The Overture of

ELDEN RING

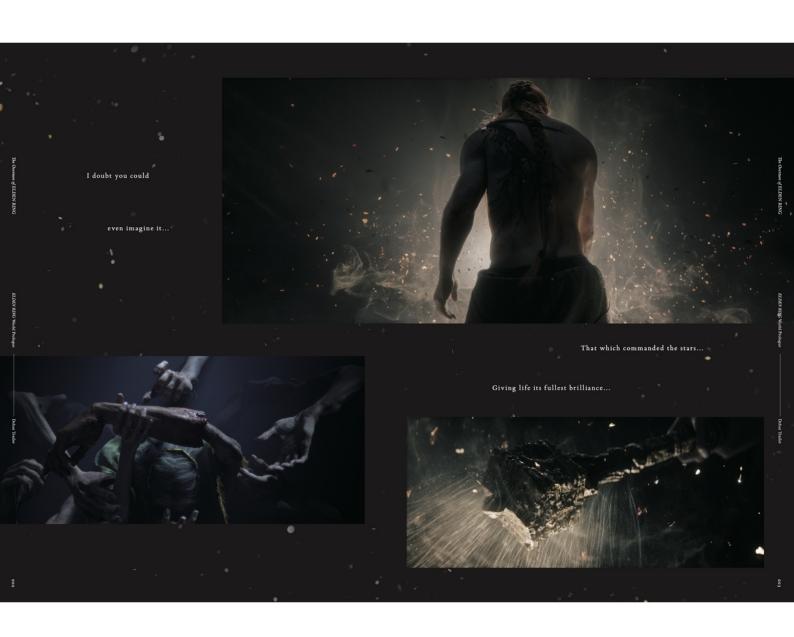


The Golden Order has been broken.

Rise, Tarnished, and be guided by grace to brandish the power of the Elden Ring and become an Elden Lord in the Lands Between.

The Overture of

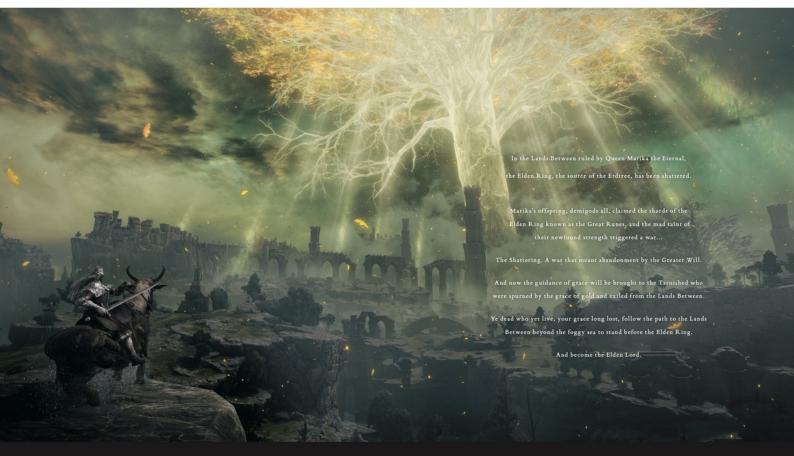
ELDEN RING











ELDEN RING World Prologue

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ELDEN RING-will be released as lars on February 28, 2022. This take made is we done on the word gar at Bis 1023 11. melanocisforers which is the names FromSoftware and Hiderala Miyazaki, developers of the DARK SOULS seriappeared on the seron. Then came another names George R. R. Martin, author the A Song of the and Fire series of novels. The crowfu appliance built no a rear if conference hall termed with enhancement for this new project. Wide genes and core may have their differences, but any collaboration between these masters of diductors in belief convertion actions demand as utilization. As the next step along the path laid out by the DARK SOULS series, ELDEN RUNG features an all-new world and serting, as well as a rebuilt user interface. It is Proceedings all largest game to date. Its world is meant to be explored, and well love to give you a taste of what awaits, even before it's released.

This actensive book contains interviews with ELDEN RING directs Hidetak Miyazaki, early piet proports from the network test carried out in the ye before release, and screenshors and concept serwork that introduce the world ELDEN RING. We hope that it will prepare you for your own journey in the Lands Berween.













Interview with HIDETAKA MIYAZAKI

As the full release of ELDEN RING draws closer and FromSoftware's team puts the finishing touches on their largest dark fantasy title yet, director Hidetaka Miyazaki set some time aside to discuss this upcoming achievement.

We've split our interview with Miyazaki into two parts. In Part 1, we mainly focus on Miyazaki's insights into development and establishing a visual identity—two very fundamental parts of creating a game.

This interview took place on December 20, 2021.

Part 1

Evolving Toward a New Sense of Scale

Q: First of all, how is development on ELDEN RING going these days?

Miyazaki: It's almost finished. At this stage, all that's left are the finishing touches.

Q: What about ELDEN RING's development have you found most challenging?

Miyazaki: This isn't something that's unique to ELDEN RING—actually, it applies to every game I've ever worked on—but this period we're coming up on, between the last stages of development and the release date, is always trepidatious. No matter what you do. Truth be told, it's not exactly my favorite part of the dev cycle!

But all throughout our work on ELDEN RING, I've told myself, "If we've captured a simple sense of adventure, we're on the right track." I think we've achieved that, at least to some extent. We've built a whole wide, unfamiliar world and loaded it with threats and mysteries, new encounters, drama, and mythology, and it's all there for players to discover and explore, bit by bit. Q: The network test version of the game already delivered on quite a bit of that—it had its share of exvirement!

Miyazaki: If you say so, that takes a bit of the edge off my uncertainty. That's definitely something we hope players will feel from this game.

Q: Compared to your previous games, what about ELDEN RING stood out as new and different to you as a director?

Miyazaki: There are two major things in particular. For one, this time around, we were collaborating with George R. R. Martin. We asked him to come up with the mythologies that form the underlying basis of ELDEN RING—events that took place in its world well before players step into the story. Building a game up from an existing backdrop like that was a new experience for me, and it was a thrill to break that ground.

The second thing was the sheer size of the game. ELDEN RING is much larger than any game I've directed before, which means there was more that I had to delegate to other members of the team. That was something I'd anticipated from the very beginning. Actually, you could say that the fact that we'd built up team members to the point where I could leave things in their hands was a major factor in deciding to make a game of this scale in the first place. And of course, they met my expectations!

Q: Did the size of your team also grow out of your needs

Miyazaki: The size of my team and the length of the development process both hit new highs for FromSoftware with ELDEN RING. But the important thing isn't that we had more people to toss at the project; it's that we'd built up a team that we could trust to get it done.

Q: You say you delegated parts of the game to other members of the team. Were there any ideas they brought to you that had an impact on the project? Anything that struck you as particularly off-the-wall or refreshing?

Miyazaki: Tons and tons of things, of course! The visual design of the Erdtree itself is one, for example. That's the real appeal of working together to make something as a team; it's one of my biggest joys as a game creator. Q: How did your job as director change as you delegated more of the game?

Miyazaki: Fundamentally, it wasn't actually that different from how I'd directed games before. It all begins upstream, with broad concepts and designs; establishing all the separate parts that define the game's overall direction, like artwork, level design, animations, and text. I tried to stay involved in those elements as directly as I could. But let's take level design, for example. Once a certain area's design is established to some extent, it's time to hand more of it over to another team member. There was a lot to be done this time around, since ELDEN RING's map is so huge.

Q: What about ELDEN RING's development process differed from your previous work, technologically speaking?

Miyazaki: We'd been continuously testing some automation since before work ever began on ELDEN RING, but this time around, we automated everything we could—to make sure that our team had plenty of time to make the game more fun to play too. Some asset construction and placement, AI base creation, and even a bit of debugging was all automated. Naturally, a lot of this is stuff you'd want to adjust by hand in the end, so we still did that as well.

To look at it from another side of development, we also honed our abilities to collect playtest data and put it to work in our adjustments and improvements. It was important to us that our fixes weren't just based on hunches, but on actual data. Especially as the team grew larger and I had to delegate more and more things, that became a must.

Q: So you'd say ELDEN RING's considerable volume and depth were possible through a combination of automatic generation and good old-fashioned manual labor?

Miyazaki: Yes, I suppose so... To tell you the truth, though, I thought we'd be able to automate more than we actually could. There was a lot that we had to get through on pure strength of will! But I think that also led to some nice, distinctive bits with a real FromSoftware flair, so I'd say all the hard work paid off.

The Hows and Whys of a Wide World

Q: Did your decision to have a wide, open setting in ELDEN RING originate with the SOULS series and its heavy emphasis on exploration?

Miyazaki: In this case, I'd say that the "sense of adventure" that I mentioned earlier is closer to what were after than exploration per se. Don't get me wrong, there's still exploration—but not so much in the sense of searching through every nook and cranny of the dungeons in the game. It's something on a much wider scale than that.

Q: Does that tie into the high level of freedom that we experienced in the network test?

Miyazaki: Yes, that's it. "Freedom" is something of a key phrase for ELDEN RING. You'll have a great degree of freedom in how you tackle each area, in how the story progresses, in the combat skills you use, and in how you build your character.

Q: In the network test, we saw how Torrent, the spectral steed, gives players a way to actively travel through the game's vast environments. That really stood out as something unlike any of your previous games. Did you have to alter your approach to placing items, enemies, and other things to discover because of the spectral

Miyazaki: Since we have such a big, open field to work with, the exploratory elements of the game—that is to say, the "things to discover" you mention—are less tightly packed than they are in previous games. We made the truly important discoveries a bit more visible, in order to keep players from having to thoroughly scour every single area. When you're in a spot where you really should stop, take your time, and leave no stone unturned, the game will let you know.

We've also filled the world with distinctive landmarks, both large and small, in hopes that players will see them and say, "Oh, let me go check that out..."
That encourages them to explore and make discoveries on their own.

Q: We're really looking forward to seeing what sort of fiendish situations await us in the full game.

Miyazakii I'm glad you're looking forward to it! ELDEN RING definitely has plenty of hair-raising situations and enemies to go around. That's a given. But if I had to say what's unique about ELDEN RING in that respect—and this ties back into the freedom that we discussed earlier—it's that there aren't many points where those "fiendish" parts might bring your progress through the game to a complete stop. Much, much less than in previous games. For many—but not all!—such encounters, you'll be able to avoid them, put them off until later, or even come up with ways to ignore them entirely.

Of course, that coin has another side. Since I had that freedom as an excuse, I couldn't help but devise even crueler situations and more dangerous enemies to toss in...

Q: Another thing that sets ELDEN RING apart from your other games is its item crafting.

Miyazaki: We had a few different reasons for including item crafting, but our main goal with the crafting system was to raise players' ability to weather combat without sacrificing the game's overall sense of tension.

Since it's an open-world game, individual chunks of play tend to feel stressful if they're too short. For example, those moments where you realize, "I'm all out of items; I've got to turn back," feel much worse in a game of ELDEN RING's size than they do in the games I've made up until now. I wanted to cut down on those moments. One way we manage this is by having your Sacred Flasks (which are used to replenish HP and other resources) fill back up a bit when you defeat a group of enemies. Item crafting was another thing that grew out of that same goal. Naturally, the search for rare materials and large deposits of useful items is a perfect match for a large, open game world.

Q: It certainly felt like there was plenty of ground to cover, even in one outing.

Miyazaki: Working with an open world in particular, we had plenty of things to adjust and tune to get that feeling across. We want ELDEN RING to be a fulfilling experience that offers a real sense of achievement, but that doesn't mean we want to put unnecessary grief or stress on players. On the contrary, by thoroughly polishing out those rough spots, we've tried to make sure that players can focus on and enjoy the adventure itself, with all the danger it has to offer. In a sense, "comfort" was another main theme we kept in mind while making ELDEN RING.



"Freedom" is something of a key phrase for *ELDEN RING*.

Q: Is the spectral steed another major step in that direction?

Miyazaki: Exactly. With the spectral steed, we focused less on providing a realistic horseback riding experience and more on offering players options for exploration. We put a lot of emphasis on making it intuitive and stressfree to control.

Q: The spectral steed isn't just for transportation. Did you have mounted combat in mind when you first came up with the idea?

Miyazaki: Sure. As soon as we added a horse to the mix, I figured, of course we need to have mounted combat as well.

Q: The spectral steed may not move like an actual horse, but it certainly handles very smoothly.

Miyazaki: Thank you for saying so! I should mention that the spectral steed isn't just for getting around on flat land. One huge way it differs from real horses is that it can jump quite high, because we wanted to make it a complete, three-dimensional travel option.

In addition to its double jump, you can ride the spectral steed to a spiritspring and use that to jump even higher. Even if the path is a little rough, you can breeze right through it on your steed. It can even safely run down gradual cliffsides. The world of ELDEN RING is wide open, but it's certainly not flat. Giving players the ability to traverse all that varied terrain is an essential part of the spectral steed's role.

Q: While we're on the subject of the spectral steed, was there any part of its visual design that you gave special attention?

Miyazaki: As I mentioned, the spectral steed needs to be able to move in three-dimensional space—so we knew it shouldn't look like a prize thoroughbred! Actually, its design has a few little touches that aren't horse-like at all but rather take inspiration from donkeys and antelopes, which are perfectly at home on crags and other rough terrain. As a plus, these details give it a nice roughness that fits right in with FromSoftware-style fantasy, don't you think?

Q: There's one emblematic piece of scenery that you can almost always see, no matter where you are in ELDEN RING: the Erdtree. What role does it play in the game?

Miyazaki: The Erdtree is both a visualization of the Elden Ring that lies at the core of the setting itself and also a major key image for the game itself. When you see a screenshot or take a glance at the screen while someone is playing, we want you to know that you're looking at ELDEN RING. We worked hard to give the visuals a mythological, fantastical feel, and I think the Erdtree goes hand in hand with that idea. It certainly makes an impression.

Since the Erdtree is visible from most places in the Lands Between, it also serves as a rough indicator of where you are in the world. Plus, it also let us set up some of the really memorable scenes you'll see, like golden leaves falling through the night sky.







Ah, but of course, the Erdtree also plays a major role in the worldbuilding and story of ELDEN RING. If you want more specifics on that, though, you'll just have to play the game and see for yourself.

Q: There's a big planet—sort of like our moon—that hangs in the sky over the Lands Between through both night and day. What's that all about?

Miyazaki: People who've played certain past titles of ours know that we've got a particular fondness for the moon here at FromSoftware! Rest assured that it also plays a major role in the world and story of ELDEN RING.

History You Can See

Q: You previously mentioned freedom as a keyword for ELDEN RING. Would you say there was more creative freedom for the enemy designs this time around?

Miyazaki: The enemies have certain characteristics to their design that are unique to ELDEN RING—especially the crucial boss characters. Most of the major bosses are Demigods that appear in the mythology that George R. R. Martin wrote for us, so they were designed

with a careful eye toward giving them an appropriately mythological, heroic feel.

Of course, since we're FromSoftware, that's "heroic" in a rather broad sense of the word. They're heroes of ages past, since subject to the ravages of time, loss, disgrace, corruption, transformation, aberration...but heroes all the same.

Q: It sounds like George R. R. Martin's mythology is a real core part of the experience.

Miyazaki: It certainly is! But that mythology is the initial spark, so to speak. With such a great well of inspiration to draw from, we were ready to come up with our own ideas and build them into the boss characters you'll face in ELDEN RING. I'm extremely grateful to Mr. Martin for allowing us that approach!

Also, since we had Mr. Martin's mythology to work with, most of these major bosses ended up being more talkative than usual. I don't mean to say they're a bunch of chatterboxes, but compared to the bosses in our past games, they have noticeably more dialogue. That's a simple difference, but I think it's refreshing.

Q: Godrick the Grafted's many hands stand out in particular, but we get the impression that much of ELDEN RING, including the players' equipment, is more intricately detailed and designed than in previous games. Is Martin's influence at play there?

Miyazaki: I'd say that it is. There's a lot more information to take in about the world and setting of ELDEN RING, compared to our past titles, and intricate visual details like crests and paintings—unique designs in general, really—are one way for us to convey some of that information. I especially enjoyed designing the crests, myself.

Q: On that note, we're sure the flavor text on all the items and equipment also offers a peek at those details. How much volume can we expect there?

Miyazaki: You're right. The role that flavor text plays in ELDEN RING is consistent with our previous games. But like I said, there's a lot more information to take in, which means more flavor text, as well.

Q: Overall, the colors in *ELDEN RING* give a distinctive, faded impression. We assume that was a conscious choice.



Miyazaki: I touched on this a bit earlier, but we had a mythical, fantastical, painterly vibe in mind. This might be putting it into overly abstract terms, but we also wanted a sense of "lonely, forlorn, heroic romance." We experimented with making everything darker, but ultimately decided that a more colorful, less-monotone world would make for a more engrossing adventure. But of course, there are still plenty of dark, horrific areas to be explored.

Each area of the Lands Between has its own unique characteristics. Each Legacy Dungeon we've put together is a collection of unique content too. I hope players enjoy all the variety there.

Q: While we're on the subject of graphics, all the visual effects for magic and the like also seem flashier than in previous games.

