



The Lieutenant and the Emblazoned Champion

Two Archetypes for the *Unknown Armies* RPG

by Dylan Craig

The Lieutenant

Il duce's most trusted goodfella. The ace's wingman. The warrior's shield-bearer. Who is that figure standing alongside every holder of power? Why, it's the Lieutenant. Loyal, intelligent, and reliable, the Lieutenant is an asset on all counts to the one lucky enough to command their services. But one important feature sets the Lieutenant apart from other, similar, Archetypes: ambition. history is full of aspiring figures who turned on their masters; Lieutenants whose careers begin to outshine their boss' reign might just turn out to be the wielders of the knife which ends it.

In game terms, the Lieutenant cannot exist alone; she must be an associate of an avatar of another Archetype. A Lieutenant may only associate with one avatar at a time, although if this person dies or disappears, the Lieutenant is free to pick another avatar to work alongside -- irrespective of which Archetype that avatar embodies. For instance, a Lieutenant working alongside an avatar of the Masterless Man could transfer her allegiances to another Masterless Man, an avatar of the Necessary Servant, or any other avatar she felt capable of serving, once her original patron was out of the picture. Any restrictions on avatar choice should be as a result of the Lieutenant's personality; hence, a Lieutenant with a basically philanthropic outlook would have a hard time justifying an allegiance to a Dark Stalker, and would no doubt have to deal with the Self checks that would result, but there's nothing in the Lieutenant avatar itself to prevent it.

When chosen, a patron must have an avatar skill at least 10 points higher than her associate's Avatar: The Lieutenant skill. The process of offering service is outlined below. If the patron accepts, then from that point on, every point that the patron gains in their avatar skill is mirrored by a corresponding increase in their Lieutenant's avatar skill. In addition, the Lieutenant can draw on the patron's channels as if they were her own. The Lieutenant is subject to all the constraints, taboos, and benefits of their patron's Archetype as well as their own, and uses their Avatar: The Lieutenant skill as if it were an avatar skill of the same type as their patron's. If a patron loses points in her skill, the Lieutenant's skill doesn't drop; similarly, if the Lieutenant's behavior conflicts with her assumed Archetype, the patron's avatar skill doesn't suffer. The only direct relationship is the increase detailed above. The only time that a Lieutenant can operate against constraints of her assumed Archetype with impunity is when it comes to their role as an assistant; Lieutenants never lose avatar points for obeying orders, even if they are Lieutenants of a free-willed Archetype's avatar.

All fine and well. The complication occurs when, or if, the Lieutenant's avatar skill ever reaches a point where it is within ten points of her patron's. At this point, the Lieutenant must choose between remaining loyal, in which case her avatar skill drops to 10 points below their patron's again, or deposing, killing, or otherwise permanently removing their patron from the equation, in which case she assumes her patron's avatar skill and leaves the path of the Lieutenant forever. Note that Lieutenants inherit their patron's avatar skill level even if it was lower than their own at the

point of betrayal. On the positive side, a Lieutenant is always aware of the relative avatar skill levels of herself and her patron; Lieutenants may limit their own skill increases so that the 10% cap is maintained, "out of respect to the boss," although they are powerless to prevent a drop in their patron's avatar skill from breaking this barrier.

A Lieutenant who serves a Godwalker has it somewhat easier. She don't have to worry about the 10% cap anymore, and if her patron ever achieves ascension, and her own Avatar: The Lieutenant skill exceeds 91%, she ascends to the Clergy alongside them, as the new Archetype of the Lieutenant. The character of the Archetype is set by the overall tone of the term of service of the avatar who last ascended to the role. Hence, a Lieutenant whose style of assistance involved slavish obedience to her patron would make for a very different Archetype to one who was treated as an equal.

Taboos: The Lieutenant cannot act against her patron's interests. All orders must be obeyed to the letter; however, unless directly specified, the Lieutenant may decide for herself how exactly to achieve a goal set by their patron. If a Lieutenant is ever ordered to do something in a manner which would break the taboos of their patron's Archetype, and loses points in her own avatar skill as a result, their patron loses twice as many points for giving the order. Any direct confrontation of the patron (such as an attack) immediately causes the Lieutenant's avatar skill to drop to zero.

Symbols: The tall candle, the shield, the practice of carrying another's weapons, and the forearm-grip handshake are all symbols of the close bond formed between a Lieutenant and her patron, as is a position on someone's right hand.

