

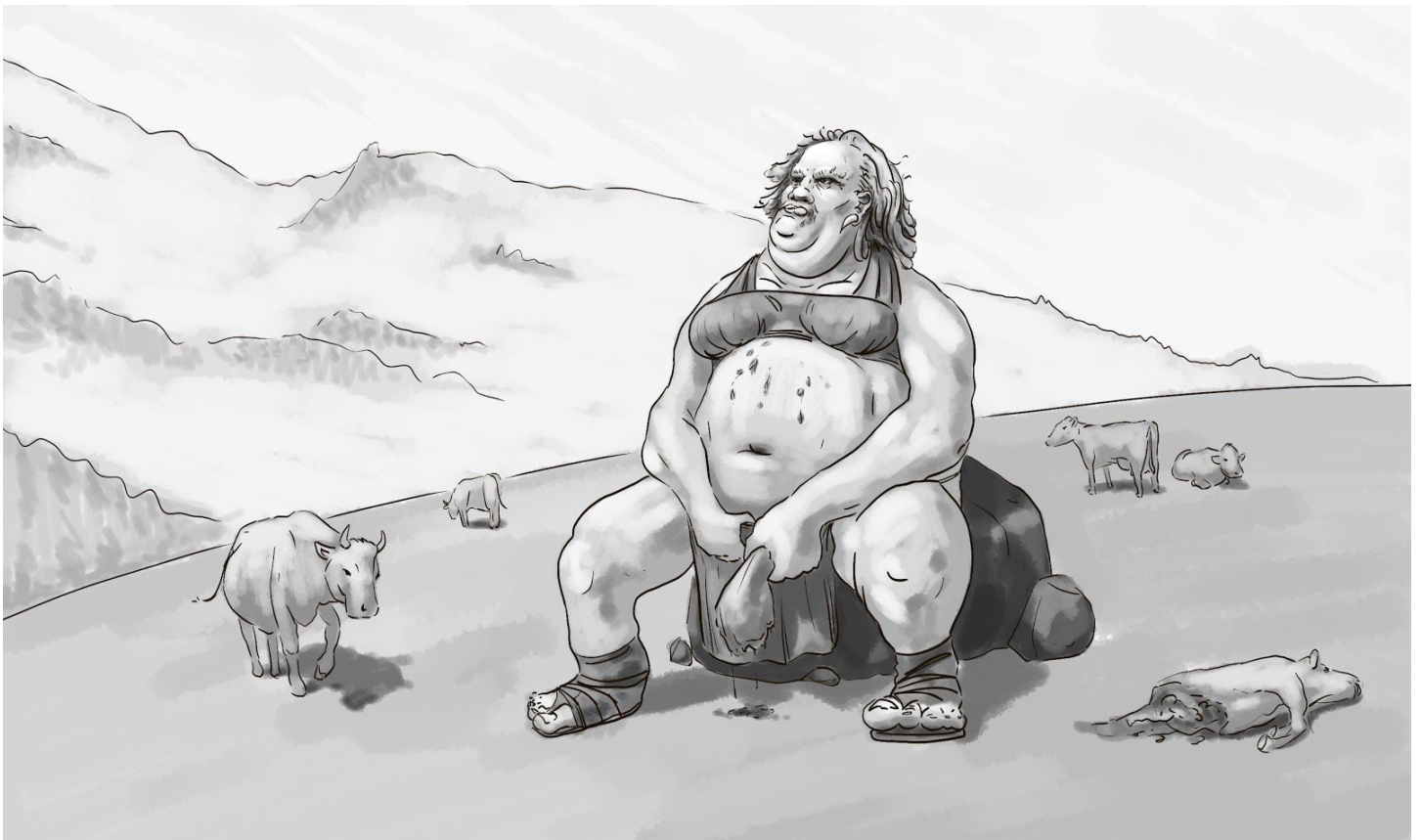
Upstart

The Tale of Lucinda

A three-hour adventure for 4th to 5th level players.

