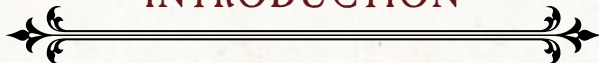


FREE CONTENT FRIDAY, JUNE 2021

KIDS ON BROOMS

By Kimi Hughes

INTRODUCTION



WHOA!! ARE YOU A PLAYER OR A GM?

If you're a player, stop reading!
This has major spoilers about the entire year!!

If you're a GM, though, dive on in!

THE MERLIN INVITATIONAL

An adventure for *Kids on Brooms* written by Kimi Hughes

Content Warnings: cheating, danger from plants

OVERVIEW

The Merlin Invitational is a fun mystery adventure for 2 to 6 players and is great for a one-shot or to supplement your normal Kids on Brooms campaign. It differs from most adventures for this year's Free Content Friday because the player characters are adult school employees, not kids, and because . It's an ideal adventure to run if a few of your players can't make it to a session!

The Merlin Invitational takes place at Delacorte, a wizarding school of great renown built around a mystical tree. Teams of students travel from other schools all over the world to test their skills in the magical arts and win the Merlin Banner for their school. However, this year someone is trying to cheat! The wizard overseeing the competition has asked the adults involved to handle the situation. In their roles as the coaches of the different teams, the players will help track down the culprit and ensure the competition goes as planned.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Every four years, wizarding schools send their best students to the famed Merlin Invitational. Said to have been started by the actual Merlin centuries ago, it's a chance for each educational institution to prove they are superior to the rest by having their students compete head-to-head. Each team is tested in five wizarding subjects and each event is shrouded in secrecy until it begins. The winning school gets to display the Merlin Banner in their great hall for the next four years and the names of the winning team members are magically etched on the banner itself. Many a wizarding career has been made by having a name on that banner.

Overseeing the competition is The Merlin. No, not THAT Merlin. The wizard chosen to oversee the competition is given the honorary title of "The Merlin" in honor of the event's founder. It's always a very powerful wizard or witch of great renown, but for the duration of the competition they will be called only by that title. This year, it is a tall, somewhat scruffy wizard from Chicago, USA. He's a bit of an unconventional choice, and although it is supposed to be a great honor this wizard seems annoyed about all the fuss.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The Academic team has used a Parchment of Prediction the night before the competition to find out what the challenges will be so they can prepare for them ahead of time. Unfortunately for them, the spell was discovered and the officials are now aware that someone is cheating. The Parchment of Prediction is a time sensitive spell since it relates to the future which is always in flux. Many of the components must be harvested within

a very short time before casting the spell for it to work, so the coaches and The Merlin are now tracking down those responsible by investigating the reagents found on the Delacorte campus. After the investigation is completed, the clues should lead the party to the conclusion that the Academic team is responsible.

NPCs:

- ⓓ The Merlin (a title used by the official overseeing the Invitational as a sign of respect for the original wizard Merlin) - A tall, scruffy looking wizard from Chicago, he oversees the competition. Called “The Merlin” for the whole adventure. (he/him)
- ⓓ Potions Master, Professor Zhao (she/her)
- ⓓ Gardener, Mx. Drew, the Hedge Mage (they/them)
- ⓓ Caretaker’s pet, Ged the orange cat (he/they/she)
- ⓓ Chef, Chef Tim (he/him)

GETTING STARTED

The Players should start by making new faculty characters, these characters are the coaches of the different teams from around the world.

Assign or let them select an archetype for their team:

- ⓓ the Jock team
- ⓓ the Academic team
- ⓓ the Popular team
- ⓓ the Slacker team
- ⓓ the Goth team
- ⓓ the Artistic team

They should name the four students on their team and the school they came from.

All the teams are at the competition, so any teams that are not chosen by players will still be present in the narrative.

THE STORY

Read the following or put it into your own words for the players:

The Merlin Invitational has begun! Delacorte's enchanting campus is even more stunning than usual. Enchanted banners representing the competing schools have been hung in the hallways and cheer for the teams when they walk by, the candles and fireplaces have spells on them that will rotate between team colors, music echos through every stairway to encourage the competitors, and new faces, languages and uniforms fill the common areas. Wizarding moguls and famous superstars have come to scout out new talent for their organizations. It feels like the whole magical world has turned its eyes on Delacorte and the anticipation is palpable.

