood queen's chamber on hunter of vilebloods alfred's corpse. he will not drop it until he has completed his quest.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

OATH SWORN TO?: *logarius, and/or an unknown radiant great one*

NOTES:

this rune is an extended "dark souls" reference that has been re-mixed to fuck with audience expectations.

there is a cut ritual material from the game called the "radiant eelworm". no information exists beyond knowing it would have been used to access chalice dungeons. eelworms are nematodes, a type of parasite. augurs. phantasms. some types of nematodes have spade-shaped heads (like triangles). there are some enemies that shine in a supernatural way, but one enemy in particular is host to radiant, glowing worms.

"radiance"'s appearance on the astral clocktower is different than its equipable counterpart. i don't know why. what the hell man. normally, i would assume it's a rendering error, but because there's other fucked up runes on the clocktower, i guess we can't rule out that it was intentional.

please refer to the second addendum for far too many words on "radiance" as a prank.



Figure 80: the strange "radiance" rune on the astral clocktower.

BEAST'S EMBRACE



After repeated experiments in controlling the scourge of beasts, the gentle "Embrace" rune was discovered.

When its implementation failed, the "Embrace" became a forbidden rune, but its knowledge became a foundation of the Healing Church.

Those who swear this oath take on a ghastly form, and enjoy accentuated transformation effects, especially while wielding a beast weapon.

SHAPE: a twisted and malformed clawed hand with five fingers turning spiraling outward. it turns clockwise. the proportions of the fingers are totally fucked.

EFFECT: boosts the effects of beast blood pellets. and transforms you into a beast. using the beast claw with this rune will unlock a unique moveset.

SUBSTANCE?: blood.

CENTER: none.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND: the hunter's nightmare, dropped by laurence, the first vicar after his defeat.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: yes.

OATH SWORN TO?: *oedon, as suggested by the "nuance of blood".*

NOTES:

this rune does not mention caryll, but if we follow the pattern set by the other runes discovered in the DLC ("milkweed" and "guidance") it can be assumed that this rune was discovered in/by laurence. "beast's embrace" is described as "a" foundation of the healing church; a late addition to the scripture revealed only after laurence transformed into the first cleric beast. it became forbidden to the public, but internally became a source of fascination to the church.

the beast claw is a strange weapon made from the still animated bones of an undead darkbeast. much like the beast it originated from, it can be found in a lower loran treasure coffin. combining this item with "beast's embrace" will fill the "beast-hood meter" (a multiplying damage bonus in-game) faster and transform the hunter into something resembling the human faced beasts from loran, such as the abhorrent beast or paarl.

it seems at one point the church tried, and failed, to harness the power of beasthood for their own purposes. this is, perhaps, what the experiments of the forbidden woods revolved around, hence the proliferation of beast blood pellets in the area and the appearance of a man who can transform into an abhorrent beast at will. this would also explain why a hunter can only purchase beast blood pellets after taking the choir hunter badge; while the pellets can be found in the chalice dungeons (making them an ancient art), they were manufactured for internal use by a dominant faction in the later history of the church.

MILKWEED



A Caryllic rune envisioned by Adeline, patient of the research hall.

A transcription of the inhuman, sticky whispers that reveal the nature of a celestial attendant.

Those who take this oath become a lumenwood that peers towards the sky, feeding phantasms in its luscious bed. Phantasms guide us and lead us to further discoveries.

SHAPE: it is NOT H.P. FOR HP LOVECRAFT!!!! NOT GONNA SAY IT AGAIN!!! I HATE THIS FAN THEORY! it sucks! it has no narrative depth! its unimaginative!! it's shallow!!! it's SHIT!!!! anyway, it's a corpse blooming, a la tomb mold or coldblood flowers.

EFFECT: a tiny increase in item discovery. also, you transform into a tree full of phantasms. using the kos parasite with this rune will unlock a unique moveset.

SUBSTANCE?: paleblood (?).

CENTER: none.

SECRET?: no, but private.

FOUND: in the research hall, shared with you by adeline.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: no.

OATH SWORN TO?: paleblood?

