

# The Ultimate Metamorph

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## The Review:

*Reviewed By Gordon Feiner*

The Upside:

The Ultimate Metamorph is the fifth Ultimate Series book from Hero Games. This time around we get extensive coverage in one of the more bizarre archetypes, the metamorph or Shapeshifter character.

Chapter One - Metamorph Characters. The book opens with a breakdown major Metamorph character types. Though tout the book it references the five main types it has classified. They are Internal, Cosmetic, Minor, Major and Complete Metamorphs. There is also a discussion on deciding what type of Metamorph you want to play, going over various Backgrounds, Personalities and Archetypes to fit together to create the type of Metamorph you want. Or, how to mix and match the major archetypes.

The first part of the Chapter does an excellent job of covering the various kinds of Metamorphs that exist. From those who can change only the most superficial of aspects to those that can assume any shape your imagination can come up with, including shapeshifters who steal others powers.

The second part of the chapter covers how the various aspects of the Hero System interact with the Metamorph Archetype. Covering various uses for Skills, Talents, Perks and Powers. The Powers section is of the most interest as it expands the various Body Affecting Powers.

Density Increase has three tables worth noting. First is a larger standard table of effects, second is an expanded table breaking the Power down into three point increments, last is a Personal Gravity table, which goes into how much gravity a character with a large number of points in Density Increase. The discussion on both making the Power more granular and on gravity increase the utility and detail of the Power. Desolidification has an alternate version presented, which breaks he power down into increments instead of all or nothing. Duplication gets an expanded discussion on using this particular power, along with a short piece on using it for Cloning effects. Extra Limbs has an alternate version presented, using the "doubling rule" present in much of the rest of the system instead of the standard method of using Extra Limbs. Growth has a larger table for standard growth, as well as an expanded table breaking the power down into five point increments for more granularity in the power. Multiform has a longer discussion on how to use the power, including using it for 'steal power' type characters and an expanded Personality Loss matrix. Shape Shift gets a much needed expanded explanation as well as examples of how various aspects of it work. If the Fifth Edition version of the power is more complicated than you need an alternate Shape Shift is presented that simplifies it greatly. Shrinking, like growth, has an expanded table and a table that breaks the power down into five point increments. Stretching is the only power that doesn't come with alternate or extra information beyond a more detailed description.

Several new and alternate powers are presented. First is Alter Density, which combines Density Increase and the new Alternate Desolidification Powers into one unified Power. Alter Size combines Growth and Shrinking into a unified Power and has some information to balance out the benefits and limitations of both powers. Combining is the only completely new Power, giving various options to create characters who combine into one larger or more powerful character. Two of the options involve using existing Powers in new ways, the third option is using a new concept called Pool Resources. The two optional variant powers are good if you want to unify things. The Combining Optional Power is the most interesting addition in the Chapter, adding several options and new dimensions to the system.

Also in this section, specifically in Density Increase, Growth, and Shrinking are the rules for creating permanently Dense, Large and Small characters respectively. These rules allow for a wider range of options on how you can create characters who a permanently different from the base assumption the systems starts with.

The last part of the Chapter covers Metamorphic Creation, going over the major types presented at the beginning of the Chapter again, this time with more detail discussions and examples of kinds of Metamorphs for each of the five types.

Chapter Two - Metamorphic Powers. This is the largest chapter in the book, and is a gathering of two hundred and eighty-nine Power write-ups. While there is some overlap with other books containing write-ups, most of these powers, and variations, are either updated or completely new. The chapter is split into twelve main Power Types.

Animal Powers is first, with forty-six animal related write-ups. Starting with some general Powers that animals from many Families might have. There are powers specific to Aquatic animals, Avians, Insects, Mammals, and Reptiles.

Body Control Powers has forty-four write-ups pertaining to controlling your body, or someone elses body (biomanipulation Powers). This section is split in Offensive, Defensive, Movement, Sensory and Miscellaneous Body Control Powers. Along with Body Control are Body Transform Powers, this is section contains nineteen write-ups. Body Transform powers center around creating a character whose body is made up of some substance such as a Body Of Acid or Body Of Fire. Many of these write-ups are actually groups of Powers that work together to achieve the effect.

Density Increase Powers is seven write-ups centered around increasing either tour density, or something elses density.

Duplication Powers is fourteen write-ups using duplication as a special effect as well as the basic Power.

Hyper-Characteristics is twelve write-ups on ways to use or simulate the Characteristics as Powers. The section is mostly centered on various Comeliness Powers. Most of the other Characteristics have their own Ultimate books all to themselves.

Hypersenses is twenty-one write-ups on altering, affecting or enhancing the senses.

Intangibility is twelve write-ups centered around being intangible or lighter than air.