Miyazaki: We didn't exactly say, "let's make it flashier!" or anything like that, but I think I know where that impression is coming from. Many of the spells in ELDEN RING are emblematic of certain magical lineages, and those distinctions mean visual differences.

If I may digress a bit, there are several magical traditions represented among the sorceries and incantations of ELDEN RING. Some sorcery is associated with a magical academy, for instance, while some comes from royal houses; there are incantations of the Erdtree, and incantations of the Two Fingers; just to give a few examples. The symbols you see in the magic visual effects show those lineages directly.

Those magical lineages will also be important in the game. Some staves and sacred seals strengthen the sorceries and incantations, respectively, of particular lineages. If you decide to roleplay as a sorcerer of a certain tradition, for example, that will offer gameplay benefits as well. I think that makes for a new way to enjoy character builds focused on spellcasting. And, of course, all these different types of magic contribute to the worldbuilding too.

Q: In the network test, players could learn sorcery from a woman in a stone mask (Sorceress Sellen). Is she learned in one of those styles of magic, then?

Miyazaki: Yes, she is! Sellen is an academy sorceress...
Though as she admits herself, she was actually cast out from the academy. That stone mask is an academy sorcerer trademark. Even within the academy, there are different branches that each lend their name to their own types of sorcery.

Q: We also spotted a character dressed like a samurai. Did you include them to show off the sheer breadth of the world?

Miyazaki: Ahahaha, no, it's nothing that high-concept. It's just that, as a Wizardry fan, I can't pass up a chance to slip a little eastern garb into my fantasy worlds.

Meeting George R. R. Martin

George R. R. Martin, the author behind the fantasy novel series A Song of Ice and Fire, also served as executive producer and writer on the TV show Game of Thrones (based on that same series). Martin's other works include novels such as Fevre Dream and Tuf Voyaging and the Wild Cards series of stories. Such works earned him Hidetaka Miyazaki's appreciation as a fan. Knowing of Miyazaki's fandom, FromSoftware board member Eiichi Nakajima approached Martin—and found that the author was familiar with DARK SOULS! The two of them had a spirited conversation, which in turn led to the collaboration that would become ELDEN RING.

Legacy Dungeons

In addition to wide, open fields, ELDEN RING also contains castles and other large architectural areas like those found in the DARK SOULS series. These are called Legacy Dungeons; players in the network test experienced one as they explored Stormweil Castle. These special strongholds are built on an even greater scale than those in DARK SOULS, giving players a chance to make use of their advanced jumping abilities and other new exploration techniques.

"Comfortable" Gameplay

ELDEN RING uses several gimmicks not found in previous Miyazaki titles to make it more comfortable to play. For instance, resurrection points known as "Stakes of Marika" (see page 24) are generously placed near bosses and spots full of dangerous foes. That means that after players die, it won't take too much effort to get back to where they were to try again. There are also "Birdseye Telescopes" (shown here) that offer players an overhead view of their surroundings. These telescopes are useful discoveries in the Lands Between indeed.



Godrick the Grafted

Godrick is one of the Demigods and the castellan of Stormweil Castle. It's said that the sickly born Godrick coveted the powers of his relatives.



Flails

The flail—this archetypal medieval weapon does not actually appear in the DARK SOULS series. It has a handle shaft connected to a striking portion by a chain or rope. It's a bludgeoning weapon, like a mace or a dub, but its chain offers it greater reach and lets it strike a wider swath. You can see one right here in the hands of the approaching figure. Keep an eye out for the flail and its ilk to make their first FromSoftware dark fantasy appearance in ELDEN RING!





NETWORK TEST REPORT

The ELDEN RING network test took place from November 12, 2021 to November 15, 2021. Those who participated got a glimpse of the breathtaking vistas stretching out from under the Erdtree and encountered new, unknown foes there. Despite its brevity, the test offered an expansive look at what ELDEN RING has to offer, hopefully giving its players a sense of the sheer depth and breadth they'll find when the full game is released.

In this section, we'd like to give you a closer look at the game as participants experienced it during the network test, along with visuals accenting the world and the game systems themselves.

Allow us to start off by introducing the five Origins that were available to player characters in the network test. Please regard them well as you set out on your own journey; you may meet those like them, and be asked to offer aid...

(Note: This section is based on ELDEN RING as it was at the time of the network test. Content may differ from the final game.)



WARRIOR

With a curved sword in each hand, the Warrior specializes in consecutive attacks with two weapons. They possess the "Storm Blade" Skill—a valuable tool that helps them control the battlefield. Their nomadic tribe wears flowing blue cloth to represent running water, a purity of motion they exemplify with their blades. With stagnation comes rot; a Warrior's flow must never cease.



ENCHANTED KNIGHT

The Enchanted Knight wields both sorcery and spear to face their foes at medium and long range. Their "Sorcerer Hunter" shield Skill nullifies magic and channels its power into tiny, glistening blades to turn the tables on its caster. Any one of the Carian royal family's Enchanted Knights was an easy match for a thousand men; however, it's said they all vanished with the collapse of their royal household.



CHAMPION

Clad in light armor and swinging axes, the Champion of the badlands excels at combat. They can even breathe draconic fire. Life is a struggle in the badlands, and Champions exemplify survival of the fittest. Following the example of their chieftain Hoarah Loux, they shun excess.



PROPHET

The Prophet casts incantations that allow them to heal and harness the strength of beasts. Their shield is imbued with the "Holy Ground" Skill, which provides healing and defense to themselves and nearby allies. Persecuted and driven out of their homelands for following their faith to its fiery conclusion, Prophets are forced to wear cart wheels around their necks so that others know not to lend an ear to their heresy.



BLOODY WOLF

With thick armor and a heavy sword, the Bloody Wolf bears whatever pain their foes can dish out before striking back with a mighty blow. Their "Thunderbolt" Skill extends their reach out to midrange. Vargram, the first among the Tarnished to reach Roundtable Hold, was a Bloody Wolf himself.



Following the Guidance of Grace

If you want to survive in the Lands Between, you'll have to fight. As a Tarnished, you'll wield armaments such as swords, axes, and shields to face down those who would block your path to grace.

You'll need your trusty spectral steed, Torrent, to traverse the vast lands before you. While on horseback, your Tarnished's range of movement expands tremendously. Furthermore, you can crouch to sneak past danger, make daring jumps across leveled terrain, and more. You have a wide range of movement in the Lands Between.



ATTACKING

You can attack with armaments in either your right or left hand. On top of that, you can use your right-hand armament for a mighty strong attack. Hold down the strong attack button for an even more powerful charged attack. Both of them take longer to perform, but they hit that much harder. With a weapon in each hand, you can attack with both



GUARDING

You can block incoming enemy attacks either with a shield in your left hand or an armament wielded in both hands. Guarding is especially effective when done with a shield.

Guarding consumes stamina. If your stamina runs out, your stance will be broken.



GUARD COUNTER

You can perform a counterattack by using a strong attack immediately after blocking an enemy. Guard counters make it easy to break an enemy's stance.



CROUCHING

Crouch to make it harder for enemies to discover you. This is especially effective in tall grass. Attacking an enemy that hasn't noticed you will inflict more damage than usual.



CRITICAL HITS

If you get behind an enemy, you'll have a chance to perform a critical hit. You can also perform a critical hit after breaking an enemy's stance. Stance-break critical hits cause more damage than critical hits from behind. Charge attacks and jump attacks make it particularly easy to break an enemy's stance.



EVASION

You can avoid enemy attacks with a dodge roll or backstep. Both of these actions consume stamina, though, and become less effective the closer you are to your maximum equipment load.



FINER POINTS OF MELEE COMBAT

Using melee attacks to break enemy stances is important. Guard counters make it easy to break an enemy's stance, so they're also easily connected to critical hits. This one-two combination is a very effective battle tactic.

If you run out of stamina while guarding, your stance will be broken, so it's important to evade and keep your distance while fighting. Your stamina replenishes quickly, so once you get the hang of it, you'll be caught up in the flurry of battle for sure.



GRACE

Go where light converges to discover sites of grace throughout the Lands Between. Resting at a site of grace will restore your HP and FP (which is spent to cast sorceries and incantations, as well as perform Skills) and heal any status ailments. It will also refill your sacred flasks. However, most of the enemies you've defeated will be revived when you rest at a site of grace.

Grace exists to guide the Tarnished and lead them along the proper path. Even now, some sites of grace retain that power. Their golden rays will guide you along your way.



DEATH

Upon dying, you will be revived at the last site of grace at which you rested. If there is a Stake of Marika near where you died, you can choose to be revived there instead. You will drop any runes in your possession at the site of your death. If you die again before reclaiming those runes, they are lost forever.



You'll have the HP-replenishing Flask of Crimson Tears and the FP-replenishing Flask of Cerulean Tears at your disposal. There is also a third flask, called the Flask of Wondrous Physick. You'll find items called crystal tears at Minor Erdtrees and elsewhere throughout the Lands Between, which can be mixed in the Flask of Wondrous Physick at sites of grace to create elixirs with various custom effects.





HORSEBACK RIDING

Use the Spectral Steed Whistle to summon and ride your spectral steed. You can attack and double-jump while on horseback. If you jump while on horseback near a spiritspring, you can ride its current high into the air.

Use the Spectral Steed Whistle again while mounted to dismount. If your spectral steed dies, you can summon it again, but it will cost one use of your Flask of Crimson Tears to do so. You cannot summon your spectral steed while inside a dungeon.



MAP

Use your map to check your current position and the terrain and buildings in the surrounding area. You can update your map with new information by finding Map Fragments at steles along the road. You can also use the map to freely place beacons of light to serve as landmarks as you explore.

Through your map, you can instantly travel to any sites of grace that you've discovered. However, there are some areas, such as the inside of dungeons, where this cannot be done.



JUMPING

You can jump to cover certain differences in terrain height. You'll leap farther if you jump while dashing. You can also perform jumping attacks and jumping strong attacks.



GATHERING MATERIALS

In every corner of the Lands Between, you will find fruits and flowers, mushrooms and butterflies, and various other useful materials. These materials can be used to craft items.

INDISPENSABLE KEYS TO ADVENTURE: GRACE AND SACRED FLASKS

As the Tarnished explore and broaden their world, they focus their wanderings on discovering spots rich in grace. Throughout the Lands Between, such sites of grace will serve as checkpoints on your adventure.

When you rest at a site of grace, it doesn't only restore your HP and FP, refill your sacred flasks, and heal your status ailments. You can also choose what time of day—morning, noon, or night—to continue your journey, use Ashes of War and change the sorceries and incantations you have memorized, move items between your immediate inventory and storage, and level up. Each site of grace is an important base camp for your adventures in the Lands Between.

Precious as life to many a Tarnished, sacred flasks have a limited number of uses. You can change how those uses are distributed between them at sites of grace. During the network test, players had a total of four uses to divide between the Flask of Crimson Tears and the Flask of Cerulean Tears. Some preferred an even distribution of two and two, while some chose to augment their physical health by allocating all four of them to the Flask of Crimson Tears; with each stop at a site of grace, they struck the balance they sought.

Sacred flasks are refilled at sites of grace, but they can also be refilled by seeking out Crimson and Cerulean Teardrop Scarabs, which replenish the flask that matches their color. Vanquishing groups of enemies will also replenish your flasks, but the amount and type of flask replenished varies based on the enemies in question.

Choose the correct balance of doses to suit your situation—your flasks can never be refilled beyond their maximum capacity.







STRENGTHENING ARMAMENTS

At a smithing table, you can spend runes and Smithing Stones to strengthen your armaments. Somewhere in the Lands Between, you may meet a blacksmith who can make your armaments even stronger.

You can equip up to three armaments each on your left and right arms. The actions each armament performs will vary based on which arm is wielding it. In addition to armaments, you can also equip arrows, bolts, armor,



BOWS

Bows fire arrows and crossbows fire bolts. You can equip up to two types of arrows and bolts at once and choose between them when you attack.

You can do major damage to enemies by aiming for their heads and other weak points. If you're locked onto an enemy, you won't automatically aim for its head, but with a bow wielded in both hands, you can use precision aiming to place your shots with greater accuracy.



ITEM CRAFTING

If you have a Crafting Kit, you can make various items from materials you've gathered. You can learn to craft more items by finding cookbooks.

You will need cracked pots or other containers to craft certain items. You will not be able to make more of those items than you have containers. Containers will be consumed when crafting, but they can be reused when emptied.



CHOOSING ARMAMENTS: THE FIRST STEP TO VICTORY



MULTIPLAYER

There are three different multiplayer modes available in ELDEN RING. In cooperative multiplayer, the host and the guests they summon work together to defeat the boss of the host's current area. In invasion multiplayer, invading guests attempt to defeat the host before they can defeat the local boss—but the invaded player can call for assistance from other players as well. In competitive multiplayer, players will square off in a duel to see who emerges victorious.

You will need certain items to participate in each mode. To summon guests for cooperative and competitive multiplayer, you'll need to use items to discover interested players' summon signs and call them into your world.



SUMMONING POOLS

In each area, you may find effigies of martyrs that serve as summoning pools. You'll find it easy to summon other players at these locations, as co-op and hostile summoning signs created with small effigies gather at summoning pools.

Column



ONLINE PLAY THROUGH LOOSE BONDS

In addition to the multiplayer modes already described, ELDEN RING features asynchronous communication elements. Think of these as loose bonds formed between you and other players. You'll find messages that others leave on the ground, offering pointers, encouragement, and maybe even misleading taunts. You might find phantom forms of other players, showing you what they did in a certain spot—or bloodstains showing you how they died. If you see a lot of bloodstains in one area, then you know that something sinister lurks nearby.

If you set a group password, you'll be more likely to see messages, summon signs, bloodstains, and so on from others using the same password. With a multiplayer password in effect, you'll only be matched with other players using the same password for cooperative and competitive multiplayer—though you can still be invaded by anyone.

During multiplayer in ELDEN RING, you'll do most of your communication through gestures. You'll find a wide array of gestures you can use to casually express yourself to players all over the world.

Feel like playing all by yourself? Simply don't use any multiplayer-related items and you'll be free to enjoy ELDEN RING with only asynchronous communication features in effect.



Armaments and Skills

Armaments can have one special ability called a Skill. There is a wide variety of Skills available, from powerful attacks to defensive boosts and healing. You can use items called Ashes of War to grant new Skills and affinities to armaments that meet their criteria. Selecting the right armaments and Skills for the rigorous combat ahead will help lead your Tarnished to victory.



STORM BLADE

A Skill used by the Stormveil Knights long ago. Your armament is wrapped in a stormy blade that can be fired in rapid succession.



SORCERER HUNTER

Swing your shield to form a force field that stops magic and reflects it back as small glintswords. Works as a regular parry against melee attacks.



THUNDERBOLT

A Skill used by dragon worshippers from the capital. Your armament calls down a bolt of lightning. You can fire multiple bolts in rapid succession.



A fixed Skill for Reduvia. Blood forms into projectile blades that force bleeding. Can be fired quickly and repeatedly. Reduvia is a jagged dagger with a distinctive curved blade used by the noble servants of the Lord of Blood. This dagger rips the flesh as it enters, inflicting blood loss with sickening efficacy. A proud testament to the success of its vicious design, this weapon is perpetually coated in blood. Charge attacks and jump attacks make it particularly easy to break an enemy's stance.

REDUVIA BLOOD BLADE

ASHES OF WAR: BUILD YOUR IDEAL ARMAMENT

The arsenal of armaments in ELDEN RING already come loaded with their own Skills. However, you can use Ashes of War to imbue them with new Skills too. Each armament can only have one Skill, though, so be sure you're willing to trade the old Skill for the new!

Ashes of War can also add certain affinities, such as "Keen" or "Magic," to your armaments. This will change the effects of their attacks and alter how they scale with attributes like Strength. You can also choose to apply Skills only, without altering affinities.

Ashes of War can be used to add Skills and affinities to armaments at sites of grace. They can be applied and removed over and over again, but there are rules. Not every Ash of War works with every type of armament, and some armaments have fixed Skills that cannot be replaced.



ORDOVIS' VORTEX

A fixed skill for Ordovis' Greatsword. The greatsword slams into foes with the swirling might of a Crucible vortex. Charge for more power. Ordovis was one of the two honored as foremost among the knights of the Crucible. His greatsword is imbued with an ancient holiness. Its scarlet tint exemplifies the nature of primordial gold, said to be close in nature to life itself.







GRAVITAS

A Skill from a great white king with stone skin. Pierce the ground with your armament to damage foes as a surge of gravity draws them in.



Colun

CHOOSE SKILLS TO SUIT YOUR ARMAMENTS

The Longsword is an easy-to-use, characteristically balanced weapon that can perform piercing attacks in addition to dealing standard physical damage. During the network test, they came equipped with the "Square Off" Skill. Using "Square Off" holds the longsword in a horizontal position from which it can slash through an enemy's guard with a normal attack, or break into a running thrust with a strong attack.

