

The Paleblood Hunt

A Bloodborne Analysis

by “Redgrave”

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“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”

-Howard Phillips Lovecraft

Supernatural Horror in Literature, 1927 .



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Chapter One: Byrgenwerth, Kos, and The Vacuous Spider

“Byrgenwerth is an old place of learning. And the tomb of the gods, carved out below Yharnam, should be familiar to every hunter. Well, once a group of young Byrgenwerth scholars discovered a holy medium deep within the tomb. This led to the founding of the Healing Church, and the establishment of blood healing. In this sense, everything sacred in Yharnam can be traced back to Byrgenwerth.”

-Alfred, Vileblood Hunter

Everything begins at Byrgenwerth. An old institution of learning, Byrgenwerth was built in a peaceful, secluded area away from the neighboring city and close to a great lake. It is here that a group of individuals studied and explored the depths of human knowledge.

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

There were many students at Byrgenwerth. There were, however certain individuals of note other than the students, figures of importance who formed the inner circle so to speak. While not all of them were scholars, for the purpose of this analysis I refer to this group of individuals as The Byrgenwerth Scholars, or The Scholars for short.

Those individuals who we can safely conclude were members of The Scholars consisted of Willem, Laurence, Micolash, and Carryl.

Master Willem was the head of the academy and a highly respected figure. All characters who refer to Willem specifically refer to **Master** Willem, indicating a deep respect for the figure even if they had differences in beliefs. There is also a reference found on the Rune Workshop Tool which refers to him as **Provost** Willem. A Provost is an administrator of an academic facility which supports placing Willem as the head of the academy and the leading figure. Master Willem's primary focus of study concerned the limits of human intelligence.

Laurence is a much more enigmatic figure, especially for a character so important. From the Beast skull in the Grand Cathedral, the PC Hunter witnesses a memory of an encounter between Laurence and Willem, in which Willem accuses the younger Laurence of betraying him. A note left on the Cathedral staircase reads: *“Place your hand on the altar's sacred covering, and inscribe Master Laurence's adage upon your flesh.”* That Laurence would be revered so highly infers that he must have been a very significant figure in the Healing Church. It is well documented that the Healing Church has its roots in Byrgenwerth College. The Byrgenwerth Student Uniform states:

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The Healing Church has its roots in Byrgenwerth, and naturally borrows heavily from its uniform design. The focus not on knowledge. or thought. but on pure pretension would surely bring Master Willem to despair, if only he knew."

Laurence's title is that of the First Vicar, given to him both by the Human Skull of the Nightmare and in his boss fight, confirming this idea that Laurence was in fact one of the Church's founders, splitting from Byrgenwerth in an event that I will later describe as The Schism.

Micolash, the boss encountered in the Nightmare of Mensis, was another Scholar, as evidenced by the tattered Byrgenwerth uniform he wears during the PC Hunter's fight against him; Micolash also makes references to other parts of Byrgenwerth, which I will discuss later.

Caryll was a genius runesmith who, through unknown methods, could listen to the scratchings and utterings of the Great Ones. While she could not understand the inhuman words they spoke, she managed to etch them into visual symbols that could be identified. The Rune Workshop Tool describes Caryll as: *"Runesmith Caryll, student of Byrgenwerth, transcribed the inhuman utterings of the Great Ones into what are now called Caryll Runes."*

There are also two individuals whom we can **believe** to have been a member of The Scholars: Gehrman and Maria.

Gehrman was most assuredly an acquaintance of both Laurence and Willem. After the PC Hunter defeats Rom, The Vacuous Spider, they can find Gehrman whimpering in his sleep. *"Oh, Laurence... Master Willem... Somebody help me..."* Gehrman is also, as we know, the First Hunter. He founded the Workshop, located in a hidden section of the Upper Cathedral Ward, and presumably worked with the Church in its infancy. Judging from Gehrman's combat proficiency and master craftsmanship he may have been a bodyguard for tomb excavations, a groundskeeper, or a handyman for the college at large.

Maria was Gehrman's greatest pupil, and judging from the fact that she takes over the Research Hall of the Healing Church it's possible that she was a student at the College under Laurence. Regardless, her participation in the events



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which would take place at the Hamlet place her as a member of the Byrgenwerth Scholars prior to its schism.

We can now look at The Scholars, having explored each one individually, as a collective unit. Willem, Laurence, Micolash, Gehrman, Maria, and Carryl were individuals at the Byrgenwerth College, an institution dedicated to the furthering of knowledge and the exploration of the massive Labyrinth built underground. It was in this Labyrinth that the scholars made the discovery that put every event in Bloodborne into motion. Indeed, the entire history of Bloodborne can be traced to a single defining moment, in which The Scholars discovered something deep inside the ancient Pthumerian Crypts. The Executioner Alfred muses that *"Once a group of young Byrgenwerth scholars discovered a holy medium deep within the tomb. This led to the founding of the Healing Church, and the establishment of blood healing."* Deep inside the Labyrinth, the Scholars discovered the Old Blood. It is unclear exactly what was found, but in the upper level of the Byrgenwerth mansion we can find the Empty Phantasm Shell. *"Empty invertebrate shell that is said to be a familiar of a Great One. The Healing Church has discovered a great variety of invertebrates, or phantasms, as they are called."* Whatever was found, it was proof of the existence of the Great Ones. It's possible that The Scholars discovered Ebrietas, the abandoned and left-behind Great One who would later commune with the Healing Church. They certainly discovered a source of the Old Blood, the tainted Blood of the Great Ones. Whether it was Ebrietas or something else is unclear.