Shape Alteration Powers is thirty write-ups centered around the classic metamorph special effect of altering ones body shape to various forms, either completely or partially. This section also works well in conjunction with many other sections in this chapter (Animal and Body Control Powers most especially). Aside from the standard Offensive, Defensive, Movement, Sensory, and Miscellaneous

sub-categories there is one dedicated to just Skin Alteration powers.

Size Alteration is thirty one write-ups split into two sections, Growth Powers and Shrinking Powers. Each section is split into Offensive, Defensive, Movement, Sensory and Miscellaneous Powers.

Stretching Powers is thirty-five write-ups focused on stretching, twisting and otherwise deforming your body.

Miscellaneous Powers is seventeen write-ups that don't fit into the above Special Effects. A few examples are Berserk Fury, Bodyjacking, Mimicry Powers, Replicative Cloning, Transference Touch, Mind Transferring (for those campaigns with mad scientists) and Spirit Channeling.

Most of the write-ups come with suggestions on variants, alterations, strong and weaker versions. This creates a large pool of Power write-ups to work with when creating Metamorph characters, all in one spot.

Chapter Three - Metamorphs Genre By Genre. This Chapter presents thirteen characters from nine genre's as examples to work from. Champions gets three characters; Eclipse (a power stealer), Jaguar (an animal Shapeshifter), and Morph (a true Metamorph). Cyber Hero has two examples; John Doe 4.0 (an Internal Metamorph able to change personalities), and Dis Armament (a classic Cybermorph able to switch out cybernetic arms). Dark Champions has one example of a Metamorph, another Internal type, Dr. Nathan Sumbro (a Jeckyl/Hyde type who has a potion that brings out his inner demon). Fantasy Hero has two examples; Alvaran Nineforms (a ranger able to take the forms of eight animals), and Hrolf Kellingson (a skinchanger for a Tuala Morn campaign). Horror Hero has one example; Nazeron Johnson (a man able to switch souls with people). Ninja Hero also has only one example; Bishamon (an assassin able to enhance his body through mystic powers and training). Pulp Hero has one example; The Ghoul (a man able to alter his facial appearance). Star Hero has one example; Prana Monk (an order of monks able to enhance their bodies abilities after years of training). Finally, Western Hero has one example; Sun Eagle (a Native America Shaman able to totem animals), the Western Hero example uses magic from Fantasy Grimoire II, using that magic system.

The characters are good examples of various ways to create Metamorphs in a variety of genre's and styles.

Chapter Four - Ten Thousand Forms: Metamorphic Campaigning. The last chapter is split into four main sections. First is Combat And Adventuring, which gives guidelines for dealing with Metamorphs. Opening with some thought on perceiving metamorphs, when it's not completely obvious what they are. It also goes into changing Speed in combat which is most likely to happen with this character type and other various effects likely to come up.

Part Two is the Size Dimensions. This part goes into great detail of the Macroverse and Microverse and dealing with exceptionally large and exceptionally small characters. Treating them as either so far in one direction of size that they can't even effect the normal world, to dealing with what happens when they can affect the normal world with their powers. This section is indispensable when it comes to dealing with characters of widely varied sizes.

Part Three is a Metamorphic Bestiary, providing nine monster and creature write-ups: A Berserker character, the Brollachan (a creature from Scottish legend able to almost any shape), Kitsune (shapechanging fox spirits of Chinese and Japanese legend), Lycanthropes (a wererat, wereshark and werewolf are presented), Masquer (a classic fantasy doppelganger creature), Nanometal Robot (a liquid metal machine), and Tanuki (a mischievous shapechanging dog from Japanese legend). The last page is a list and description of various shape-shifters from around the world, while no write-ups are

provided the descriptions are good enough that you can easily create them with the Powers in the book, or by altering a write-up already presented.

The last section is Metamorph Gadgets, eighteen more write-ups of gadgets, potions and items for various genres. Things like Potions Of Invisibility, Stealth Suits and Shrink Rays.

The bibliography is complete, providing a large amount of source material to turn to for ideas, concepts and stories centered around metamorphs.

#### The Downside:

It would have been nice to see some information on setting up Metamorph specific campaigns. Creating storylines, dealing with complications and how to work with an Archetype that can almost literally become anything needed from moment to moment.

One bit that's an oddity and not so much a downside is the Metamorphic Gadgets being at the end of Chapter Four. It would have made more sense to place them with the rest of the write-ups in Chapter two.

#### The Otherside:

The first part of Chapter One is useful for just about anyone wanting to play a shapeshifter character. The Power write-ups themselves would need conversion if you want to use them for another system, but the descriptions are enough to get you in the right direction even without converting them.

Overall the book does an excellent job of helping players create, play and deal with the Metamorph Archetype, in fact it's almost indispensable to the Metamorph Player. I would have liked to see a little more GM Support in dealing with this particular character type, but it does an admirable job of dealing with the more complicating interactions you're likely to encounter, especially with the various Body Affecting Powers in the Hero System.

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