NOTES:

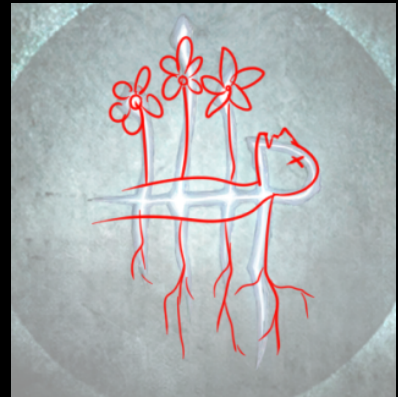


Figure 81: the author's attempt to convey an interpretation of "milkweed".

after her evolution and shortly before she dies, adeline will share this rune with the hunter. this turns the hunter into a "lumenwood", which is apparently different from a "lumenflower". the strange space broccoli appearance is a reference to the 1963 movie "matango".

kudos for the translation team for this one: the original is "seedbed", or "nursery", already an excellent word for its dual meaning. this rune makes you a feeding ground for phantasms by turning you into a living salad bar for space bugs. i believe that the name "seedbed" was intended to be an ironic twist on the concept of a place where plants can grow without interference from bugs by instead making YOU become a plant for bug farming. knowing what the rune does to you and taking stock of the amount of "metamorphosis" and butterfly imagery in the game, "milkweed" (a plant consumed by monarch butterflies), is a perfect way to communicate this information.

simply: plants (and fungi) sprout from the dead in bloodborne. coldblood blooms flowers. tomb mold sprouts from decaying flesh. master willem has cordyceps growing from his back. and in a quiet moment of incredible environmental storytelling, the hunter's dream is a field of what looks like funeral lilies.

to be a celestial attendant is to become consumable.

once you understand "milkweed", you will see it everywhere: in the brainsuckers, in the celestial emissaries, in the bloodletting beast, in rom, in the barnacle-filled fishmen of the hamlet, in ludwig's eyes. maybe in the snake-infested shadows of yharnam or the split skull of ebrietas? the leeches of the moon presence?

THIS STUPID FUCKING THING



SHAPE: i don't know.

EFFECT: n/a

SUBSTANCE?: n/a

CENTER: n/a

SECRET?: it's so secret even the player doesn't know about it.

FOUND: on the nightmare astral clocktower.

ON THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER?: much to my chagrin, yes.

OATH SWORN TO?: shut up/*unknown snake great one.*

NOTES:

i've oriented the rune so that it's facing the "right" direction for the screencap so we can all scratch our heads over what the hell we're looking at. i don't know! why should i know! why is this thing here! what the hell!!! aaaugh!!

fandom guesses have ranged from "both 'metamorphosis runes overlaid" (no), ebrietas (not at that angle), and the moon presence (i guess?? but it's the worst depiction thus far). it could be the unused "snake ball" boss, somehow elevated to a rune. this has more legs than other guesses: snakes are beloved by the fromsoft devs, especially snakes that aren't REALLY snakes. say, have you noticed...? the snakes in yharnam dissipate into white particles when you kill them. most enemies leave physical corpses behind. some don't, presumably because they return to the nightmare or explode into blood (in some cases this is because the corpse takes up too much on-screen space). but what about the little snakes? why the sparkles instead of exploding into blood?

the snake ball is also a "seedbed", covered in ticks. the ball would have been fought instead of the shadows of yharnam and later could have been found again in the odd, purposeless firefly pond in the finished game. albino snakes would have differentiated the snake ball from other giant balls of snakes.

however, i don't think we can rule out that it was simply put in to fuck with us because they knew it would drive people like me crazy. that's always an option.

MEANINGFUL SHAPES AND PATTERNS IN RUNES

THE BEAST CURL



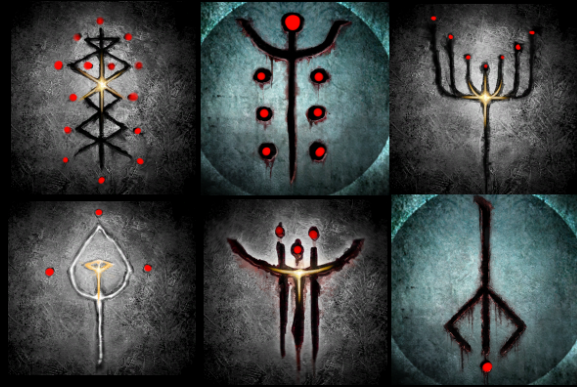
a tim burton-esque twist associated with bloodlust and untamed beasthood.
perhaps a sign of the beast scourge?

THE OEDON ARC



a parabola shape associated with blood and formless oedon. *these connections are largely unsurprising and may suggest that the vermin hunted by the league are oedon's phantasms.*

THE BLOOD DROPS



dots are a common motif in caryll runes, but their "meaning" isn't explicit. they appear in runes related to obtaining blood or obtaining a substance from blood, whether it be blood echoes ("heir"), vermin ("impurity"), external toxins ("sea"). *i'm less sold on this explanation for my bottom row: the dots in "communion" became flowers in later iterations. while "formless oedon" extracts quicksilver, the dots in the rune were derived from the tips of a building. "hunter" gives you more stamina which has nothing to do with anything. so who knows. look, i'm just saying there's a lot of dots, alright.*

"sea" depicts several dots of blood converging into one steady stream. "When all is melted in blood, all is reborn".

