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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Fabula Ultima**!

What you hold in your hands is the core rulebook for a **tabletop roleplaying game** inspired by some of the most beloved **JRPG** videogames, such as *Bravely Default*, *Bravely Second*, *Granblue Fantasy*, *Ni No Kuni*, *Octopath Traveler*, and the legendary *Final Fantasy* series.

The **JRPG** acronym stands for **Japanese (or Japanese-style) Roleplaying Game**, a videogame genre that saw its origin in Japan but is currently spread all over the world, counting hundreds of titles.

JRPG videogames share some major elements: they tell fantastic stories in which extraordinary individuals confront the darkness that threatens their world, growing and learning to trust each other: only by struggling together and casting aside their suspicions and differences will they save what they hold dear. This may read like a reasonably common premise, but what makes JRPGs unique is that the worlds in which they are set – often wondrous and bizarre! – are built around the protagonists and act as a reflection of the doubts, hopes and feelings driving their actions: the process of discovering the setting goes hand in hand with understanding who is accompanying us in our journeys.

- ◆ Just like the JRPGs it was inspired by, **Fabula Ultima** focuses on epic tales of **growing heroes and powerful villains**, set in **fantastic worlds** brimming with wondrous locations and bizarre, unique monsters, tightly connected to each protagonist's unique themes and choices.
- ◆ Unlike a videogame, you won't play through a prewritten plot and grind for experience by slaying monsters for countless hours or carrying out duties for quest-givers. Instead, you will **build your own story together** little by little, and you will be rewarded for playing your character in a way that fits their role and identity in that story!

A ROLEPLAYING GAME

Roleplaying games (abbreviated RPGs) are a particular type of game – they originated as tabletop games, but are nowadays often played online as well.

In a roleplaying game, a group of people play together to create a story: they do so by talking with each other, and that conversation is accompanied by the use of rules and (typically) dice rolls, which help determine the outcome of uncertain situations and guarantee that the story created reflects the premises of the game – tension and fear for a horror game, adrenaline scenes for an action game, deep and heartfelt character interaction for a romantic game, and so on.

In Japan, this activity is also known as a "**table talk role-playing game**" (TTRPG), specifically, because it relies so heavily on the conversation at the table.



ROLES IN THE GAME

The people who play this game will fulfill different roles:

- ◆ **One person will be the Game Master.** Often abbreviated as **GM**, this person's role is that of portraying the game world in which the protagonists of the story act and live. As the protagonists establish goals and make choices, the Game Master will challenge those goals and describe the consequences of their actions.
You can find more about the Game Master's role on page **26**!
- ◆ **Everyone else will be a Player.** Each of the remaining participants – **two to five people** – will create a heroic protagonist and then control that character's actions within the game world. Each protagonist is known as a Player Character, generally abbreviated as **PC**.

Characters that are controlled by the Game Master, on the other hand, are called Non-Player Characters, or **NPCs**.

You can find more about each Player's role on page **24**!

While it is true that the role of the Game Master is to present obstacles and put the Player Characters in situations of risk and danger, their role is **not** that of an adversary, but rather someone who aims to make the protagonists shine throughout the story.

There is no "win condition" in this game: as long as you **create a memorable story and enjoy each other's company**, you're all winning.

*This is a tale of heroes and darkness.
Of great hope... and even greater sacrifice.*



THE BASICS OF PLAY

In the conversation, Players describe their characters' actions and choices:

"Isabelle raises her shield and guards your back!"

"I step forward and speak to the queen!"

"I run after the thief! Where did he go?"

Similarly, the Game Master describes what happens in the world and also portrays the actions of every creature and character around the protagonists:

"The village looks calm, its white windmills turning lazily under the sun."

"The king appears tired and struggles to speak, as if not in control of his body."

"The dragon turns his smoldering gaze towards you!"

Together, this is all known as **roleplaying**, and these events will take place in your imagination – a space that is often called "**the fiction**".



THE RULES

This is also a **game**, and that's where the rules come into play: much like in a video game or board game, characters have scores and abilities representing their strengths and weaknesses, and dice rolls will often be used to make a situation's outcome a bit tense and unpredictable.

Unlike video games and board games however, the possibilities of a roleplaying game are **endless**: there is no single approach to a situation and the story will naturally emerge from your interactions and choices at the table.

BUT WHAT IS THIS GAME ABOUT?

There are many roleplaying games in the world, and we play them for different reasons: many make us feel like heroes, some have us embroiled in dark investigations and tragic tales, others will challenge our skills and tactical mindset, and others make us reflect on heavy and important topics.

Fabula Ultima was designed to be a **TTJRP** – a **Table Talk JRPG**, evoking the feel and stories that can typically be found in classic console Japanese roleplaying video games.



HEROIC AND FANTASTIC ACTION

In line with the genre that inspired it, this game doesn't concern itself with realism or verisimilitude – instead, it deliberately embraces a light-hearted, bizarre and "videogamey" feel, both in its tone and in its mechanics.



A GAME OF HEROES AND VILLAINS

This is a game about larger-than-life heroes and tragic antagonists. There is no predetermined plot, scenario, or "adventure" – the heroes' actions, motivations, and objectives will drive the story forward while the Game Master reacts to their choices and places obstacles on their path, often in the form of powerful villains with their own devious agendas, which will change time and time again as the protagonists manage (or fail) to thwart their plans.



HEROIC DESTINY

The heroes of **Fabula Ultima** are destined to accomplish great deeds, and they will only meet their end when the person who plays them deems it appropriate.

That said, the price of defeat will often prove steeper than death – a major part of this game will be discovering how your heroes rise from their failures and learn to work together in order to accomplish what they could never do on their own.

CHALLENGING BATTLES

Combat in **Fabula Ultima** is reminiscent of the console games that inspired it – each character will have a few tricks up their sleeve, and only by properly combining clever tactics and coordinating with your allies will you emerge victorious... especially when fighting against **bosses**!

YOUR WORLD

Fabula Ultima has no default or "canonical" world, and that's on purpose! Your group will collaboratively create a custom world in which your tales will take place.

That said, the world and characters you create must adhere to eight core principles, known as the **Eight Pillars** – which you can find on the next page!

On the other hand, if you're not familiar with the classic tropes of Japanese console roleplaying games, you can find a useful collection of inspirational worlds starting on page 16!