With the discovery of the Old Blood and of the Great Ones, everything changed. Evolution became the goal; push the limits of humanity and become something greater. Ascend to the level of the Great Ones, push humanity into its next stage. A scribbled note found in the Nightmare Lecture Hall reads: *"Master Willem was right. Evolution without courage will be the ruin of our race."* However it quickly became apparent that some of The Scholars, and Laurence in particular, differed in their belief on how the evolution should be carried out. Carryl's Eye Rune states: *"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."* However, Carryl's Metamorphosis Runes state: *"The discovery of blood made their dream of evolution a reality. Metamorphosis, and the excesses and deviation that followed, was only the beginning."*

There are two different resources that the Player collects during their time in Bloodborne: Blood Echoes, and Insight. The Echoes is the method in which the PC Hunter gains power, while Insight is the method in which the PC Hunter gains knowledge. While some at Byrgenwerth believed that knowledge and understanding of the Great Ones and the higher planes of

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existence would lead to humanity's uplifting, others believed that it was through the imbibing and fusing with the Old Blood that would lead to humanity's ascension. This was a concept anathema to everything Willem stood for.

Fear the Old Blood

These two fundamentally opposed philosophies would lead to The Byrgenwerth Schism. But there's another piece of the puzzle.

Upon entering the Fishing Hamlet in the Hunter's Nightmare, the PC Hunter is greeted by a Fish Kin, muttering to himself. *"Byrgenwerth... Byrgenwerth... Blood-crazed murderers. Blasphemous fiends."* If the player is wearing the Milkweed Rune, the Kin will give them the Accursed Brew, a skull which states: *"Skull of a local from the violated fishing village. The inside of the skull was forcibly searched for eyes, as evidenced by innumerable scratches and indentations."* Whatever happened in the Fishing Hamlet must have had to do with Kos, the Great One found at the end of the area. Kos is apparently dead, and while the Hunter battles her Orphan, the Great One is long since past. Other than the mutterings of the Fish Kin, there is only one other reference to Kos, that of Micolash in his commune with the cosmos. *"Ahh, Kos, or some say Kosm... Do you hear our prayers? As you once did for the vacuous Rom, grant us eyes, grant us eyes."*

Rom, as the PC Encounters, is a large creature who is found at the bottom of the Moonside Lake of Byrgenwerth. Rom's title is that of the Vacuous Spider, and is shown to be very relatively weak. Rom's only real strength comes from the Spider Kin she can spawn to defend herself. Other than that she is barely capable of defending herself either through carelessly hurling shards of energy, or thrashing wildly at her enemy.

When the player encounters Rom it is the defining moment in which the story of Bloodborne goes from a narrative of hunting Beasts, to a sudden understanding that we, the player, have barely even scratched the surface of a much, much darker truth. But Rom is not a fully developed Great One. Micolash, in his communing with the cosmos, mutters: *"As you once did for the vacuous Rom, grant us eyes, grant us eyes. Plant eyes on our brains, to cleanse our beastly idiocy."* Rom was not always a Great One. Eyes planted on her brain to cleanse her idiocy, Rom ascended to **become** one.

Vacuous is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as: **Having or showing a lack of thought or intelligence; mindless.** The word comes from the Latin *vacuus* meaning **empty**, along with the suffix *-ous*, meaning **by the nature of.**

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Where does Rom come from? Who is she? What is her relation to the dead Great One, Kos?



What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

In Byrgenwerth, Master Willem and his students toiled away to excavate the Pthumerian Labyrinth underground, studying their Gods and exploring the depths of human intellect. The Byrgenwerth Scholars made two major breakthroughs in their study. Their first major discovery was the Old Blood, specifically the blood of a Great One. It's possible that this Great One was Ebrietas, as in the Byrgenwerth Lecture Hall we can discover the Augur of Ebrietas, and we also find an Empty Phantasm Shell in the upper chamber of the Byrgenwerth Mansion.

The second great discovery was Kos. When I first played The Old Hunters DLC, my initial impression had been that it was the Byrgenwerth Scholars who had killed Kos. When I shared this theory, many people pointed to the description of the Kos Parasite, which states: "*When the carcass of Kos washed up on the coast, its insides were teeming with tiny parasites, unlike any found in humans.*" The argument was that this gave evidence to the fact that Kos had actually been dead prior to the encounter with Byrgenwerth, having washed up on the coast of the Fishing Village. I was unsure about my conclusion, and couldn't decide which theory was more accurate until I played through the DLC a second time, and encountered Maria. Her words, now that I had seen the entire picture, made much more sense.

"A corpse... should be left well alone. Oh, I know very well. How the secrets beckon so sweetly."

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When I first encountered Maria, I had naturally assumed she was talking about her own corpse. Now that I had seen what lay beyond her care, everything fell into place. As I wandered around the Fishing Hamlet, taking a look at its design and features, I came to a new conclusion. Look at how the Kin of the Hamlet throw their harpoons; how the Giants wield massive anchors; how the wrecks of mighty vessels line the coast. This isn't some quaint fishing village, **it's a whaling town**. Prior to the release of the DLC, many players had noted the strange masts sticking out of the water in the Nightmare Frontier. We can now see the origin of these vessels, the Hamlet. The villagers must have sighted the Great One Kos in the sea one day, rising up and taking arms to kill what they must have perceived as a monster. They hunted and killed her, losing many of their whaling ships in the process but inevitably returning home victorious, having sent the creature back to the sea. But one day, the corpse of the dead Great One washed ashore. When the villagers investigated the corpse they found it teeming with parasites, which soon infected and took over the minds and bodies of the villagers, transforming them into the Kin that we encounter them as.

Inevitably, word reached Byrgenwerth of the Dead God on the Hamlet. They sent two individuals to investigate the Hamlet: Gehrman and Maria. The announcement trailer featured Gehrman with his scythe extended, walking into the Hamlet, and we find Rakuyo, Maria's weapon, in the Hamlet well. Gehrman, the First Hunter, traveled along with his greatest pupil Maria to the Hamlet and **butchered** the Kin. The skulls were split open in search of eyes, and the First Hunters carved a path towards the corpse of Kos. It is there that their greatest blasphemy was committed. The elevator to the Healing Church Research Hall depicts three statues hovering over a child, examining it. The central figure is clearly a depiction of Master Willem, featuring the same robes and hat as the Provost's.