Each of you have had a busy day of opening ceremonies, speeches and last minute preparations with your teams. The students from all your teams are settled down in the student dorms for the night. You were just starting to retire for the evening yourself when you received an urgent summons from The Merlin. No, not THAT Merlin. The Merlin is a wizard of great renown who is chosen to oversee the Invitational for that year. They are given the title The Merlin to honor the competition's founder, the original Merlin. For the duration of the Invitational this wizard is only called The Merlin, even by those who know their true name. This year, The Merlin is a tall, somewhat scruffy wizard from Chicago. Those who know of him are a bit wary of him.

When you arrive in the Teacher's Lounge The Merlin is standing facing the fire. He gestures for you all to take seats at the long wooden table that runs down the center of the room. Cups of coffee are already sitting at each place waiting for you.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you, but it couldn't be helped." The Merlin turns and casts an apologetic look on each of you. It seems that not all of our fine students are willing to compete on a level playing field. Some cowards have decided to cheat.

The contempt in his voice is clear. He tosses a burnt piece of parchment into the air with a glare and it magically floats to the center of the table where you can all see. It appears to be a small

corner of a larger page that was burned away. There is a red smear on it that looks to be paint or ink of some kind.

“A Parchment of Prediction. Someone wants to know the future so they can prepare for the challenges to come. I want all of you, as the adults in charge of these kids, to figure out which team is behind this so we can disqualify them. I’d handle it myself, but now I have to spend all night redesigning the competition. As you know, the Parchment is a temperamental spell with a list of very specific, time sensitive reagents. They’d have to be collected here, not brought with them. That gives us a place to start the investigation. Do you have any questions?”

Information The Merlin will provide if asked:

- ✘ The remaining part of the parchment was found on the hearth of the Potions room.
- ✘ The fire damaged it too much to use tracing spells to find the culprit.
- ✘ The Parchment was too damaged to tell what the cheaters found out.
- ✘ Parchment of Prediction spells are windows to a future that is constantly changing due to our actions in the present. To be accurate, they must be cast as close to the predicted event as possible.
 - ⓓ This means it was probably cast right before student curfew.
- ✘ Spell ingredients:
 - ⓓ Pollen from the Lava flower that only blooms for one hour then turns to rock
 - ⓓ Oil taken from a wind-up clock on the same day of the spell
 - ⓓ Soot from a fire that was still lit at the time the spell is cast
- ✘ The Merlin will now change the challenges, but they still want to know who the cheating group is so they can be disqualified. He seems annoyed that he has to redesign the whole competition in one night.
- ✘ Students from all the teams have had the run of the campus all day. It would have been pretty easy for any team to collect the necessary materials and gain access the unlocked potions room.
- ✘ He doesn’t know much about the teams or competitors individually but encourages you to share with each other about your schools if you think it might be relevant.
- ✘ He hopes the investigation will be completed before the competition begins the next day. He has provided magical cups of refilling coffee to aid you in what may be a very long night.
- ✘ The red stain is not blood but was also contaminated in the fire so it can’t be traced magically

INVESTIGATION

The party may visit these in any order depending on where their investigation leads them. ***Bold and Italicized clues are vital and should be given to the party by NPCs if they don't discover them.***

School Grounds: *these are clues the party might notice or think of as they move around the school during the investigation.*

- ✘ Jock team was wearing red face paint in their team colors for the celebrations earlier in the day. (Grit or Brains roll 5+)
- ✘ Goth team has many members who wear elaborate white/red/black/etc makeup and face paint (Charm or Brains roll 5+)

Potions Classroom: *where the parchment was found and where the fireplace soot was collected to cast the spell.*

The potions classroom resembles the other classrooms at the school in its size and style. There are tables spread about the room with small cauldrons in the center of the table and shelves of ingredients line the walls with magical floating footstools for access to the higher items. On one end of the room is a large fireplace and the instructor's desk, which faces all the student tables.

Professor Zhao is present to answer questions. The party has the freedom to ask her questions and roam about the room. The parchment was found near the fireplace in the front of the room.

The potions master will give the following information, if asked:

- ✘ She was out of the room for about an hour before student curfew.
- ✘ The teams have had access to different places on campus all day for practice.
- ✘ ***The Slacker team and Academic team were practicing potions that afternoon but all the students left before she did.***
- ✘ Someone on a broom was seen flying near the potions room right before curfew.
- ✘ Because of the short life of the Lava Flower, the culprit probably had to fly directly from the herbology garden to the potions room.

