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Issue #27 (February 2005)



# Miniature HERO: Terrain

by Bill Keyes

## Using Miniatures in a Superhero RPG, Part Three

“The bank alarm is clanging loudly. Distantly, you hear sirens approaching, but you know the cops will never get here in time. Just then, the bank’s door bursts off its hinges and Armadillo stomps out. ‘So long, suckers!’ he laughs, then turns and spots you. He seems surprised to see you here. Actions?”

“What’s the scene on the street look like?”

“You’re standing on the sidewalk in front of Rosie’s Diner. There are a few cars parked next to Rosie’s, which sits on the corner across from First National Bank. Across the street, there’s an auto parts shop, and across from that is a messenger service. Traffic is starting to pick up prior to the lunch-hour rush. There were a few civilians on the sidewalk, but they’re all running away from the bank.”

“Great! Bantamweight was never one for subtlety, so he’ll pick up a nearby car and hurl it at Armadillo.”

“There aren’t any cars parked next to you.”

“But you just said there’s a few cars parked next to Rosie’s!”

“They’re around the corner from where you’re standing, in a small parking area.”

“Sigh. Well, I guess I’ll run across the street and punch him, then.”

### ADVANCED BATTLEFIELD TECHNIQUES: USING TERRAIN

What’s a great way to set a vivid scene that’s easy for everyone at the gaming table to envision and at the same time liven up your combats? How do you explain a complex scenario so your players can fully immerse themselves in the game and not forget all the rich details you’ve added? What’s the perfect method of avoiding arguments about which character is standing near what piece of landscape?

Whether you use miniatures, paperboard counters, or even dice or coins to represent your heroes, villains, and bystanders, you’ll breath new life into your game when you add a few pieces of terrain to the battlefield! Combats become even more dramatic when your group can visualize not only the positions of their characters and the villains, but also local

features like buildings, trees, fire hydrants, and vehicles. You don’t want to turn your Champions campaign into a wargame, but some simple pieces of terrain make your game really come alive.

Finding good looking terrain is not that hard, and if you’re on a budget, creating your own (or finding some that won’t damage your wallet) is pretty easy, too. There are a lot of companies that make gaming terrain these days, but don’t worry – you don’t need to spend a lot of money to give your players a great looking (as well as a fun to play) battle!

### FROM THE GROUND UP

The first thing you’ll need is someplace to stage your battles. If you play on a table, that’s perfect; otherwise, you’ll need a wide, flat surface that’s large enough to hold a mega-superhero battle. Vinyl battlemats are just the thing for HERO gamers. Using water-soluble overhead-projection pens (do **not** use dry erase markers, grease pencils, or permanent markers, trust me!), you can draw on the vinyl and wipe it off with damp paper towels when the adventure is done. Chessex ([www.chessex.com/mats/Battlemats\\_&Megamats.htm](http://www.chessex.com/mats/Battlemats_&Megamats.htm)) and Crystal Caste ([www.crystalcaste.com](http://www.crystalcaste.com)) make battlemats with 1” and 1.5” hexes (the larger hexes are ideal for HeroClix figures, while the smaller hexes are better for standard 25-30mm miniatures).

A little bit more expensive (and harder to find) are “Skirmish Boards” from DeeMer Games. One-inch hexes are printed on the 20”x20” clear acrylic boards. You can write on them with dry-erase markers, and lay them over colored felt, maps, or sheets of paper with your battle map drawn on them. DeeMer is no longer in business, but you may still be able to find the boards at your local hobby shop, or on eBay.

If you don’t want or need a battlemat, check your local office supply store for an erasable whiteboard. They come in various sizes and shapes, and like the vinyl mats, you can draw all over them (using a dry erase marker) and then erase your marks later.

Another option is to use large sheets of newsprint, available from any office supply store. They are sold in pads of 50-100 sheets (enough for a lot of battles!), and can measure as large as 18”x24”. Crayons and colored pencils work well on newsprint. Be careful if you draw on these with markers, since the ink will bleed through. If you’re using pens, it’s best to lay down 2-3 sheets at a time, unless you don’t mind getting ink on your furniture.

