

Secret of the Illuminati

By Eric Avedissian

In Washington, D.C., the heroes receive a phone call or telegram from United States Senator Joseph Paine to meet him in his office by the U.S. Capitol.

Paine is a charming, white-haired man with spectacles and a folksy down-home manner. He welcomes the heroes into his office and notes he read about their prior exploits in the newspapers. Admiring their heroism and sense of adventure and for solving mysteries, Paine says he'd like to hire them for a job. He explains the task would be to find out who murdered his dear friend Zell Fitzwater, a local historian. Paine said the police haven't caught the killer and the case is two months old. He said he fears the trail is growing cold and wants the killer found because the man who killed Fitzwater is in possession of a rare book.

Paine said he fears his friend Fitzwater may have been a member of a secret group called the Illuminati. He said Fitzwater, a fellow Freemason, wouldn't attend lodge meetings in the months before his death, and preferred to keep company with a few unsavory characters.

Paine asks the characters to pardon him while he relates the background of the Illuminati.

"In 1776 a German professor named Adam Weishaupt founded a secret society called the Order of Perfectibilists who advocated the abolition of organized government and religion and the formation of a new order controlled by logic and reason. In 1777, Weishaupt joined the Freemasons, and it was here that he began recruiting fellow Masons into his secret order, which was renamed the Bavarian Illuminati. The group had codenames for its members; Weishaupt was codenamed Spartacus. Details of Weishaupt's plans were eventually exposed, and he was barred from the Freemasons. In 1784, the King of Bavaria declared all secret societies including the Illuminati and the Freemasons illegal. The authorities branded Weishaupt a traitor and he fled to Gotha, in eastern Germany where he lived out the rest of his life in exile. Before they were labeled illegal, the Illuminati designed a symbol for their order: an all-seeing eye in a pyramid and a phoenix rising over the Earth. Weishaupt ordered a gold medallion, embossed with these cryptic symbols to be used at arcane rituals, but the secret society was declared traitorous before the medallion could be used. Weishaupt sent the medallion to America, accompanied by two loyal Illuminati brethren. They settled into Washington society comfortably, even joining the Freemasons and starting their own secret chapter of the Illuminati. Called the Columbian Illuminati, the group carried on their rituals from a secret crypt. In 1786, the Great Seal of the United States, suspiciously resembled the all-seeing eye atop the pyramid, made its debut. According to a letter found after the War of 1812, the Columbian Illuminati disbanded around 1799, locking all of their secrets in their underground crypt. The story was dismissed as a fanciful tale and forgotten, until about a few months ago, when Fitzwater, a prominent Mason, was cleaning his grandfather's attic and discovered a journal written by Karl Mueller, a Bavarian architect who came to the United States after the Revolutionary War and died in 1849. According to this journal, Mueller was a member of the Bavarian Illuminati and provides details of the secret crypt and the fabled Illuminati medallion. Unfortunately, before Fitzwater could translate the rest of the journal, he was murdered, and the journal went missing."

Sinister Scheme

Paine said he wants the heroes to discover the identity of the killer and retrieve the journal. Such a book should be destroyed before anyone else dies.

Paine suggests contacting Detective Brad Grayson at the Washington Police Department for more information. He provides them with a signed letter of introduction.

In reality, Senator Joseph Paine's motives are far from altruistic. He is a Freemason who wants to resurrect the Illuminati, unbeknownst to his fellow brethren. He plans to use Freemasonry to recruit potential candidates into the Illuminati. He needs the Illuminati medallion to conduct a powerful ritual that would transfer arcane powers to him and his inner circle. Then, he could run for president and create a one-world government. Paine would achieve this by eliminating any powerful rivals, namely Germany, England and Russia. For now, Paine is obsessed with finding the Columbian Illuminati's secret crypt in Washington, and the powerful amulet, the Illuminati medallion!

The Police

Grayson investigated the Fitzwater murder and admits he was stumped by the case. If the heroes say they're working for Senator Paine, Grayson is skeptic and won't budge. If the heroes show Grayson the letter of introduction, Grayson is cooperative and shows them the case files.

According to the files, Fitzwater had few friends. Interviews with some lodge brothers seem pretty straightforward and routine. Heroes making an Investigation roll discover one name keeps reoccurring: Miles Fortasque. He's mentioned by nearly all the contacts as being a solid friend of Fitzwater's, but he's not interviewed himself. If the heroes search for Fortasque's address, they trace it to a tiny apartment in Foggy Bottom.

Fortasque

Fortasque's apartment is abandoned. The front door is unlocked and a foul odor permeates the place. Upon further investigation, the living room appears as if a violent struggle took place: overturned furniture, broken lamps and blood splatters on the walls bespeak of violence. A roll-top desk in the corner has been rifled through, its drawers overturned and papers scattered on the floor.

Heroes making a Search roll discover Fortasque's battered corpse face-down on the floor underneath a broken table. He's clutching a piece of paper splattered with blood. Any hero who investigates further sees the word "Traitors" written in blood.

