

TEMPUS FUGIT

AN ADVENTURE MODULE FROM THE GM'S SECRET STASH

Quickphix Presents

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the world's greatest roleplaying game



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An Adventure Module from the GM's Secret Stash



Presented by Quickphix

Tempus Fugit

A 4 - 5 Hour Adventure for Characters of any Level

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“There’s no arcane law forbidding time travel. Our magical arts can rejuvenate the body, help plants grow or turn rocks to dust. All of us know it is possible, yet we cannot perceive a way to think outside of linear time. I’ve studied this problem for years and thought my mind ready. It turns out, to step outside the flow of time, you don’t just have to open your own mind – but the minds of everything caught within.” - Tarek the Scholar

Summary

The Ipsfort Manor School for Arcane Innovation stands isolated in the middle of the vast and ancient forest of Azila. Its founders reasoned, that for the proper education of the arcane arts, no worldly concerns should be able to trouble a young mage’s mind. A sentiment very much shared by the school’s numerous rich donors, who were happy to have a place to lock away their more troublesome offspring. Hence, with each successful alumnus inheriting their fathers’ fortunes, Ipsfort Manor grew very quickly both in size and reputation. Recently, the school even acquired the famed arcanist Tarek Simar as their dean and head researcher. This also came as a shock to the school’s administration – as it was Tarek himself who asked for the post. Since then, arcane scholars all over the world had been holding their breath – because there could only be one reason why the well-travelled Tarek Simar would choose to seclude himself from the world: He was working on his magnum opus, the holy grail of all of Chronomancy – a spell powerful enough to untangle the fabric of time.

In this 4 – 5-hour adventure, a party of characters of any level are hired by a worried mother to stay a few days at Ipsfort Manor. The school seems normal at a first glance, but events soon take a turn to the strange. The dean is nowhere to be found and the school feels oddly familiar. One could think time has stopped in this idyllic manor if it weren’t for the ever-ticking clocktower and its inscription reminding the players: “Tempus Fugit”.

Premise

The players are hired by Duchess Manita van Niederhausen to check on her son. She’s worried, because his last letter arrived over a month ago and she hasn’t heard anything from him since. Even though the merchant delivering supplies to Ipsfort Manor assures her, everything is fine at the school, she cannot not shake a feeling of dread. Thus, she’ll award the players handsomely for spending a few days at the school as visiting lecturers, keeping an eye on her son and the happenings at Ipsfort Manor.

A Muddy Welcome

In the early morning the party is transferred in the open coach of Ipsfort Manor’s personal merchant called Maurice Grant. On their way through the dense Azila forest surrounding the school, the players can learn the following things from Maurice:

- The Duchess’ son, Bradford “Bradley” van Niederhausen is doing just fine. Maurice asked for him at his previous visit and confirmed that he was still his spoiled self (true).
- No suspicious supplies have been ordered by the school – the orders have remained largely the same (true). The only thing weird is the large quantity of ink he had to deliver since Tarek joined.

In your Campaign:

This one-shot requires a lot of creative and difficult role-playing – especially on the players’ side. If your players don’t like this type of campaign or tend to meta-game a lot, the campaign can be simplified by just having the players’ repeat the first day over and over without losing their memories until they discover a way to escape.



- He has not seen Tarek once in all of his deliveries, but he has only heard the best of him (true).
- The forest surrounding the school is said to be mystical and to have sprung up overnight a few hundred years ago (false – Maurice only half remembers the proper legend of the forest).
- The school owns a lumbering company, which not only produces their firewood, but also vast amounts of writing paper and scrolls for the school to use (true).

Just as the sun starts to peak over the horizon, the coach approaches Ipsfort Manor and a heavy cold rain begins to fall. Cold and miserable, the players walk up to the impressive gate of the school. An ancient looking plaque at the door proudly proclaims the school's motto: *Scientia Gratia Scientiae*.

The First Morning

The players are greeted by the vice dean, a thin woman called Evelyne Bardi. With a reserved smile, she confirms Maurice's order and introduces herself to the players. She's been informed of their arrival by the Duchess and leads them to their room (see Appendix I). Apologetically she explains to the players, that due to the recent increase of staff members, the players will all be sharing the guest room for the time being. After letting the players settle in for about 20 minutes, she knocks on the door and asks if the "esteemed professors" would like to meet some of the students during an arcane experiment.

The Mind Reading Experiment

Evelyne leads the players to the big auditorium, where a crowd of students has already gathered. Evelyne herds the players into the back of the auditorium, where they can see a small man give an enthusiastic speech. Ostensibly, Professor Eric Rary (the small man) has devised a new telepathic communication spell, which is said to outperform any other form of communication,

due to it not relying on words or language. Instead, Rary asserts it to transmit the "sender's true sentiments". To test this theory, he devised a simple experiment:

The class will be split into two groups. Each group will get a "leader", who'll be submitting his thoughts to his "followers" using one of the two telepathy spells provided by Prof. Rary. The leaders will try to describe an image they see to their followers (see Appendix II). They in turn will then have to redraw the image for themselves according to the description they receive. The experiment takes about 10 minutes to complete. Prof. Rary introduces the players and appoints one of them as the leader for the control group. The GM – as Prof. Rary – hands this player a print of the image in a binder filled with empty pages, telling him or her to hand out these pages. The players then do this "experiment" for real – but instead of using a telepathy spell, the leader just talks. After ten minutes, the GM - as Prof. Rary - collects both the image and the drawings of the others without letting anyone see the results. In steps, the experiment looks like this:

1. Let the players choose a leader from amongst themselves.
2. Hand him or her a binder with the image in Appendix II on top and tell him or her to hand out the empty papers (without showing the image).
3. Make sure the leader can't see the other players while drawing (maybe have him / her look at a wall).
4. Have him or her describe the image to the players for ten minutes (or as long as they think is necessary). The players may not communicate with the leader.
5. After the time is up or the leader declares he or she is finished, collect everything WITHOUT showing it to the leader or the other players.