Significant Avatars in history: Macbeth provides one of the most well-known examples of the double-sided power of the Lieutenant, a man whose progress along the path of the Archetype of the True King (and a little help from the witches) led him to murder King Duncan and take his place, with disastrous results when he proved incapable of sustaining the demands of the role.

Channels

1-50%: A Lieutenant gains the ability to impress a potential patron with her competence. Any roll to convince someone to take on the Lieutenant's services may be flip-flopped; if the roll could already be flip-flopped as the result of some other effect, then the roll can be made on three dice instead of two, and the best possible result assembled from the result. Furthermore, the patron may not dismiss or be coerced into dismissing the Lieutenant unless they are proved disloyal (which in turn, could only happen if the Lieutenant had acted against her own avatar and lost points as a result).

51%-70%: A Lieutenant always knows when her patron wishes her presence, and gets a vague idea of their location (down to a few square miles) and basic mood when such a summons is issued.

71%-90%: A Lieutenant may reroll any one skill check, and take the best result, per mission in the pursuit of a direct order issued by her patron. This ability can be held in reserve until it is needed, but cannot be used more than once in a day.

91%+: As well as drawing on her patron's channels, a Lieutenant with this level of power may also draw on their skills. Any time that a Lieutenant fails a skill roll where her patron would have succeeded, she may immediately reroll the dice. If the result falls between her skill level and her patron's again, it is counted as a success.

Example: Sharon is an avatar of the Lieutenant whose patron, Grizzled Luiz, is an avatar of the Executioner. When their association begins, Sharon has an Avatar: The Lieutenant skill of 31%, and Luiz has an Avatar: The Executioner skill of 61%. As a result of their association, Sharon is able to draw on the first channel of the Executioner Archetype, and flip-flop her combat rolls

against any target who has been named by a figure of authority for Luiz (Luiz doesn't get to nominate the targets himself; Sharon has to accept the limitations of his Archetype in this regard). After their first successful joint hit, Luiz' Avatar: The Executioner skill rises by 2%, to 63%. This results in a corresponding increase of 2% for Sharon, on top of any Experience Points she wants to spend. Sharon won't be able to channel the second level powers of the Executioner (the death-head stare) until her Avatar: The Lieutenant skill reaches 51%, even though Luiz can. A few dozen hits later, Luiz starts to act against his type, and his Avatar: The Executioner skill drops from 81% to 75%. This puts it only 4% away from Sharon's Avatar: The Lieutenant skill of 71%. Sharon now faces a tricky decision: either she accepts a drop in skill level to 65%, and lose access her 71%-90% channels, or she cooks up a plan to whack Luiz and take over his Avatar: The Executioner skill of 75%.

The Emblazoned Champion

Since the earliest times, warriors and crusaders have buckled on some significant piece of uniform, equipment, or ornamentation before going into battle. Thus inspired and protected, some went on to achieve superhuman successes -- whether against mundane foes or the minions of an opposing champion. This power is still available to those who would walk the path of the Emblazoned Champion today, although the tabard and silk ribbon have been exchanged for tights and a mask, and the awed crowds of unwashed serfs now crowd the signing tables at comics conventions instead of lining the muddy fields of honor.

Anyone who follows a strict code of behavior and wears an identifying uniform while doing so may channel the power of this Avatar. However, if the uniform itself is fairly common (such as a police officer or fireman's uniform), it must include some distinctive feature which sets the wearer aside from others who wear the same uniform. This item is usually somewhat incongruous; masks are powerful items because they single out their wearer while simultaneously rendering them anonymous. Other appropriate items would be armbands, hoods, facial markings, piercings, or tattoos, unusual equipment ("A bellhop with a sword?"), and so on. If the costume itself is fantastical, these restrictions do not apply, as the wearer is sufficiently distinctive without requiring additional symbols of identification. Whatever the case, those who channel this Avatar may only do so while in costume or bearing (wielding, displaying) their totemic identifiers. At all other times, the powers bestowed by their Avatar channels are closed to them, although they still register as an Avatar for the purposes of astral sight or scrying, and still gain any passive or peripheral benefits of such status.

The second vital quantity for Avatars of this Archetype is a Code. A Code must be somehow based on a character's obsessions to achieve or allow the degree of devotion that Emblazoned Champions must represent. A Code might take the form of a long-term goal ("Bring chaos to the East Side"), required responses to certain phenomena ("Apprehend criminals whenever they are encountered"), abstract constructions ("Be just in all that you do"), or (as is usual) a mixture of these types. An Avatar's Code may grow in complexity as she increases in power, but it may never be disobeyed while in uniform. Just as an Emblazoned Champion gains none of their powers when "off duty," she suffers none of the burdens of their role. Disobedience to the Code renders a Champion powerless in a similar way to an adept who breaks a magickal taboo; the effect can be reversed, but only by devoting effort to their Code and to ritual actions designed to regenerate their power.