Photography by Bill Keyes

# The Nightwatch

by Matthew Gaul

A small yet popular genre of comics is what I like to call the “Monster Hero” comics. In Monster Hero comics the monster is actually the hero, simply enough. They fight their natural tendencies to prey on humans and use their monstrous powers for good. The best example of these comics would be the incredibly talented Dan Brereton’s *Nocturnals*. There are others though including *Madman*, Marvel’s *Werewolf by Night*, *Blade*, and, the *Man-Thing*, DC’s *Swamp Thing*, *Eerie Comics* of the ’70s, and so on. On television, there was *Angel* and *Forever Knight* – both shows where vampires fought their urge to feed on humans, and instead helped them.

This article introduces the Monster Hero as a subgenre of *Dark Champions*. But first, we have to define the Monster Hero subgenre.

## Monster Hero Elements

The following conventions tend to define the Monster Hero subgenre:

**Monster Subculture:** Like goths, ravers, and gamers; monsters, vampires, and demons have their own subculture. They have their own jargon and fashion. They hang out on the fringes of society where there is safety in numbers. The Monster Subculture sets up neutral ground where creatures that would be shunned, feared, or hunted by normal society can get together and make deals or just relax. The PCs navigate this culture trying to weed out the truly evil and letting the others go about their business. Often instead of a Secret Identity, the fact that the character exists is a secret. This is bought as Social Limitation: *Secret Existence* (Very Frequently, Severe, Not Limiting in Some Cultures). The characters are still accepted in their own subculture (that’s why they must take the Not Limiting in Some Cultures modifier. Not every character in the campaign must take this. Some Monster Heroes explain their differences as some sort of deformity or mutation and are able to function in the normal world leading a double life. These characters may take the normal Secret Identity.

**Normals are Clueless:** Normal human society is not aware of the Monster Subculture. These creatures tend to prey on the homeless and outcasts of society. People that the general public will not miss or even know are missing.

**Work Well as a Team:** Monster Heroes actually work well as a team. Since often they feel themselves as shunned or outcast from normal human society and also since they are the few among the Monster “society” that don’t hunt and kill humans, it’s natural for them to group together.

**Killing Monsters is Okay:** In the Monster Hero campaign, characters surprisingly often have a code against killing with a catch.... They have no problem killing monsters or demons that kill or hunt humans. This is bought as Psychological Limitation: *Code Against Killing Humans* (Common, Total). If the hero finds himself killing a normal human, even one that is hunting him, or a criminal, he feels he has failed. Normal criminals are left to the normal police. This character will use less lethal methods to detour cops and monster hunters that mistakenly hunt him, but have no problem blowing away a demon that feeds on little kids.

**Unreliable Powers:** Though Monster Heroes are powerful, their powers aren’t always reliable. A shapeshifter might only be able to change shape under a full moon or when enraged, precognitive visions are always vague, and so on.

## Monster Hero Campaigns

Monster Heroes ride the borderline between Heroic and Superheroic. Characters can be created as Very Powerful Heroic characters, with 125 Base Points and 125 Character Points from Disadvantages or as Low-Powered Superheroic characters, with 150 Base Points plus 100 Character points from Disadvantages. Monster Heroes normally should not have to use the Normal Characteristic Guidelines and should get Disadvantage points for using them.

For my Nightwatch setting, a hybrid was used to simulate this subgenre. The characters get 125 Base Points and 125 Character Points from Disadvantages, but are allowed to buy superpowers up to 50 Active Points. They did not use the Normal Characteristic Guidelines (though many of their characteristics fell within these guidelines) and they did receive the Disadvantage points for it where appropriate. They may have up to 40 Character Points from any Disadvantage category, and may have up to 60 Character Points from the Psychological Limitations and Distinctive Features categories. (Monster Heroes tend to have more problems than normal heroes.) They get their normal equipment for “free” without using Character Points for it (though the GM may use the Resource Points rules on page 150 of the *Dark Champions* book to keep players from abusing this rule if using these guidelines). If the character has a mystical item, or some piece of equipment that’s unique or unusually powerful, they have to pay Character Points for it.