Gehrman and Maria discovered that the dead Kos had been pregnant, the unborn fetus still intact. A very important rule of Bloodborne's world is that even if an individual dies in the Waking World, their consciousness may still remain in the Dreamlands. This is something that will come up time and time again, and is evidenced by the existence of Micolash's corpse in the Waking World. The unborn, murdered Great One was brought back to the Byrgenwerth college and dissected in the name of science. What was retrieved was a Cord of the Eye, the Orphan's umbilical cord.

And it was then that Master Willem, the greatest mind of Byrgenwerth, had an epiphany. Willem is quoted in the description of the Great One's Wisdom as having stated: *"We are thinking on the basest of planes. What we need, are more eyes."* The Eye is indeed the symbol representing not just Insight in the Player's HUD, but also the knowledge of the higher planes of existence and of the Great Ones.

The discovery of the Great Ones and the Old Blood split The Scholars into two opposing factions. One I have dubbed the Loyalists, led by Master Willem. The Loyalists believed in evolution through Eyes, the accumulation of insight that would let humanity ascend. This faction consisted of Willem and his students. The other faction, which I have dubbed the Radicals, was led by Laurence. The Radicals believed in evolution through Blood, the accumulation of power that would let humanity ascend. This faction consisted of Laurence, Micolash, Gehrman, and Maria. While there was never any violence between these two groups, the fundamental difference in philosophy led to them inevitably separating to go their own paths. While the Loyalists remained at Byrgenwerth, the Radicals founded the Healing Church in the pursuit of further spreading their knowledge of the Old Blood. This schism was not also purely among The Scholars, but also amongst the student populous, with many leaving along with the Radicals.

With the Healing Church founding and flourishing, Willem and the remaining Loyalists were no doubt concerned with the growing power and the threat they posed. The Loyalists were fully aware that the actions of the Healing Church in their use of the Old Blood would lead to the spread of the Scourge.

While the Healing Church spread throughout Yharnam, Willem and the remaining Loyalists got to work on their own research. This is where things get fuzzy, as there is very little information available on this crucial point in time. What we can see however, are the results of the Loyalists' research. If the PC Hunter encounters Iosefka, or rather, the imposter Iosefka, after the Blood Moon has risen, killing her will make her drop a Cord of the Eye, which states: *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.*

When the PC Hunter first enters the Byrgenwerth Mansion, they encounter on the second floor an NPC Hunter named Yurie who appears to be a member of the Choir, the highest-ranking members of the Healing Church. Yurie wields A Call Beyond, the Choir's ultimate weapon, and wears the Blindfold Cap and the attire of a Choir member. This would show that the Choir returned to the ruins of Byrgenwerth from time to time in order to gather old research notes or artifacts. That the imposter Iosefka, who wields a weapon of the Choir, an Augur of Ebrietas, would be in possession of an artifact that once belonged to Master Willem can be explained as such. The Choir recovered this cord, the umbilical cord of the Orphan of Kos. Willem had used the Cord in order to further his research, delving deeper and deeper into the depths of human understanding. During this point in time, with intense research into the Great Ones being conducted at Byrgenwerth, the students were twisted and transformed into Gardens of Eyes for Willem's research,

bizarre Kin of the Cosmos who would wander the grounds. Only four individuals were left intact: Willem, Dores the Graveguard, the unnamed Doorman who would be entrusted with the password, and Rom. Whatever happened to Caryll is unclear. She may have left with Laurence. She may have been transformed along with the student body, or she may have left Byrgenwerth at an unspecified time to continue her research separately. However, thanks to Caryll's transcriptions of the inhuman uttering of the Great Ones, the Loyalists learned of the importance and the power held by great bodies of water. If we take a look at any of the Lake or Sea runes, we can find the description: "*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.*" This even matches the game mechanics, in which runes representing Water provide defense and resistance.

"The grand lake of mud, hidden now, from sight." - Micolash

Master Willem's last, great ritual ascended Rom into that of a newly formed Great One. Placed at the bottom of the Moonside Lake, Rom's empty mind served as a shield for our physical plane, protected by the great body of water. It prevented the beckoning of the Moon Presence by Laurence's Healing Church. With his knowledge and understanding of the Great Ones, Willem was able to use the Orphan's Cord to rebirth a new Great One and line her brain with eyes, using her as a living bulwark to seal away the Great Ones, the Nightmare, and the Blood Moon. But where did she come from?

We have already determined what the word *vacuous* means: empty, mindless. This can very easily be attributed to a simpleton, or to a braindead being. Rom, however, certainly does not seem to be braindead. While she is weak, she most certainly attempts to defend herself in the meager ways she has. In the interview with Hidetaka Miyazaki found in the Official Guide, Mizayaki was asked what his favorite boss was. His answer was Rom. But that in itself, while interesting, was not very striking. However the specifics of his response were... unexpected. "*I really like her. There are some **oddly cute** aspects to her moves and modeling.*" There is another type being that is blank, empty. As John Locke writes, human beings are born *Tabula Rasa*, a *blank slate*, empty beings that are given shape by our experiences. A being that can be described as being cute, weak, helpless, and empty of thoughts, lacking of experience: an infant. From Miyazaki's Interview: "*In the world of Bloodborne, babies that are treated as "special" in one way or the other are offered as lures to the Great Ones. The Great Ones have all lost their children because of their positions, and as a result, they're attracted to these 'special' babies. The babies are one way of calling them.*"

The Hunter can find a note in Yahar'gul left by a dead Hunter, which reads: "*Nightmarish rituals crave a newborn. Find one, and silence its harrowing cry.*" The first instinct of the player is to associate this with the School of

Mensis. They must be using some child to perform a ritual. But Micolash and his students are only following in the footsteps of Master Willem, trying to reproduce the success of the Loyalists of Byrgenwerth.