In fact, the similarity between adepts and Champions goes a step further. Because the Archetype demands and rewards action rather than simple obeisance from those who channel it, its Avatars must accumulate and spend "charges" much as their magickal counterparts do. These charges are also divided into minor, significant, and major charges. Some of the powers granted by a Champion's channels (which are called focused powers) require the expenditure of charges; others (which are called intrinsic powers) simply require that the Avatar possess one or more charges of a certain level, and operate more or less permanently. All powers are considered to be focused, unless they are upgraded to intrinsic status, as detailed below.

Avatars of the Emblazoned Champion who are also adepts can use the charges gained through these action to fuel their spells, but may not use magickal charges to fuel their Avatar powers. The activities which accumulate these charges are the same for all Champions, and are as follows:

Minor Charge: Further the standing of your Code in society. Lawful Champions might take steps to apprehend a fugitive or do a good deed; malicious Champions might spend an evening stalking a victim, perform a criminal act, or place another's life in jeopardy.

Significant Charge: As above, but the action must be opposed by opponents who do not subscribe to your Code. These opponents must outnumber you and any allies you have; the charge is only gained if you overcome their resistance and succeed in your intentions.

Major Charge: As above, except that the opponents you and any allies face must include another Avatar of the Emblazoned Champion who follows a different Code to you, and you must overcome this person single-handed, without any assistance.

Symbols: Surcoats, heraldic devices, masks, titles of rank (such as 'Captain' or 'Doctor'), and bright colors are all symbols of the Emblazoned Hero.

Taboos: While Emblazoned Champions do not lose charges for disobedience to their Code while out of costume, periods of inactivity weaken their connection to the Archetype. An Avatar who spends more than a few days out of costume will lose points in his Avatar skill. If this causes them to lose access to a particular channel, they cannot use any of the powers that they were granted through that channel until they regain access to that channel. In this case, they also lose any charges that they no longer have powers of the appropriate level to use.

Suspected Avatars in History: Roland ("Orlando Furioso" -- Roland the Furious), who held the pass at Roncesvalles against the Moorish armies; Sergeant Alvin York, who performed a similar (and more successful) defense against the Germans in World War 2, and several other war heroes are the most clear candidates for being Avatars of the Emblazoned Hero.

Channels

1%-50%: Select 1 minor power from the list below. This power may not be made intrinsic, and can only be used by spending charges in the normal way.

51%-70%: Select 1 significant power from the list below, or gain a new minor power and upgrade an existing minor power.

71%-90%: Select 2 new significant powers, or two upgrades to your existing powers. Also, nominate a particular group, nation, or organization as enemies; you gain an extra significant charge whenever you defeat representatives of this group in pursuit of the goals of your Code.

91%+: As above, but all damage inflicted on you by members of this group is reduced by one grade; firearm-type attacks are thus treated as melee-type attacks, and melee-type attacks never cause more than 1 point of damage. In addition, every time you gain a charge through furthering the standing of your Code, you gain another charge of the next lowest grade for free.

Powers

A list of the most well-known powers available to Emblazoned Heroes is detailed below. GMs and players are likely to want to expand this list; inspiration is as close as the nearest copy of a superhero RPG. It is crucial to remember, though, that this is, after all, an *Unknown Armies* game; because avatars of this Archetype are drawn from people who were dressing up in superhero costumes and following bizarre codes before they started to manifest any powers, the PCs are as

likely to meet Captain Golden Arches and her sidekick, Pederast Man, as they are to encounter a more standard lycra-tights-do-gooder.

Energy Projection (minor): Choose an energy form (heat, cold, telekinesis). Maximum range of 15 meters; if used offensively, does damage like a melee attack. Can also be used to levitate light objects (less than 10 kilograms). Manipulation or delicate work is handled using your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill or some other appropriate skill (such as Juggling or Welding), whichever is higher. Energy blasts can only be dodged if the target's Dodge skill is higher than your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill, and even then only on a successful Dodge roll.

Gadgeteer (minor): You may create minor gizmos using the Mechanomancy rules as a template, rolling on your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill to determine success. If you already have an appropriate skill for building such items, you may flip-flop it every time your Gadgeteer power is activated. Alternately, if you are already a Mechanomancer or have the ability to flip-flop gadget-building rolls, you can now roll three dice for such tasks, and put together the best result possible whenever this power is in effect.

