



# ENNIES mini- INTERVIEWS

## Interviewees

Alex Obernigg  
Andreas Ruu  
Jacqueline Bryk  
Jason Fryer  
Petter Nallo

## ENNIES Nominations

### Best Writing

Beyond Darkness & Madness

### Best Cartography

Labyrinths & Secret Chambers

### Best RPG Related Product

Labyrinths & Secret Chambers

## What is this?

**ENNIES Mini-Interviews** is the seventh monthly small release, fully dedicated to the people behind the two products nominated for the ENnies Awards of 2022. Here they talk about who they are, share their creative process, and give advice to fans working on (or wanting to create) their own projects — more specifically KULT.



Characters, locations and incidents are portrayed from the metaphorical viewpoint of the *KULT: Divinity Lost* setting.



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# ALEX OBERNIGG

Hi, I'm Alex. Born and raised in Vienna, I am also known as Auburney in the bottomless expanses of the internet. When I'm not busy fighting off the lictors or raising my two little purgatides (four and six years old, so very recently reincarnated), you can usually find me hanging out with the other truth-seekers on the [Kult: Elysium Discord server](#). I'm more sporadically also active on other socials, such as Reddit and Facebook.

I've played and ran KULT since 1994, when the game originally came out in my country. My impressionable teenage mind at the time appears to have never quite recovered from this, as it has become my One True Love amongst all roleplaying games ever, and thus here I am, still gleefully reenacting that trauma to this day.

## Which projects have you worked on?

I got involved with this new edition, K:DL, already during the first Kickstarter. Eagerly following the gradually released infos there, and increasingly loving what I saw. I became very active on the online fan-forum they had back then, quickly becoming online friends with Robin and Petter. I was invited to help proofread and edit the Corebook and several of the scenarios in Tarotcum and Other Tales. I was even asked to write the NPC/monster statblocks for some of them, and did so with great joy!

Since then, I have worked on several releases: The Driver, Echoes from the Past, Beyond Darkness and Madness, and Labyrinths and Secret Chambers all have my bloody fingerprints on them in some forms. And there's more to come, that hasn't seen the light of day just yet — we have books in the works that will be interesting for both players and GMs!

## What are your favorite aspects of KULT: Divinity Lost?

One of my favorite things about KULT is that it makes it so easy and at the same time so enormously enjoyable for me to tell stories in all my favorite horror subgenres: From out-and-out supernatural horror, to occult horror, and social/psychological horror.

My favorite realm has got to be Metropolis — it is the single most unique and inspiring example of “another dimension just beyond our senses”, and deeply connected to human-kind in KULT (with all its divine history and diabolical depravities) as well.

My favorite creatures are probably the Azghouls, though I do love so many of them so dearly. I enjoy how even all the monsters are also victims in this setting, and while they all kill, violate, and devour their prey with demonic revelry, they all hurt, suffer, and grieve, too. It truly depicts a cosmos of bleak, nihilistic terror for every single being in it.

## How is your creative process?

When sitting down to write, I first make sure to get in the right headspace. A quiet surrounding without distractions is important to me, so I mostly write at night. Sometimes I take a couple days to work up inspiration — I like to take walks in scrapyards or industrial areas, visiting abandoned or condemned buildings, riding the subway, reading the news...

As for the writing itself, I try to focus on what's the single most terrifying thing I have to say. The Horrible Truth I need to reveal. Then, once that is identified, I mentally arrange everything around this.

For me, a time-proven structure that often works is to follow the pattern of “The Lie, The Madness, and The Truth”, which is how both the 1st and 4th edition KULT Corebook are also structured. In a sense, every story in this setting begins in The Lie. A place where the world is normal, your neighbors and coworkers aren't monsters, there's no secret cults infiltrating society, and no other dimensions exist that seek to intrude upon our fragile everyday reality. Your dreams are just dreams, the dead cannot return, and cities are just inanimate constructions of concrete and steel, nothing more.

Of course this is a whole bunch of false assumptions in KULT, but almost nobody realizes that. This is where The Madness comes into play with erratic perceptions, impossible murders, people displaced in Time and Space, raving madmen on the subway proclaiming secrets from your childhood no one should be knowing about... Very often, this is the absolute bulk of a story or other text. It's where I spin the arc towards the final, central, horrible reveal I cooked up in advance. And it's one of the many beauties of the KULT setting that it provides us a near-infinite ‘possibility space’ to fill in with this sort of things.