“As you once did for the vacuous Rom, grant us eyes, grant us eyes. Plant eyes on our brains, to cleanse our beastly idiocy.”

Rom is **not** a Great One, in fact Bloodborne causes understandable confusion in that it refers to many different species, factions, and groups as belonging to the singular group *The Great Ones*. But the Kin, ascended mortals who bleed a clear Serum, are **not** fully fledged, complete and whole Great Ones like the Moon Presence, the Wet Nurse, or the Orphan. They are merely Kin of the Cosmos. Killing Rom does **not** drop a Great One Coldblood; killing Rom drops a **Kin** Coldblood. Rom, daughter of Willem, either literally or metaphorically, born from the fruits of his research and used to ascend. Look at the way she moves, desperately backing away from the Hunter, she seems almost infantile. Unlike the rest of the Kin that are encountered, Rom has no natural defense mechanisms other than her ability to manipulate energy. If you ask me, she doesn't look like a spider at all... she looks like a caterpillar. The infant form of a butterfly, one that may have become beautiful.

Chapter Two: The Healing Church, Lady Maria, Iosefka, and Ebrietas

"If it's blood you're interested in, you should try the Healing Church. The church controls all knowledge on blood ministration, and all varieties of blood. Across the valley to the East of Yharnam lies the town of the Healing Church, known as the Cathedral Ward. And deep within the Cathedral Ward is the old grand cathedral. ...the birthplace of the Healing Church's special blood, or so they say. Yharnamites don't share much with outsiders. Normally, they wouldn't let you near this place, but... The hunt is on tonight. This might be your chance..."

–Gilbert

It's the first concrete objective the PC Hunter can make for themselves: Get to the Healing Church and look for answers. The Healing Church is the institution that, while it doesn't technically rule over Yharnam, serves as the City's anchor and structure. It is from the Healing Church that the art of Blood Ministration, the art that Yharnam would become famous for, was first brought. With the use of the Healing Church's *special blood* they were able to cure any disease, forming a religion devoted to the worship of Gods and Blood. When tales of the curative properties of Yharnam Blood spread, those suffering from incurable diseases often traveled to Yharnam in order to seek out their last chance at salvation. The PC Hunter was one such individual, according to promotional information leading up to the release of Bloodborne. In search of Blood that can cure any disease, the PC travels to Yharnam. But what is the Healing Church? Where does it come from? And, most importantly, what is the secret behind their *special blood*?

For starters, I will use only information and evidence that can be found inside of the game. I will save my personal interpretations and beliefs for the end, so that you can make up your own mind about the evidence presented.

The first sane member of the Healing Church the PC Hunter encounters is Alfred the Executioner. From Alfred, the Hunter learns more about the roots of the Healing Church: *"The Healing Church is the foundation of blood healing. Well, I'm a simple hunter, quite unfamiliar with the ins and outs of the institution. But I have heard that the holy medium of blood healing is venerated in the main cathedral. And that councillors of the old church reside in the high stratum of the Cathedral Ward. [. . .] The tomb of the gods, carved out below Yharnam, should be familiar to every hunter. Well, once a group of young Byrgenwerth scholars discovered a holy medium deep within the tomb. This led to the founding of the Healing Church, and the establishment of blood healing."*

The short story is that a group of scholars in Byrgenwerth discovered blood of incredible power in the tombs underneath, specifically, they discovered Old Blood. The Old Blood and knowledge of the Great Ones that existed led to a revolution in the college's theories and experiments. But Master Willem, head of Byrgenwerth College, disagreed with the idea of using the Old Blood of the Great Ones to advance humanity.

Fear the Old Blood - Master Willem, to Laurence

This led to the Byrgenwerth Schism, in which a group of scholars led by Laurence left Byrgenwerth and founded the Healing Church. There are four individuals whom we know were founders of the Church, though there may very well have been unnamed others: Laurence, Gehrman, Micolash, and Maria. Laurence became the First Vicar, founding a new religion and promising a cure to any disease through the use of his miraculous Blood Ministration. A note found in the Grand Cathedral reads: *"Heir to the ritual of blood, purveyor of ministration. Place your hand on the altar's sacred covering, and inscribe Master Laurence's adage upon your flesh."* Laurence and his Blood Ministration brought a new era into Yharnam, a culture of Blood Worship spreading through the population.

But with the tainted blood of the Great Ones flowing through human veins, the Scourge of the Beast came to Yharnam. Those who had been ministered by the Old Blood were susceptible to coming under the effects of the Scourge. In response to this, Gehrman, one of the men who had sided with Laurence in the Byrgenwerth Schism, founded the Workshop. Located in a hidden area of the Upper Cathedral Ward, the Workshop was a place of training of elite warriors, dispatched by the Church to hunt the beasts and prevent panic from spreading through the population. The Hunter Attire reads: *"One of the standard articles of hunter attire fashioned at the workshop. A fine piece of hunter attire that provides stable defense to anyone facing Yharnam's beastly threat. Allows one to stalk beasts unannounced, by cover of night."*

The last sentence is the most important: *"Allows one to stalk beasts unannounced, by cover of night."* Originally, the Workshop was likely a secret institution. The Hunters wore no symbols and had no uniform, save for the Saw Hunter Badge which each kept in order to identify one another: *"Badge crafted long ago at the Workshop. Attests to one's prowess as a hunter of beasts. The Workshop is gone, and no group recognizes this meaningless badge."* They operated in the cover of darkness, disposing of Yharnamites who had succumbed to the Scourge of the Beast, likely as more of a cover-up than anything; anything to prevent the public becoming aware that the blood they were being administered was turning them into monsters.