Clues:

- ✘ ***Partial sneaker prints in the ash by the hearth. They are a very popular style of Midas Gold brand shoes that many magical students wear.*** (Charm or Brains roll 7+)

Herbology Garden: *the party will come here to find information about the Lava Flower, upon arrival the party is attacked by the large Snapdragon Dragons (see entry at the end of the adventure). The party will need to defeat them or recapture them before they can continue.*

The party can defeat the Snapdragon Dragon by:

- ✘ Fighting the creature. It will not die since it is plant-based and it will regrow once it is planted back in its pen.
- ✘ They can charm it to calm it and get it to go back into its pen. (Charm roll 10+)
- ✘ They can trick it to get it back into the pen. (Brains roll 8+)

Once the creature is back in its pen, they can investigate the area. They easily find the Lava Flower bed.

Clues:

- ✘ ***Sneaker print in the dirt matches the one in the potions room, but they disappear. Someone got on a broom.***
- ✘ The flower has red pollen that gets on everything
 - ⓓ ***This must have been the red stain on the parchment.***

The school gardener comes out after hearing the ruckus with the dragon. If asked she will give the following information:

- ✘ She saw some of the kids from the Slacker team in the herb section of the garden, but didn't see why they were there.
- ✘ ***Kids from the Popular, Academic and Artistic teams were all practicing their broom skills above the garden at different points during the day.***
- ✘ ***The pollen from the Lava Flower causes a strange rash - something to keep an eye out for, but you can't just demand kids disrobe to prove their innocence.***

The final reagent is the oil from the clock.

Grandfather Clock: *A familiar sight in the school's entry hall and the likely source of the clock oil. This magical clock synchronises all the clocks on the Delacorte campus.*

- ✘ It has a hypnosis charm on it. Anyone who looks directly at it has to resist forgetting why they are there. Players must roll a 6 or higher on Grit to resist.

The caretaker's pet, an orange cat named Ged, is sitting on top of the clock and seems immune to the hypnosis charm. Ged is a very unique cat who is able to talk and, according to some stories, even use magic! Rumors abound as to Ged's true species and form but the only thing that is known for certain is that a large orange cat appears in the portraits of every caretaker in Delacorte's long history.

Ged is full of useful information, but needs to be bribed or charmed to help the party. (Charm roll 10+.)

Alternate is a bribe of fine food intended for the Invitational's closing feast which must be acquired

from the kitchens. This can be obtained from Chef by stealing (Brains or Grit 5+), by assisting Chef carry the large Dragon Loins from the store room (Brawn roll 6+). Chef is too stressed and in a hurry to be charmed.

If persuaded, Ged will share:

- ✘ Slacker team and academic team were caught arguing about the clock earlier. The slacker team was trying to enchant it to run more slowly so they'd have more time before the competition. *The Academic team came in at the same time and caught them.* The Slacker team ran off.
- ✘ *The Academic team did something to the clock and they had a funny smell, like a mixture of fire and flowers.*

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence and that they kept appearing every time there was a clue, the Academic team is guilty. Report that to The Merlin.

The Merlin summons the team from the student dorms. If one of the players is the coach of the Academic Team, they will be allowed to help summon them to the Great Hall.

- ✘ Confront them and bring them to the cat/bring the cat to them for confirmation.
- ✘ The cat points out a specific member of the team as the person you have been tracking. If one of the players is the coach of that team, have them name the person, otherwise his name is Tim Prospero.
 - ⓓ They are wearing Midas Gold shoes
 - ⓓ They have a strange rash on their forearms from the Lava Flower
 - ⓓ They have a scratch on their leg from getting close to the Snapdragon Dragon when they released it
- ✘ They are expelled from the competition.

GM Hint: If your players come to a different conclusion, you can have The Merlin summon them and the cat can tell them they have the wrong suspects. Or, if you like the party's solution and think it is logical, feel free to roll with it if you are comfortable with that. Sometimes players come up with imaginative, creative solutions that are more fun than the one in the adventure!

TIME EXTENDER: COMPETITION

- ✘ Each PC rolls their stats to represent their team
 - ⓓ Based on their roll, each player tells a little story about what their team did to do badly/ok/great
- ✘ Add up the scores and see which team wins

SNAPDRAGON DRAGONS

The large Snapdragon Dragons look like plant versions of snapping dragons. They have escaped or been released from their cages. They are woven together like vines and have three large snapping plant heads.

- ✖ **Fight:** d10
- ✖ **Flight:** d6
- ✖ **Brains:** d4
- ✖ **Brawn:** d20
- ✖ **Charm:** d4
- ✖ **Grit:** d8