One guiding principle I often call to my mind for this part is that those who have glimpsed fragments of *The Truth* will act upon these perceptions in ways that seem rational and sane to themselves, but are perceived as delusional and depraved by those who haven't.

When revealing these final Truths, then, I aim to be brief and brutal. I deeply enjoy what I've come to call “The KULT Reversal”, a shocking revelation that subverts or inverts some aspect of our world and lives that is commonly taken for granted. That moment that just completely pulls out the rug from underneath everyone's feet. God is Evil (and also dead and gone), Death is Only the Beginning, Nightmares Are More Real Than Your Waking Life, Humans Are Really Gods... You know all these.

Now, for many stories you will want something a little more small-scale than that. But you can stay true to the principle regardless of scope. It could be “*This whole time, the monster wasn't trying to kill you, it was trying to save you!*” From what? An even worse monster? Your fellow human beings? Yourself?

Or maybe it's something like “*The ritual abortions aren't meant to kill the babies. They're designed to liberate them!*” Is someone gathering a host of souls yet unfettered by the Illusion? Seeking to use them as a weapon against the lictors? Harnessing their power and insights to fuel one's own divinity? Or trying to send them to paradise before they can become too corrupted by the world?

Whatever it is, when I feel I've found something that reverberates with this “KULT Reversal” kind of vibe, I know I've got a shot at writing something really good and strong.



***Do you have any advice for fans who are writing (or wanting to write) their own projects?***

When writing your own material for K:DL (or any other horror game, really), I feel it's most important to find a strong kicker or hook for the beginning, and to have a good (possible) ending/payoff/shocker in mind for the end. These are the two pillars between which you'll weave your web. Think of it like when telling a joke: Above all, you need a setup, and a punchline. This may seem like a weird comparison to some, but Comedy and Horror are very closely related, and the narrative structures are very similar here. Once you have those two pillars, you can fill in all the rest, and on this part I would advise to write as little as you can, but as much as you have to.

In the case of scenarios or campaigns for roleplaying games, don't be afraid to dictate things in the beginning. Starting location and/or situation, available character Archetypes, NPC relations that have to be in place... Anything you need to make your story work, but also then take care to leave the middle part largely a possibility space for players to unfold their creativity and really participate in shaping what the actual story will ultimately be.

Finally, allow your reveal/payoff/punchline to act as a pull factor, powerfully drawing things together again after the more open and sandboxy middle part, and make sure to have a strong final choice (or three) in mind for the ending. The K:DL scenarios *Oakwood Heights*, *Rockets Red Glare*, and *The Driver* all illustrate such a final choice, and it makes them strong gaming experiences for this exact reason. Player agency is a very real priority in roleplaying games, right up until the very end of a story. You may want — even need — to employ some amount of a bit more heavy directorial control in these final stretches of a game in order to get things to where they need to be going... But in my experience the game will be more satisfying for your players if they get to help shape the outcome in some form.

Allow them this little measure of freedom and choice, and they'll not only let you get away with a large amount of railroading and directorial control in return, they'll be likely to actually praise you for it!

## ANDREAS RUU

I'm an Illustrator and writer working for Haxan Studios, currently on the grind developing another very dark RPG, *Astro Inferno*.  
<https://www.astroinferno.com>

I've played *Kult* since it came out in Sweden in 1991 and I've played through the *Black Madonna* not less than 3 times (3 and a half to be precise). *Kult* has been a favorite game of mine ever since with its heavy and intimate type of horror.

***Which projects have you worked on?***

I am quite new to the RPG business and this was my first project I've been involved in, being dragged into it by Petter at Helmgast. For *Labyrinths* and *Secret Chambers* I've mainly been drawing lots and lots of maps, writing some stuff and creating lots of tables. After the project ended I got a taste for blood and started working on *Astro Inferno* that will spread its darkness later this year, or in 2023 if the *Black Emperor* is willing.

***What are your favorite aspects of KULT: Divinity Lost?***

I'm very split, since I really love the intimate and psychological part of the game, building relations and sawing them in half with screaming buzzsaws. But I'm also very fond of exploring the Pantheon, giving the entities more room and personality, where *Nepharites* and *Lictors*, and all the 7777 dead gods of *Metropolis* actually are powers more present, making *Kult* more of a *Over the top Epic Horror "Fantasy"* game creating new myths in the epic lore of its world.

***How is your creative process?***

As most creative workers and illustrators in particular, I think night time in itself is an inspiration, a sort of meditative atmosphere where time loses meaning and you can much more easily invoke the darkness within. I listen to music constantly while working and I think the music reflects in the stuff I create. I do mostly dark stuff, dark but with a splash of color and hope, just as my taste in music - *Behemoth* and *Britney*.