The Bastard Sword has exceptional reach. Its wide range makes it suitable for chaotic group fights. Its "Stamp" Skill allows its wielder to brace the sword in a low stance that prevents recoil from most enemy attacks, then follow up with a strong attack for an upward strike.

As you can see, these Skills enhance their weapons' strong points. If you're not sure what Skill to choose for your favorite armament, you can't go wrong with one that helps it do what it does best.

HAILSTORM SWORD

A fixed Skill for the Dragonscale Blade. The blade calls down a bolt of ice, temporarily imbuing it with ice and lightning.

The Dragonscale Blade was forged from the remembrances of dragonkin soldiers, burnished with the essence of draconic immortality. Alas, the dragonkin never attained immortality, and perish as mere imitations of the ancient dragons.







A Skill used by the enchanted Carian Knights. Your sword becomes a magical glintsword for a slash. You can charge this Skill for more power.



Column



CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON, CHOOSE YOUR EXPERIENCE

In the network test, Tarnished of the Champion origin started off with a Battle Axe. This weapon boasts a great deal of destructive power, but it's also rather heavy and allow, making its user easily overwhelmed by fast enemies and large groups of foes. Luckily, the Battle Axe has the "Wild Strikes" Skill to turn the tide of battle. This barbaric Skill lets the axe keep swinging over and over again—and also emboldens the user to keep striking, even as enemies attack. Keep holding down the button, and your "Wild Strikes" can continue for as long as you've got FP and stamina to spare. Finally, follow it up with a normal or strong attack to faith things of "Wild Strikes" eaken was to be a foresten and the assence in the strong attack to

The Short Bow, intended to be used for long-range attacks, comes with the ability to zoom in with a focused view and strike with precision at a distance. Its "Mighty Shot" Skill puts the user in an oblique stance for a powerful shot that penetrates an enemy's guard. Arrows may be limited, but more can be crafted from the proper materials. Various types of arrows, from flame-enhanced Firebone Arrows to soporific Sleepbone Arrows, make bows a powerful and flexible combat option. With so many types of armaments available, you're bound to find one that suits your style and role-playing preferences.





PIERCING FANG

A Skill used by Yura, the Bloody Finger Hunter. Starting with your blade held horizontally, you make a powerful thrust that cannot be blocked.



Column



AN ARSENAL OF ARMAMENTS, A STOCKADE OF SKILLS: YOUR ROAD TO VICTORY

Twinblades sport two fearsome blades on either side of one shaft. The "Spinning Slash" Skill shows off their true potential...but try giving this wide-reaching weapon the "Piercing Fang" Skill instead and it will gain a powerful, thrusting attack, expanding its combat potential.

The Lance, a type of great spear, works well on horseback for mounted combat, but with the "Charge Forth" Skill, you can hold it at your hip for a high-momentum forward thrust that pierces an enemy's stance—no horse required. Then you can connect into even more attacks.

Incidentally, in the Lands Between, you'll encounter certain scaly foes that are hard to faze with piercing and slashing attacks. In that case, you'll need a good weapon for striking damage—like a hammer. During the network test, a club was available that essentially ignored enemy scales with its powerful charged attacks. To top it off, this club could make use of the "Brave War Cry" Skill, which increases attack power and makes its strong attacks even more powerful. A Champion and their club is a fearsome duo indeed.

Foes of all sorts abound in the Lands Between, but there are armaments and Skills suited to each of them. Focus on strengthening one favorite weapon or build a whole arsenal—the choice is yours.



STORM STOMP

A Skill brought to Stormveil by knights from lost lands. Stomp the ground hard to kick up a temporary storm.



VIPER BITE

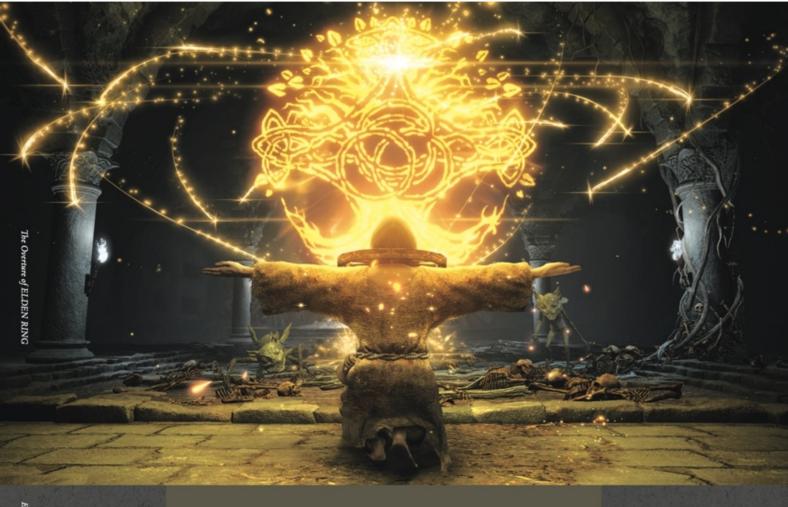
A fixed Skill for the Coil Shield. The bronze venomous snake comes to life and stretches out to bite your foes. The Coil Shield is designed for gladiatorial combat and rises above its peers as a particularly showy specimen. The sculpted bronze snake is a poisonous breed, boosting the wielder's immunity.

SHIELD SKILLS THAT SHINE IN THE FACE OF DANGER

Small shields, like the Iron Roundshield and the Buckler, and the midsized Leather Shield have the "Parry" Skill. This useful Skill lets you deflect an enemy's attack and break their stance. Once an enemy's stance is broken, you can follow up with a critical hit. "Parry" makes a great regular addition to your Skill repertoire.

There are other shield Skills too, of course. "Barricade Shield," made famous by a certain Sir Neidhardt, temporarily hardens your shield to deflect blows that it normally couldn't stop. Then there's "Holy Ground," which consecrates the land around you to the Erdtree to restore HP and boost defense. Such Skills let your shield truly shine in the face of adversity. Naturally, if you're confident enough to sacrifice your HP in exchange for truly ferocious damage, you may forgo a shield entirely and wield a heavy armament in both hands instead.





Sorceries and Incantations

Shimmering stars. Dragons that epitomize violence. These and more astounding forces can be called down and put to work by the Tarnished through spells called sorceries and incantations. To use sorceries and incantations, you'll first have to memorize them at a site of grace. Sorceries also require a staff to serve as a catalyst, and incantations call for a seal. To expand the number of spells you can memorize, you'll have to seek out an Ancient Amulet.



SORCERY: CARIAN PIERCER

A glintstone sorcery used by the enchanted knights who served the Carian royal family. Forms a magic sword to impale one's foes. This sorcery increases in power when charged up.

Blades of pure moonlight epitomize the protection the moon grants to Caria.



SORCERY: BRIARS OF SIN

An aberrant sorcery, discovered along with red glintstone by those exiled to the north for their crimes. Summons large thorns from a whorl of blood shed by one's own hand in penance for sins. This sorcery can be cast repeatedly.

The Academy reviles this sorcery, which draws its power from faith.



SORCERY: METEORITE

A glintstone sorcery that draws on gravitational force, used by the Alabaster Lords, who had skin of stone. Calls small meteorites down from the sky. The meteor shower continues for as long as the sorcery is in effect.

It is said that, in the Eternal City, now lost in ruin underground, meteorites held the same import as stars.



INCANTATION: THE FLAME OF FRENZY

An incantation from the maddening Three Fingers. Causes the yellow flame of frenzy to burst forth from the caster's eyes. This incantation can drive human foes mad, and charging up makes it more powerful.

Those whose eyes are afflicted with the flame of frenzy are racked with maddening pain and unstoppable tears.



INCANTATION: GREYOLL'S ROAR

An incantation of the Dragon Communion, used by those who've eaten of a dragon's heart. Manifests the power of the Great Ancient Dragon Greyoll to sound a fearsome roar.

The roar of the great Greyoll, foreboding as a mountain, overcomes all who hear it with its might. Their attack power is temporarily decreased.



INCANTATION: BEAST CLAW

An incantation bestowed upon those who cull the Deathroot by Gurranq, the Beast Clergyman. Creates beast claws that tear apart the land. This incantation increases in power when charged up.

Long ago, Gurranq was a beast of such terrifying ferocity that his former name meant "Death of the Demigods."



INCANTATION: DRAGONFIRE

An incantation of the Dragon Communion, used by those who've eaten of a dragon's heart. Spews flaming breath with draconic power.

Those extraordinary individuals who perpetuate the Dragon Communion are called the dragon-hearted.



Spirits

S pirits are ghostly allies that you can summon to fight by your side. To summon spirits, you'll need a Spirit-Caller's Bell and the proper ashes, as well as a nearby rebirth monument. Summoned spirits will join the Tarnished in their lonely battle. Each spirit represents the remains of a person or thing left behind in the Lands Between long ago; perhaps only the Tarnished themselves, having lost the grace of gold, can beckon them into the present.



NOBLE SORCERER ASHES

Summon the spirit of a noble who studied sorcery at Raya Lucaria. This spirit wields rudimentary glintstone sorceries; it seems that was accomplishment enough for a noble.



USE SPIRITS AS YOU SEE FIT

There are many different ways to use the spirits you summon. You could use them as a decoy to draw enemy attention, for instance. However you choose to use yours, you must first keep an eye out for the monument icon on your screen to make sure you're in a suitable place for summoning. Be aware that you can only summon one sort of spirit at a time, though, and that you can't summon spirits at all during multiplayer.



WANDERING NOBLE ASHES

Summon the spirits of nobles who, after death, now wander the Lands Between. Surely they were in search of something once—but whatever it was has long been forgotten.



LONE WOLF ASHES

Summon the spirits of three wolves who were chased from their pack and later found company with a human outcast—a fellow hunter. Wolf spirits overwhelm enemies with their agility, aiding the summoner in combat.





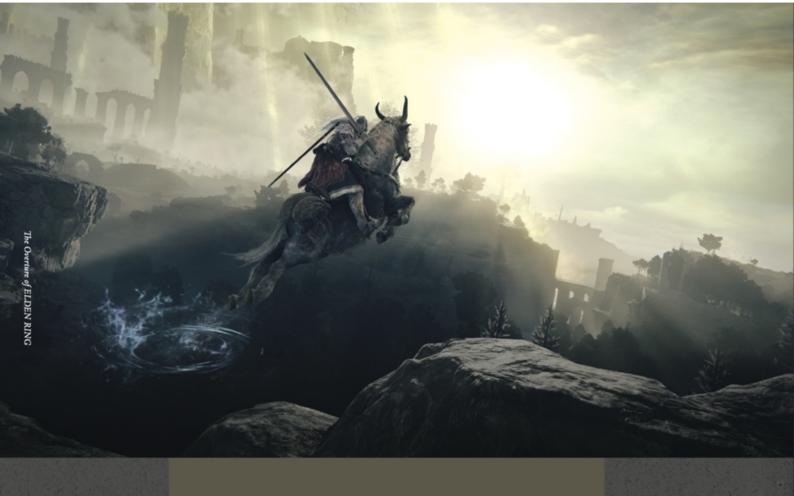
SPIRIT JELLYFISH ASHES

Summon a floating phantom that illuminates its surroundings. This is seemingly the lingering spirit of a young girl on an eternal search for her sister, with whom she'd promised to see the stars.



NORTHERN MERCENARY ASHES

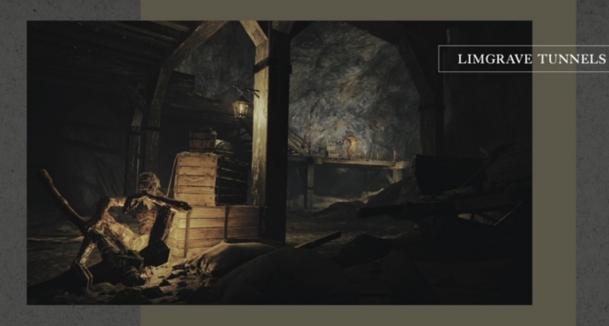
Summon the spirits of northern mercenaries, said to carry the blood of giants in their veins, who wield curved cleavers with ease. Their bellowing shouts further enhance their strength.



The Lands Between: Vistas

The Tarnished's continuous search for the Elden Ring leads them all across the Lands Between. The world before them offers sprawling grasslands, steep mountains, wind-worn hills, murky swamps, and more. Despite its beauty, this is a wild land where law gives way to disorder. The splendor of mankind is long lost, and the ground itself begins to warp. The last fumes of a golden age linger in the air; perhaps you'll catch a whiff of them as you traverse the lands astride your spectral steed, and they'll lead you to new discoveries.



















AS THE SEASONS CHANGE, SO DO THE LANDS BETWEEN

As time passes in ELDEN RING, your view of the Lands Between will change with every hour. At sites of grace, you can choose to pass time, allowing the hours to slip by from morning to night. The weather also changes with the passage of time, occasionally bringing rain. Rain means less visibility, which may be the perfect thing for stealthy tactics. Similarly, at night, you'll find it easier to move without enemy detection. Additionally, some shimmering materials might be easier to find at night than by daylight. On the other hand, night also brings with it certain nocturnal foes. Some areas might offer far safer passage in the daytime.

During the network test, players found that some mounted soldiers patrolling a bridge from morning to evening turned over their rounds to more fearsome, black-clad cavalrymen at night, and that enemies that spent all noon slumbering among boulders woke to prowl the grasslands after nightfall. No matter the time of day, whatever the weather, one thing is certain: wonder never sleeps in this dark fantasy world. The intrepid Tarnished is advised to tread carefully.

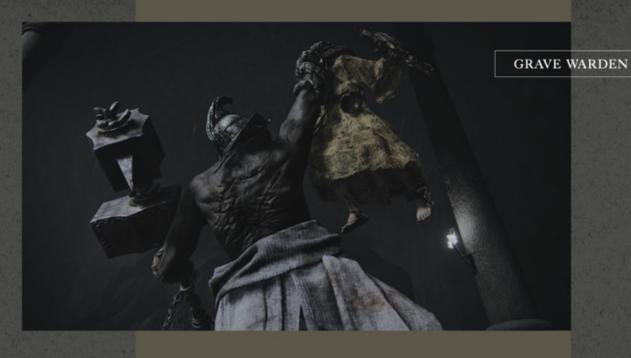




The Lands Between: Encounters

A cross a sea of fog lies the Lands Between, home not only to typical wild animals, but also fearsome, prowling aberrations. Throughout dim, labyrinthine outbacks and bastions crawling with foes, powerful forces await to prevent the homecoming of the Tarnished. But if you stick to the roads, you'll likely find those eager to help you along your way as well. For the Tarnished, there is nowhere to go but forward, continuing on a path toward the Elden Ring...





























THE THRILL OF BESTING A FEARSOME FOE

When facing an enemy, pay close attention to their movements. Once you've figured out how they strike—and selected armaments and Skills to suit the situation—you should be up to the task of defeating them...provided you don't get surrounded. Naturally, one moment's carelessness can mean the end of your life. Luckily, on top of your combat fundamentals, you'll have a wide range of tactics at your disposal to help you survive: Skills, spells, stealthy surprise attacks... However you choose to conquer your foes, you'll gain useful experience to refine your tactics and enjoy ELDEN RING's deep combat to its fullest.

The bosses in particular present bold, formidable challenges; you can expect to fall at their feet over and over again. But take heart! You can always summon spirits to you aid, try attacking from a distance, or parry their blows. Each boss can be defeated in a multitude of ways. Strive for victory, trying out any tactics you see fit, and you'll feel truly accomplished when you succeed at last. Perhaps that's the greatest charm ELDEN RING has to offer.







Very well. You are now my protégé in glintstone sorcery. SORCERESS SELLEN











THROUGH QUEST AND COMBAT SHALL THE TARNISHED KNOW THEIR WORLD

MELINA





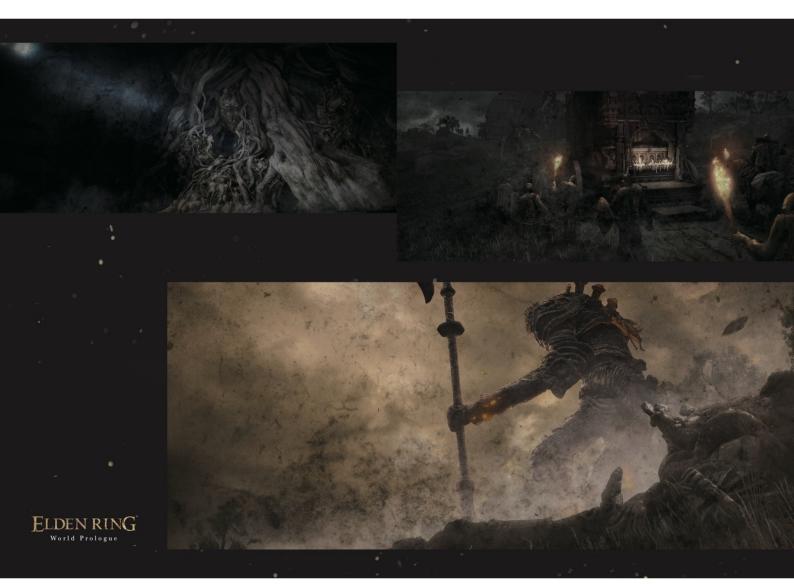
...So take me with you. To the foot of the Erdtree.













