

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.



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.

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.



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.

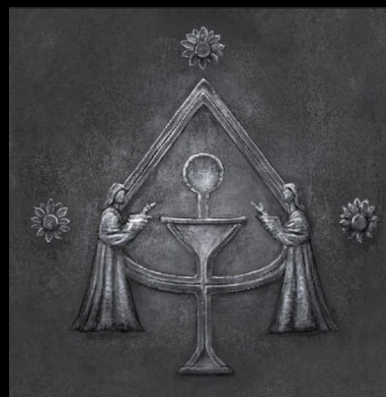
in contrast to "beast", which is banned, "clawmark" is more socially permissible.

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.



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!



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

SUBSTANCE?: blood.

CENTER: orange shine.

SECRET?: yes.

FOUND:

- iosefka's clinic, dropped by gascoigne's youngest daughter after her transformation into a celestial emissary.
- lower pthumeru (root), in a treasure coffin.
- 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 blood-borne, 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.

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 that 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.

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.

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.

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".



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.



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 ebrietias 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.

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!

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.*

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 ya-har'gul. this could be another example of this mechanism; oedon's augurs (and his inadvertent worshipers) 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 Caryll 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.

NOTES:

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 be consumed.

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.

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



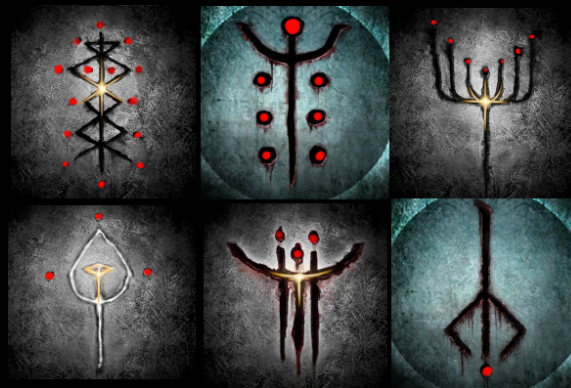
a tim burton-esque twist associated with bloodlust and untamed beasthood. perhaps a sign of the beast scourge?

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 flow-ers 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: it's a funny prank.