The drawings of the players will most likely be inaccurate. Put them all in the binder you originally handed the leader and continue the story without explaining anything to the players.



Successful Studies and Tours

Professor Rary thanks all the participants and says he'll have to objectively measure the accuracy of the drawings for both groups. He briefly flips through the entries in the binder to make sure all of them are here. With an excited nod to the players, he retreats into his office, leaving them in the professional care of Evelyne once more. She then shows the players the rest of the school (the GM hands the players the map in Appendix I – minus the cellar map). Use this time to let the players look at some of the rooms that interest them.

Chatty Lunch

As the clocktower strikes 12, the players are invited to join the students and the faculty for lunch. Here they can learn and talk about the following things:

- Name and department of each staff-member (see Appendix III)
- Discussing arcane theory (see Appendix IV for inspiration)
- Prof. Tarek has been terribly busy for quite a while now. Not many students have seen him in these past few days (true).
- Bradley Van Niederhausen has been caught repeatedly stealing supplies and bullying younger students (true). The reason he doesn't write his mother, is because he doesn't want to admit that he'll probably have to repeat the school year (true).
- Prof. Tarek's classes are incomprehensible, even to most of the professors (true).
- Prof. Tarek told the faculty he wanted this post to "shape the minds of the next generation of arcanists" – but everybody had a feeling, this wasn't the full story (true).
- The student body is made up of about 50% rich sons and daughters and about 50% geniuses, who came here on a recommendation (true).
- One of the students recently came into the infirmary with weird cuts and bruises all over his body. He refuses to tell where he got them (true).
- There's supposedly one student here on Tarek's recommendation (false – he was just the only student who understood Tarek's lessons), whom he tutors personally (true).
- There's a madman living in the woods, destroying trees and stealing ink (false).

Afternoon Excursion

After lunch, the assisting Professor Lorca Gesoa asks the players, if they could accompany her and her class some ways into the wood. She wants to harvest bark from some of the oldest trees of Azila forest. However, the dean has forbidden her to go out there without guards, as there are some wild creatures lurking nearby. The grove is about a 10-minute walk away from the school, near the school's lumber yard. With the players being skilled fighters, she reasons, the dean should have no qualms about letting them go into the woods.

The Wood's Blight

Arriving in the grove Lorca mentioned, everyone notices something is wrong. The bark of the trees in question show several knife marks, as if someone unskilled had been harvesting it. Lorca holds her students back, saying there are several agitated Blights hiding amongst the trees. She asks the players to safely remove the Blights, without endangering the students or the trees. Thus, the primary challenge of this encounter should not be beating or killing the Blights but doing so in a targeted manner. The Blights do not attack unless the players approach them. The following complications can be used to make the encounter a bit more difficult:

- An over-eager student wants to join the fray, only to be caught in a Vine-Blight's entanglement attack.
- Fire or electricity-based spells ignite a pile of leaves near the base of one of the trees. The fire threatens to spread.



- The Blights are hiding in the tree's crown, making it hard to hit them without scarring the trees.
- Critical misses damage the trees in some way.

Have the Blights fight back until the players have killed a few of them. Mark down secretly how many Blights have been killed and what kind of damage has been dealt to the trees.

Gathering Bark

After the fight, Lorca and the students start stripping some bark from the trees. She notes, someone has been harvesting a lot of it – very recently as well. While working, she retells the story of this wood. Supposedly, an immortal being went to sleep in these lands a long time ago. Its giant body forms the base of the hill Ipsfort Manor was built on. A part of the being's magic has been infused in the soil of covering it. Apparently, that's the secret of the trees' longevity and why their bark and wood can be used so well for several druidic rituals.

Evening Frights

The rain kept on falling throughout the afternoon and well into the night. Evelyne invites the party to the teachers' table again. Tarek Simar is nowhere to be found. Should the players inquire about his whereabouts, they'll only receive shrugs. Apparently, Tarek being absent isn't out of the ordinary. After everyone has been seated, Evelyne hands one of the players a crystal glass and a spoon. She wants them to give a short speech to the assembled student body and faculty. Depending on how well the players do on this speech, the faculty and the student body will be more willing to listen to their suggestions in the ensuing events.

A Dinner Interrupted

While eating desserts, a freshman named Glen Morrison suddenly bursts into the great hall. He's soaking

wet and looks completely pale. Without much hesitation, he storms over to the vice-dean and reports, that he was tailing his room-mate Vince (Stellar), who'd been sneaking out these past few nights. Glen wanted to find out where his friend would disappear to each evening, since he came back recently with cuts all over his body. However, while tailing him through the rain, Glen saw a group of five armed and masked figures climbing over the gate. They spotted Glen and four dispersed immediately while one started to run towards him. In a panic, Glen ran all the way here. Evelyne nods and tells the teachers and students to remain here. She, Prof. Loggard, Prof Leifson and the party will search the school.