By: Matthew Ian Stanford and Shawn Stanford

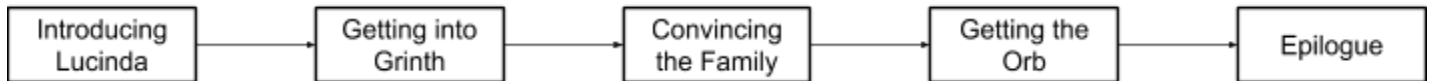
Art by: Luke Absolum Reid



Introduction for the GM

The city of Grinth is populated entirely by giants and organized in a strict caste system with hill giants at the very bottom. The hill giant Lucinda is dissatisfied with her place in the caste system and wants help getting an artifact which will allow her to break free of it.

Adventure Flowchart



Act I

Introducing Lucinda

In a small town, the party is approached by a farmer who is having trouble with a hill giant killing her cattle.

You are approached by a woman whose face shows that she is at her wits' end. She is dressed as a farmer, and she came up to you as soon as she recognized that you aren't a group of normal villagers.

"You have to help me!" She says. "A hill giant, probably down from Grinth, has been slaughtering my cows! That livestock is my livelihood! Please!"

The farmer has little to offer the characters as a reward, but her sister owns the town's inn, so she guarantees the party free room and board in town in exchange for the help. She can relay the following information:

- It's definitely a hill giant, and she's been coming down from the hills to eat these cows nearly every night.
- The hill giant doesn't seem to be interested in anything other than the cows.
- Grinth is a city of giants nestled between the hills and mountains several leagues away.

Lucinda, the hill giant, will return that night to munch on a few more cows. If the players immediately engage her in combat, she gives up after her second round and executes the following box text. Or, if the players observe her for a bit before attacking, she executes the box text after killing each cow.

The hill giant lets out a huge, moaning sigh, and seats herself on boulder which juts up in the middle of the pasture. She reaches out a huge hand and grabs the rear haunch of the cow she killed and starts munching it. After a moment, though, she begins sniffing and crying. The haunch falls to the ground as she weeps into her hands.

If the players decide to kill Lucinda, she will not put up any more of a fight. Afterwards, the farmer will thank the players, and the mayor of the town will scrape together a small monetary reward on behalf of the residents.

If the players decide to talk to Lucinda, she will introduce herself and explain her situation and why she's so miserable.

"It's awful," Lucinda says with a heavy sniff. "Because I'm a hill giant, I can't get nowhere in life. Just work work while the fancier folk get to have parties and pretty clothes and learn to read. I just know I could do more, but I'm not smart enough for them to notice me. I know we could be better giants, but they don't listen to me, because I'm just a hill giant."

Lucinda pauses as a thought slowly crosses her mind. "You're not hill giants! You can help me! If I get smart, I can show them! Help me get the Orb!"

She refers to the Orb of Illumination, an artifact held within Grinth which is said to bestow intelligence and knowledge to all giants that touch it. Lucinda has trouble with complex concepts, so she will shrug noncommittally if the players ask her anything complicated. If asked for a reward or payment, Lucinda offers the "riches of Grinth," though even she's confusedly vague about what those riches might be. She will agree to leave the town alone forever ("I eat because I'm sad."), and ask her kin to do likewise.

Act II

Getting into Grinth

Grinth is several leagues away, deep in the hills. Journeying with Lucinda is tricky as the giant constantly forgets that the party has trouble keeping up with her larger proportions. She isn't frustrated by having to wait for the smaller beings to catch up, but simply eager to get the mission accomplished.

As you crest a particularly large hill, you spy the massive stonework of the city of Grinth. It looks like any other large city you've seen, except the proportions are massive. A wall one hundred feet high protects the city center, and the spires of buildings soar hundreds of feet in the air.

It takes another hour of travel before you reach the edge of the city, and another hour before you near the gate of the central wall. Lucinda greets other giants as she passes them, and they give you odd looks as you scurry to keep up around her feet.

Lucinda needs to get the party into center Grinth, but knows the guards at the gate will not let the adventurers enter the city alive. She knows the smaller, secondary gate only has one guard posted during the day, but she doesn't know how to get the players through without being noticed.

Whatever the players want try, Lucinda will not allow them to cast magic on her owing to a superstitious fear of it. She will gladly lie to the guards at the gate in order to cover for the players, but they need to be the ones to come up with the plan.

With a plan decided, Lucinda goes to enter the gate, but she is second behind another giant.

Ahead of you, another hill giant approaches the guard at the gate. The guard is a two-headed Ettin, much smaller than the giant, but with a fearsome looking morningstar. "Anything to declare?" one head asks.