But what of Maria? According to Maria's Hunting Attire: *"Among the first hunters, all students of Gehrman, was the lady hunter Maria. Maria is*

distantly related to the undead queen, but had great admiration for Gehrman, unaware of his curious mania." Born in Cainhurst, Maria was a beautiful woman, no doubt even by Cainhurst standards. While she was a relative of the Queen, to the aristocratic Nobles of Cainhurst this likely meant very little. No doubt every Noble was dying to tell everyone they knew about how they were Annalise's twelfth cousin seventh removed, and so the relation probably didn't mean much. Unlike the rest of her people, however, Maria disliked the use of blood-weaponry, as stated by the Rakuyo: *"This sword feeds not off blood, but instead demands great dexterity. Lady Maria was fond of this aspect of the Rakuyo, as she frowned upon blood blades, despite being a distant relative of the queen."* However after the events that took place at the Fishing Hamlet, Maria could no longer bare to wield a weapon. As she and Gehrman retrieved the Orphan for Byrgenwerth, Maria threw Rakuyo into the Hamlet's well: *"One day, she abandoned her beloved Rakuyo, casting it into a dark well, when she could stomach it no longer."*

We as players first hear of Lady Maria from the patients in the Nightmare Research Hall. They call out to her and speak of her with genuine admiration and even love. They ask her to hold their hand or to help them, to care for them.

"Key to the balcony on the first floor of the Research Hall. Lady Maria of the Astral Clocktower gave this to the patient, Adeline. Maria had hoped Adeline would find comfort in the faint breeze that carried the scent of flowers from the outside, but Adeline couldn't fathom her intentions." -Balcony Key

It seems that Maria genuinely cared for the patients of the Church's experiments, as she went out of her way to try and make Adeline more comfortable in her suffering. While the experiments themselves were gruesome, there's no evidence that there was any malicious intent towards the patients themselves. Though it might be their madness, the patients all seem to be there willingly, even apologizing for having been failures in the experimentation.

But eventually, Maria died. Her passing marks the end of an era, the beginning of the transition from the old Church and the old Hunters into the new ones, the ones that we find ourselves engaging in the present. But how did Maria die? When we meet her, she is noticeably dead, at least as dead as a consciousness can be. The evidence seems to point towards a slit throat, as the blood on her blouse has traveled down from her neck. In addition, during her boss fight she visibly stabs herself in the throat in order to initiate the second phase of the battle. This seems to point towards Maria's death as an act of suicide, slitting her own throat.

But let us pause for a moment to remember the individual other than Gehrman and Maria who left with Laurence: Micolash. There is very little information on Micolash and on the School of Mensis, which was no doubt

founded to continue the work at Byrgenwerth. Micolash founded his institution in a city hidden by the Church, Yahar'gul. From here, Micolash could research in secret while supposedly reporting to Laurence. The Upper Cathedral Ward Key states: *"The upper echelons of the Healing Church are formed by the School of Mensis, based in the Unseen Village, and the Choir occupying the Upper Cathedral Ward."* The School of Mensis was likely there first, as its research more closely resembles Byrgenwerth, and its practice of researching in secrecy matches the Healing Church's early strategy of working, for the most part, behind the scenes.

Everything changed with Old Yharnam. Ashen Blood was a horrible epidemic that spread like wildfire. Naturally, in order to cure the disease, Blood Ministration was used in excess, on each and every one of the victims. This would lead to the Scourge, as referenced by the antidote tablets: *"Small medicinal tablets that counteract poison. Used to treat ashen blood, the baffling sickness that ravaged Old Yharnam long ago. These tablets only provide short-term relief. The ashen blood ailment eventually triggered the spread of the beastly scourge."*

After Old Yharnam, the Scourge could no longer be kept a secret. The Workshop was disbanded and replaced with a new group that would become the Healing Church Hunters, led by the Hunter Ludwig. The Workshop was no longer necessary, and was sealed away. It is likely at this time that the Healing Church took more control over Yharnam, the Church effectively acting as the governing body of the City. With the Church firmly seated in power as the saviors who had brought Blood Ministration to Yharnam, the Choir was formed in the upper reaches of the city.

By now, the Healing Church was being run not by Laurence and Gehrman, but by the generation who came after them. The Choir ruled over the Church while Ludwig's Hunters formed the new ranks of Church's police force. The School of Mensis remained, but likely grew further and further apart from the Church over time. Likely dissatisfied with the progress of research that had been made since the Church split from Byrgenwerth, the Choir began to research the blood of the Great Ones.

The Choir Garb states: *"Members of the Choir are both the highest-ranking clerics of the Healing Church, and scholars who continue the work that began at Byrgenwerth."* It is uncertain exactly how much of the Church's religion was merely used as a figurehead. It's not clear if the Choir truly believed that the Great Ones were Gods, or if they simply used that as a way to legitimize their research. They certainly acknowledged that the Great Ones, if not Gods, were certainly God-like. The level of detail devoted to the sacred symbols and carvings in the Church can only display a veneration of the Great Ones as superior beings, specifically the Formless Great One, Oedon. To get a closer look at the Choir's motivations and research, let's take a moment to

analyze Doctor Iosefka, a character whom the PC Hunter encounters very early on in the story.

Bloodborne begins with the PC Hunter awakening in the first floor of Doctor Iosefka's clinic after receiving their very first blood ministrations. Iosefka is the very first NPC that the Hunter can encounter in Bloodborne; after the Hunter dies to the Wolfbeast and is sent to the Hunter's Dream, returning with weaponry marking them a Hunter, if the Player travels back up the stairs towards the clinic they will encounter the door locked and barred. Through a crack in the door we see a woman dressed in white, with whom we can speak. *"Are you... out on the hunt? Then I'm very sorry, but... I cannot open this door. I am Iosefka. The patients here in my clinic must not be exposed to infection. I know that you hunt for us, for our town, but I'm sorry. Please. This is all that I can do."* Iosefka will assist the Hunter by providing them with her specially concentrated Blood, capable of fully healing the Hunter. *"The product of a slow and careful refinement process, this rare blood vial appears to be a clinic original."* The Hunter can return to Iosefka at any time to collect more Blood, but can only carry a single vial at the time. This changes, however, after the death of Father Gascoigne.

