

HEROIC PROPERTIES

AN M&M SUPERLINK SERIES CONCEPT

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For decades, superheroes have been the stuff of four-color comic strips, existing in their two-dimensional world on paper and on television, movie, and computer screens, as well as in our imaginations. But what if they didn't *always* exist there? What if, in fact, they used to exist out here, in what we call "reality" and their two-dimensional existence was a form of imprisonment? More importantly, what if they managed to get free again...?

THE HIGH CONCEPT

Heroic Properties is a "series-in-brief" for *M&M Superlink*. It concerns a world very much like our own, but about to change. Comic book characters on this world were in fact real people, trapped in fiction by an arch-villain whose plans succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. The power of the imagination allows the imprisoned essences of a super-heroic world to escape, but the newly reincarnated characters have to deal with not only the foe who imprisoned them and their old adversaries returned but also with a world that has largely forgotten their values and considers them "intellectual properties" to be bought and sold.

THEMES

The themes of *Heroic Properties* are heroism, the power of imagination and belief, and the cooperation, particularly when it comes to creative and social endeavors. Some of it is looking at the idea of communities (like Open Design) versus top-down authorities.

SERIES OVERVIEW

The ownership of certain comic book properties having passed into the public domain, an effort has been made to revive them as a creative fan project. It has taken off and reaches a kind of pinnacle at a major urban comic book convention. What follows is entirely unexpected: a release of energy, the very heroic archetypes and essences of a world contained in those comic books and their characters. Attendees at the con—and in the city nearby—are infused with them. The four-color world is back, and how!

Adjusting to their new lives as superhumans, the player characters encounter others similarly empowered. They also begin to learn more about the revival of the Heroic Properties and the failed effort to keep them forgotten. It was more than just a legal battle over IPs, it was part of a supervillain's scheme. Trouble is, the villain is wealthy, respected, and connected, and has little trouble convincing the authorities that the Heroic Properties are a threat that must be contained and eliminated.

The heroes need to make a choice: do they want to try and put the genie back into the bottle (meaning they'll have to give up their own powers, and perhaps even lives) or do they want to fight to keep the wonders that have been released free? Perhaps the series splits into two sides that can be played equally, depending on which one the players favor.

The culmination of the series is in the decision: do the Heroic Properties remain incarnated in the world, or are they banished back to where they have been imprisoned for all these years? There is the potential for a lot of twists along the way, and the players should get to make the call in the end.

CONCEPTS

Although *Heroic Properties* has a lot of four-color superhero elements to it, it is also a “people with powers in the real world” series, an overlay of the comics world-that-was with the mundane world that took its place. There are lots of intersections to explore in the context of the game, both for player characters and NPCs, such as:

- ★ The combination of archetype and the person invested with it. The Properties don't all spring back to life just as they were; their essence is infused with different people. Sometimes there's a real sympatico vibe, sometimes it is a villain connected to a decent person, or a criminal or psychopath possessed of a formerly heroic archetype. Which has the greater influence?
- ★ The safety and security versus principle aspect can play out like Marvel's *Civil War* storyline with both heroes and villains taking sides, and often thrown together working for common goals.
- ★ There's a “reality archeology” aspect: the restored Properties gain in power and stability as they reestablish their stories in the world. That may mean finding lost friends and loved ones (or representations of them), performing important deeds, and a lot of the elements you find in a “reboot” of a property in modern media that re-casts a familiar character in a new place, time, or role (*cf.* Marvel's *Ultimate* line, DC's *All-Star* comics and various new universes).
- ★ If we really want to play around with it, the series could involve existing public domain comic book characters as the Properties, such as those listed on the Public Domain Superheroes wiki (http://pdsh.wikia.com/wiki/Public_Domain_Super_Heroes). The recent *Project Superpowers* is one interpretation of some of those characters.
- ★ Similarly, patrons could be involved in defining what the original Heroic Properties were like, as well as their new incarnations, contributing to a conceptual shared universe that reflects the concepts of the series.