Search for the Culprits

Leave it up to the players if they want to split up to search the school or suggest different tactics. The professors will all take the route shown in Appendix V. At the same time, the assassins are already in position. To heighten the tension, the GM can also use the group of assassins hiding in the library to ambush or kill some of the players. The following things will happen regardless of the players' actions:

- Vince may be seen or heard on his way to the cellar, but he won't be caught. He always manages to give his followers the slip by using the secret passage in the cellar.
- The assassins will always be in position, regardless of how fast the players act.
- Tarek Simar will always be in the Sanctorem, casting his spell (see next paragraph).

Bright Lights

Whether the players are in the middle of a fight, searching the Manor or even dead, as the clocktower strikes 10, the players will see and feel the world being ripped apart by a wave of bright light. Their last feeling being one of unimaginable dread.



Stuck on Arrival

The GM now must acquaint the players with the central mechanic of this adventure. After the dramatic pause of the light swallowing the school, the players find themselves once again in their room on the first morning. Evelyne is knocking on their door, asking if the “esteemed professors” would like to meet some of the students during an arcane experiment. The players retain NONE of their knowledge of the previous day. From here on out, the day will repeat exactly as before.

What happened?

To run the second half of this one-shot, the GM must understand what happened. During the first day, Tarek remains in the Sancta Sanctorum (see Appendix I), gathering ingredients with the help of his favourite student Vince Stellar. Vince makes three trips to the Sanctum during the day, bringing Tarek bark and sap from the magical trees of the forest. At night, a group of hired assassins sneak into Ipsfort Manor with the mission to kill Tarek. Once they notice they can't find him, they'll try to find Vince, from whom they know he works for Tarek. At 10'o clock, Tarek finally succeeds in casting a time-travel spell – resetting time to the previous morning. However, he didn't realize that resetting time also means resetting the mind to the physical state it had in the past. This means, no new information can be brought into the past. This would effectively mean the end of time – since Tarek would figure out how to cast the spell during each loop, reset the world – forget it happened and then cast the spell again. Forever.

The only thing able to change this infinity loop are the magical trees of the Azila Forest. Since they had been growing on magical ground for eons and are the primary component of Tarek's spell, they and everything made from them are the only things capable of retaining information throughout the time loops. When time is reset, everything moves back to its original position in space and time – but things made from the trees retains their information. In practice, this means the following:

- Although paper used moves back to its original place (e.g. a binder), the writing stays on them through the loops.
- The bark harvested from the trees is back on the trees but retains the scars of the precise knife work used to cut it.
- The killed Blights come back to life, but their skin and armour made from the trees show the scars of battle.
- Any tree or object made from the trees retains the “information” of damage it has received during a loop. E.g. a tree killed with a necrotic spell might contain magical runes or scars typical of the spell.

Armed with nothing but wood and paper, the players must now figure out how to stop Tarek from casting the spell – thus ending the loop.

Sources of New Information

Because there's no reason why the players would act differently in the first looped day, the GM can just skip to the points in the day which contain new information. As an overview, these are:

- During Prof. Rary's experiment, the players made drawings which are now again in the binder.
- Any time, the players made some notes in a library book or similar (attention – this only counts if it is paper made from the magical trees of Azila)
- The trees in the magical grove the players visit together with Lorca retain the damage of their last battle as well as the marks of the bark being skinned from them. Same is true for the Blights.

The Meaning of the Experiment

On the day of the first loop, conduct the experiment again with the players (don't explain anything to them, just repeat it). As Prof. Rary, hand the leader the physi-



cal binder once again – this time it will contain the players' drawings as well as more empty paper. One of two things will mostly likely happen:

- The leader either won't notice or acknowledge the existence of the drawings. In this case, just run the experiment the same as before. In the end, when collecting the results Prof. Rary will wonder why there are more drawings in the control group but do nothing more.
- The leader acknowledges the drawings and either informs Prof. Rary or the students. Prof. Rary will just dismiss him, saying he must have forgotten his test drawings in the binder.

It is important, for the day of the first loop no to differ too much from the original day. This way, the players will experience which things are different the second time around and be more likely to make the connection between the trees, the forest, paper and time-travel. On the second loop, the binder will now contain twice as many drawings as there are players. An anomaly Prof. Rary can't ignore, even if the players do. He'll either cancel the experiment or start questioning the players, where they got these sketches.

Scarred Trees

The scene at the grove with Lorca works similarly. After the battle with the Blights, have her examine the scarred trees. She'll note, the scars look like really old battle wounds – which is impossible, since these trees were fine just a week ago. Use this scene as jumping off point for an investigation. Maybe one of students will carve his name into the tree or the players will visit the nearby lumberyard to help them make the connection between the trees and paper. However, afterwards have them return to the school and the dinner scene. It will play out the same as on the original day.

Ending the Loop

From here on out, repeat the day (and if necessary, the experiment) as many times as the players need to figure out how to retain information. Always skip to the scenes

where new information has been added. Otherwise, you can assume they'd act the same as in the previous loop. The loop is broken, if they can get Tarek to stop casting the spell.

Lose Nothing Looping

Here are a few notes to keep in mind while looping:

- The players can't find Tarek if they do not follow Vince into the cellar, as they have no reason to go there in the first place (except if they have done so during the original day).
- The damage on the trees in the grove is likely to get worse with each loop.
- If the players have a tough time figuring out what to do, maybe bend the rules a little and let them have flashbacks of previous loops.
- Finding Tarek won't stop the assassins. Meaning, if they stop the loop without thinking it through, Evelyne and everyone getting in the assassin's way will die. Tarek will point that out, if they manage to inform him about the complete situation.