***Do you have any advice for fans who are writing (or wanting to write) their own projects?***

My advice is "Just do it!". Every page you write or draw will be a stepping stone into the future you want. If you never do it, there will be no stones to step on, and you'll find yourself in the same place you started (probably eating some strange fruit from a dream someone else had).

## JACQUELINE BRYK

Hi! I'm Jacqueline Bryk, otherwise known as Jax Romana or Jax. Never Jackie. My pronouns are she/her, they/them, and fae/femme. You can find most of my work through my Linktree, <https://linktr.ee/rufflejax>. You can find me most places on the internet as *RuffleJax*! I am a *Mad*, *polyamorous*, *queer*, *femme*, *cis woman* (whew!) and I started professionally writing horror in 2016. Great year for it, right?

***Which projects have you worked on?***

My fingerprints are all over *KULT: Divinity Lost* — I'm the English-language line editor, and I've handled the core, *Black Madonna*, *Tarotium* and *Other Tales*, *Beyond Darkness* and *Madness*, and *Screams and Whispers*, just to name a few. I wrote two scenarios — *La Cena* and *And The Rockets Red Glare* — and *Chapter Ten: Prisoners of the Self* for *Beyond Darkness And Madness*. I'm also currently developing a full book about modern childhood in *KULT: Divinity Lost*, which is kind of an ambitious project — children in *KULT*, regardless



of edition, tend to be symbols of innocence or hapless victims to be saved, and I want people to be able to play them instead of constantly rescuing them. It's easy to forget that kids are people too!

I've also worked on a bunch of stuff for other companies, including Onyx Path Publishing, Wizards of the Coast, Ulisses Spiele, White Wolf Entertainment, Genesis of Legend Publishing, and Ninth Level Games.

### **What are your favorite aspects of KULT: Divinity Lost?**

I got into KULT back when it was only being published in the states by Metropolis Ltd, and it was originally pitched to me as "you've lost your divinity and you need to find it again." My initial response was "that doesn't sound scary" but I quickly learned otherwise. KULT was my first foray into apotheosis or transcendental horror, the horror of the process of transformation into something beautiful and terrible. That horror occupies a very special place in my heart — the endings of Tarotium and Black Madonna give me big feelings. Sure, you've been through all of this suffering, but now you stand in a place surrounded by stars and gods. What will you do with this new-found power, and all of this trauma haunting you?

Sorry, bit of a tangent there, but I love how big everything in KULT feels, and how much of a muchness there is to explore. Here's a quick list of favorites.

**Favorite monster:** Gynachids!

**Favorite NPC:** The Tomb Guardian!

**Favorite Archetype:** *The Broken!*

**Favorite Realm:** Metropolis!

**Favorite Archon:** Malkuth!

**Favorite Death Angel:** Sathariel!

**Favorite Magic Path:** Dream Magic!

**Favorite Adventure I Didn't Write:** The Summit!

### **How is your creative process?**

Fine, thanks! A little frazzled, but we're working on it.

Seriously though, it's not usually very hard for me to get in the mood to write on KULT: Divinity Lost. I'm a cradle Catholic and I love cosmic horror distilled to a very local level. I have a couple of playlists I'll listen to to get in the mood — I find The Haxan Cloak's discography to be incredibly helpful, as well as this spooky Halloween classical playlist, this dark romantic/classical playlist, and this dark ambient playlist. I haven't listened to the official KULT: Divinity Lost discography (I know, I know) but I am assured it is quite good!

I like writing a lot of flavorful hooks and seeing what players do with them. I'm very much not a novelist;

I describe my style as "setting up dominoes for others to knock down". I love writing rich and terrifying scenarios for people to explore at their own pace. In terms of subgenres,

I tend to lean into trauma-informed, suspenseful, gothic, sublime, and apotheosis horror.

### **Do you have any advice for fans who are writing (or wanting to write) their own projects?**

There are more monsters out there than lictors and nepharites, and they're not always fighting each other! Seriously! Play with dream creatures, play with ghosts, play with azghouls — there's a huge setting and hundreds of creatures just waiting for you to explore.

Also, I know it seems like the Illusion is an impediment, but it can be a gift if you let it. Humans do shitty things to each other all the time without supernatural influence. What happens if your villain is just the worst on his own? What does that mean if people can do bad stuff on their own? To me, in a setting full of creatures with knives for hands, that's pretty scary!

