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INTRODUCTION

What You Will Need to Use This Book

Strange Magic is not a stand-alone RPG. It's a 2nd Edition M&M Superlink scenario. That means you'll need a copy of the core M&M rulebook to play it. You won't need anything else apart from some twenty-sided dice, some friends and some paper (although some pizza might also be a wise investment, as would some drinks). You aren't going to have to buy any other supplements or campaign settings to make use of this book—we wouldn't rip you off that way. This is just the basic M&M ruleset, with no extras or add-ons. Go spend the money we've saved on some more snacks for your players. They look hungry.

New Powers, Feats and Skills

We don't have any. Just as we don't want you to have to buy anything but the core rules to use this book, we don't want you to have to buy this one in order to make use of something else we publish down the line. Nor do we want to clutter up your game with a bunch of extra rules—one more thing for the "rules lawyers" in your gaming group to try and mess you about with. Furthermore, while everyone knows that the annoying problem of "rules creep" is all but inevitable with a game as popular as the M&M system, we don't want to contribute to it ourselves. So, you won't find any new rules of any kind in this volume.

The Campaign Setting

We'd like to think of this adventure as being set in your own campaign world instead of ours. In order to make it as easy as possible to incorporate into your campaign, we've tried our best to keep the locations as generic as possible. We name a number of locations—a city park, a jewelry store, a museum, to name a few, but we leave the actual locations intentionally vague so that

you can migrate them over to your own setting. This could be Pittsburgh or Hong Kong or the futuristic wonder-city of Ultropolis.

Which Age is This?

Grim in some respects, campy in others, Strange Magic doesn't easily fit into categories like "Silver Age," "Iron Age" etc. It has a lot of elements of supernatural horror and the potential for a lot of (largely offscreen) civilian casualties, but its tone is lighthearted and its protagonists are never in any real moral doubt. Oddly, this makes it closest to the innocently vicious stories of the pre-comics-code Golden Age in tone, even though the setting is the present day. Not that there's any reason why this adventure couldn't be set in the 1930s. There is very little to tie it to any particular epoch—neither cell phones nor the internet nor any of the other trappings of the 21st Century appear in the plot.

Recommended PL

Strange Magic was designed for a "typical" party of superheroic adventurers. It works best with a group of 4-5 PL 10 PCs. We also have an appendix (Appendix B, which starts on Page 128) full of backup characters that you can use to beef up the ranks of the opposition or to replace NPCs who get killed, incapacitated or captured by the PCs.

A Few Words About Tone

While this is a supernatural adventure, with terrible, bloodthirsty villains and a heavy dose of horror, it's actually pretty lighthearted. The PCs will face no agonizing moral decisions or tortured ambiguities here. It is, instead, a simple tale about good guys beating up bad guys and foiling their sinister schemes. We've just dressed it up in horror comics clothes. The villains



may be disturbing, but the plot isn't. Our aim here was to make it useful to the broadest possible range of GMs and players.

It's easy to make it darker without changing the story. We've included a lot of scenes with large numbers of innocent bystanders, so just let the villains start piling on the collateral damage, mowing down civilians like wheat in a field. Then make sure that the relative or spouse of at least one dead civilian shows up later and demands to know why the heroes didn't save them.

Because the adventure can be just about as dark or as "four color" as you like, the GM should probably sit down and make a conscious decision before starting the game about just how dark they want the tone to be. Bear in mind that if the PCs see the villains routinely use lethal force, they're probably going to get a lot more casual about taking human life themselves, and are much more likely to start killing the villains rather than trying to take them prisoner, which could effectively take them out of action in the later scenarios. And we only have a limited number of replacements in Appendix B.

Powers That Could Mess it all Up

Supernatural scenarios like this one tend to attract supernatural player characters—and this is precisely the type of PC who is likely to have problematic superpowers. High-level telepaths, guys who can predict the future or ask a crystal ball to tell them what's really going on here. Characters like that can seriously disrupt adventures that are built around, for example, mysteries. With this in mind, we have done our best to make Strange Magic telepathy-proof.

Although the PCs won't initially understand the opposition's objectives, it's not a mystery and reading an opponent's mind won't send the plot off its rails. Figuring out where the Goth Squad intends to strike next will actually help the plot along instead of hindering it, and the big villain is a strong

enough telepath himself that turning his minions against him with Mind Control is likely to be ineffective.

The only superpower you really might want to watch out for is projective teleportation. A certain amount of the plot hinges on a small but powerful artifact called the Heart of Set. If a PC has the ability to teleport it into his or her grasp, things could get screwy. If you have a PC like that in the group, give Mr. Mandrake the same ability. Then if someone teleports it away from him, he can take it back. Pencil it onto his character sheet and try not to look like you're fudging.

A Summary of the Adventure

Life is dull for the diabolical Mr. Mandrake. Being an evil sorcerer hasn't cured his ennui, and neither has getting away with all sorts of unspeakable crimes. It's too easy. Then he hears about an ancient artifact called the Heart of Set, a thing of fiendish, wondrous power that could give him the strength of a god and an army of zombie horrors to command. He supposes that would be something, at least, and sets out to acquire it.

Mr. Mandrake hires a bunch of gun-toting henchmen, assembles a team of supernatural supervillains and starts terrorizing the city in an effort to conceal his real objective—stealing the Heart of Set when it goes on display at the museum. He'll also need some other gems to complete the ritual and so he has been having his henchmen rob jewelry stores.

The ritual that he needs to perform in order to gain the Heart of Set's power requires a human sacrifice, and it has to be someone the caster either loves or hates. No one he loves is still alive, so he's going to snatch his old nemesis, occult investigator Gavin Kolchack and feed his soul to the powers of darkness. Can our heroes foil this evil plot?