



THE RULES OF THE FLESH

Interview

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What is this?

The Rules of the Flesh: Interview is the fourteenth monthly small release for **KULT: Divinity Lost**. This release features an interview with two Kultists behind the Rules of the Flesh LARP, a story about madness, dreams, and passion. Here we talk a little about the event and marvel at their photographs and flavor text.



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



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There is a shelter in the city where
Madness, dream and flesh merge.
A place where chains break free.
A place where we rewrite the rules
and we shatter the illusion.
A place where delirium reminds
us of our lost divinity.



The Rules of the Flesh

I want you to cry until you want to tear your eyes out. I want you to scream in terror until your vocal cords tear. I'd like your laughter to freeze the blood of the crazy ones you share a cell with. I was hoping you could take one last shot in that dark flat surrounded by strangers. I want your nightmares to be so real that you fear to fall asleep. I want every one of your orgasms from that endless orgy of flesh, latex and blood. I was hoping you could give me all that and much more because you will be one step closer to the edge of the abyss with every trauma and irreparable loss.

One step closer to reaching The Delirium where we will crack the Illusion with blows.



A Note on the Chaotic Nature of Fun Conversations

This month's small release is an "interview" with two Kultists who organized the Spanish LARP named Rules of the Flesh, a KULT story that took place in Barcelona twice at the time of this release. I put "interview" between quotes because although it was planned to be a somewhat formal interview, it evolved into a friendly, pleasant, and fluid conversation. The truth is that by the end of it all, questions, answers, and commentary got mixed up. Suddenly, we stumbled upon simultaneous threads that were being resolved and recalled as the interviewees walked me through what Rules of the Flesh is and felt like.

Now, you should know that I'm not a trained interviewer, but I did my best to introduce proper context and light commentary using brackets [like this, for example] throughout this transcription.

Thank you Juantxi and Alberto for participating in this. It was a pleasure to get to know you and the story you've run, and experience a tiny bit of the Rules of the Flesh. I cannot help but gasp in wonder when staring at the amazing production you've set up for this. I hope that Kultists reading this are just as inspired to delve deep into similar horrors.

Spoiler Warning

If you plan to participate in this LARP in the future — provided that future editions find their way out of Limbo — know that this document contains mild spoilers about what has happened with previous characters, as well as the Higher Powers influencing the plot and each of the Stages.

Reminder

As one would expect, Rules of the Flesh is the creation of the people behind the project. Helmgast isn't involved in any way, shape, or form in its organization. The photography and translated text presented in this document were kindly provided by Alberto and Juantxi to better illustrate the event and inspire other Kultists.

Who Are You?

Juantxi: Hello, my fellow Kultists! I'm Juantxi, from Salamanca (Spain). I've been a KULT fan for more than twenty years. It's my favorite rpg so far. In addition to playing and GMing tabletop RPGs, I'm a LARP designer and runner. I worked in several LARPs and collaborated with groups like *Salamarkham*, *Snara*, *Somnia*, *Not Only Larp* and *Monster Productions*. Also, I'm one of the organizers of *Entre-Revs*, a Spanish LARP convention. Beyond the Elysium, I'm a software developer in a fintech. Yes, I sold my soul to the Archons.

Alberto: My name is Alberto. I live in Madrid (Spain) and I am an economist by profession and a writer and event designer by heart. I have been playing tabletop RPGs for more than 20 years both as a player and as a DM. My favorite games have always been *Dungeons & Dragons* and, of course, *KULT*. In my opinion, the *Clavis Inferna* scenario is still the best scenario ever written. As for the LARP world, I've been involved in it for quite some time now as well, playing and organizing events for *Monster Productions* mainly and collaborating with other organizations over the years.

ABOUT THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PROJECT

Mixed answer: We are a bunch of friends... and lovers in some cases. We don't earn any money with this. We make this for love. And madness. We made two runs last year. The idea is to play it and re-design, improve, and make it better for the next runs.

When it comes to KULT, what inspires you the most?

Juantxi: The setting. The urban style of the game. Considering reality as a prison is very inspiring for me (*Dark City* has been one of my favorite movies since I was a child). As Berto said, *Clavis Inferna* is one of the best scenarios I played in my whole life. I've always ignored the game system of former editions. I always disliked it. Now [when it comes to the new ruleset], I love the style and it helps me a lot with the roleplay.

There is no doubt my favorite aspect of the game is dreaming. Scenarios like *Et in Arcadia Ego* changed how I play RPGs. After Rules of Flesh, dream-wandering is the part I enjoy the most about KULT: *Divinity Lost*. Dreams are a potent tool to tell stories. And of course... *Clive Barker* is God, and we are their prophets.