Finally, and this should go without saying, talk to your players. Trust your players. Treat your players well, and expect the same from them. Death might only be the beginning, but KULT: Divinity Lost is still just a game that we're playing for fun!

## **JASON FRYER**

I'm a part-time writer/game designer and have worked on several projects over the last few years. Having grown up around books and writing, I became fascinated with role-playing games at an early age. I found their methods for storytelling meshed quite well, so I couldn't get enough of games like AD&D, Gamma World, and Traveller.

My love of horror started even earlier with Bradbury, Poe, and Lovecraft. At the time, I pretty much read everything by King and Koontz, only to move to Clive Barker, James Herbert, and John Skipp and Craig Spector. It amazed me that you could get paid for scaring the hell out of people.

In the 90s', gaming became very transgressive. So when KULT came along, I immediately fell in love with it. Never imagined that I'd be writing on KULT 2nd Edition and Purgatory shortly thereafter. So, twenty years later, working on KULT: Divinity Lost felt like coming home again.

### **Which projects have you worked on?**

After a major hiatus, I started writing/designing games again for Third Eye Games, specifically AMP, Ninja Crusade, and H.P. Lovecraft: Preparatory Academy (Pip System). That gave me the boost I needed, and so kept working on other projects, and led me back to KULT. I've truly enjoyed writing and editing for KULT: Divinity Lost, but Beyond Darkness & Madness is the one I'm most proud of, for many personal reasons.

Currently, I have another Through the Breach project in the works, as well as two for KULT: Divinity Lost that I'm quite excited about. I hope to share more details on them soon, as I think they'll help expand the fascinating mythos even more. I'm also about to start running a live-game of KULT on Twitch, which is a real thrill.



### What are your favorite aspects of KULT: Divinity Lost?

Since the original KULT, I've been intrigued by the game's unseen world, which felt unique when compared to the plethora of RPGs that dealt with the concept at the time. Yet, despite its existential threats, KULT explored horror on the personal level, lending agency and importance to the characters. For me, that created far more compelling narratives and deeper terrors.

Mechanically, KULT: Divinity Lost took that personalization even further, so it really spoke to me both as a Gamemaster and a player. The game's collaborative nature helps inspire some intense stories, where the monsters aren't just the things from beyond, but the characters themselves. Things have deeper meaning and impact. So, to me, it narratively feels closer to an organic horror story than more plot-driven games.

### How is your creative process?

Writing for KULT: Divinity Lost actually feels more natural, as I'm exploring the concept, What If? From that, I can create general ideas and narrative beats, but ultimately, everything depends on the players and where they take the story. Usually, I explore resource books and the Internet for snippets and threads. Something to stir me.

After that, I allow the research to lead me, shaping it into a coherent foundation. I also build the narrative themes around this foundation, as they'll be what really fuels the story. It needs to mean something or the players probably won't respond. When writing, I have a playlist of inspiring music, as well as imagery and art posted.

For example, *The Atrocity Exhibition* started from Death Angel Togarini's association with macabre artists. It triggered some old memories and ideas about death, rebirth, and gaining immortality through art. From there, I just collected as much information on death art as I could, finding even more threads to tug and weave. The end result went far beyond the original idea, and I think the story was better for it.

### Do you have any advice for fans who are writing (or wanting to write) their own projects?

Firstly: Write what inspires you. If you're not passionate about something, it's going to show. And people—especially editors—will see that. Secondly: Finish what you started. Writing is like exercising. Sometimes it's easy. Most times, it's hard. But, as long as you get words onto the page, you're a writer. The moment you stop, it becomes easier to not write.

The hardest part though is sending your finished product out. It's scary, but do it. Pay attention to who you're sending it out to, as well. Check their guidelines and make sure you adhere to them. If they only ask for an abstract, don't send them your

200-page campaign. Familiarize yourself with the system and mythology. And don't let rejections dishearten you. There's many reasons for them, so don't let them stop you from writing.

But take the chance. I wrote a letter with a 250-word blurb and mailed it to Sweden on a dare. It got me my first job on KULT. Never would have happened if I hadn't fought the fear and just taken the risk.