What about Tarek Simar?

Tarek isn't a villain – the assassins are here on orders of an old student of Tarek. If Tarek would be killed, his student would not only be the only chronomancer left, there would also be nobody who could falsify his theories and publications. Tarek is completely oblivious to all of this. Him accidentally looping time was the result of his scientific vigour. Vince Stellar sees it much the same way. He was sneaking around because Tarek informed him, that harvesting bark in the quantities he's been doing wasn't exactly allowed. However, Vince took the risk of being caught out of his own free will, to see Tarek's experiment succeed. Hence, if he's caught by the players, he won't betray Tarek's location unless they have some strong evidence or arguments why he should do so. The same goes for Tarek himself: just confronting him won't necessarily dissuade him from casting the spell. Yet Tarek will not resort to violence,



unless the players threaten, attack or physically try to restrain him. In that case, he'll try to use powerful but non-lethal spells such as high level "hold person" or similar.

Now it is up to the players: will they try learning Tarek's spell and help him spread the knowledge, or will they try to dissuade him from ever researching such perilous arcana ever again? Only time will tell.

One of Two Endings

The adventure can end in one of two ways, depending on how the players convince Tarek to not cast the spell.

1. They tell Tarek all that is going to happen – he'll suggest looping the day one last time to stop the assassins as they enter the school ground.
2. They stop Tarek only with partial information or by force, which will result in them having to fight the assassins afterwards. This also most likely means, Evelyne was killed in the classroom.

Reward

If the players manage to arrive at ending 1, Tarek will award the party with an amulet made from Azila wood. It allows the wearer to cast the spell "haste" as an action once – afterwards it needs to be recharged for a week. Additionally, the players can get the gold reward from the Duchess, after they persuade Bradley to write a letter confessing his failures at the school.

Should the players arrive at ending 2, they might not receive any award at all – as the grieve-stricken Tarek vows to find his student and get revenge.

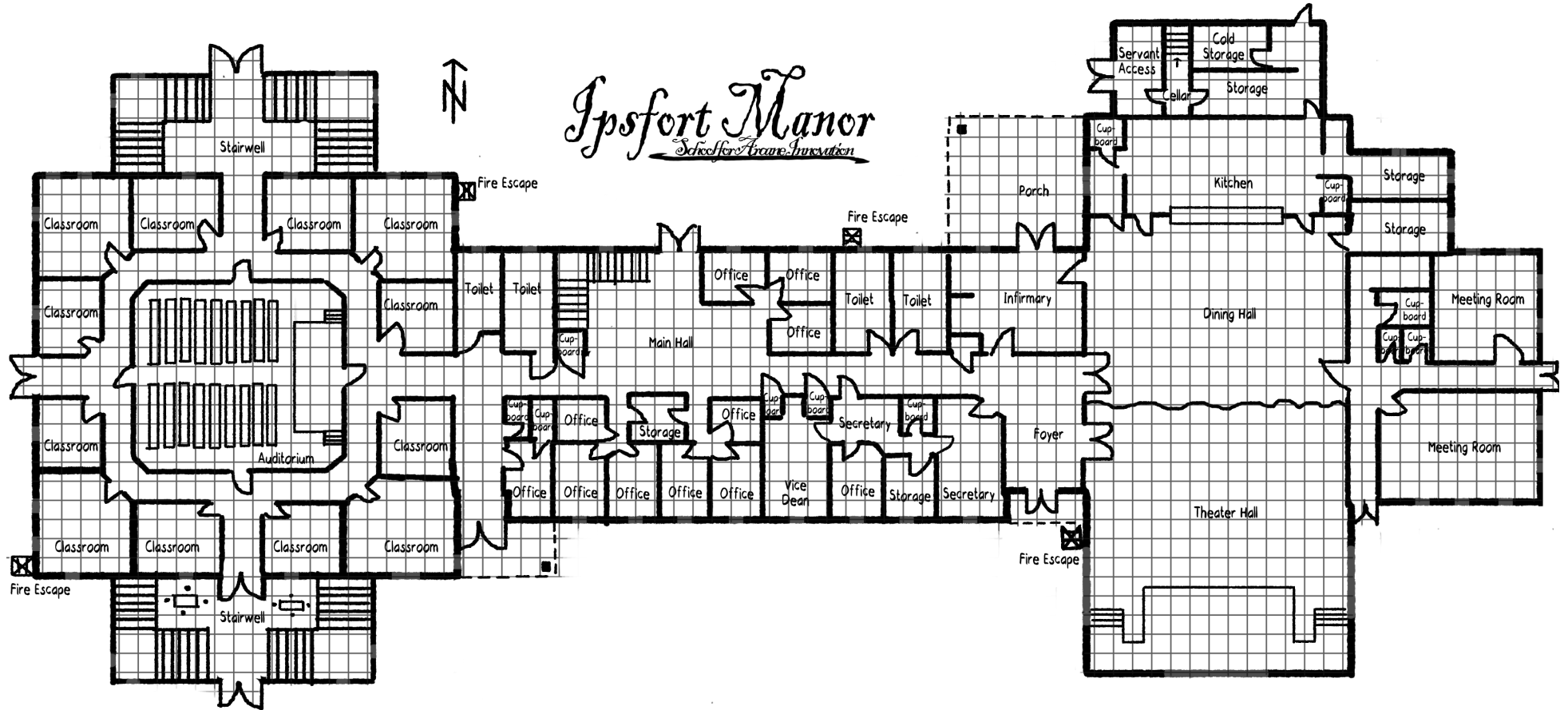
What's Next?