Alberto: I'm a big fan of writers like *Clive Barker* and video games like *Silent Hill*, and KULT is all that and much more. I'm passionate about the way it approaches horror in such a stark and direct way that is very different from the cosmic terror of other game worlds like *Call of Cthulhu*.

I have always liked the game system of KULT in previous editions, but what I really love is its setting. The approach to Madness, Dream and Passion and how they are keys that allow us to break the Illusion. The infinite possibilities it offers... and, oh my god, the spectacular way in which each of the texts is written. There is so much love put into each and every word.

It is one of the few settings that delicate subjects are dealt with in a mature way. And, strangely enough, it is a game that makes you think about deeper issues than it seems. [When asked about his favorite creature:] Of course... KULT has the wonderful nephrites. What *Hellraiser* fan wouldn't like them?

What is "Rules of the Flesh"?

Juantxi: The *Rules of the Flesh* is an excellent way to lose your sanity [laugh]. It is a savage trip full of urban horror, madness, violence and sensuality. Berto was the leading designer, it is his baby, so please Alberto, introduce the story.

Alberto: The Rules of the Flesh is a psychological and physical horror LARP. About love, madness and carnal hedonism. An experience in which we merge the aesthetics, dynamics, and safety of the BDSM world with KULT: *Divinity Lost*.



Who are the Player-Characters in Rules of the Flesh?



Juantxi: We have three archetypes of player-characters (PCs) in *Rules of the Flesh*: the Sleepers, the Aware and the Enlightened. The main cast has 21 PCs and at least 12 non-player-characters (NPCs). But this is only the first layer of explaining the characters. The cast includes lawyers, influencers, dancers, rock stars, porn stars, psychiatrists, novel writers, dream travelers, priestesses of passion and monsters. The relations between them are very extreme. We have people who love each other, people who hate each other, and messy friendships and family relationships. They are not exactly the kind of people you'd want to be around.

Alberto: The characters are broken toys and tormented souls who suffer a great trauma that led them to break the Illusion when they were children, which led them to end up living in an orphanage dedicated to a Higher Power. Then, something terrible happened in the orphanage and the children got out into the real world, only to be reunited many years later in a very special celebration. However, it won't be long before the past comes looking for them.

Basically, the orphanage was run by an order consecrated to Kether. They tracked children who had caused shatters in the Illusion and admitted them to the orphanage. There, the children would be "cured", or eliminated in the case it was impossible to find a cure. When the orphanage suffers a mysterious fire and the children begin to live free in the real world, the real problems begin. In the end, each of these children possesses a very valuable soul and are potential weapons that, should they fall into the wrong hands, could tear the Illusion.

How do Sleeper, Aware, and Enlightened PCs differ in your story?

Alberto: They function like explained in the *KULT: Divinity Lost* manual. The Sleepers are PCs adapted mainly for players who do not know the *KULT* setting well enough, so that they can be surprised as they discover it. They represent the most human side of the event. They are those who have not yet suffered a major trauma, but will soon go through that.

The Aware have already gone through their own personal purgatory. They are at that point where one wrong step could lead to their destruction. They are still struggling to open their eyes and come to terms with the Truth. These characters must begin the game with pre-defined deeply rooted traumas.

The Enlightened are those who have opened their eyes and act as guides for the rest of the characters. They are very powerful PCs that are given to players with experience in the setting, because they act as plot-channelers and are a very important gear to keep the story moving forward. Their intentions depend on which Archon or Death Angel they serve.

With the Enlightened being handled by veterans, are Sleepers exclusively roleplayed by beginners?

Alberto: In general, yes, but there are exceptions. We had players who knew the setting well who wanted to enjoy the experience from a high humanity starting point. When I run *KULT*, if a player doesn't know the setting, I ask him not to read it so that he can enjoy it more.

Juantxi: Interestingly, many beginners were very well prepared to play Aware PCs. But yes, that's a good way to approach it. I think that the best way of discovering the full potential of *KULT* is by playing without knowing anything at all. The excitement of everything being new is great fun.

How are Enlightened Player-Characters able to guide the plot?

Juantxi: This is a hard one. There are no prompts off screen. We make the direction of the game as organic as possible. We used many storytelling techniques and theater tools combined with excellent stage management. In addition, we ran the first stage of the LARP using online role-playing scenes for a month to properly enhance the players' immersion and prepare their knowledge of the Kult-ure [as in culture – namely, the setting].