Interview with

HIDETAKA MIYAZAKI

Now, we'd like to pick up our interview with Hidetaka Miyazaki from where we left off on page 19. From here on, our discussion takes a turn toward the finer details of the game, including what was learned during the network test. Together with Part 1, we hope this will deepen your appreciation of ELDEN RING.

Part 2

Deeper, More Free Combat

Q: There are some new additions to the combat system in *ELDEN RING*, like guard counters, as well as adjustments making jump attacks easier to perform. What were the reasons behind these changes?

Miyazaki: With guard counters, we wanted to add more reasons for players to pick a shield-toting, defense-heavy playstyle. Since there are plenty of evasive and long-range options available, not to mention mounted combat, we wanted to make sure that the trusty shield style would still be a valid option.

Jump attacks came about much in the same way mounted combat did. We want players to have enough freedom of movement, even when they're not on horseback, so we gave them a jump. And of course, if they jump, it follows that they should be able to do jump attacks. One key to combat in ELDEN RING is breaking enemies' stances; we decided to make jump attacks one useful way to achieve that. I hope players will see them as another weapon in their offensive and defensive arsenals.

Q: So you've not only included combat elements that people who've played your previous games would expect, but added new ones too.

Miyazaki: As we've said a few times since ELDEN RING was first announced, we're approaching it as another step along the evolutionary path set out by the DARK SOULS series. Take sword-based combat, for example; it's been expanded upon in ELDEN RING, but without the foundations laid in the DARK SOULS series, we wouldn't be able to make those expansions. We've taken everything we've made so far and continued to build on it—that's what I mean by calling it an "evolutionary step."

There are plenty of new combat skills too, so I think players will forgive us for building on what came before and enjoy the combat in store for them with ELDEN RING.

Q: There are a few other new elements as well, such as stealth being an option, and summoning certain foes to fight alongside you as spirits. What was the intent behind adding those?

Miyazaki: We started by considering all the different types of fight scenes that might arise in a vast, open world. Let's say you might happen upon a campsite where your enemies were gathered—what would you do? How would you approach them to attack? We wanted to give a tactical edge to those decisions for players to make. Those new elements grew out of that idea; we wanted to give players more tactical options. Even some that come into play before combat actually begins.

Stealth and spirit-summoning were the result. They fit in with our central goal of boosting player freedom, and they also work well as combat tactics that call for a less gung-ho, action-packed approach. Summoning spirits for help brings up even more options too since different types of spirits make different plans of attack possible.

Q: Storming an enemy base with summoned spirits by our side sure was fun.

Miyazaki: Glad to hear it! There are more than fifty distinctive spirits that you can summon, and I want players to try a bunch of them out. Even if you don't use them much, you might enjoy simply collecting them.

Q: Speaking of things to collect, where did the concept of Ashes of War come from?

Miyazaki: Ashes of War let you make your weapons truly yours by freely changing the skills they include and powering them up. We thought that would be a great way to increase the amount of freedom that players have. They greatly expand your options for customizing your weapons, and I think that extra degree of personalization is fun.

The skills themselves harken back to DARK SOULS III, where we used skills to boost the individuality of each type of weapon. We took that system and tried to beef it up by making the skills into powers appropriate for high-fantasy, mythic-level battles. As a result, they're flashier and more individualistic than before.

Q: ELDEN RING also offers a uniquely high amount of freedom in altering and upgrading your gear.

Miyazaki: Ashes of War also ended up being a way for players to add specific affinities to their weapons. If they can change their skills as they see fit, we thought, why not affinities too? For example, if you customize your weapon to pair a fire-based skill with the fire affinity, that link makes it feel more real and at home in the world of ELDEN RING.

Q: All right, here's a big one: Will players be able to reassign their characters' stats to try out different builds? Miyazaki: They will indeed! I mean, it's not something you'll be able to do indefinitely, but it's possible. The option becomes available after you've progressed through the game to a certain point

There will also come a point where you'll be able to alter your character's appearance. Unlike reassigning your stats, though, you can do this as many times as you like. Since it's a rather long game, we didn't want to put players through the pain of starting over just because they wanted to change up how their character looks. I know there are some players who never actually make it past the character creation screen because they can't get their character exactly the way they want them—this should help them out too!

Being able to change your character's appearance also benefits roleplaying. You might want to switch things up depending on how things have progressed in the story, or for how you see your character personally, and we wanted to allow for that. For instance, maybe you think, "Hey, my character's been through some horrifying ordeals—it should turn her hair white!" You can do that. If we were to push changes like that from our side of things, some players would get upset that we messed with their characters. So we wound up with the current system, where players who want it can do it themselves. Q: That's a fun new twist that you haven't had in your other games.

Miyazaki: Right. I like to roleplay, myself, so it's right up my alley.

Q: The network test offered five different origins for player characters. Can we expect more in the full game? Miyazaki: The origins available in the full game will be different from the ones in the network test. We've prepared ten of them altogether—but there were some origins in the network test that actually won't be in the retail game.

Network Test Response

Q: The network test generated a lot of buzz, but what was the response like for you?

Miyazaki: Like I said at the start of this interview, the network test happened during a pretty stressful time in the development process—so once I saw it was well-received, and that it went off without any major hitches, the first thing I felt was relief!

I think most of the network test players had a good time with it. Of course, we still got plenty of useful data about issues and points for improvement, and I want to reflect as many of those improvements as possible in the final game.

Q: For just a network test, it offered a rather large area to play around in. We're curious about how much of the full game's scale made it into the test version.

Miyazaki: Just taking the open world into account, I'd say it's roughly ten-plus times as large as what you saw in the network test. But like I touched on before, it won't be necessary to turn over every single stone and explore every last inch of the world. All that scale is entirely there to provide a real sense of adventure. The things that you'll really have to search for aren't as tightly packed as they are in our previous games. I really don't want the sheer size of the world to become a burden or a source of stress for players.

There's a lot to do in ELDEN RING, but compared to previous games, significantly less of it is necessary, proportionally speaking, if all you want to do is beat the game. But what that also means is that, should you decide to stray from the most direct route to the ending, you'll find plenty to explore. New threats and mysteries, encounters and drama—a whole entire mythology is waiting for you, just off the beaten path.

Q: Is there a system of multiplayer covenants, like in DARK SOULS?

Miyazaki: ELDEN RING doesn't have covenants like the ones in the DARK SOULS series. We wanted to lower the hurdles to online play as much as possible; mechanics like summoning pools are some of the ways we've made matchmaking easier. Covenants didn't really fit into that concept.

Q: The DARK SOULS series has storied competitive elements; did you have a similar concept for those in ELDEN RING too?

Miyazaki: As far as competitive multiplayer goes, the PvP invasions you remember from our past games will be making a comeback in *ELDEN RINGs* massive field. To be frank, the network test revealed several issues with it, but we've made solving those one of our top priorities since.

While we're on the subject of ELDEN RING's network play, I'd like to touch on its so-called "asynchronous multiplayer" features. Those cover things like phantoms that show other players' gameplay, messages from others, and bloodstains that reveal how they died. This time, you'll be able to form your own groups that effect how you see those. When you're grouped with another player, you'll be more likely to see their phantoms, messages, and bloodstains. They'll stand out more, visually, than those of players from outside your group too. So even when you're not directly playing with your friends, you'll still be able to play with

We've taken everything we've made so far and continued to build on it—that's what I mean by calling it an "evolutionary step."





them in a looser sense. You're still connected.

By switching these asynchronous multiplayer features so that they're less "something from someone out there somewhere," and more "something from someone I've chosen and approved," I think we might have given them a new meaning. Maybe it could be the start of a new sort of play built around that system.

The Charm of Characters with a History

Q: Melina, one of the more important characters, has three distinctive scars across her eyelids. Will we find out what these scars mean?

Miyazaki: That's something that I can't say much about right now—at least not without spoiling things for everyone!

But speaking of Melina, while she does allow the player character to level up, there's a clear difference between her and the Fire Keepers who performed that role in the DARK SOULS series. Melina has a will of

her own; she isn't just there to attend to the player. She's something of an equal partner, and in keeping with that characterization, she has a less-arcane design that shows a more natural face.

There are characters like the Fire Keepers in ELDEN RING, though. They're known as Finger Maidens. However, the player character has lost their Finger Maiden—leaving them "maidenless." Melina offers to strike up a pact with them in the absence of a Finger Maiden.

Q: How about the "snow witch" at the end of the story trailer? She feels like she's a counterpart to Melina in some way.

Miyazaki: I'm afraid that's something else I can't give away right now! She is an important character with deep ties to the story, but you'll have to play the game to find out how.

Q: The Tarnished of ELDEN RING cannot die—at least not all the way—which seems subtly different from the Undead player characters of DARK SOULS. What sort of immortality do the Tarnished have?

Miyazaki: The immortality of the Tarnished originates with the guidance of grace. Tarnished are those who have died outside of the Lands Between, only to be awakened by grace and beckoned there—that's where your story begins in ELDEN RING. That guidance won't let the player character go.

This grace isn't just a guiding line in the story; it also offers hints and direction in actual gameplay. If you're not sure where you should head next, traces of light shining out from sites of grace will tell you where—or present one option, at least. You're free to refuse and set off on your own too, of course.

Q: Godwyn the Golden was the first of the Demigods to die. Do the Demigods not receive the immortality that grace provides?

Miyazaki: No, theirs is a different story entirely a story that it isn't time to tell yet. But the Demigods' immortality stems from having their fated deaths removed from the Elden Ring. I don't expect that to make much sense right now, but as you play the game, I think you'll gradually come to understand.

Q: What can you tell us about Godfrey, who recently adorned the cover of EDGE magazine?

Miyazaki: Godfrey was the very first Elden Lord and the companion of Queen Marika. In the past, there were two Elden Lords, and Godfrey was one of them. His tale is deeply entwined with that of the Tarnished, and the creature at his back is called the Beast Regent.

Q: In a previous interview about your title Déraciné, you mentioned that you "never thought [you'd] use a shoujo manga-style motif until [you] made Déraciné." Were there any similarly unexpected shades on your palette for ELDEN RING?

Miyazaki: Hmm... Not really, to be honest. ELDEN RING does have a much larger cast of NPCs that had to be drawn up than my previous games, though. I can only compare this to what we've done at FromSoftware in the past, but I think their portrayals are a lot easier to grasp too and they tie into your progress through the game itself to a much greater degree. These NPCs and their stories play a role in offering players more freedom. We paid special attention to how a few of these characters would grow and change throughout the game, and it was fun to build out their stories.

Q: Even the music this time around felt more heroic than it usually has in your games.

Miyazaki: Thank you! Earlier I mentioned how I thought of ELDEN RING's bosses as heroic, in a sense, and the music comes from a similar place. The sound team really delivered on the concept. There are quite a few pieces of music in the game—please look forward to hearing them all.

Q: All right, last question. What's the part of ELDEN RING that you hope players enjoy the most?

Miyazaki: There's one thing that's remained unchanged, throughout all of my previous work and ELDEN RING as well: I want players to enjoy a real sense of accomplishment after facing down and finally overcoming adversity.

Beyond that, I also want them to feel that sense of adventure I talked so much about earlier. The world of ELDEN RING is vast and mysterious. Don't hesitate to explore it, or overprepare; feel free to experience its dangers and riddles, get to know its people and events, and take in its myths and legends. If fantasy fans are happy, I'm happy!

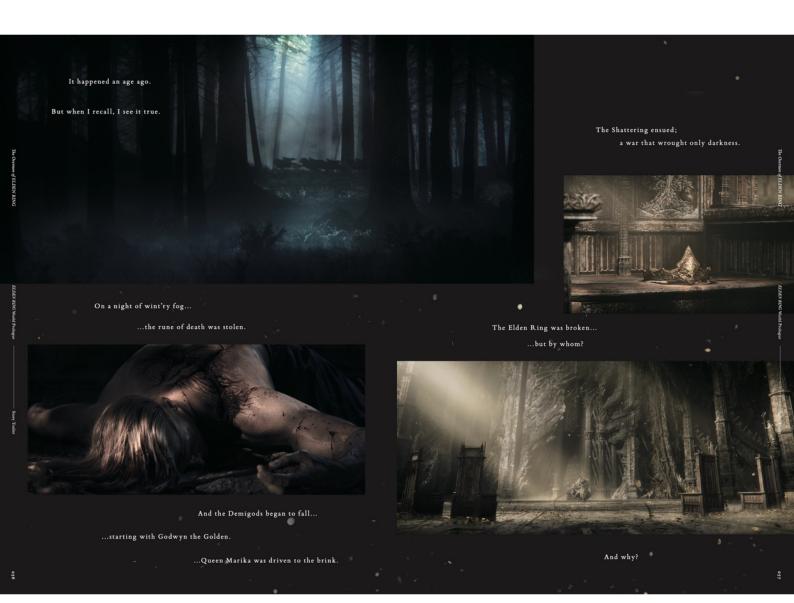
Q: Thank you very much!

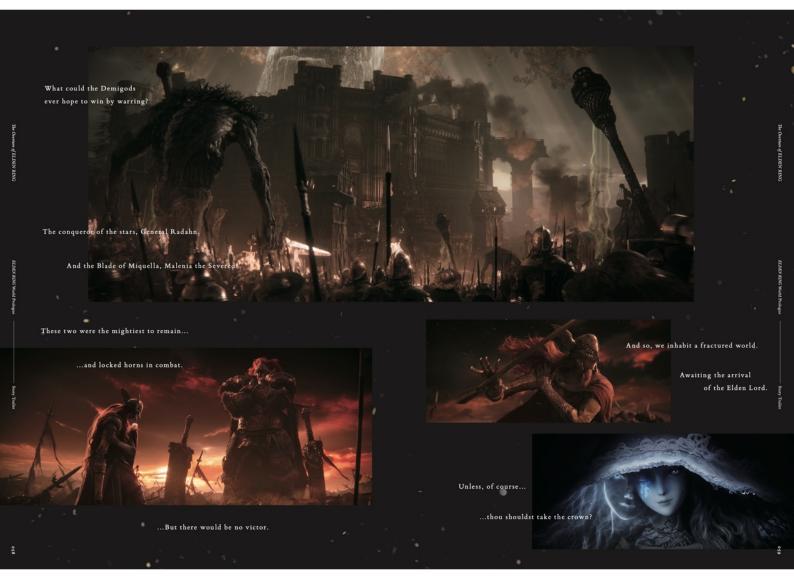
Godfrey, the First Elden Lord

The image of Godfrey, who graced the cover of the acclaimed gaming magazine EDGE, also appears in the screenshot here. As you might imagine from the hanging hands, this is likely Stormwell Castle, home of Godrick the Grafted. If it is indeed Stormwell, then this portrait may well be a symbol of the admiration and awe Godrick feels for his ancestor.



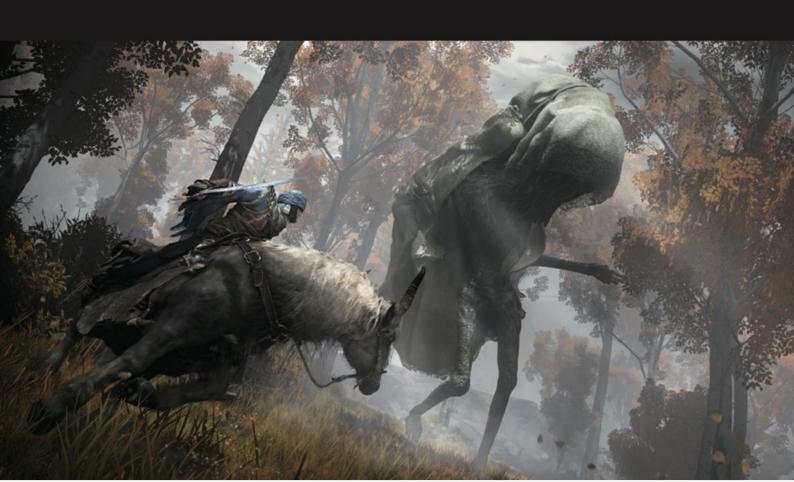


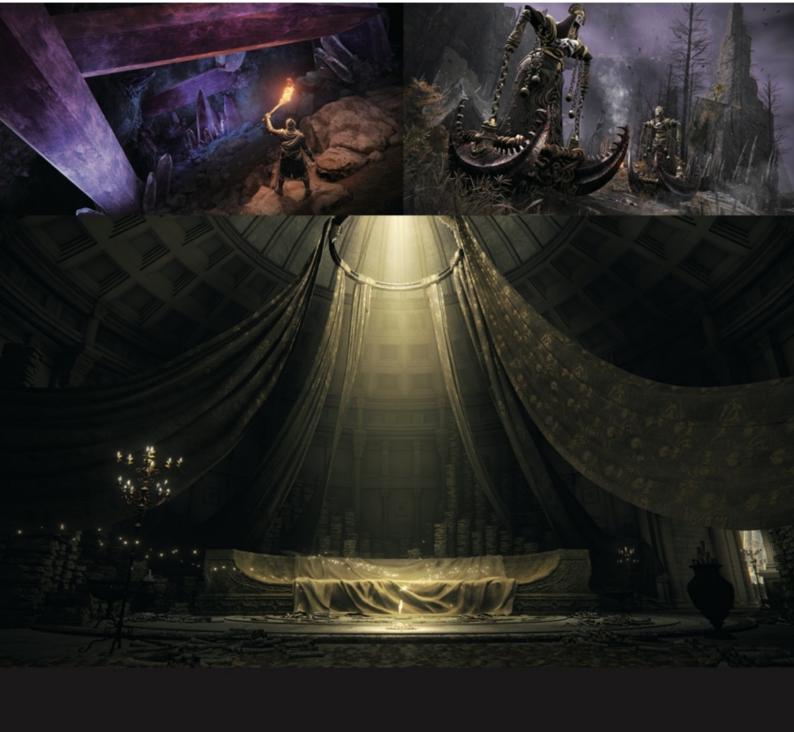






They will fight and they will die...
...in an unending curse.