Whatever the outcome – Tarek has definitively proven the existence of time travel. Maybe his former student figured this might be the case and apart from all selfish reasons, had sent the assassins to stop the spread of this dangerous knowledge. After all, any madman with the information could top the flow of time forever.



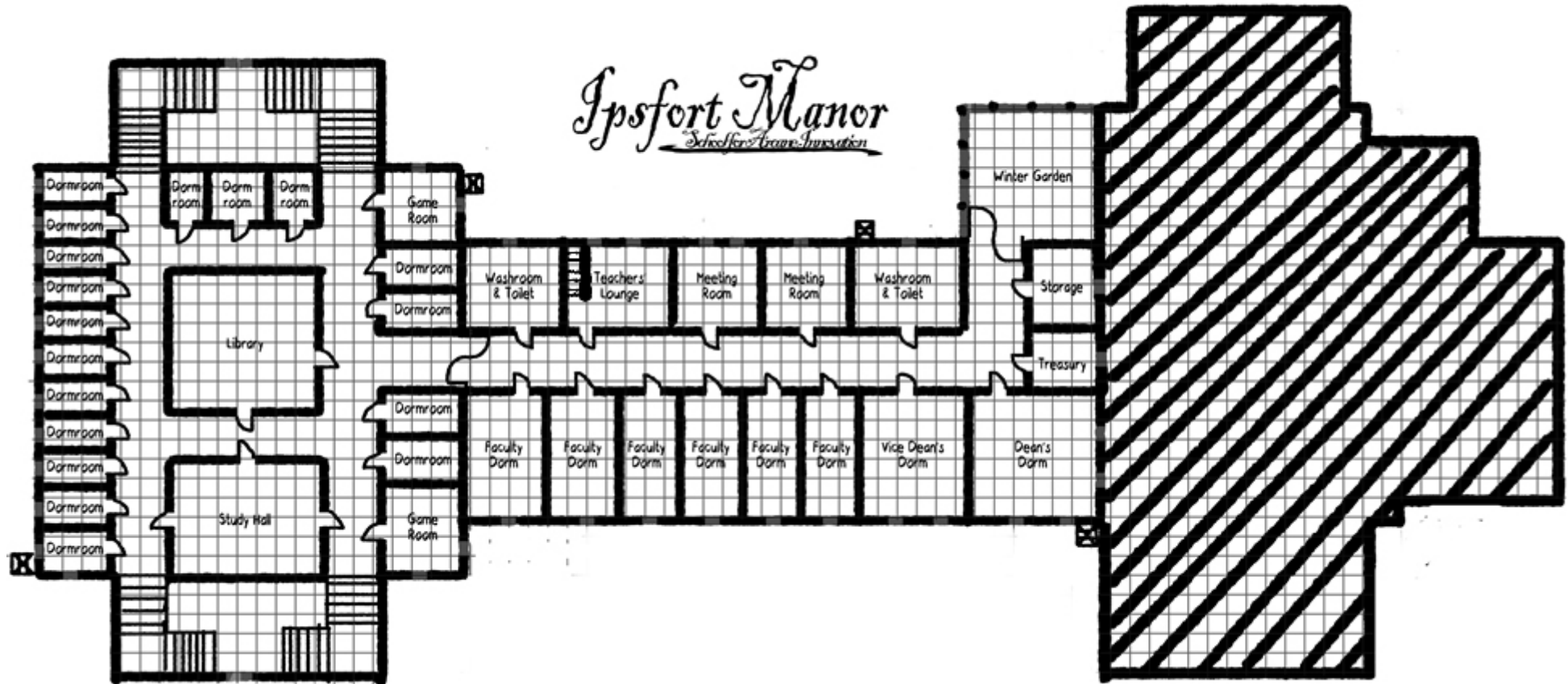
Appendix I – Map of Ipsfort Manor

Ground Floor

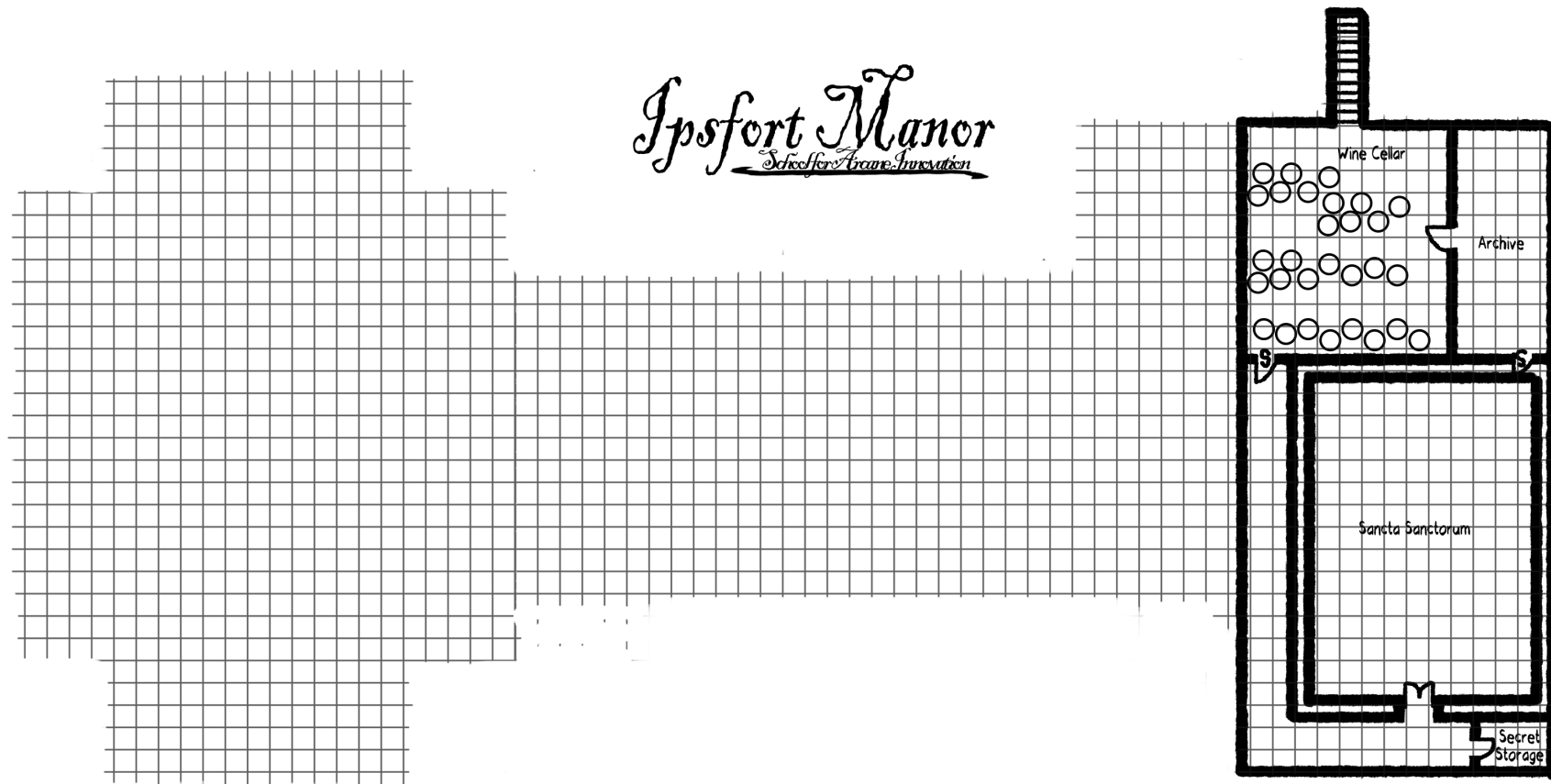




First Floor



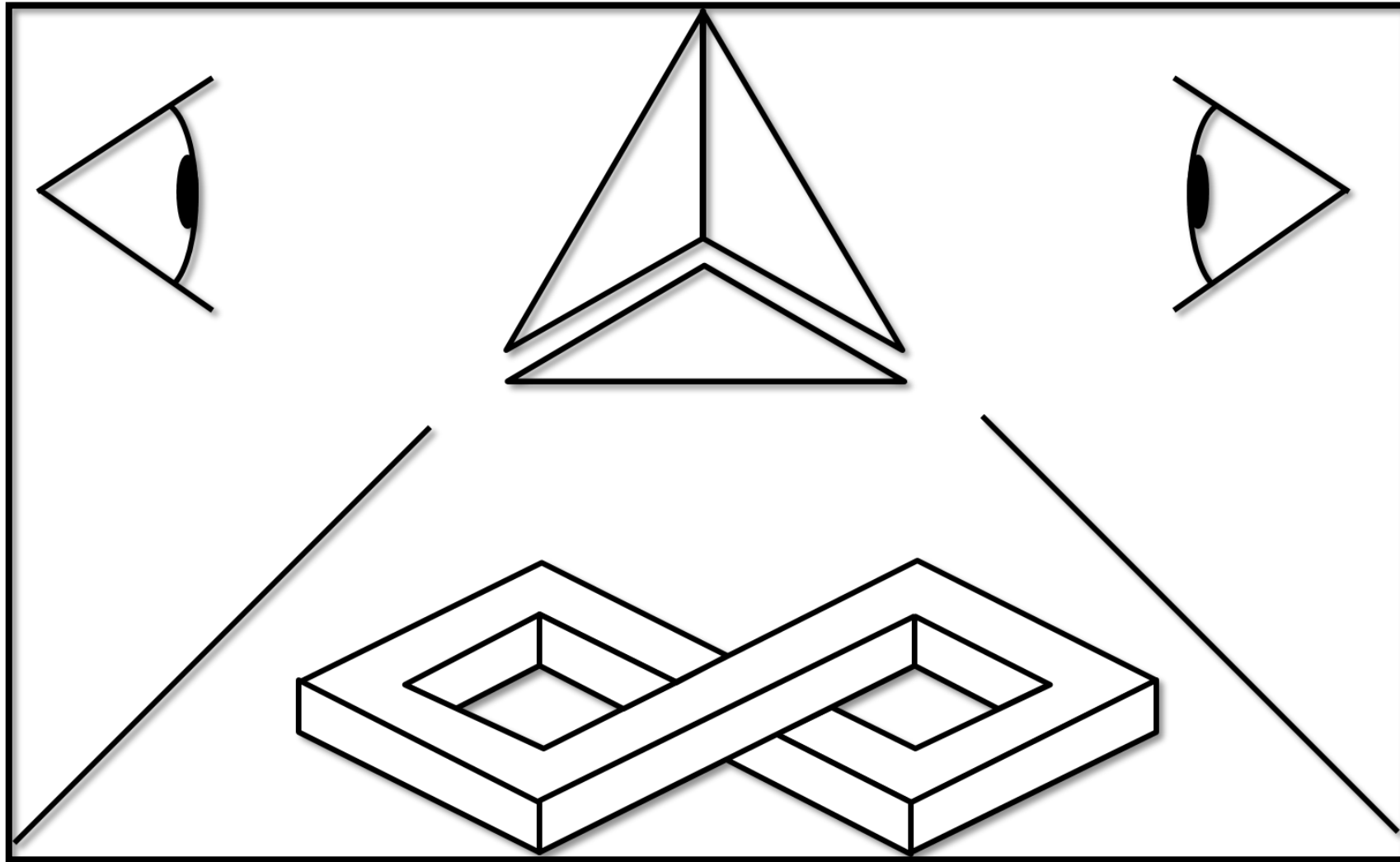
Cellar (not for the players' eyes)