It was hard but very satisfying work. I don't want to think how many hours we spent directing online scenes before the LARP. Alberto did count them [laugh].

Alberto: More than what Juantxi says, the Enlightened had more information about the metaplot and setting and had more advantages in their own dynamics related to Madness, Dreams and Passion. Some were Magicians or dream wanderers, for example. As reinforcement, some Enlightened were handled by the LARP organizers.



The Rules of the Flesh

THE STRUCTURE

Stage 1: The Veil is Torn

This is when online scenes to establish the player-characters and their Relations. The stages 1 and 2 took an entire month of our lives... and tons of messages, emails, telephone calls, video calls, chats in discord, voice notes, videos, ouija boards. It was crazy [laugh].

Stage 2: The Illusion Shatters

A second stage of online scenes to make some hard decisions that will lead PCs down different paths reflected in Stage 3. There are several cinematic scenes and fixed events that move the story along, but overall it's an open event. In each of the two editions of the event, players followed very different paths and ended up in completely different ways.

Each player could end up in a nest related to dream, madness or passion depending on how their story developed. At the end of the LARP, for example, you would be able to decide to run away from the Purgatory you were trapped in, become a soul harvester for a nephrite, or be part of the harvest. Three very different endings.

Stage 3: The Night at the Nests

The LARP starts on Friday and we separate the players into three groups [called nests]. We based the nest on aspects of KULT: Passion, Madness, and dreaming. The nests are divided in such a way to offer a complete vision of the game.

Some characters are more oriented towards one of the three aspects, yet most could have ended up in any of them. It depended on their decisions during the first two stages. There was meta-gaming and players chose where they wanted to go. Mainly, if your character was insane, they ended up on the madness floor, for example.

As another example, there was a character who followed the orders of his dominatrix — a Passion Magician — and caused the death of his family, which led him to Madness. However, that character could have ended up in the nest of Madness or Passion. Choose your own way to lose your sanity!

In the Passion nest, they sought to destroy reality following Gamaliel's maxim of carnal hedonism. Dynamics related to sex, domination, submission and passion were used. They played a lot with the beds, the ropes, the bathtub, candles, etcetera.

In the Madness nest, we played with Time & Space to drive the players (and the organizers) crazy. The structure of that night was messy and chaotic. It was a nest where the madness of each character affected the others.

Juantxi: I can talk about the **Dream nest** because was the place I did my main work as the LARP runner. First of all, I could not have done it without Maria, who was also a gm, larrunner, npc and the point of organization that is always missing in me. It was a place to create dreamlike scenes, terrifying fantasies, to explore the emotions of the characters as if each character was a storyteller. There was dance, there was theater, there was magic. There were stories with violence and also sex, but in a very elegant way. My dear dreamers were able to make good use of the dreaming mechanics we designed for them. We explore the past, present and even the future of the characters through dreams. It was intense and wonderful. All my dear dreamers were excellent and very, very generous players.

Stage 4: The Delirium

The final stage of the LARP happened in a saturday night, when we gathered all players and NPCs to play in a real BDSM place in Barcelona. All the characters met for the first time in a single point for a collective catharsis. The environment was sordid and oppressive and all the control that they had in the nests was broken down. The delirium was controlled by the hosts of the weekend and, in the end, everything literally went to hell.

Juantxi: After all that happened, it was in delirium that they faced all characters they couldn't be with in the previous stage. For example, for my NPC, Milton, it was amazing to see his girl again and to be able to tell her "good to see you, babe" (Sorry, I couldn't help myself). It was the first time we had seen each other live in character and of course it could only be explosively fun, and the player was amazing.



How did you adapt the tabletop rules for live action roleplay?

Juantxi: We use fluid techniques to represent conflicts, their escalation and resolution. This means that fights have to look like fights, madness has to look like madness and sex has to "look like" sex. We want total immersion in character and a "what you see is what you get" experience.

Of course, safety is VERY important to us. Even more so when it comes to *KULT*. That's why before the game we do about two hours of workshops to train all the techniques, and we take into account all the boundaries and triggers of the participants. We use the traffic light technique [red, yellow, green] and the OK check. We take care of ourselves. The participants are always more important than the LARP.

How do you handle physical conflicts?

Juantxi: The one who receives the damage/impact decides how severe it is. Players must be generous if they want to create an interesting story. Playing to lose can be very, very fun. We do not believe in a competitive style. That's not to say that the characters are not at odds with each other, we also want there to be lots and lots of conflict. As we say, "*the floor is drama*". We simply give them the tools to have fun suffering as their characters. There is always a case [that someone might disagree on the result of a conflict], but fortunately it doesn't happen often. That's why we made a casting for choosing participants. Sign up is not a first come first served process.