This time, when the Hunter comes to Iosefka, there will be no blood provided. Instead, the Doctor will ask the Hunter to direct any individuals they come across to her clinic, so that they can be treated and cured. From this point onwards, the Doctor speaks with a slightly deeper tone of voice, and in fact is voiced completely by a different person. While Iosefka's voice actress is credited as being Jenny Funnel, there is a second credit to an *Imposter Doctor*, credited to an actress named Lucy Briggs-Owen. From this point onwards, Iosefka will ask the Hunter to bring her more and more people, assuring that they are being taken proper care of. As a reward for the Hunter if the Hunter begins to bring her people, she will eventually start providing the player with Blue Elixirs. Blue Elixir is described as a: *"Dubious liquid medicine used in strange experiments conducted by high ministers of the Healing Church."* A rather chilling item indeed for a common blood ministrations doctor to be carrying.

But it isn't unless the Hunter finds the back entrance to the Clinic, accessible by climbing up an adjacent building connected to the Forbidden Woods, that the truth of Iosefka's research can be discovered. Here, the results of the research is discovered. Any NPCs that the Hunter sent in the past to Iosefka's clinic will be found, transformed and twisted into Celestials, blue-skinned Kin of the Cosmos. If the Hunter sent nobody to the Clinic, they will only find a single Celestial, located in the Sickroom. Upon its death, it drops one of Iosefka's Blood Vials, possibly one that was being saved for the Hunter upon the player's return. These are presumably the remains of the true

Iosefka whom the player meets at the beginning of the game. As the Hunter travels upstairs towards the top of the clinic, one of two events will take place.

If the Hunter goes to the top of the the clinic **before** the Blood Moon has risen, the Imposter Iosefka will attack the Hunter. She wields a Threaded Cane and a Repeating Pistol, and if her health is low enough will even attack the Hunter with A Call Beyond, the ultimate weapon of the Healing Church: *"One of the secret rites of the Choir. Long ago, the Healing Church used phantasms to reach a lofty plane of darkness, but failed to make contact with the outer reaches of the cosmos. The rite failed to achieve its intended purpose, but instead created a small exploding star, now a powerful part of the Choir's arsenal. At times, failure is the mother of invention."* The False Iosefka is one of four NPCs who wield A Call Beyond, the other three being Micolash, the Forgotten Madman, and Yurie, the Choir Member found in the Byrgenwerth Mansion. We can infer from this revelation that the False Iosefka is a member of the Choir, relocating from the Upper Cathedral Ward to Iosefka's Clinic in order to continue her research, possibly because of the fact that due to the spread of the Scourge of Beasts the Cathedral Ward is no longer a safe place to operate. Upon killing the False Iosefka, she will drop a powerful Oedon Writhe rune. Interestingly enough, the Hunter can locate a weaker version of the Oedon Writhe rune by killing Adella the Nun, or by looting it off of the Celestial she becomes if the Hunter sent her to Iosefka's Clinic. This connection only reinforces the False Iosefka's affiliation with the Church, and that she held a rank of higher importance than a nun. But this is only one of two possible events that can occur in Iosefka's clinic.

If the Hunter goes to the top of the clinic **after** the Blood Moon has risen, they will find her on all fours, perched on one of the operating tables. *"God I'm nauseous... Have you ever felt this? It's progressing. I can see things... I knew it, I'm different. I'm no beast... I... Oh... God, it feels awful... but, it proves that I'm chosen. Don't you see? How they writhe, writhe inside my head... It's... rather... rapturous..."* With enough time to conclude her research, Iosefka has begun her ascension. Killing her can drop what I believe is the Orphan's umbilical cord, which was recovered by the Choir.

But what was this research? What did the Choir do? How did they do it? This brings us the final topic of our current analysis: Ebrietas, Daughter of the Cosmos. Ebrietas is found in the depths of the Orphanage, described as: *"Key to the Orphanage, birthplace of the Choir. The Orphanage, shadowed by the Grand Cathedral, was a place of scholarship and experimentation, where young orphans became potent unseen thinkers for the Healing Church. The Choir, that would later split the Healing Church, was a creation of the Orphanage."* We have established previously that it was originally the School of Mensis which performed research for the Church in the secrecy of

Yahar'gul, however with the growth of the Church's power after the cleansing of Old Yharnam there was no longer a need for secrecy and a new effort was put forward into spreading the Old Blood. It would be the Choir who would fulfill this need, with the Orphanage as their laboratory.

Note that the Orphanage is located directly behind the Grand Cathedral. We can recall Gilbert mentioning that: "*Deep within the Cathedral Ward is the old grand cathedral. ...the birthplace of the Healing Church's special blood.*" But the Cathedral is not the source of the blood. While it is provided to the public **from** the Grand Cathedral, it actually originates in the Orphanage. From Ebrietas, and the Celestials. Ebrietas is the left-behind Great One, whatever that means, and communed and worked with the Healing Church in their research. We find multiple references to this.

"One of the secret rites of the Choir, high-ranking members of the Healing Church. Use phantasms, the invertebrates known to be augurs of the Great Ones, to partially summon abandoned Ebrietas. One of the few rites that allow one to directly utilize the power of the Great Ones, and evidence that the Choir had approached the eldritch Truth." - Augur of Ebrietas

"Great chalices unlock deeper reaches of the labyrinth. The Great Isz Chalice became the cornerstone of the Choir, the elite delegation of the Healing Church. It was also the first Great Chalice brought back to the surface since the time of Byrgenwerth, and allowed the Choir to have audience with Ebrietas." - Great Isz Chalice

But who is Ebrietas, what is her purpose? What research did she allow the Healing Church to perform, and what relation does she have to the Great Ones and the Old Blood?