Toughness (minor): Every time you activate your Toughness power, you gain 10 Wound Points, which last ten minutes. At the end of the ten minutes, you lose these points, so if a fight leaves you badly injured, it would be a good idea to seek medical help before the reserves of endurance provided by this power run out, leaving you dead on your feet.

Leap (minor): You gain the ability to leap massive distances. Every time this power is activated, make a Body roll. If successful, you travel ten meters, plus a number of meters equal to the sum of the dice. If you fail, you only travel as many meters as the lower of the two dice. In either case, halve the distance if you are jumping straight up or didn't take a run-up. In-flight acrobatics and treacherous landings are handled using your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill or an appropriate Speed skill (such as General Athletics), whichever is higher.

Enhanced Skill (minor): Every time this power is triggered, you gain a +10 shift to all rolls on the Skill you nominated when you chose this power. The bonuses are cumulative, and last one minute.

Flight (significant): Allows speeds of up to 100 kph, plus your Speed attribute. Aerial maneuvers are handled using your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill or some other appropriate skill (such as Acrobatics), whichever is higher. You can fly for as many minutes as your Body attribute before having to touch down and spend another charge.

Mind Control (significant): Handle using the rules for similar adept spells; generally, you have to roll higher than your target's Mind (or Soul) and under your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill (or another appropriate skill such as Hypnosis, whichever is higher) in order to succeed, with shifts of -10, -20, and -30 for trying to simultaneously affect successively larger groups of people.

Invulnerability (significant): Like Toughness, Invulnerability grants a reserve of Wound Points, but these are treated as a "buffer," and don't disappear after ten minutes. Also, each use of the power grants 20 Wound Points instead of 10.

Enhanced Attribute (significant): Every time this power is triggered, you gain a cumulative +10 shift to all rolls on the Attribute you nominated when you chose this power. The bonuses are cumulative, and last one minute.

Upgrades

Powers may be bundled with upgrades when they are first selected, or upgraded at a later stage when a new channel is attained. In either case, each upgrade increases the level of charge required for the use of the power by one level, so that a minor power with a single upgrade functions like a significant power, and requires significant charges.

Intrinsic: All the powers listed above are listed in their focused form. Selecting this upgrade means that you don't need to spend a charge of the appropriate type to power the skill; you can use it as often as you like (within reason), as long as you're carrying a charge of that level.

Enhanced Effect: Kicks the output of the power through the roof. Gadgeteers may now create significant artifacts; Energy Projection does firearm-style damage or levitates up to 500 kilograms; the maximum distance of a Leap and the maximum speed of Flight are multiplied by five; enhanced skills or attributes get a +30 shift, Toughness becomes Invulnerability, and Invulnerability becomes literal invulnerability. Mind Control rolls against a single target may be flip-flopped (or rolled on 3 dice if they could already be flip-flopped), and the power can be used against small groups (as many targets as the first digit of your Avatar: Emblazoned Hero skill) with no negative shift.

Enhanced Duration/Mastery: Easy enough. Any power with a duration now has five times that duration; any instant/once-off-type power (Gadgeteer, Energy Projection, Leap) can be used twice in the time it would usually take to do it once -- hence, two leaps or energy bolts per round, or two gizmos in the time it would take to build one.

Restriction: Not an "upgrade" as such, but a feature of a power which serves to limit its effectiveness and thus brings it down a notch in terms of the type of charge needed to make it happen. This restriction prevents the power from working at all, and should occur in about 50% of cases. Suitable examples might be: unable to use the power in daylight/at night, unable to use the power on living matter, and so on. Alternately, any restriction which mimics another upgrade, but in reverse (restricted effect, restricted duration etc.), is fair enough. Such a restriction must be in effect constantly; if the use powers with restricted mastery (which take twice as long to accomplish) are interrupted in midstream, they fail and any charges spent on powering them are used up.

Article publication date: August 31, 2001

122 *Pyramid* subscribers rated this article **2.95** on a scale of 1 to 5. Visit the [ratings page](#) for more info.

Copyright © 2001 by [Steve Jackson Games](#). All rights reserved. Pyramid subscribers are permitted to read this article online, or download it and print out a single hardcopy for personal use. Copying this text to any other online system or BBS, or making more than one hardcopy, is *strictly prohibited*. So please don't. And if you encounter copies of this article elsewhere on the web, please report it to webmaster@sjgames.com.



[Home](#) - [Subscribe!](#) - [Current Issue](#) - [Playtesting](#) - [Chat](#) - - - [Feedback](#)