ASYLUM: An Introduction

Welcome to the Asylum playtest packet. If you’re wondering, “What is Asylum?” then this is exactly what you need to read first. While that simple question gets echoed quite a bit from various characters in our setting, here we’re specifically going to address what you, the readers, need to know.

## What is Asylum?

Asylum is a pen & paper roleplaying game (RPG) set in a fictional world that parallels our own. On the surface, the setting of Asylum is identical to the world you live in, with the same history, nations, and world leaders that you know about. However, in the world of Asylum many creatures of myth and legend are also secretly real. Most of these magical creatures come from strange realms outside of our world. So-called *Outsiders* continue to exist in our modern world by disguising themselves as human beings.

## What is a Roleplaying Game?

Now, let’s take a step back because some of you may not know what a roleplaying game is. Roleplaying games (also known as **RPG**’s) are a hobby where several people get together and pretend to be protagonists in a collective story. RPG’s aren’t like most games in that there aren’t necessarily any predefined objectives. Instead, you invent your own narrative objectives and cooperate and collaborate with your fellow players. The game only ends when the story reaches its conclusion, and no one necessarily wins or loses.

I want to emphasize that last part: **You only “win” at roleplaying when every player is having fun.** Try to make sure your fun doesn’t interfere with anyone else’s and play together so that the story is as exciting and interesting as possible for everyone involved.

## Roleplaying in Asylum

Before you can play Asylum first you need a group of people who will play the cast characters. Theoretically this group can be any size, but we strongly recommend between 3 and 7 people when playing Asylum. Generally, more people make the game more fun, but at a certain point you have can have too many characters in your story and too many people talking in the conversation.

## The Narrator

Like many roleplaying games, Asylum requires one player to serve as a sort of referee and director for the story, called the **Narrator**. (Other games frequently call this role the game master or GM.) The Narrator is probably the most important and demanding role to play in Asylum because Narrators help make the story happen and brings the setting to life. As the Narrator you decide how the players’ decisions shape the story. You also get to roleplay the entire supporting cast of allies, bystanders, rivals and villains. The most important part of being a Narrator is crafting conflicts and directing scenes that challenge and engage the players. A good Narrator relies on both spontaneous creativity and careful planning.

The Narrator role isn’t necessarily for everyone, but some people are naturally attracted to it and find it more rewarding than the standard player role. Don’t worry; this playtest packet includes an introductory story with several prewritten scenes and challenges to get you started. The final product will include an extensive Narrator’s Guide with plenty of tips and guidelines for both first-time and experienced Narrators.

## Player Characters

The rest of the players will take the roles of characters important to the story. The setting and system of Asylum is designed for urban fantasy and hard-boiled action, but it’s versatile and appropriate for a wide range of different stories.

When you’re playing a roleplaying game for the first time it’s not a bad idea to roleplay with a pre-generated character. That way your character is already built according to the rules and game scenario in mind. For that purpose, this playtest provides several pre-generated characters for you to choose from.

Asylum is probably at its most rewarding when you feel a strong connection with your character. While it’s possible to feel that with a pre-generated character, most players prefer to eventually generate their own. So once you’re comfortable with the rules and setting, feel free to jump right into **Character Creation**.

Player characters can be either supernatural Outsiders or human *Insiders*. Regardless, all of the player characters in Asylum are assumed to be “Contractors.” This use of the term contractor is actually a double-entendre because not only is their loyalty is malleable, so are their abilities thanks to use of magical pacts called contracts.

To learn more about these concepts go take a look at our next chapter about the Asylum Setting.