Is it the same for social conflicts?

Juantxi: Yes, social interaction was essential. Everything had to be very intense. There were moments to catch your breath, but generally the scenes were powerfully dramatic. That's not to say it was a shouting match. In the Dream Nest, the characters spoke almost in whispers and this created a gloomy, mysterious and very suggestive atmosphere.

Alberto: Yes, but complying with a code of conduct. In the end, *Kult* is a very harsh setting and you have to be careful not to hurt the player. The level of immersion in a LARP can be greater than that of a tabletop role-playing game. For better and for worse.

Do you use Advantages and Disadvantages?

Juantxi: No. LARP has its own rulings to aid the plot and the scenes. If you want an immersive experience, you need to design techniques that will work for the story and the experience. Advantages could be features of your characters, like moments in their past life or something else. But we don't use rules based on numbers.

Alberto: Explicitly no, implicitly yes. To design the characters, Advantages, Disadvantages and other characteristics were taken into account. The Moves were not taken into account, since in LARP it is you who has to move. Numbers are not used.

How do you handle the See Through the Illusion basic Move?

Juantxi: With a suitable production. Monsters have to look like monsters, as you may see in the photographs. The location has to convey the feeling that you are in a dungeon. Lights, music, fog, etcetera. We put all the means at the service of immersion. Like a theater production, but with more leather and chains. And latex. Tons of latex.

How do you handle Character Development and Experience?

Juantxi: It is a unique experience, and the characters suffer extreme endings. It would be very difficult to continue with them. Of course, each player owns their own character's ending. There are people who decide to end their character then and there. This is not a story of happy endings except in very, very specific cases. Of course after the event there is a lot of wonderful fan fiction and everyone can give it the end they want. Death is only the beginning.

About the Horror Contract...

Context, quoted: KDL suggests that the Horror Contract should be used to draw these lines and reveal what scares the players. Are the answers to such questions openly communicated? Do you veto players based on certain answers?

Answered by both: Thanks to the design document and the sign-up form, players are able to learn about the game's themes before applying. They can also explain their boundaries based on that. In addition, we had an online briefing with all participants that we recorded, so no one missed it. As if that wasn't enough, we went over safety rules, themes, limits and tools in the workshops to make everyone feel safe.

Then, within the game we use security systems typical of the LARP world, such as the traffic light system and the OK sign.

What are your favorite moments generated by the players themselves?

Juantxi: Berto, do the honors, I need to think about all the feelings I left in the Dream Nest.

Alberto: I'm not able to say a single moment. We had players who composed songs, who directed short films, who organized small live roles for other players... but in my case I really enjoyed the final catharsis of the Passion nest and the dynamics in which the bathtub was used. There was a very funny moment where we ordered dinner and players showed up to the delivery guy dressed as their *KULT* characters before heading off to a BDSM dungeon.



Really, the city was another character in our story. Also, when we lost our Cabify ride and stayed in the heart of the city of Barcelona dressed as the PCs.

Juantxi: The very dramatic chat or video scenes in Stages 1 and 2. Every scene with my dear dreamers was amazing. The Dream nest was a beautiful exercise in storytelling which was made possible by the players. It is as if they have all become GMs. They created super powerful scenes involving all the characters. The scene where the characters ate Mathew, the character played by María, my girlfriend, the love of my life (and without her we wouldn't have been able to make this possible). It was horrifyingly funny. And of course when we got into a taxi wearing a plague doctor's mask, handcuffs and asked the driver "Do you want me to put on a face mask or...?"

Last Words

Juantxi: I want to thank all the people who contributed to make this madness possible. First of all, María, that had to be part of this interview because without her we would not have made it.

Marta and JK for helping with the location.

Maribel, for the help in the wicked place.

Victor Munster, for always being there taking great pics of us to make us eternal.

Every NPC and collaborator, each one who gave us everything without expecting anything in return. You are all amazing.

To the fucking awesome players who made it possible.

To all of you, thanks with all my love.

To all of you, the lyrics that inspired me during this crazy adventure:

"Like a fever, fever - inside of me

Like a fever, fever - inside of me

Stand fast, faithful one

See the moon and not the sun but I...

All I need is a simple reminder "

Alberto: [That, and] to my psychologist, without her this would not have been possible.





Juantxi



Alberto

LAS ABORMAS DE LA CARNE

Download the original design document in Spanish here:

[Google Drive Direct Link](#)