For how else is a champion, or a lord...
...to be born?







Brandish the Elden Ring... for all of us.







In the latter half of the first decade of the 2000s, game studies streve to make use of the staggering improvements in expressive power presented by the then-new PlayStation 3 and Xhos \$60. Among all their progress, one game showed promise of advancement in a particularly unique direction. That game was the brainchild of Sony Interactive Entertainment (then called Sony Computer Entertainment and FromSoftware, and Hideuka Miyazaki's debut as a director of dark fantasy titles: Domet Sud.

Domet's Sud. aimed to take tried-and-true elements that date back to the birth of computer games—challenge, discovery, and

Denset's Seafa aimed to take tried-and-true elements that date back to the birth of computer games—challenge, discovery, and a sense of achievement—and present them anew through the advanced hardware of the day.

Challenge—conquering complex dungeons and facing off against powerful boses.

Discovery—conceiving new strategies and uncovering

Sense of achievement—players' mastery would be rewarded with strong feelings of genuine accomplishment.

With its asynchronous multiplayer features, Donor) Souli invited players into a shared experience, even if they weren't playing together at the same time. Systems were created to make players feel as if others were there, playing along with them, even if they weren't participatine in multiplayer at all.

After its release, Down's Souls became one of the most heavily discussed and highly regarded titles among gamers the whole world over. Since then, FromsSourch has kept its essence alive through its other work—the DAMK SOULS series in particular. Demon's Souls continues to influence game developers to

Ulthough the PlayStation 3's network services are no longer perational, Denor's Souls lives on through Bluepoint Games' emake, which a new generation of gamers can enjoy online on the PlayStation 5.



Demon's Souls

THE GRAND ORIGIN WHENCE ALL CAME

BOLETARIA

A vas, notices to could y tice by king rusin Art. Once made prosperous through the Soul Arts, Boletaria is now a nightmarish metropolis mired in a deep, colorless fog. It's inhabited by demons and the maddened remnants of the past—both of whom are eager to seize Souls.

As the fog chokes out all sunlight, the things below it begin to vanish into thin—or perhaps, in this case, oppressively thick—air. It is not hard to imagine the fog spreading forth from Boletaria and consuming the entire

Persons of great skill and wit who strive to reach beyond the grasp of the common man. Many such heroes make their way to fog-shrouded Boletaria. Each of them is exceptionally capable and bears a worthy story to their name. Unfortunately, such tales lose their meaning one stride's length into the fog. No figure is so noble, so dashing, that the fog cannot obscure it.

SOULS

The Souls discovered by King Allant are a form of energy, held to be a power long dormant in mankind. It might be illustrative to picture this concept alongside the notion of hun and po souls proposed by Chinese philosophy.

The hun is the ethereal spirit, while the po remains with the physical body. To put it simply, those who lose their hun lose their sanity; those who lose their po become Souls and give themselves to the war effort against the demons.



THE NEXUS

If the deep, colorless fog symbolizes dispersion, then this temple could be said to symbolize binding together. A "nexus" is a focal point where things converge. This temple, deep in an icy mountain range at the outskirts of human ruins, performs that exact role, binding together many things in the land of Boletaria...or, as some might see it, imprisoning them.



CRESTFALLEN WARRIOR

A man who sits alone at the Nexus, where heroes cross paths. He was likely once a warrior of some renown, but long, fruitless combat with the demons has worn him down. It seems his spirit is already frayed almost to its limits.

Perhaps he is a mirror of our future or, more optimistically, a warning. He is a living indicator of discouragement, frustration, and worldly strife—themes that appear throughout Miyazaki's work in a variety of forms.



MAIDEN IN BLACK

This maiden's shabby, wretched appearance belies the importance of her task: tending the fire at the Nexus so that it never goes out. She gathers Souls and converts them into power—an act which seems sinful, even if her goal is to lull the Old One back to peaceful sleep.

Her long, torchlike staff resembles a boating pole; one she may well use to steer through the flow of faith from those who waver between man and beast.



Column

THE IMMORTAL SOUL

In these spaces throughout, we'll explore several key concepts of FromSoftware's dark fantasy library and what they mean in the real world that we live in. Be forewarned: this is all subjective interpretation, so ponder at your own risk!

In Demon's Souls and DARK SOULS, Souls are left behind when one's strength finally gives out. If this has any analogue in our world, it's in the popular belief that ghosts linger on in places where people have died. Something that persists forever, even after the physical body is gone—that's the nearly universal definition of a soul."

In these games, players can assume a Soul form to enter other players' worlds in order to help or hinder them. This could be likened to an 'out-of-body experience,' wherein the spirit travels beyond the body. Such experiences have been described in detail throughout history. The ancient Egyptians, for instance, believed that the ba—part of the soul that endures on earth—became a bird to fly out of the tomb of the deceased.

There are also many folk tales of heroes that leave their souls behind in candles, plants, or other objects before embarking on their journey. Those who fear for the safety of their adventuring loved one can keep an eye on the chosen object; any changes in its condition could mean the hero is in danger. This might strike you as somewhat similar to the bloodstains and messages found in FromSoftware's titles, which offer a phantasmal look at other players' adventures (and untimely demises).

SAINT URBAIN

Saints such as Urbain wield godly miracles in hopes of staving off calamity and providing safety and comfort. The word "Umbasa" is both a sign of their faith and a prayer meaning "God's blessings upon you."

Incidentally, such priests decry the sorcerous handling of Souls as evil. But they supernaturally draw out the latent powers within mankind; isn't any distinction just splitting hairs?





YURT, THE SILENT CHIEF

At times, a quiet, eloquent countenance can serve to mask the truth. The shotel and parrying dagger in Yurt's hands silently boast of his technique more clearly than any words could.

At the story's beginning, it's clear enough from speaking to other heroes that Yurt's second title is widely known...but those who know his true nature and why he is called "the Silent Chief" are few and far between.

The beasts that pour out of the log around boletaria to devour souls are called demons. They come in many shapes and sizes; the only thing they have in common is that they're all powerful, Soul-hungry creatures. This necessarily creates a wall between the demons and mankind, who ruled the world through Soul Arts in ages past.

The beasts that pour out of the fog around Boletaria to devour Souls



THE OLD ONE

ancient beast that created both the colorless fog and the nons it spawns, sealed away by the Nexus long ago. All disasters that befall Boletaria now are evidence that the g-slumbering Old One has awakened.

Demon's Souls, the world is presented as tragic. Perhaps is tragedy is a lamentation for the thoughtlessness of ho refuse to learn from history...or for a despair





PHOSPHORESCENT SLUGS

Most real-world slugs are omnivorous, but a quick look at the mouth of a slug from *Demon's Souls* reveals that they are carnivorous through and through.

With their moist bodies and numerous parasites, slugs are living symbols of impurity. The alugs of Demon's Souls, however, are soaked in luminescent fluid, and the Sticky White Slime that their bodies secrete has magical properties. Perhaps, among their impurity, they hold something of the divine...

DRAGON GOD

Deep within Stonefang Tunnel lie the scattered bones of a colossal dragon. Given the size of the bones, the burrowers that found them surely considered them the remains of a god among dragons.

This demon does indeed rule the dragons it so resembles, but having grown drunk on Souls, it may be a mere imitation of the god that commanded the burrowers' devotion.





A decrepit old man seated on a throne, the Old Monk drew on the power of his golden robe to take revenge on those who wronged him. After having his vengrance, however, the madness of the robes continued to dominate him.

If we may digress... A certain American author once penned a collection of short stories called "The King in Yellow." One might explore that work for insight into the Old Monk's robes. The "King in Yellow" that features in the stories is a fictional play said to bring madness and death to those who read it.



MIND FLAYER

All throughout history, sailors have told stories of giant squids and octopuses, boat-rending terrors of the sea. With their cephalopod heads and humanoid bodies, Mind Flayers like these have made for perennial foes in tabletop roleplaying games ever since their original appearance in Dungeons & Dragons. They're a familiar sight for gamers, though no less horrific for it.

The Mind Flayers that serve as prison guards in Demon's Souls are certainly no less fearsome; they give captive heroes a compelling reason for remaining in their cells.

MAIDEN ASTREA

The Sixth Saint of the Church, regarded as the most pure and sincere. Astrea came to Boletaria along with her knights on a long journey of salvation. However, no word of them has been heard since they entered the filthy and poison-drenched Valley of Defilement.

Many stories tell of heroes who succumbed to darkness and fell into evil. Perhaps Astrea's fate is only one more tragedy in a world overflowing with misfortune.



Column

TO SELL A SOUL

The Souls of Demon's Souls are spirits left behind, sought out and consumed by demons. But players must collect them too, because they need them to purchase items and level up. Sound familiar? Back in our world, there's no shortage of stories about contracts and deals made with souls as part of the bargain. Perhaps the most famous others is Goothe's Faurt whereighthe timber doors and so

souls as part of the bargain. Perhaps the most famous of these is Goethe's Faust, wherein the titular doctor strikes a deal with the devil Mephistopheles.

Why do demons want our souls, anyway? It must be because, from the demons' point of view, the immortal soul represents the pinnacle of human virtue, the light of human reason, and the very flame of human ambition.

Converting souls into your own strength—that is to say, consuming them like food—could certainly be said to be a devilish act, or at the very least ambitiously selfish. However, in *Demon's Souls*, it's a sacrifice that must be made to slay actual demons and defend the realm. It is an act at once diabolical and noble. Heroes must keep these aspects in careful balance as they walk their path, lest they tip over.





BONFIRE

These rudimentary campfires may look too small and too easily extinguished to be called proper bonfires. And yet, they burn with a special heat that brings warmth and comfort into the hard lives of the Undead that populate the world of DARK SOULS. Perhaps their meager embers originate from the First Flame itself.

Bonfires remain essentially the same throughout the three DAR SOULS games, continuously lighting the way for the Undead. Wi those Undead one day light a new flame—one that illuminates the world of humankind?



A light in the darkness and a shield against glowering beasts. The discovery of fire was undeniably one of humanity's most pivotal achievements. In fact, Greek myth holds that Prometheus passed it down to humankind from the gods themselves.

Fire plays a special part in the DARK SOULS series, carrying much greater import than it does in our real world.

In a sense, fire could be said to originate with the big bang—the theoretical birth of the universe itself. It's deeply linked to the very beginnings of the world.

GWYN (DARK SOULS) (DARK SOULS)

Before the First Flame began to blaze, the legends say, the world remained shrouded in formless fog, barren of all except cold stone, giant trees, and dragons. Then one day, suddenly, the flame was lit, and with it were born contrasts: heat and cold, life and death...

However, the Kiln where once burned the First Flame now lies cold, having been shattered long ago.

Gwyn, Lord of Sunlight, was drawn to the flame in the darkness, and there he discovered the Lord Souls. Seizing victory over the ancient dragons, Gwyn ushered in the Age of Fire. In that course, perhaps miraculously, darkness receded; in that moment, all throughout the world were newly able to see and hear.

Of course, it's said that history is written by the victors, and there may be no stronger evidence that such is the case than the tale of Gwyn...

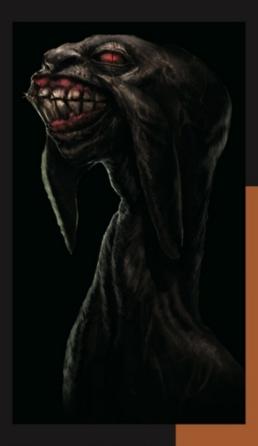


(DARK SOULS)

When the First Flame was weak, the Darksign began to appear among mankind as the mark of a curse. Those who bore the Darksign became Undead—and eventually Hollows in want of souls.

This symbol, which faintly appears in the logo of the DARK SOULS series, is a closed loop; perhaps it's a metaphor for the unending cycle of life. This ring of flame continuously burns; surely it must be fueled by something...

(Image shown is from DARK SOULS III.)



KINGSEEKER FRAMPT

(DARK SOULS)

The Primordial Serpent Frampt seeks an Undead hero to fulfill a certain purpose: nothing less than rekindling the flame that extends the Age of Fire.

However, in our own world, was it not a serpent that supposedly tempted mankind into tasting forbidden fruit, bringing about our exile from paradise? Either way, it seems no choice lies before the Chosen Undead but to move unwaveringly forward...



LOTHRIC

DARK SOULS III

The setting of DARK SOULS III, where the series comes to an end. Said to be the final resting place where the homelands of Lords of Cinder who passed down the flame all eventually drift, and where pilgrims find meaning in prophecy:

"The fire fades, and the lords go without thrones."

This is written in the tale of the lord-slayer. The homelands of the Lords of Cinder aren't the only places that drifted to Lothric; perhaps Lordran and Drangleic, where the earlier DARK SOULS titles took place, have found their way here as well.



Column

FLAME AND IMMORTALITY

In DARK SOULS, fire fades and soon sputters out, which puts it at odds with notions of persistence and immortality. This interpretation isn't uncommon in the real world either. For instance, many major world religions forbid cremation, because it irreversibly damages the body and prevents its resurrection. Granted, the destruction of the body might not seem so bad to religions that believe in reincarnation.

Buddhism is among those religions that take a dim view of physical immortality, instead pursuing the transmigration of the soul. DARK SOULS is firmly rooted in the trappings of occidental dark fantasy, so looking at it through the lens of eastern philosophy might well lead to new interpretations and discoveries.



The Undead are bound into a cycle of death from which there is no escape. Given time and deaths enough, they lose their memories and their sanity. These unfortunate Undead are said to be Hollow. They can no longer sense their own Humanity. Rootlike growths appear in its place, spiraling out from their chests where their hearts should be.

As their pitiful forms wander around, desperate for nothing but life, perhaps they bear some resemblance to the earliest primordial organisms as well.



The knights of Catarina, a land known for festivity and drink, wear rather unique armor. Its onion-like shape draws so much derision that even the most devout and magnanimous knight might feel the sting of resentment.

Then again, in the language of flowers, the onion symbolizes eternity and immortality, so perhaps it's auspicious armor after all.

YURIA OF LONDOR

(DARK SOULS III)

Londor is called the Land of the Elderly and the Hollows. Yuria is the second of three sisters who founded the Sable Church in that land, where the Undead are seen as human, to bring salvation to all Hollows. She is also renowned for her skill with a sword.

Yuria moves in the shadows of Lothric to ensure true salvation for the Hollows. Deep in the dark recesses of her mind, do feelings for mankind yet linger?

AMNESIAC LAPP

(DARK SOULS III)

An unfortunate Undead who teeters on the brink of going Hollow, unable to remember even his own name. He wears heavy armor to hide his Hollowing frame, adamantly refusing to lose any more than he has already lost.

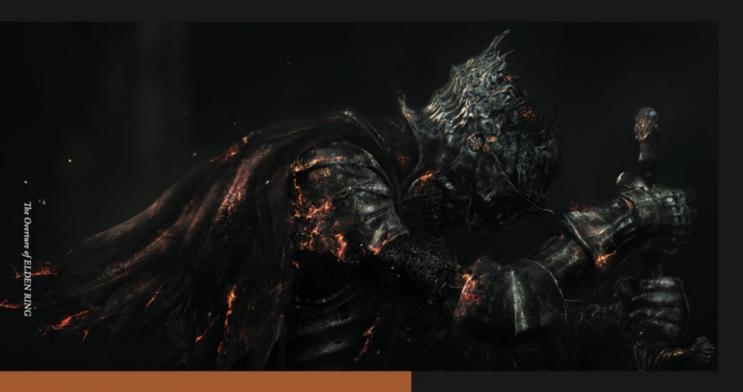
In the age of DARK SOULS III, all things—god or aberration are weathered away and forgotten...and yet Lapp journeys on with an indomitable spirit, determined to regain his memories. Perhaps he is the most human of all.



PUS OF MAN
(DARK SOULS III)

SEE THE SE

The Pus of Man is one sign of approaching doom. In the age of DARK SOULS III, it already runs rampant throughout the world to such an extent that not even mighty dragons can escape. If it truly originates from mankind, as the name suggests, then just what is a man in this world?