What follows is purely my own interpretation and belief based on the evidence I have gathered. Do not consider any of this as solid fact. Instead, use it as my interpretation, so that you can gather your own beliefs.

The Healing Church operated in secrecy in its formative days. Micolash slowly continued his own research into the Old Blood through kidnappings and experimentation. Laurence administered the Old Blood to the ill, and those who succumbed to the Scourge of the Beast were eliminated under cover of darkness by Gehrman's Hunters. While this was going on, the Church quietly continued their research into the Great Ones, independent from Byrgenwerth. Initially, the only Great One that the Healing Church had identified had been Kos, the Great One from the depths of the ocean. The Church's experiments into the Great Ones therefore revolved around water, as described by the Brain Fluid: *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. It was a fruitless pursuit, however, for as far as we know the Great Ones do not originate from the sea, but from the Dreamlands and the Cosmos. As such, the experiments were failures. Overseeing the research from the Astral Clocktower was Lady Maria.

After the Hamlet Massacre, Maria refused to hunt again. Instead, she began to run research towards the Great Ones for the budding Healing Church. But her thoughts could never leave the blasphemous nature of what she and Gehrman had done at the Hamlet, how the Orphan had been ripped from its mother's womb. Nor would she be allowed to forget.

"Atonement for the wretches... By the wrath of Mother Kos."

Not all of the Hamlet had been destroyed. The parasites that inhabited their Mother Kos had managed to infest the villagers, transforming them into ascended Kin of the Cosmos. Gehrman was the First Hunter, and Maria his greatest pupil. In this sense, they can be seen as the Father and Mother of all Hunters. Anyone who calls themselves a Hunter, no matter what organization they associate themselves with, is a descendent in some way from Gehrman and Maria, who murdered the Orphan of Kos.

"Curse the fiends, their children too, and their children, forever true."

Perhaps Maria was haunted by unending nightmares of what she had done. Perhaps, in her frustration, she desperately continued her experiments. Surely something had to come out of the atrocities she had committed? But each and every one of her experiments was another failure, another dead end. The patients began to notice her frustration with them, sobbingly apologizing for their failures, begging for her forgiveness. Maybe over time she became less and less compassionate with the patients, and more and more wracked with guilt. On one hand, her desire to uncover the truth behind Kos and the Great Ones could not be stopped, but on the other hand she cared for the patients of the Research Hall and did not want to see them suffer. She could see only one way out.

"Oh, I know very well. How the secrets beckon so sweetly. Only a honest death will cure you now. Liberate you, from your wild curiosity." -Lady Maria of the Astral Clocktower.

And so she ended her own life. Her death marked the end of an era. By this point, Micolash and the school of Mensis had already begun to draw further and further away from the rest of the Healing Church. With her death, Gehrman spiraled into depression and the elite Workshop was sealed away and abandoned. The old, secretive, quiet Healing Church had begun to die, and may have fallen apart completely were it not for the events of Old Yharnam. The Church had always relied on gaining new followers through the use of their miraculous disease-curing blood, and Old Yharnam gave them the perfect opportunity to display their religion to the masses. After Old Yharnam's

cleansing the Healing Church exploded in power and fame. They could no longer operate in secrecy, and needed a much more significant source of the Blood.

"The Great Isz Chalice became the cornerstone of the Choir, the elite delegation of the Healing Church. It was also the first Great Chalice brought back to the surface since the time of Byrgenwerth, and allowed the Choir to have audience with Ebrietas."

And so the Choir was born. An elite delegation of old scholars and clerics, the Choir would become the new ipso-facto leaders of the Healing Church. The Choir plunged into the tomb, deeper than anyone had gone since the days of Byrgenwerth, looking for a greater source of Blood and a way in which to bring their research to the next level. They traveled to the ruins of the Pthumerian City of Isz, which had not been entered since the time of the Byrgenwerth Scholars. They went to meet with Ebrietas, Daughter of the Cosmos.

The Great Isz Chalice was relocated to the Orphanage located behind the Grand Cathedral and would serve as the main laboratory for the Choir. Interestingly, we see many, many carriages throughout our time in Yharnam. Many players will recall seeing or leaving notes in front of them with charming or amusing words such as *despicable infant*. But... **where are all the babies?** We encounter no child-sized coffins in the streets of Yharnam, but many, many, many carriages. Where we **do** find child-sized coffins is in the Upper Cathedral Ward.

In the Orphanage, the Choir communed with Ebrietas and used their new knowledge to experiment on the babies that were either abandoned or sent to the Orphanage. It is even possible that, after the widespread epidemic of the Scourge, the Choir went through the public and gathered all babies and children of Yharnam under the pretense of protecting them until the Hunt was over. Yharnamites would have no reason not to trust the Church, and were likely delighted that their governing body had such a concern for the welfare of their children.

In the Lumenflower Gardens, we can see the results of their experiments. Look at the way the Celestials seems to grow from the ground. Even the name *garden* seems to suggest an almost sickening way in which the Celestials were harvested from the ground like a crop. This was the source of Yharnam's *special blood*. The children who were elevated to becoming Celestials were then harvested and used as sources of Blood for the Church, a renewable resource that would allow them to provide the entire City with as much Blood as it needed.