The Sancta Sanctorum can only be entered by opening one of the big wine casks and crawling through. The secret entry in the archive is just a ventilation space – which can be used to peer into to room through the brickwork, but not access it. The secret storage contains a small cot for Tarek to sleep on, some food, ink-barrels and a lot of notes pinned to the wall. Tarek obviously has been living down here for quite some time. The Sancta Sanctorum is a mostly empty room with a large brazier in the middle of the room. It was originally used by the school's founders for the riskier arcane experiments. Therefore, it is completely sound and blast proof. Tarek found this place while researching the school. Nobody else in the faculty knows of it.



Appendix II – The Arcane Focus Image



Appendix III – Faculty List

Name	Surname	Rank(s)	Field of Study
Tarek	Simar	Dean, Prof. Dr. Dr.	Chronomancy, Arcane Innovation
Evelyne	Bardi	Vice-Dean, Prof. Dr.	General Abjuration, Universals
Eric	Rary	Prof. Dr.	Divination & Druidic Traditions
Hanna	Ardera	Prof. Dr.	Transmutation & Enchantment
Meinard	Franck	Prof. Dr.	Conjuration, Planeology
Heidar	Leifson	Prof. Dr.	War Magic & Tactical Necromancy
Sara	Verdi	Prof. Dr.	Illusion & Universals
Johnathan	Loggard	Dr.	Evocation & Protective Abjuration
Mantas	Gudz	Assisting Professor	Lore, History & basic Divination
Lorca	Geso	Assisting Professor	Universals & Druidic Traditions
Gilliam	Werthof	Assisting Professor	Evocation & Universals
Samantha	Torna	Assisting Professor	Enchantment
Joel	Frech	Assisting Professor	Transmutation & Universals
Zelda	Hubbard	Research Assistant	Arcane Innovation
Ulrich	Golan	Research Assistant	Evocation
Dario	Van Bergen	Research Assistant	Transmutation
Martin	Schubert	Research Assistant	Illusion & Conjuration