"Just this," the giant says, as she holds up a human figure by the ankle. The figure is struggling, but unsuccessfully.

"Oh, a fresh dinner!" the Ettin says. "You'll have to kill it here before you enter," the Ettin also says with the other head.

The giant nods and slams the human into the ground, killing it. The ettin nods in approval, waves the giant through, then motions to Lucinda both heads shouting, “next!”

Lucinda is nervous as she talks to the guard and fumbles the lie. Another Ettin guard emerges, and they both start to grill Lucinda. The party either needs to sneak by now (DC 14 group Dexterity(stealth) check), somehow convince the guard to let them through (DC 16 group Charisma check modified for each character by whichever skill is most appropriate to the conversation), or fight the Ettins. If a fight breaks out, Lucinda will deal with one Ettin while the party has a combat with the other.

Convincing the Family

Inside Grinth, Lucinda explains that the Orb is kept in the archive building, which is heavily guarded. Only a few hill giants are ever allowed inside. Fortunately, her dad is one of them. He works shifts cleaning the place as a servant to the higher ranked giants. Unfortunately, Lucinda hasn’t told him about her plan, so she doesn’t know if he’ll help her. In fact, none of her family know about this scheme, and she’ll definitely need their help after she “gets smart.”

Realizing the players are a smart bunch, Lucinda insists that the party join her and her family for dinner in the hopes of convincing them to help.

Lucinda’s family lives in a basement apartment at the end of a dingy alley. However, it is warm and comfortable inside, though everything is wildly out of proportion for you. After an awkward round of introductions, including three separate instances where Lucinda must explain that you are not food, you are offered a seat at the table. That seat is round stool easily ten feet across.

Seated around the table are Lucinda’s family, including her mother and father, her younger sister, and her wizened grandmother. Several entire animals are on the table, freshly roasted and still steaming. You are offered nothing in the way of appropriate sized cutlery, but a large roasted ram is placed in front of your seat.

This is a social encounter in which the players have a chance to talk to Lucinda’s family and enjoy a meal with them. The primary goal is to convince Lucinda’s father to help smuggle her and the party into the archive building. Lucinda will not have trouble convincing him (the adventure cannot continue without doing so), however a successful DC 14 Charisma(persuasion) roll by one of the players will make him more eager to help.

He will explain that in addition to the orb, there’s a secret compartment in the orb’s pedestal where this treasure is stashed. He accidentally found it, and thinks it might be useful to the party. He obviously doesn’t know what it is, and describes it with contradictory statements if pressed about it.

Aside from the father’s help, the dinner party is a good opportunity for the players to ask about Grinth and the giant family’s position in the strict hierarchical society. Lucinda’s mother is concerned about the danger this mission poses to her oldest daughter, but understands its importance. Lucinda’s little sister wants to come too, but relents when told she’s too “little to be helpful,” though she is well over nine feet tall herself. Lucinda’s grandmother is just happy that the family is together and enjoying dinner.

Act III

Getting the Orb

More Ettins guard the archive building, but Lucinda's father takes her and the party to an unguarded backdoor he can unlock. After doing so, he offers directions to the chamber with the orb.

"Alright," Lucinda's father whispers to you. "You go straight for twenty or thirty steps, then turn this way," he says as he holds out his left hand. "Another forty or eighty steps, and you turn this way," he adds, holding out a right hand. "Or, no, wait, maybe it's straight from there, then... yeah, down some stairs, then you turn that way, then turn the first way again, and then you're there."

"Thanks dad!" Lucinda says, hugging her father. She seems satisfied with the directions as she turns to you, saying, "lead the way."

The directions do not get clearer than this no matter how much the players ask the giant about them. However, finding the orb is fairly simple as pictographic signs on the corners of the corridors point the way.

The hallways in the archive are thirty feet wide, and the signs lead the party around several turns, and up a flight of stairs. During these travels, the group must make three group skill checks, each at a DC of 13. Lucinda always passes these checks. First, a group Dexterity(stealth) check to avoid notice through the initial set of corridors. Second, a group Strength(athletics) to quickly climb the giant-sized stairs before any other denizens of the building see them. Finally, a group Dexterity(Stealth) check to go unnoticed to the orb's chamber. Each time one of these checks fails, a pair of ettin guards will come across the party, and the players will need to fight one while Lucinda fights the other.