The False Iosefka was one such researcher, who fled to the Clinic after the Upper Cathedral Ward was lost to the Scourge. The presence of Scourge

Beasts in the Upper Cathedral Ward only proves that the Scourge was too much for even the Choir to handle, and that the researchers likely fled. One researcher fled to Byrgenwerth, the first member of the Choir that the PC Hunter encounters. The Choir Member, Yurie, is seen wandering the second floor of Byrgenwerth Mansion. She even wears a Blindfold Cap, reminding us that: *"Members of the Choir are both the highest-ranking clerics of the Healing Church, and scholars who continue the work that began at Byrgenwerth. The eye covering indicates their debt to the teachings of Master Willem, even though their paths diverged."*

The Choir had an enormous respect for Master Willem, even though they split away from him. There was never any violence between the two factions in Byrgenwerth, only a difference in philosophy that led to an inevitable separation. It is no wonder that the Choir never disposed of Master Willem, they truly saw him as a highly respected figure in their history. In fact, Master Willem had achieved what the Choir so desperately yearned for: He had ascended to the level of the Gods.

In the beginning days of Bloodborne's release, all anyone could talk about in regards to Lore was Iosefka. Who is she? Is she an imposter? When do they switch? Which is the real one? So much focus was placed on the False Iosefka that the real one got swept away. People were so engrossed with the revelation that Iosefka was replaced with an imposter that they stopped looking at the original. Who was Iosefka? Like the imposter, she wears the White Church Garb, which tells us: *"These doctors are superiors to the black preventative hunters, and specialists in experimentally-backed blood ministrations and the scourge of the beast. They believe that medicine is not a means of treatment but rather a method for research. and that some knowledge can only be obtained by exposing oneself to sickness."* This implies that Iosefka was a high-ranking member of the Church, and a specialist on experimental blood. Now look at the back of Iosefka's clinic. Bodies have been dumped into pits, vials upon vials upon vials of blood have been collected, hundreds of research notes have been written. There are also Celestials in the Forbidden Woods, who appear to have wandered off from the Clinic. How could this be the work of the False Iosefka, when **the original Iosefka doesn't get replaced until the death of Father Gascoigne**. Furthermore, how was she replaced in the first place? There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that it is possible to copy someone's face. There's only one type of woman that has the same face as another: a sister. In the back of Iosefka's clinic we find a half-transformed Celestial, dead on an operating table. Iosefka isn't some innocent doctor, she's the one who invented the process in the first place. This explains why one of Iosefka's Blood Vials can be found in the Nightmare of Mensis, as the School of Mensis and the Choir shared their research. It's possible that Iosefka's Blood Vial is, itself, the key to the Celestial

transformation; a clinic original. Who knows what might have happened had we consumed enough of it.

When the False Iosefka fled to the Clinic, she brought with her an artifact that the Choir had previously recovered from Byrgenwerth, the Orphan's Cord of the Eye. The False Iosefka sought to ascend just as Master Willem had, by lining her brain with eyes in the manner he had done so many years ago. "*How they writhe, writhe inside my head... It's... rather... rapturous...*" She isn't pregnant at all, but instead has run out of time to continue her experimentation. In her last ditch effort, she imbibes Willem's Cord. But it doesn't work, as evidenced by the fact that she bleeds a dark red.

"*Seek Paleblood to transcend the hunt*". The first note that the Player receives. Many, many players have noticed that there are certain enemies which bleed not red, but a clear and almost pale colored blood. However, this is **not** the specific Paleblood. If this indeed was the blood of the Great Ones, there would be a few figures whom we would believe to bleed pale, but in fact bleed a dark red themselves: Amygdala, the Orphan, the Wet Nurse, and the Moon Presence. There **are** however, certain figures which bleed what I call, Serum: Celestials, Brainsuckers, Master Willem, Rom, and **Ebrietas**. Rom, an ascended mortal, does bleed red if the Hunter attacks her stomach, as do her Spider Kin. But if the Hunter attacks the eyes and heads of Rom or her progeny they bleed the Serum of the Kin. Serum is not blood of the Great Ones, but rather blood of the Kin of the Cosmos, those who were once mortal but ascended to becoming Kin of the Great Ones. Notice how Ebrietas is mentioned as being the **Daughter** of the Cosmos. But this doesn't follow, as every Great One loses its child. Instead, the Great Ones yearn for surrogates.

Ebrietas was possibly Pthumerian, as she is found by the The Scholars in a Pthumerian city. It is well documented that the Pthumerians' research and experimentation with the Old Blood led to their ascension as they neared the Eldritch Truth, however they were struck down before they could truly to ascend to being Great Ones. The Scourge of Beasts spread throughout the people, the Blood Moon rose. The Great Ones descended, and a womb was left with child. Yharnam's pregnancy with Mergo was a failure and so in search of a surrogate, Ebrietas, possibly a researcher of Pthumeru, ascended to the level of the Great Ones. It is so very interesting to me how Ebrietas is repeatedly referred to as having been *left behind*. Ebrietas is not a true Great One, instead she was ascended to becoming Kin just as Willem did. The Pthumerians are ancient, who knows how long it took for her to develop into her current form? Perhaps in a thousand years, Master Willem will look much like her as well.

She was abandoned, as the Great Ones left after the devastation of Pthumeru. And so she waited in the Labyrinth, caring for the Phantasms, small slug-

like creatures which were named as being familiars of the Great Ones. And when The Scholars stumbled upon her in Isz, she would finally have an outlet with which to commune with the outside world.

Willem and The Scholars met with Ebrietas, and through her they began their research of the Old Blood, the tainted blood of Ebrietas, surrogate child of the Cosmos. It was through Ebrietas' tainted blood that the tragedy which struck Pthumeru would be doomed to repeat itself in the city of Yharnam.

Ebrietas seems to get her name from the Ebrietas Butterfly, a species of butterfly found in South America, which matches the, although admittedly distorted form, of Ebrietas as having an almost Butterfly-like appearance. When we meet her, she is found in front of a corpse, a corpse of a Vacuous Spider. Remember that even though something may die in the Waking World, its consciousness can continue to survive in the Dreamlands. Ebrietas had lost her daughter, Rom. It's a tragedy really: Every Great One loses its child.

But there were many surrogates to be found in the baby carriages of Yharnam.