UNKINDLED





FIRE KEEPER

(DARK SOULS)

In DARK SOULS, Fire Keepers are women who watch over bonfires. Their souls draw in a great deal of humanity. The role bestowed upon them seems much clearer than that of the Fire Keeper in Demon's Souls, doesn't it?

The Fire Keeper in DARK SOULS III (pictured here) wears a tiara-like band over her eyes that admits no light. Though the Fire Keepers protect the fire, they love the darkness; what could it mean for them? For the world?

Spells

Throughout fantasy literature and roleplaying games, magic is often assigned certain elements. The four classical elements—earth, water, fire, and wind—are perhaps the most popular. In ancient Greek philosophy, these four elements were even thought to make up the entire world.

The world of DARK SOULS does not subscribe to this classical worldview, but it is rooted in other distinct types of magic: sorcery, miracles, and pyromancy.



CLERIC

(DARK SOULS)

Miracles are magical spells received through prayer after contemplation of godly texts. These divine tales, primarily known to Clerics, are used to comfort the downtrodden as well as vanquish the foes of the gods.

Gwyn, Lord of Sunlight, struck such powerful blows with his miraculous lightning that he could pierce even dragon scale, though it's hard as stone.



(DARK SOULS)

In the halls of magical academia, sorcery is sought and studied as a system powered by Souls. Logan lives in the age of DARK SOULS, but such was his mastery of sorcery that his fame lingers on through the ages until DARK SOULS III takes place.

The enormous hat that grants him his nickname blocks out distracting sights and sounds, allowing him to focus on his own sorcerial insight.

CHAOS WITCH QUELAAG

(DARK SOULS)

Long ago, the Witch of Izalith and her daughters—who fought alongside the gods against the dragons—attempted to generate a new flame of their own. However, their flame proved to be beyond their control.

This Flame of Chaos consumed them along with their city of Izalith. It warped them and gave birth to countless demons. From this conflagration also rose the art of pyromancy. Perhaps due to these grim origins, those who teach pyromancy often admonish their pupils to "always fear the flame."



Fluctuation

As doom approaches the world of DARK SOULS, the concepts of space and time themselves become vague. There are those who would use this fluctuation to their advantage, whether to form rings of cooperation, fight together with those who share their will, or simply plunder and conquer.

These groups are held together by covenants—like stable rocks on which to anchor one's ideals, all too precious in a world racked by constant change.

DARKWRAITH

Above all, they hunger for Humanity—and the simplest way to get it is to take it by force. The Darkwraiths are the oldest among those who invade other worlds in search of Humanity to pilfer.

Said to originally hall from a small nation mired in total darkness, perhaps their cruel deeds are the natural conclusion of human nature. However, be they human or not, the



SOLAIRE, WARRIOR OF SUNLIGHT

DARK SOULS)

Solaire of Astora is a knight who journeyed to Lordran in search of his very own sun. As a devout follower of the sun, his greatest wish is to burn soldly and brightly like the celestial body itself. The holy symbols on his quipment were painted there by Solaire himself to show the world that se's a "Warrior of Sunlight."

Whether initially driven by human curiosity or spurned to action by the darkness of the world, Solaire's cooperative spirit radiates out from him, bright and warm, like the rays of the sun itself.

To this day, those who bask in the light as he does stand tall with their arms spread, praising the sun as they shine upon the path of the beleaguered Undead.



WAY OF BLUE

(DARK SOULS II)

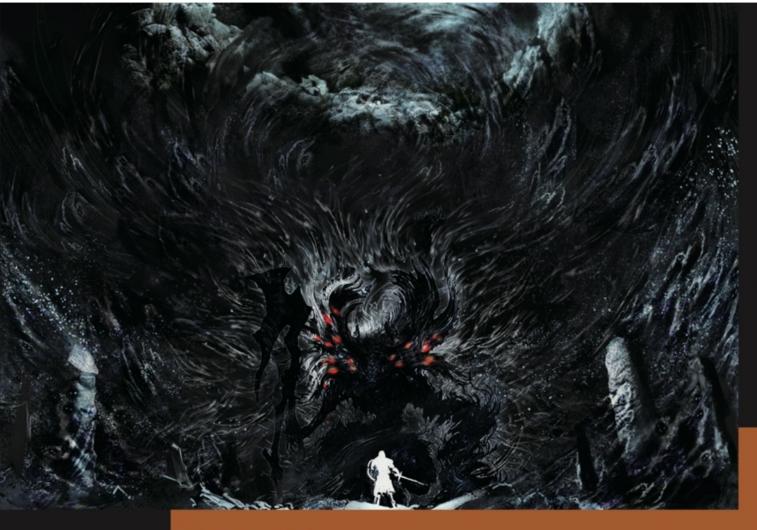
The Way of Blue covenant, acting in accordance with humankind's innate goodness, hears the prayers of those beset by pillagers and takes arms to defend them.

This covenant persists even into the age of DARK SOULS III, defending the meek even though faith in their original cause has died out. It seems entirely possible that, throughout their long history, the Way of Blue has seen many clandestine structural changes from within, much like Shinto-Buddhist syncretism in modern Japan. (Image shown is from DARK SOULS III.)



FORLORN (DARK SOULS II)

The Forlorn who wander the world of the Undead have no corporeal forms or worlds of their own. Bereft of even their own sense of purpose, they now endlessly stalk the worlds of others. To those who see them, they may appear to be on a journey that never ends—in search of redemption that



MANUS, FATHER OF THE ABYSS

(DARK SOULS)

Manus is lord of the Abyss, a pitch-black void in which no mere man can tread. In our day and age, the word "abyss" itself almost necessarily evokes the words of Friedrich Nietzsche: "Battle not with monsters, lest ye become a monster, and if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."

A chasm so deep that light has never reached its bottom... A terrifying image, to be sure. But through that fear, we discover our love for light and an indivisible kindness that covers both the pure and the impure.

Darkness

As light grows brighter, so too must shadow grow darker. When the fire fades, it leaves only darkness. In the world of DARK SOULS, just as in our own world, light and darkness are two sides of the same coin—or rather, as some have suggested, darkness prevailed long before the first light shined.

Well, then, what is darkness? Perhaps, as the title of the game suggests, it is what is seen in the depths of a benighted soul.

KNIGHT ARTORIAS

(DARK SOULS)

One among the Four Knights of Gwyn. Artorias' name calls to mind Lucius Artorius Castus, a renowned commander of the ancient Roman army. Many theorize that Lucius is the actual historical basis for the King Arthur of English legend, and as such, there may be some of the Arthurian in Artorias as well.

By the time DARK SOULS takes place, Artorias' heroic hunts in the Abyss have already secured his place as a legend. But in a world where space and time are always in flux, one may still see the legends with their own eyes...





FUME KNIGHT

A knight who dwells in Brume Tower, erected by the Old Iron King in days of yore. None can match his skills with the two blades he wields, which one might imagine earned him considerable fame; however, he no longer boasts of his proud name.

It takes more than a suit of armor and a stout steed to be a knight. The commendation of a well-served king or lord is needed as well. Perhaps in his tower, darkened with smoke and soot, the Fume Knight has found what it is that he must serve.



SCHOLAR OF THE FIRST SIN

The first sin: that which every human shoulders the moment they are born, and from which none can redeem them but themselves.

In the world of DARK SOULS, moreso than in our own, life itself may seem to be a punishment for some heinous sin. What might a scholar discover, then, when their search for the first sin bears fruit?

EMERALD HERALD

(DARK SOULS II)

"Those who come to Drangleic seeking salvation soon lose hope, and turn Hollow..."

So whispers this emerald-clad pilgrim, talking of the forlorn and listless souls who wash up in Majula. She stands in this hamlet of perpetual sunset and guides them towards King Vendrick, sovereign of Drangleic beside the origin of Souls, in order to keep hope alive among the Undead.

The Emerald Herald has long wandered in a world under the falling curtain of darkness. Surely when the Bearer of the Curse claims the throne, her wanderings will finally find meaning...



Column

DARKNESS, THE ABYSS, AND THE DEEP SEA

Creation myths from all over the world tell of a primordial chaos that existed before matter was formed. Such chaos is invariably said to be a great darkness. In another sense, though, darkness could be seen as the womb from which all things—worlds, laws, even the gods themselves—are born. The fading of the fire in DARK SOULS could represent a return to the primordial chaos—a return to the womb.

The book of Genesis in the Old Testament says that, in the time before earth was created, "darkness was upon the face of the deep." From the literal beginning of creation, darkness is likened to a bottomless depth. "Bottomless depth," incidentally, is also the etymological meaning of the word "abyss." No wonder so many world mythologies identify such depths with the underworld! To descend into

the abyss is to step over the border of the land of the dead.

Then again, we're still discovering the menagerie of living things that dwell in the abyss of our own world: the deepest reaches of the sea. What seem like black, stagnant depths at the end of all things to you and me only seem that way because they're strange and unfamiliar.

Just as those in ancient times likened thunder to heavenly wrath, mankind has long used gods to explain things when earthly strength and knowledge falls short. Over time, these gods have become objects of worship by the devout.

Just as those in ancient times likened

In the world of DARK SOULS, gods are mysterious yet objectively, physically real beings possessed of extraordinary power. Some of them lived in ages long ago, while some are still very much alive...





BLACK KNIGHTS Knights pledged to hunt and subdue the demons that wander all corners of the world. Originally, these knights swore fealty to Lord Gwyn; in those days, their now-blackened armor shone brilliant silver. Now, they turn their massive weapons on the unfortunate Undead as readily as any fiend. Whether this is because the Undead are what they are, or because the Black Knights have simply lost their collective grip on reason, none can say.

ANOR LONDO

Dwelling place of the sun gods and original city of Lord Gwyn. Blessed by the power of the gods, Anor Londo is in perpetual sunset, as if to show that the Age of Fire may wane, but it does not end.

In Anor Londo, where the incense of worship yet lingers in the air, one may find not only the prayers of those left behind, but plentiful divinity as well.

GWYNEVERE, PRINCESS OF **SUNLIGHT**

Lord Gwyn's first daughter Gwynevere is revered as the Princess of Sunlight. She left her birthplace, as most gods do, and the legends claim that she became a wife and mother.

The Princess of Sunlight is widely beloved as a symbol of grace and abundance; surely, her followers must be blessed!

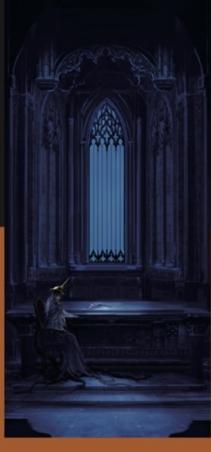


DARK SUN GWYNDOLIN

(DARK SOULS)

Lord Gwyn's youngest child and one of few remaining old gods. He turns the blade of vengeance mercilessly upon those disobedients who shun his firm command.

How did Gwyndolin, blood of Lord Gwyn's blood, come to be known as the Dark Sun? Perhaps there is something to his power and origin that yet remains hidden.





IRITHYLL OF THE BOREAL VALLEY

(DARK SOULS III)

Irithyll, bathed as it is in the light of a cold moon, appears to be the complete opposite of sun-drenched Anor Londo. This fantastical city now lies in the hands of an ambitious Pontiff and his ever-watchful knights. The beauty of Irithyll's cityscape is undercut by the wails of those unfortunates suffering in the dungeon below its streets.

EXECUTIONER SMOUGH

Along with the Dragonslayer Along with the Dragonslayer Ornstein, famed captain of the Four Knights of Gwyn, Executioner Smough guards the abandoned cathedral of Anor Londo. He is one of the more colorful figures that yet linger from throughout the age's long history.

A capable warrior, albeit one who took a particularly ghoulish joy in his work as an executioner, Smough never stood among the Four Knights. However, as the last knight who stayed behind to protect the cathedral, he was regarded as a model soldier throughout the Age of Gods.



Giants

Stories of giants are told the world over, from Greek myth to northern European folktales. Even Japanese legends tell of the giant Daidarabotchi. Nearly every fantasy world has its own types of giant, and the world of DARK SOULS is no different.



HAWKEYE GOUGH

(DARK SOULS)

Under the peaceful rule of Lord Gwyn, there lived a giant. First a slave, then a blacksmith, and finally a proud knight in his own right, he served the crown in nearly every possible manner. As a knight, Gough's prodigious skill with the bow earned him the nickname "Hawkeye" and a place among the Four Knights of Gwyn.

Gough's chivalry and intellect are evident in his every word and deed, but there were those who reviled him. They filled the eye holes of his helm with tree resin so as to blind him.



FOREST OF FALLEN GIANTS

(DARK SOUTH STE

In ages past, mankind erected a fortress in hopes of staving off the giants' invasion. When the great battle between giant and man was over, it's said, the leader of the giants was sealed away by an unknown hero.

The fighting left nothing behind but a ravaged countryside, scores of Hollows, and the rotten bodies of giants. These last grew into colossal, mute trees. Now, in the Forest of Fallen Giants, these trees are both headstone and grave.



GIANT LORD

(DARK SOULS II)

Among those who crossed weapons with the giants who invaded Drangleic, some tell of a seemingly bottomless well of malice within their foes. When they stood against the Giant Lord, how were they reflected in the empty eyes that hang under his dark armor?

Lords

Wise rulers who preserve benevolent law. Mad kings who bend their powers to vicious tyranny. Rulers of the populace, defenders of the realm, conquerors in bloody times—both fact and fiction present a whole gallery of lords.

The kings and queens of our world were once believed to rule by god-given right. In the world of *DARK SOULS*, the gods might serve as statesmen themselves. It is up to those beside the seats of power and the stories they hand down, then, to chronicle how they rule.

KING VENDRICK

(DARK SOULS II)

Vendrick, sovereign of the ancient nation of Drangleic, was known as an upright and just ruler. Long ago, he reigned as the being closest to the wellspring of Souls.

Vendrick bore a Great Soul along as he tried to reach the First Flame. However, constant war with the giants took its toll on king and country, and Vendrick vanished from the political stage.





QUEEN REGENT NASHANDRA

(DARK SOULS II)

Queen to Vendrick, ruler of Drangleic. Nashandra herself hailed from another land; it's said she first came to warn Drangleic of the danger posed by the giants and their hardened souls. Afterward, Drangleic did indeed fall to ruin through long conflict with the giants.

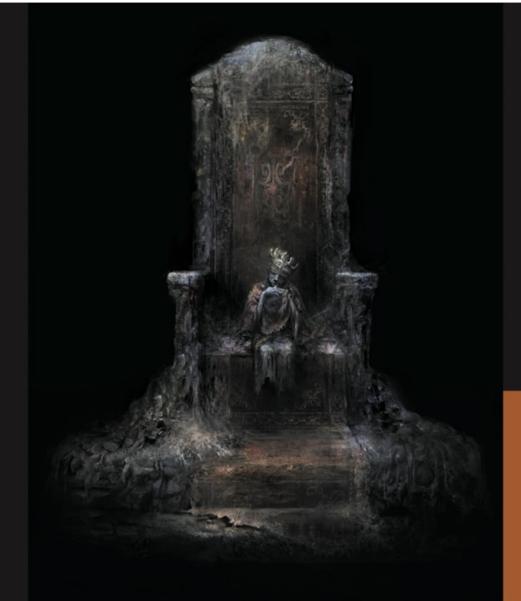
The beautiful woman from a neighboring nation is a common figure throughout tales of royalty, both real and imagined. It can't be proven that Nashandra herself isn't somehow an embodiment of raw, unstoppable ambition.

Column THE PINNACLE OF LORDLY REGALIA, THE CROWN

Throughout much of human history, kings and queens have been regarded as holy figures with the right to reign over entire empires. As we've already discussed, this right is often said to come from divine power bestowed by some supreme being. A Heavenly Father in one nation, the very sun itself in the next. With his powerful command, his association with the sun, and his weapons like lightning, there are undeniable echoes of these supreme beings in Lord Gwyn. The crown is a symbol of this absolute right to rule. Most crowns are primarily made of precious gold, which is not merely a sign of opulence and power; it also symbolizes divinity. Consider also the esoteric art of alchemy, which was born out of humankind's attempts to create gold.

This notion that crowns bear a significant meaning beyond a simple demonstration of authority plays a role in THE

LOST CROWNS, the trilogy of downloadable content for DARK SOULS II. This DLC suggests that the bearers of its crowns were something more than mere rulers. For all the considerable power stored within these bits of royal regalia, though, they cannot tell us who their wearers truly were.



LUDLETH OF COURLAND

(DARK SOULS III)

Ludleth sits upon the ancient throne of a Lord of Cinder at the Firelink Shrine—in fact, he is that Lord of Cinder himself, despite his diminutive frame.

It's said that before he became a Lord of Cinder, Ludleth researched the Soul-centered art of transposition in a nation called Courland. He may yet focus his intellect upon the flames

ALDRITCH, DEVOURER OF GODS

(DARK SOULS III)

Once a divine cleric, Aldritch was also a recidivist man-eater known as the "Saint of the Deep." His profane acts, in stark contrast to the moral conduct demanded of the clergy, granted him dire power—power enough to make him a Lord of Cinder.