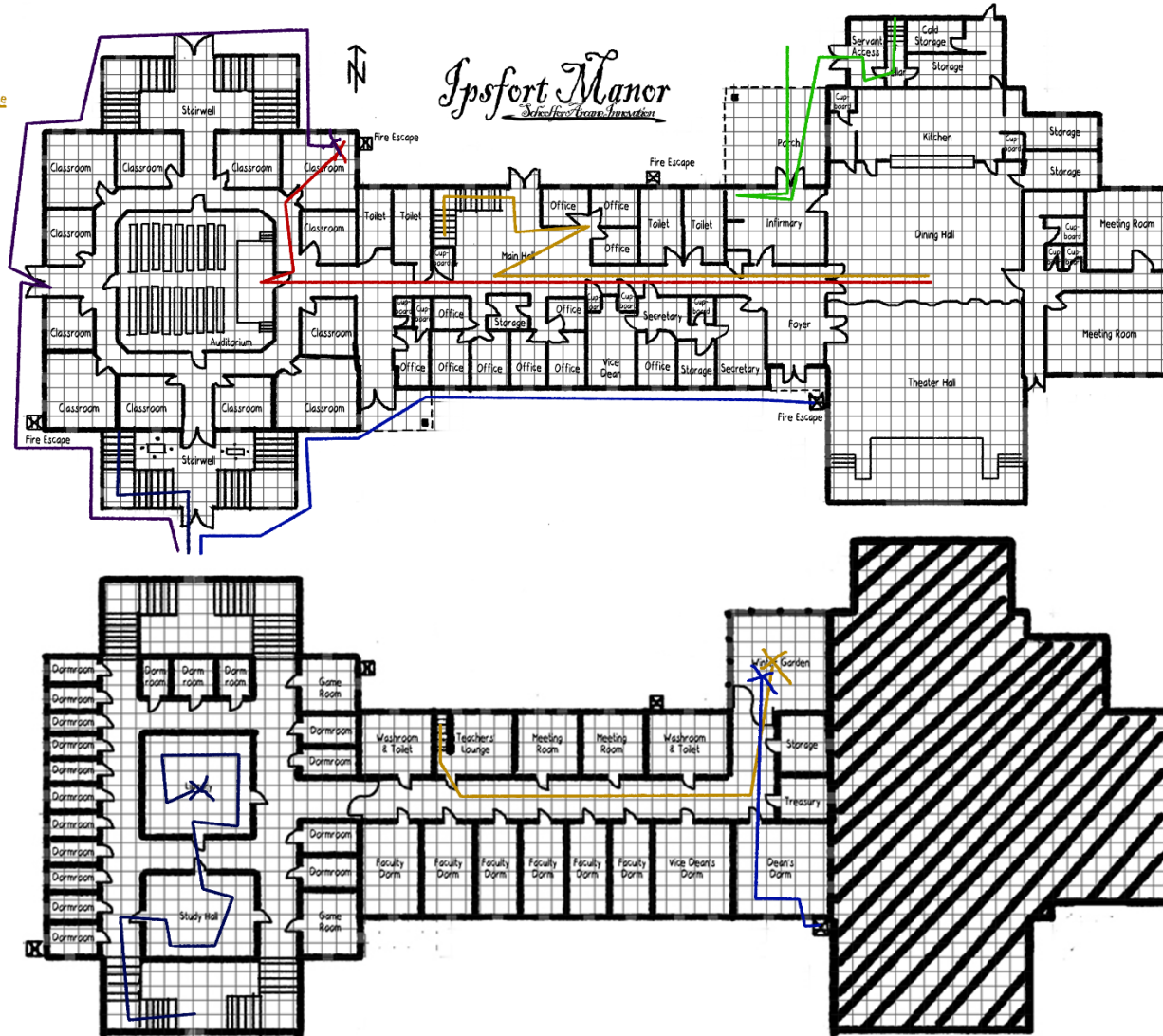
Appendix IV – Magical Books and Topics

Author	Title	Content
Tarek Simar	<i>Proposing a new unifying theory of the Arcane: Chronomancy</i>	This book is practically incomprehensible thanks to having an author that was apparently lacking any sense of organizational skill. If one miraculously managed to understand the book's contents, that person will find it is extremely disturbing – destroying any notion of mankind ever being able the eternal mysteries of the arcane.
Alastair Trimck	<i>Remedial Transfiguration</i>	This book is hard to understand because of a lack of proper references. One may be deterred from reading it, but it is evident that the contents display thoughtfulness and some new ideas.
Antonio Verdi	<i>Befuddling Your Enemies: Illusion Spells</i>	This book is all but impossible to understand mostly due to having an author that was apparently suffering from a drinking problem. A talented person may be able to derive some understanding from the book.
Meinard Franck	<i>Classic Summoning</i>	This book is of above-average clarity due to the excellent, well-planned chapters. It's easy to determine that it is reasonably useful. After some reading, it is apparent that the contents have a few areas of deep insight.
Herbert Groenke	<i>A Synopsis of Classic Theurgy</i>	This book is of above-average clarity. The book's well-done nature allows one to easily find that it has little useful information for all but new mages.
Martha Hemsworth	<i>The Catalogue of Ancient Conjunction</i>	This book is very clear. The book's well-done nature allows one to easily find the topics which interests them.
Jenna Starr	<i>Revised Divination</i>	This book is hard to understand. With time, intellect, or both, one can make sense of the book, and it will reveal it has a lot useful information. One will also find that the ideas within are very original.
Hanna Ardera	<i>Enchanting Ideas – Imposing Arcane Will unto Objects</i>	This book is reasonably easy to understand mostly due to the good diagrams. A small study will show it is extremely informative. One will also find that the concepts and information do show a great deal of insight.
Lodrean Higgs	<i>A Study of Evocation</i>	This book is reasonably clear mostly due to the good references. Perusing it will show that it has a lot useful information. One will also find that the contents contain some original thought.
Dodo Benji	<i>The Peacetime Use of Conjunction</i>	This book is hard to understand due to a lack of coherent planning. Though flawed, one can definitely see that the contents have a few areas of deep insight.
Lionel Yemad	<i>New Magic</i>	This book is easy to understand. The book's well-done nature allows one to easily find that it has little useful information. To make things worse, one will eventually discover that the contents were probably taken from several works.
Evelyne Bardi	<i>Ancient Methods of Abjuration</i>	This book is muddled beyond belief thanks to terrible diagrams. If, by chance or skill, someone can unriddle the book, that person will find it is extremely informative.
Eric Rary	<i>Understanding beyond language – advanced telepathy for a kinder world</i>	This book is impressively clear thanks to extensive references. It doesn't take much effort to determine that it is extremely informative.
Reto Wenzel	<i>A Disclosure Concerning the Present Alchemists of the Kingdom</i>	This book is muddled. After some effort to read the book, one can find it has little useful information. One may be deterred from reading it, but it is evident that the concepts in the book do show a lot of original thought.
Heidar Leifson	<i>Examining the five works of infamous war magic</i>	This book is very easy to understand because of incredibly well-done and helpful illustrations. A short look at the book will show that it has a lot useful information. Unfortunately, the contents are not very original.



Appendix V – Ipsfort Assassin Chase

- Prof. Bardi's Route
- Prof. Leifson & Prof. Loggard's Route
- Vince Stellar's Route
- 2 Assassin's Route
- Other 2 Assassin's Route
- Lone Assassin's Route



Unhindered Chain of Events

- If Prof. Bardi is alone, she will notice an open window in the classroom, go over there to close it and be killed by the lone assassin (he'll steal her keys).
- Prof. Leifson & Prof. Loggard thought to guard the treasury and inform the dean. They will stumble upon the assassins looking for Tarek in the winter garden. Leifson & Loggard will noisily overwhelm both assassins.
- Vince returns soaking wet from the wood with some bark in his hands. He'll sneakily and quickly grab a potion from the infirmary to heal his cuts and head down to Tarek in the cellar. He doesn't want to be seen – but he'll leave wet and muddy footprints in the infirmary.
- The assassin teams disperse around the school, looking for Tarek. They will sneak around large groups, but they will kill lone targets wandering the halls – the players included.