THE POUR



a long, center aligned line with an origin point depicting a substance being poured. *"formless oedon" is primarily a depiction of the moon over yahar'gul, but something certainly pours out of that moon like its being dribbled from a container. "moon" is an outlier, as the line appears to be bisecting the form rather than trying to impart a directional flow. i believe this is intentional and have included it due to its visual resemblance to "communion".*

CARYLL RUNE ADDENDUM RE: IMPURITY

fromsoft games released after "bloodborne" have expanded greatly on the concept of "dregs", stagnation, red eyes, and associating centipedes with impurity, spiritual, physical, or otherwise. with the benefit of hindsight, we can look at how these ideas developed to glean some idea of what the team was aiming for. obviously, their intent is not going to be universal across all games, but it's also hard to deny that fromsoft has not been iterating on the same ideas over and over again throughout their modern soulsborne history.

the re-translation notes by LostProtagonist are enlightening with how the term "dregs" was derived:

"淀み - Can mean a stagnant pool/ backwater or dregs--the result of all things falling to the depths. [...] "Downfall of man" is translated verbatim as "Human dregs" in DS3.) Thus, "dreg" or "stagnation" can be taken from its meaning."

"sekiro" revolved around kegare from infestation and the resulting stagnation that leads to the downfall of a nation (sound familiar?). i will do my absolute best to sum up the relevant events of "sekiro" as objectively as possible given it has fromsoft story conventions: a dragon from far away (judging by its appearance, likely korea) settled in the divine realm of the fountainhead palace, situated in the lands belonging to the ashina clan. however, the dragon was an invasive species and the water that flowed from the divine realm into fountainhead palace became corrupted by its continued presence. drinking the unfiltered mystical waters of the fountainhead palace would grant the drinker immortality and improved physical strength, but it would also expose them to the dangers lurking in the sediment of the river: the parasitic centipedes.

these centipedes grow to enormous sizes and take control of their hosts until ripped out. overexposure to the rejuvenating waters would result in violent, rampaging, mindless hosts with glowing red eyes. all of this may sound very familiar to ideas covered in the runes involving oedon; the guardian ape boss design is essentially the headless bloodletting beast redux. like the ape, the host itself is not actually alive anymore. it is the insects within that host that are imbued with eternal life; it is through their instincts that the dead still walk.

both stories are, in some ways, cautionary tales about trying to harness the power of gods for your own selfish needs.

CARYLL RUNE ADDENDUM RE: RADIANCE

this will take some explanation that might only be interesting to me, but i think the kind of work that goes into manipulating a loyal audience over multiple years is very, very funny. in order to impart the full impact of this situation onto you, i am going to first try to convey the emotional experience of a "dark souls" player for the benefit of those who haven't played.

the bearer of this rune (alfred) shares a voice actor with a beloved "dark souls" character, *[solaire of astora](#)*. in the miserable, bleak landscape of lordran (not loran, the bloodborne location. i don't know why they're almost the same. maybe it's also a reference, since both are dying worlds), solaire's upbeat and cheery attitude is a welcome reprieve. he has a few screws loose, but it makes him charming instead of terrifying (for example, the emblematic sun on his armor is his own original artwork). he's a proud member of a covenant of do-gooders, the *[warriors of sunlight](#)*, who dedicate themselves to helping others when called upon. you, the player, can summon him for help throughout the entire game.

when you first meet him, he's staring directly into the sun like an idiot and coins the term "jolly co-operation" to describe his ethos. his faith in the exiled lord of sunlight is apparently considered deeply odd by others, but as an outsider it's hard not to find his sincerity endearing. you meet up again in the abandoned city of the gods and he lightly flirts with you (regardless of gender) and assists you in a fight that would otherwise be two on one. he meets with you in a quiet, secret place and asks you to join his covenant now that he's determined you have a good heart. no matter the chosen undead's actions, solaire is either fated to go insane or he is driven to link the fire in his own timeline, grimly giving himself over to a painful, martyrdom in a state of despair. you can't return the favor for your friend no matter what you do. you end the game with an open emotional wound and the sad knowledge that solaire's death is utterly pointless and impossible to prevent.

then you pick up "bloodborne" and meet alfred. but what you really hear is solaire's voice telling you to engage in co-operation.

the warriors of sunlight and the executioners have a lot in common: they are shining, golden, and radiant. alfred introduces himself to the hunter and gifts them a very useful item early in the game, much like solaire does with the crucial orange soapstone. both covenants are focused around co-op play, both speak of exiled masters they wish to live up to, and both are a little bit nuts. ah, you think, it's the solaire of "bloodborne"!

then alfred bludgeons a woman to her (apparent) death at the first possible opportunity. only then do you realize that maybe you were a little naive to trust this guy based entirely on the fact that that he reminds you of your other crazy friend who died crazy. in conclusion: its a funny prank.