Drowning men, they say, will clutch at straws. As the world approaches its final end, power may not concern itself with right and wrong.

Aldritch saw visions of an Age of the Deep Sea that awaits the death of the fire. It was likely then that he embarked upon his final, most extreme rite: the devouring of the gods themselves.



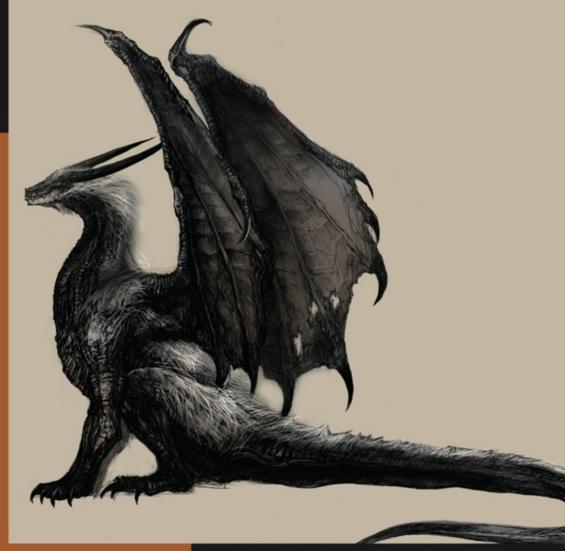
EVERLASTING DRAGON

(DARK SOULS)

Born in the Age of the Ancients, the Everlasting Dragon is older than fire and the distinction between light and dark that it brought. It yet lives and shows itself even in the Age of Fire. It is immortal, showing a refusal to follow even the laws of life and death that has made it the object of worship among warriors. These devout aim to one day become dragons themselves.

Of all the fantastic creatures described in myth and legend the world over, dragons are the clear forerunner in terms of sheer power. Dragon-slayers, humans with the might to defeat these incredible creatures, are among the most popular subjects of heroic tales. The astute reader knows all of this, as dragons of all shapes and sizes continue to appear in fantasy literature and roleplaying games to this day.

The dragons of DARK SOULS are old, predating even the birth of the gods, though many were vanquished in battle against those same gods. However, defeat has done little to mar their majesty, and their power still outshines that of humankind several times over.



Dragons

BLACK DRAGON KALAMEET

(DARK SOULS)

A black dragon with a distinctive orange eye, whom even the proud knights of Anor Londo failed to kill.

His orange eye holds magic power the likes of which only he can control; if any other tried to claim its might, surely great ruin would follow. However, the ensuing calamity might also make the perfect trial for one who aspires to Kalameet's power...



WRETCH

(DARK SOULS III)

In the world of DARK SOULS, snakes are said to be wretched, half-formed dragons, but it is this humanoid monstrosity that earns the title of "wretch." The wings barely sprouted on its back are underdeveloped, like a young chick's; naturally, flight is out of the question.

Thought to be warriors who went astray along their paths to dragon-hood, such wretches offer the perverse hope that such transformation is actually possible.





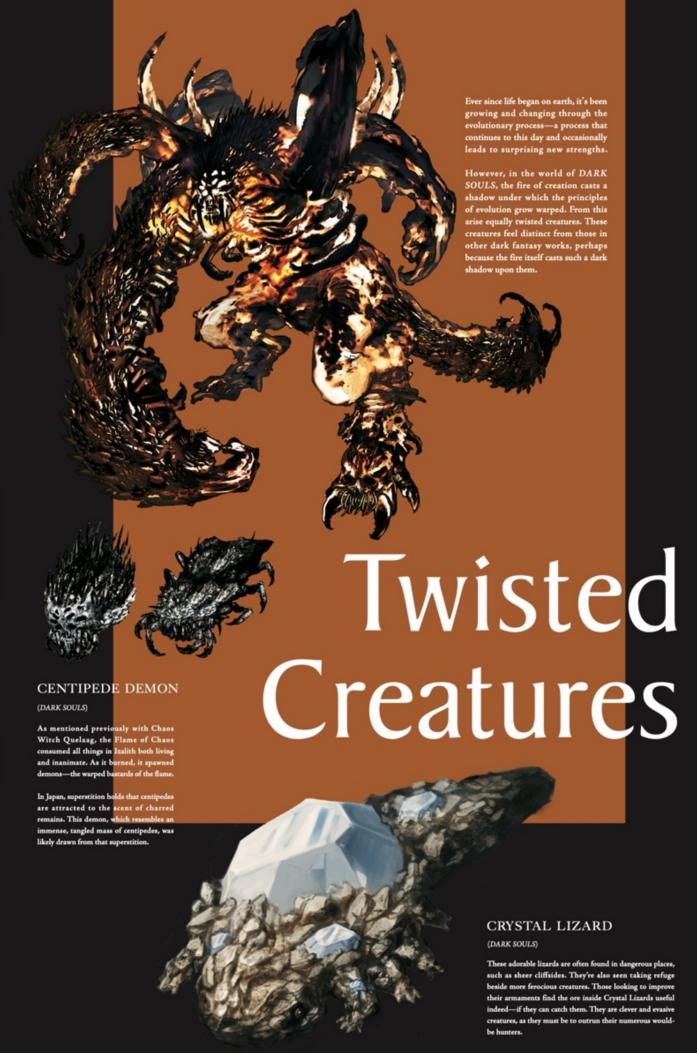
SEATH THE SCALELESS

(DARK SOULS)

Seath, born without the scales of his fellow dragons, could be likened to a mythical "trickster" figure. Though a dragon himself, Seath cast his lot with Lord Gwyn and his armies, and his treason ensured the dragons' defeat.

In the years to come, Seath would become a creature of obsession. His unending research begat hideous monsters even as it established him as a forefather of sorcery.







The Owner of ELDEN RING

MIMIC

(DARK SOULS)

A monster that imitates a treasure chest, then lies in wait for unsuspecting adventurers to approach—a tried-andtrue tabletop roleplaying staple if ever there was one. Such magical monsters inhabit the world of DARK SOULS, too; however, once these Mimics have prey in their grasp, they sprout humanoid limbs and chase it down like a predator.

Known as symbols of avarice not only for their ferocious hunger, but also because they seem like the natural conclusion of one ruined by their own greed.

FLEXILE SENTRY

(DARK SOULS II)

This creature, which appears to be two individual torsos grafted on to one lower body, may call to mind mythical figures like the Roman god Janus and Japanese folk horror Ryomen-Sukuna.

When the dungeons overflow with prisoners, it's the Flexile Sentry's duty to shove them onto crude boats and ship them off across the seas. The barbed clubs it wields speak volumes about its brutal nature.



MUSHROOM PEOPLE

(DARK SOULS)

Plenty of films and novels tell stories of people infected with parasitic fungi, but not many of them feature mushroom people quite like these! There's something charming, almost cute, about their bodies, which resemble the real-world king trumpet mushroom.

One wonders how a species like this grows and spreads. Their humorous strangeness as they wander, grow, and wither shows the unique character of the DARK SOULS world.



(DARK SOULS II

There's no shortage of horror films and stories that use spiders to inspire terror, though their image isn't entirely negative—take Spider-Man, for instance.

This particular spider has grown misshapen to better capture its creeping prey, but it was apparently a typical spider at one point. What could have happened to warp it so?



WHITE-FACED LOCUST

(DARK SOULS III)

Insects with eerie, white, humanlike faces that crawl forth from the Abyss. They babble in human language like preachers to beckon men into the blackness. As they've forgotten themselves in insectile gluttony, though, they now do little more than wait in the darkened swamp, slavering for their next meal.

They take the form of locusts: swarming, plant-devouring insects said to be the subjects of the demon Abaddon. This form, this symbol of boundless gluttony, is here overlapped with the shape of mankind.

Humans have a tendency to turn away from the unclean—to "sweep it under the rug,"

Humans have a tendency to turn away from the unclean—to "sweep it under the rug," as it were, and avert our gaze from that which would inconvenience us. However, in imposing our notions of "purity" and "filth" on the world, we show our arrogance and weakness. There is always another point of view. Perhaps when faced with the vile, people realize what it is that makes them human.



(DARK SOULS)

A village populated by those so infected with Blightpus, one almost hesitates to call them human. Little wonder it's known as "Blighttown."

The ground below, where unspeakable creatures dwell, is coated in a wide, marshy layer of poisonous filth. Those afflicted by the blight have erected scaffolds above and away from the mire and adapted to a unique way of life upon them.



THE GUTTER
(DARK SOULS III)

A great pit, untouched by the sun. Even torchlight proves unreliable for illuminating its depths. The perfect place to throw things you no longer need—or dead things that might attempt to return to life.

It's easy to imagine a deserter, overcome with remorse, throwing the ornaments of their bereavement into the blackness. If there is anything to be grasped in these stagnant depths where all grows murky, it can only be the impurity that engulfs all things.

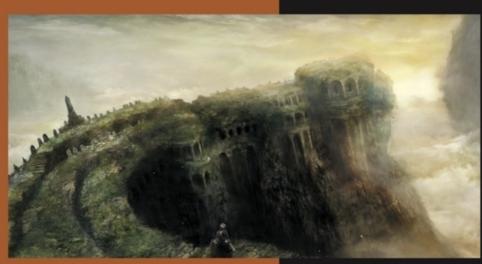




PAINTED WORLD OF ARIANDEL

Those who find no place to belong in the world are beckoned into another within a painting. There, those exiled from the world of fire may yet find the means to live.

The painting itself depicts a dark, cold scene. Still, there are surely those inside who feel its warmth. As their world lies within a painting, true warmth—which is to say flame—would bring it to a sudden and ashen end.



THE RINGED CITY

This ancient city, it's said, once belonged to a people now completely unknown. The "ring" in its name can be taken both as a direct reference to its round shape and as a metaphor, Just as an elephant will never understand the world as an ant sees it, things are often invisible when not seen from the proper scale. How might the diminutive dwellers of the Ringed City appear in the eyes of the tremendous?

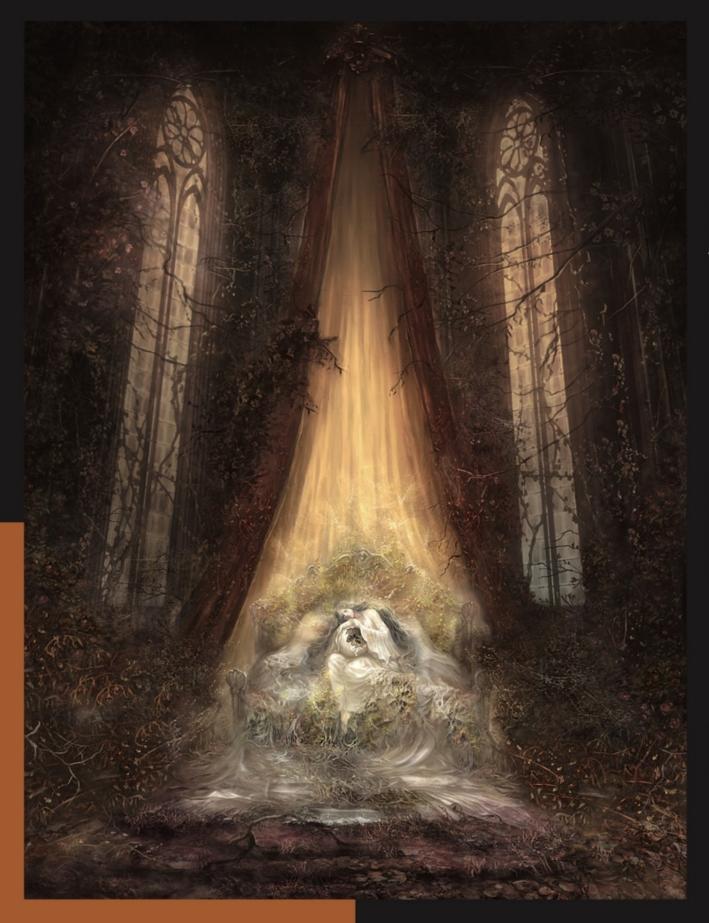


SLAVE KNIGHT GAEL

(DARK SOULS III)

An elderly knight clad in a red hood. The intricate designs on his knightly armor may be etched there in meager tribute to his fate.

Thin, haggard, and insane after a life of being forced to fight monstrous battles, Gael somehow manages to retain his pride as a knight. Perhaps because it was all done in service to his lord. If ever he risked his life before, that's all the more reason to do it now.



PRINCESS FILIANORE

(DARK SOULS III)

The youngest daughter of the ancient Lord Gwyn. Even long after the very names of the gods have been forgotten, she remains in a deep sleep in her church. All those who would disturb her slumber find themselves immediately pursued by her guardians.

What meaning could there be to a twilight slumber? In Filianore's case, one might say, "As the fire waneth, does she lie by the dark, all for the sake of Man."



YHARNAM

This old city, built among remote mountains, is awah is moke and gloom like Britain in the years following the Industrial Revolution. The scourge, a strange disease the warps its victims into man-eating beasts, runs rampas through its streets. However, the city is not known for i epidemic alone, but also for its breakthroughs in medic science. The scourge has done lithe to discourage those wh would journey to Yharnam in hopes of receiving the unusu



Just as we might liken a bully throwing around weight outside their own to a "fox borrowing the authority of a tiger" or describe the idea that no single person can do everything by saying "horned animals do not possess fangs," we often can't help but identify our own inner natures with wild animals. It may be that a beast lurks within all of us, waiting to tear through the flimsy shroud of reason.

THE NIGHT OF THE HUNT

When the moon looms large over Yharnam, the great beast hunt begins. The only ones who dare step out of doors are the beasts, no longer human; the madmen, already lost to the grip of the scourge; and the hunters, bound to slaughter them all.

Sheer madness reigns over the night of the hunt. The proper folk of Yharnam barricade their doors against the blood, the disease, and the pervading stench of death.

CLERIC BEAST

Though you would never guess it now, the Cleric Beast was once a human. This twisted monster is proof enough that the scourge of the beast is no mere passing disease.

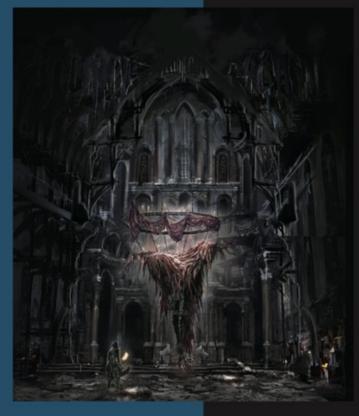
Conventional wisdom in Yharnam, whispered from ear to ear as if it were fact, holds that afflicted clerics transform into the most hideous beasts of all. It is uncertain whether the Cleric Beast was actually a man of the cloth or not, but the horrific nature of its mournful shrieks cannot be denied.











RETIRED HUNTER DJURA

A legendary former hunter known by his tattered, wolflike cap. Djura walked the night with the rest of the beast hunters...until during one hunt, he crossed the border into Old Yharnam, never to be seen again.

Djura is said to have been both uncommonly kind and dreadfully foolish. What goes through such a mind—such a heart—when it sees the horrors of a place like Old Yharnam?

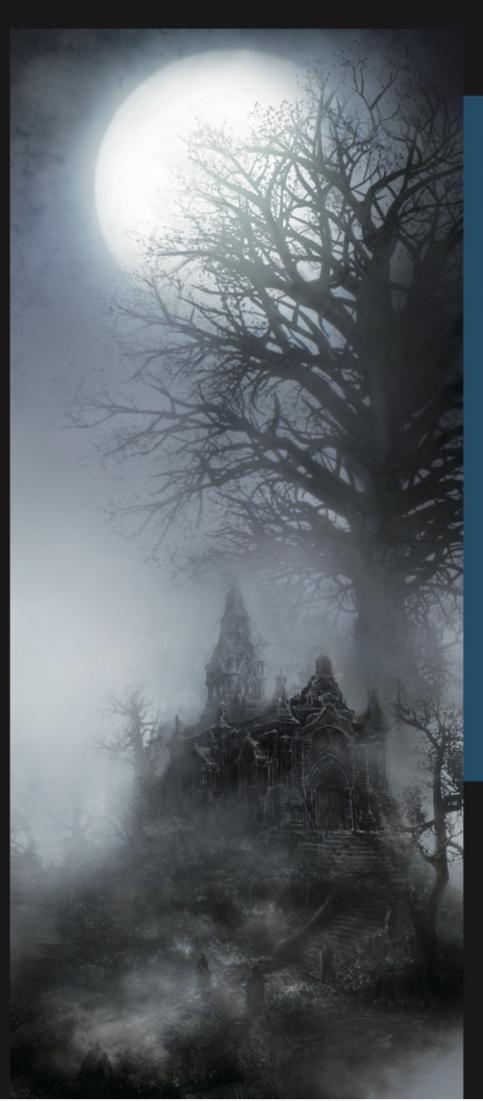
OLD YHARNAM

In succumbing to the scourge, beasts revert to one of humankind's oldest instincts: the fear of fire.

After one of the first and most heinous outbreaks of the beastly disease struck Old Yharnam, the entire district was set ablaze and abandoned. Now it's a veritable city of beasts where those who survived the conflagration still dwell.