Characters searching other rooms of the house locate a leather-bound journal in a secret hiding place in an upstairs closet. The journal, written in German, is by Karl Mueller. Tucked in the pages of the journal is an envelope, inside which a letter written by Fitzwater:

"To Whomever Reads this Letter,

I am Zell Fitzwater and I am about to be killed for this journal. I know one of my closest friends and brothers covets this journal for the secrets it contains. I believe this man will use my steadfast ally, Mr. Miles Fortasque against me. But Fortasque is only being manipulated to acquire this journal and will be expendable in the end. Whosoever finds this journal, please do not give it to anybody. Translate it and find the secret Illuminati crypt and the sacred medallion before the dark forces who ordered my execution come for you! It is not safe! I hear the car door slamming in the street outside. I see the man coming up the stairs. It's Fortasque! I shall

try and talk him out of whatever sinister task he's been programmed to do. In the meantime, I will keep this letter with the journal in hopes he doesn't find it."

Sniper!

As the heroes make their way from the apartment, a shot rings out. One of the players is hit. Randomly determine who. Heroes making a Notice roll see the silhouette of a gunman on a rooftop. When spotted, the gunman retreats into the darkness. The sniper was sent by Paine to kill the heroes.

Hall of Illuminatus

Deciphering the journal takes a Language (German) roll. The journal chronicles the early Illuminati's secret meetings and rituals. According to the journal, the group held meetings in an underground crypt in Washington, D.C. The location matches the description of where a modern subway entrance exists.

The secret crypt is in the old access tunnels, which were blocked off when the subway was dug.

An exploration of the subway reveals a curious side passage blocked off by an iron gate.

These are access tunnels used when digging the subway.

One access tunnel has curious brickwork. The brickwork appears older, as if a passage was sealed. Breaking through the bricks reveals a corridor of red brick flooded with a foot of damp, moldy water.

At the end of the corridor is tumbled debris: rocks, cement, bricks, blocking the passage.

Midway in the corridor, a doorway and arch bricked up with a grey-colored brick. Carved in the middle of the bricked-up passage is a pyramid with an all-seeing eye in its center.

Breaking down this door reveals a square chamber adorned with frescoes depicting a mural of kings and priests being roasted alive in the fires of damnation, while the council of elders looks on. At the front of the room, an all-seeing eye and pyramid looks upon a congregation of empty wooden benches. A wooden lectern sits at the front of the room, behind which a skeleton is judges' robes. The skeleton has a bullet hole in its cranium. At the back of the room rests another skeleton with a bullet hole to its head and nearby a rusty pistol.

A wooden and metal door engraved with strange symbols, leads east. The door is booby-trapped. Anyone entering the inner sanctum through the metal door triggers the trap.

Concealed metal springs release when the door handle is pressed, sending a weighted guillotine blade tumbling down from a recessed niche in the ceiling! The blade does 2d10 damage to the hands and arms of the person holding the handle.

Inner Sanctum

This octagonal room houses carved pillars decorated with gargoyles, who leer toward a stone pedestal at the center of the room. An ornately-carved wooden box rests on the pedestal, inside is the fabled Illuminati medallion!

Just as the heroes seize the medallion, several cloaked and masked figures appear, brandishing pistols. One of the figures removes his mask to reveal – Senator Joseph Paine!

"How fortuitous you accepted my little quest. I never would have found the secret entrance without you," Paine says. He grasps the medallion firmly in his hand and stares at it longingly.

“The Illuminati medallion’s arcane powers shall be mine tonight! I shall bind its powers to the inner circle through ritual, giving me ultimate power to control the minds of men!”

If you want a more dramatic flair, Paine can outline his plans to the heroes. After he does so, he orders his men to kill the heroes, and makes a hasty retreat through a secret doorway. There are seven gunmen, each armed with automatic pistols.

Center Of Power

Once he snags the medallion, Paine holds a midnight ritual in the rotunda of the United States Capitol, the epicenter of power. Paine bribes the Capitol guards to go off duty that night, and posts his own sentries to deal with any intruders.

The ritual involves Paine and five other members dressed in black robes. A pot of incense is placed on the ground and candles are lit. Paine, wearing the medallion around his neck, recites an incantation in Latin. The five other members produce rapier swords and join together, arranging the blades in a pentacle shape, and then the shape of a pyramid. Paine then evokes the powers of the ancient Illuminators and the room is filled by a blinding light as the medallion around his neck glows. At this stage, the ritual is complete and Paine and his fellow Illuminati receive the following powers: telekinesis, barrier, fear and obscure.

If at any stage the ritual is interrupted, Paine orders his men to attack while he makes his escape. Getting the Illuminati medallion from Paine should be the heroes’ first priority. Without the medallion, Paine won’t receive the arcane powers he craves.

Aftermath

If Paine is killed or the ritual stopped, the remaining Illuminati stooges flee. The heroes halted the spread of an evil power. If Paine is killed, the heroes have a lot of explaining to do: he is a United States Senator, after all.

However, if Paine succeeds in his ritual, he uses his newfound powers to have the heroes arrested and jailed. Paine then attempts to manipulate the minds of the Senate and secures the nomination for president. He is elected in November as President of the United States, and forces Germany, England, France and Russia into war!