## PETER NALLO

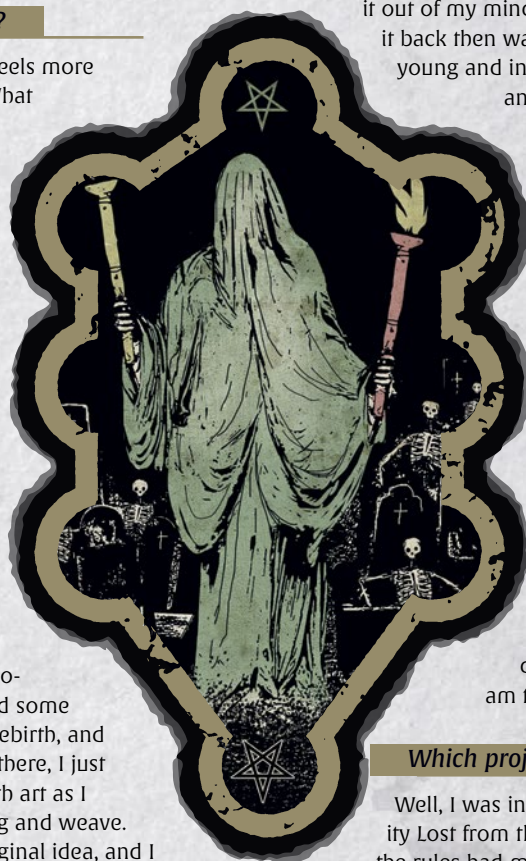
I fell in love with KULT when I bought the box in 1991 (I was 14). I remember staying up all night reading it and it was so new and so fresh and grotesque that I could not push it out of my mind. The times I tried to Gamemaster it back then was quite catastrophic since I was too young and inexperienced to create a solid story and it was mostly focused on weapons and action. However, I was madly in love with the world of KULT and it never left me. During my life the "essence" of what was KULT resurfaced in various formats: Novellas, short stories, scripts, homebrew scenarios as well as other RPGs that I wrote.

Well, one thing led to another, and many years later I am deep into the world of KULT with the fourth edition of the game: Divinity Lost. My title "Creative Director" basically means that I am the one that makes the creative decisions on what products to make, what is "true" to KULT and what is not KULT. Often this is done through discussions, pitches and playtests but I am the one with the final call.

### Which projects have you worked on?

Well, I was involved in what would become Divinity Lost from the start. Robin Liljenberg who created the rules had made an Apocalypse World hack in the KULT setting and I joined him as a player. I loved how the new rules sort of fell in place with the KULT mythology. Me and Robin continued to work with the hack (which was called Prisoners of the Illusion or Illusionens Fångar - since it was written in Swedish), he did the writing of the playbooks and I did the artworks. We felt that it was really good so we teamed up with my old partner in crime Marco (we had written a lot of RPGs together) and we went after the official KULT license. When it came to Divinity Lost core rules Robin focused on the Rules, Archetypes and Traits while I focused on the Mythology.

Other than the core rules I have had my fingers in sort of all projects to a various degree. Mainly it is about discussion with writers and artist to steer the concept in the right direction and to sharpen it and make it "better" and more true to KULT and perhaps push ourselves to explore new paths.





### *What are your favorite aspects of KULT: Divinity Lost?*

The overall mythology and that the focus is so centered on the characters and their story, their inner darkness and personal struggles. I also like that the mythological world of KULT is so rich and deep that you can have many hypotheses on why things are as they are.

### *How is your creative process?*

I am creative in different ways during the different stages of the writing. The first stage is just collecting ideas, writing down concepts, sentences that have the right feel, and trying to put words on images that appear in my head. The second stage I try to puzzle these pieces together and fill out things in between. At this stage I often realize and come up with new concepts that I try to weave together with the existing ones. I also cut and throw things away when I feel that they don't fit. The third stage is when I go through all of it again and try to polish it and get it to fit together as one big comprehensive text.

When it comes to mood I often listen to music that puts me in a certain atmosphere. Often ambient, classical music (slow piano like Erik Satie) or some form of black metal. It is important that the vocals aren't too clear because then I start to listen to them instead.

### *Do you have any advice for fans who are writing (or wanting to write) their own projects?*

Don't expect the first version to be good. Don't compare that to finished material. The first version is just the beginning. Then you rewrite things, cut things and add some more stuff that you come up with while you are creating. If you are lucky you end up in a flow and things just take a life of its own. If not (which is most of the time) you just add words on paper and it works just as well. Do not have the need to have thought everything through from the start. Just begin and see where the story takes you. I often realize what a scenario is about while I am writing it. Then I come up with far better ideas than my original one and I go back and rewrite a lot of things.

One final advice: start with something small. If this is one of your first writing projects. Don't try to write a massive campaign or sourcebook. Do a scenario, an archetype, a location. A first step on the journey. Perhaps that can be expanded to something bigger? Also, it is much easier to write together with someone, or that a person may read and comment. Here I would say the KULT community is a great asset.