As the players poke their heads into the chamber of the orb, a pair of stone giants in the room notice them.

As you take a peek around the edge of the huge doorway, you see a massive room dominated by a large pedestal in its center. Atop the pedestal rests a glowing crystal sphere about ten feet in diameter. The glow is soft, like fluorescent moss, and you can hear a faint hum emanating from it.

To the left of the orb, a stone giant holds her hands out to it, head bowed as if in prayer. To the right, another stone giant is looking your way. Her look of confusion changes to one of anger as she steps toward you, a greatclub hefted over one shoulder.

Once again, Lucinda will handle one giant while the players fight the other. If the players are a little high level for the adventure, add an ettin or two to the fight as well. This fight should pose a challenge to the party.

The stone giants' strategy is simple: kill the intruders. If the stone giant knocks a character unconscious, it will attempt to kill it before moving onto the next.

If the players are successful in defeating their stone giant, Lucinda is as well. If the players are forced to retreat, Lucinda will lose her fight as well, either by dying or being subdued and then executed for her crimes the next morning.

Treasure. *The stone giants have some gold on them, though the coins are massive compared to the adventurers' coins, and worth considerably more. The orb itself is unmovable, but if Lucinda's father explained the secret compartment in the pedestal, the party finds a magic giant dagger which functions as a +1 longsword or +1 greatsword (your choice).*

Epilogue

If the party is successful, read:

As the sounds of your fighting finally stop echoing in the corridors outside, you look back to Lucinda, who is approaching the orb. She tentatively reaches out a hand, and gives it the barest of strokes with the tips of her fingers. A bright flash dazzles you for a moment, and when your eyes clear, Lucinda is smiling at you.

“Thank you very much for your assistance,” she says, her voice and inflection sounding haughty and proper. “I have learned much from this artifact, and I now know how I shall secure my family’s place in a higher caste. Indeed, I’ve thought of three distinct plans which will achieve this outcome. As for my promise, I can readily assure you that there will be no more hill giant incursions into the town’s territory. You can tell the mayor as much once I’ve seen you safely from the city.”

Depending on the time you have remaining, Lucinda can escort the characters directly out of the city toward the town, or she will invite the party to her home to celebrate their victory. Lucinda’s family is extremely happy for her, though they are baffled and bemused by her newfound intelligence.

If the party is alive but unsuccessful, getting out of the city isn’t too tricky once Lucinda is no longer escorting them. The town is grateful for their help, and will scrape together a bit of gold as payment for the work.

Appendix: Statblocks

The following item is designated Product Identity, as defined in Section 1(e) of the Open Game License Version 1.0a, and are subject to the conditions set forth in section 7 of the OGL, and are not Open Content: Lucinda.

Material in this appendix is Open Game Content as described in Section 1(d) of the License. The terms of the Open Gaming License version 1.0a are below. All other material in this document is Copyright 2020 Legendary Pants, LLC. All rights reserved.

Lucinda (Hill Giant)

Huge giant, neutral

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)	5 (-3)	9 (-1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +2

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Giant, Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The giant makes two greatclub attacks.

Greatclub. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (3d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. Hit: 21 (3d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Ettin

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages Giant, Orc

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Two Heads. The ettin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Wakeful. When one of the ettin's heads is asleep, its other head is awake.

Actions

Multiattack. The ettin makes two attacks: one with its battleaxe and one with its morningstar.

Battleaxe. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Morningstar. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Stone Giant

Huge giant, neutral

Armor Class 17 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 126 (11d12 + 55)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws DEX +5, CON +8, WIS +4

Skills Athletics +12, Perception +4

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages Giant

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Stone Camouflage. The giant has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

Actions

Multiattack. The giant makes two greatclub attacks.

Greatclub. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. Ranged Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. Hit: 28 (4d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

Rock Catching. If a rock or similar object is hurled at the giant, the giant can, with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, catch the missile and take no bludgeoning damage from it.

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a)"Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b)"Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d)"Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product Identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10 Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12 Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13 Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14 Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15 COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, LLC.

Basic Rules Copyright 2020, Wizards of the Coast, LLC.

Upstart Copyright 2020, Legendary Pants, LLC; Authors: Matthew Ian Stanford, Shawn Stanford