Beasts though they may be, they were once human—a truth often ignored by the unafflicted. But there may be those who take pity on the beasts and grow near to them...





THE HUNTER'S DREAM

At once a familiar place of refuge and a waypoint for hunters trapped in the dream. As the name suggests, it too exists within a dream.

Look around the Hunter's Dream, and you'll find telltale signs that you have left reality: a fence around the garden with a gate that won't open, an abnormally large moon, and more. At the center of it all lies the workshop where the works of the Old Hunters slumber, offering aid to those who join the hunt.



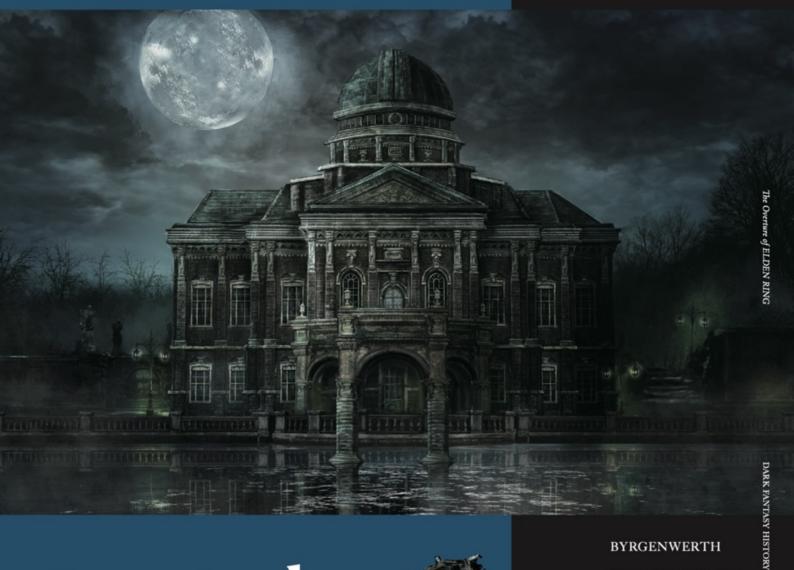
Column LIFE IS BUT A DREAM

Based purely on what they see, the hunters of Bloedborne may have a hard time telling dream from reality. But is it really that different for us? Plenty of writers have explored the difficulty of drawing a clear line between dreams and the waking world. Famous Japanese horror and mystern overlist Edogawa Ranpo famously said that "the living world is a dream. The nocturnal dream is reality." In The Tempest, William Shakespeare's Prospero declares, "We are

such stuff as dreams are made on." The Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi's story "The Butterfly Dream" tells of a man who, upon waking, can no longer tell whether he is a man who'd dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly currently dreaming that he is a man. And the list goes on.

In the world of Bloodborne, hunters die time and time again, but each time they brush it off as if it were a bad

dream. Their blood echoes remain where they died, but the hunters themselves wake to lamplight. The connection between sleep and death in popular perception is very old indeed. It stretches back to Greek myth, in which Thanatos, the god of death, and Hypnos, the god of sleep, are brothers. Both of them were born of Nyx, goddess of night. Night, death, and dream certainly seem to share some primordial connection.



Insight

Through insight, the ignorant are enlightened and wisdom is gained. Then, one asks, what wisdom is there to be gained in the world of Bloodborne? Things beyond the grasp of human knowledge, for one. In the Call of Cthulhu tabletop RPG, magical abilities are gained through greater knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos. In Bloodborne, insight works in a similar way. That is to say, insight represents knowledge of the true workings of the world. Those who seek it would be advised to remember that, on the cosmic scale, mankind is young and fragile. Too much insight could lead not to understanding, but to madness.

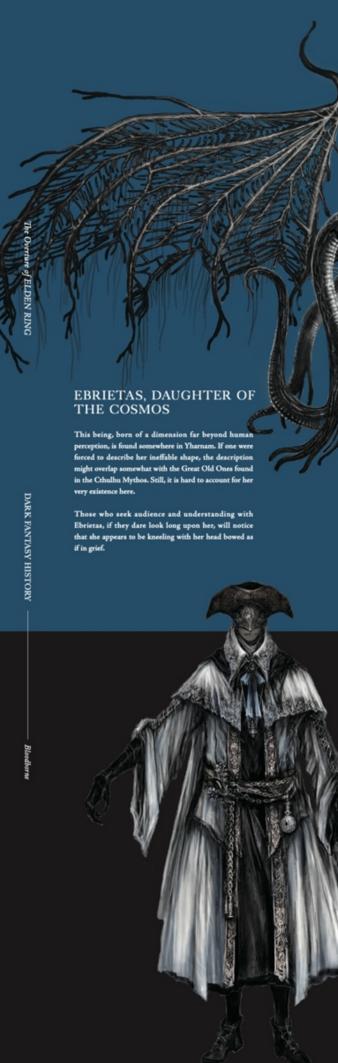
MICOLASH, HOST OF THE NIGHTMARE

A nightmare-dwelling man who has devoted an eternity of time to the search for arcane knowledge. Micolash is a member of the School of Mensis, one of the groups that form the upper echelons of the Healing Church. The strange, hexagonal iron cage on his head appears to be what brought Micolash and his fellow Mensis scholars into their nightmare

sis" is derived from the Latin word for "mo n shines with reflected sunlight in our world, so too does it darkly illuminate the night sky in the world of Bloodborne.

BYRGENWERTH

Beyond the Forbidden Woods stand the moss-covered and obscure halls of nwerth College. This institution of learning has produced many pivotal figures in Yharnam history. Long ago, its archaeological scholars discovered a piece of the divine deep below the city and henceforth devoted themselves entirely to further exploring it. Finally, they sought to line their very brains with all-seeing eyes so that their knowledge might exceed human wisdom.



THE CHOIR

The Healing Church, practitioners of blood ministration, is based in Yharnam. Among the upper echelons of this powerful church is the Choir, made up of high-ranking clerics who seek arcane wisdom.

The Choir's roots lie in Byrgenwerth, but they've since adopted a creed of their own: "The sky and the cosmos are one." The common man, with his mind clouded by prejudice, cannot see what, to the Choir, is an obvious truth. Perhaps it only reveals itself at the end of truly transcendental contemplation.





LADY MARIA OF THE ASTRAL CLOCKTOWER

A tall female hunter, said to bear a striking resemblance to the doll in the Hunter's Dream. One of the Old Hunters, Lady Maria sits motionless inside the Astral Clocktower, vigilantly guarding her secrets.

Secrets, generally, are not meant to be known, which makes them all the sweeter. But Lady Maria is a formidable opponent, and many are those who follow their foolish curiosity to a bloodstained end.

GIANT FISHMAN

Deluges of water, it's said, are harbingers of the arcane.

A certain fishing village in the world of Bloodborne presents a nightmarish scene even more terrifying than that of the Chulhu Mythos' Innsmouth. The villagers who dwell there are now tisted and amphibious, as you see illustrated here. It is impossible to put words to the horrors that befell their hamlet; secrets, after all, are made secret for a reason.



All that's fair must one day fade. SERIRO is set in the war-rawaged and precarious northern state of Ashina, the site of many bloody battles. Freezing winds blow across Ashina from perilous mountains, and its forests are dark and dense. In this harsh land, where humankind can barely find a foothold among mature, powers and phenomena beyond civilization surely will luxt.

At The Game Awards in 2017, FromSoftware revealed a teater for their latest project: an action-adventure game developed along with Activision. SEAIRO: SILADOWS DIE TWICE is set in the later days of Japan's Sengoku era, an age steeped in civil war, and brings with it shinobi, samurai, and a whiff of the arcane.

Thanks to the Wolf's grappling hook, players vault freely through complex, multi-layered areas like inijas. They weather deadly, sword-clashing stand-offs, surviving until they find an opening in their opponents' defenses that will leave them the victor. "Shadows die twice," declares the game's subtile, and players who matter its swordplay feel all the more accomplished for its deadliness.

In an unusual turn for director Hidetaka Miyazaki, the player character is not a customizable cipher, but a set presence in the story. This allows for a different type of roleplaying than that in Miyazaki's other dark fantasy titles.

From its historical Japanese atmosphere-to its differences in storytelling, SEXIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE introduces several ambitious departures from Dense's Swit into FromSoftware's dark fantasy catalogue. That ambition paid off, as SEXIRO is well regarded the world over, it received several accolledes in its release

SEKIRO SHADOWS DIE TWICE

ON THE BORDER BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH IN THE SENGOKU ERA, DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.

107



A man who saw the Ashina name rise to fortune in his lifetime and later came to be called the "Sword Saint." In his younger days, Isshin distinguished himself through many deadly battles, honing his skills through actual practice that often brought him to the very brink of death. As he hungrily sought greater and greater strength, he began to develop a following—one that, it could be said, would form the state of Ashina. His Ashina Arts combat skills are immortalized in the history of martial arts and in the name of the nation itself.





SENPOU TEMPLE, MT. KONGO

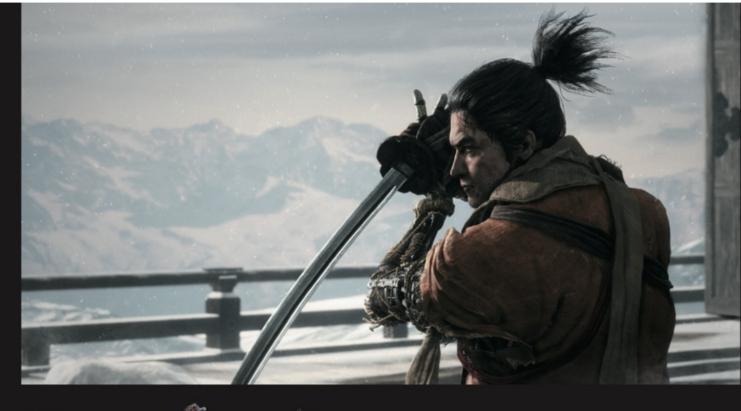
With seclusion comes enlightenment. Senpou Temple, high up Mt. Kongo, was built for the cultivation of combat skills as a means to reach the pinnacle of wisdom. It was a place where passions were cast off in devotion to charity. However, over time, its teachings became twisted. Now it has lost sight of its former morals, and the fists of its adherents grow more and more wayward. The image of the Buddha ironically remains, watching over their growing corruption.



THE MOON AND THE GRASSY FIELD

In SEKIRO, players discover the sights of ancient Japan throughout the seasons, like those celebrated in haiku and ink-brush paintings. This memorable scene recalls the harvest moon of mid-autumn.

The beautiful moonlight casts the long grasses that skirt Ashina in brilliant silver—silhouetting the three figures about to be locked in combat.



WOLF

Sekiro, also called the Wolf, is a skilled shinobi who serves the Divine Heir. Shinobi are assassins who follow the mands of their master, killing on command by any means necessary.

After having lost both his master and his own left arm, Sekiro received a mechanical arm called chanical upgrades make it yet other fang in the Wolf's maw.

power of Resurrection which, as one may imagine, allows him to repeatedly overcome death itself. This power proves useful indeed as he sets out to rescue

All that is born must die. Such is the absolute law that every living thing in this world must obey. But let us suppose it were possible to defy that law...

In the Sengoku era, life and death were never far apart. This fatalism informs SEKIRO's approach to life and death as well. What is it that awaits those who transcend this cycle?











DEMON OF HATRED

Glorious fairy tales of heroes driving out demons are exactly that—fairy tales. There is no way for us to know the real stories behind them.

Hatred. Sorrow. The Sengoku era in which the Wolf lives saw countless battles, and each battle saw countless deaths. From so much bloodshed, a terrible grudge is born. With nowhere else to go, such hatred is ensuared by ritual. It grows and grows, until finally, it becomes a flaming demon.



FOUNTAINHEAD PALACE

Fountainhead" has two definitions. For one, it can mean a literal spring of water. But it can also mean the beginning of anything.

It's easy to believe that this place, with its starry night skies and cherry blossoms in full bloom, is a whole world away from the ravages of the Sengoku era. However, look to the surface of the water, and you'll find the ruins of a fallen estate long untouched by human hands.

DIVINE DRAGON

Of all the animals that govern the Chinese zodiac, the dragon is easily the most familiar to the Japanese. Dragons are also revered as gods of water in Japan.

Though missing its left arm, the Divine Dragon maintains its poise and dignity. Something about it gives off an impression of beautiful impermanence, like cherry blossoms fluttering to the ground. In its right hand, clutches a Seven-Branched Sword, a legendary blade like one from Japanese antiquity. Some might say that its roots lie in an age far before the Sengoku era, in a land far west of Japan.



GREAT COLORED CARP

In Japan, it is said that a koi carp once swam up a raging waterfall to become a dragon. Look long upon this stately fish, however, and you'll notice that it actually appears to be an old man in the process of transforming into a carp. Or perhaps it's the other way around.



Column

ONI

SEKIRO doesn't feature much in the way of familiar yokai creatures and shape-shifters from Japanese folklore. This may surprise some players, but the truth is that there weren't many depictions of yokai in the actual Sengoku era either. In fact, yokai and their ilk have a little-known sider they were largely created to be humorous and appealing characters to keep people entertained in times of peace. The Sengoku era, by contrast, was a harsh and bloody age, with plenty of horrors far more real and pressing than ghosts.

But one particular species from Japanese folklore likely had its run of the Sengoku era: the fearsome oni. These fiendish monsters inspired some of the ogres and demons you'll encounter in SEKIRO.

The Japanese word for the family registers in which the names of the dead were written has the character for "oni" in it. In fact, that same character is used in Taoism to indicate the dead in the first place. If the dead themselves are oni, then the Sengoku era—when the nearest pile of corpses was never too far away—was truly teeming with them. It's

not hard to imagine the Demon of Hatred from SEKIRO wandering Japan in such cruel times.

To digress a bit, oni have a very distinctive image in the Japanese imagination. They're imposing humanoids with horns on their head, loincloths of tiger hide around their waists, and vicious iron clubs in their hands. This image actually has its roots in the traditional Onmyodo school of natural science, which held that oni tended to arrive from the northeast. Northeast was also known as the "ox-tiger" direction, hence the horns and striped trunks!

Appendix Arsenals

Fine armaments to guide you through lands of the dead

In FromSoftware's dark fantasy games, powerful enemies await on all sides. That makes good weapons all the more precious. They're at once lifelines to safety and covetable treasures for dungeon delvers to find.

Allow us to introduce some of the weapons waiting to be discovered in the DARK SOULS series, Bloodborne, and SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE. They may be darkened with rust or battered with use, but that just means they have wordless stories to tell. Maybe you'll help write the next chapter.





- 1. Astora's Straight Sword (DARK SOULS)
- 2. Crystal Sage's Rapier (DARK SOULS III)
- 3. Lothric's Holy Sword (DARK SOULS III)
- 4. Bloodlust (DARK SOULS III)
- 5. Sorcerer's Twinblade (DARK SOULS II)
- 6. Corvian Greatknife (DARK SOULS III)
- 7. Frayed Blade (DARK SOULS III)

DARK SOULS Weapons

The world of *DARK SOULS* is largely based on medieval Europe. As such, its weapons range from the factual and unembellished to the wholly fantastical. This extensive arsenal enriches the setting of *DARK SOULS*, allowing players to play whatever role they wish.





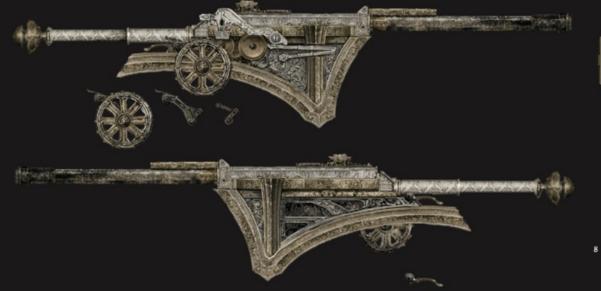


Bloodborne Weapons

The beasts of the hunt may have formidable fangs, but hunters have fangs of their own: their trick weapons, which transform in an instant to suit the situation, and their sidearms, which cover long ranges and disrupt enemy attacks. With their intricate craftsmanship and complex functionality, the weapons of *Bloodborne* are the product of high civilization. However, some of them betray the primal violence at the heart of the hunt, and others hint at arcane mysteries beyond human ken...







SEKIRO Weapons

The Wolf's primary weapon is the katana Kusabimaru, which he received from the Divine Heir. To expand his options in combat, though, he also uses various tools built into his Shinobi Prosthetic. There's more than one way for a shinobi to kill; in a sense, each life can be ended in its own way.

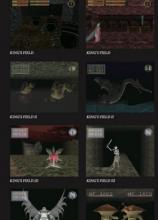
- 1. Shinobi Prosthetic
- 2. Kusabimaru
- 3. Fushigiri





Deeper into History So far, we've relieved From Software to SERKRO: SHADOWS DIE

Before Demon's Souls...there was KING'S FIELD (and more!)





A Legacy of Moonlight











Working with Sony Interactive Entertainment









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The Tarnished will soon return. Guided by Grace once lost.