

Lizzie Stark & Jason Morningstar Present

GRANDPA



A game for 4-6 players...
...and two hours...
...to be played remotely...
...with friends and relatives...
...and Grandpa.

Usually family meetings are pretty relaxed. You all like each other. You aren't fools. No one is an opinionated, impulsive asshole.

Well, *Grandpa* was an opinionated, impulsive asshole. But he's dead.

He's also coming to the family meeting.

Fact Box

By Lizzie Stark and Jason Morningstar

Illustrations from *Michael's Crag*, written by Grant Allen and published by Leadenhall Press in 1893.

Players: 4-6, with light in-play facilitation required from everyone. Four players is the sweet spot.

Time: 2 hours total. 45-60 minutes of play.

Prep: Light.

Tone: Darkly comic, from zany to heartfelt but not spooky or malicious.

Content warnings: Dead relatives, bad opinions, family drama,

Thanks to Jeeyon Shim and Hakan Seyalioglu.

A Note on Grandpas

Grandpa is a convenient place-holder for your dead relative. Elder patriarchs are generally perfect for this, but Grandma is an equally wonderful opinionated, impulsive—but loveable!—asshole. If you want to play on hard mode you can make it Cousin Dickie who water skied into a pier or Skiði Skiðisson, distant ancestor and inept tenth-century viking. Maybe you have your own ideas about an ancestor to introduce! Just make sure they are opinionated, impulsive, and an asshole.

Preparing To Play

If you're playing virtually, choose a videochat platform, and remind everyone not to raise their voices, as it makes things hard to hear. If two people want to share a camera, that's fine—someone is visiting! Or play a couple! Make it work. The game will also work just fine audio-only. Or even in the same room.

Creating Your Family

Choose characters. Any mix is fine. Don't play with fewer than four or more than six.

E is the matriarch or patriarch, in their 70s and perhaps about ready to move to a retirement home. *Nosy*.

T is in their early 50s and works a stable job at the button factory. T is divorced. H is their sibling. Their child is D. *A bore*.

H, the sibling of T, is also the spouse of R and parent of S. An unemployed wreck, and *an optimist*.

R, spouse of H, works two jobs to make ends meet, and is here to stand up for H. *Naive*.

D is the entitled kid of T, who can do no wrong in T's eyes. Grandkid of E and Grandpa. *Eccentric*.

S is the weirdo college kid who loves ghosts. Child of H and R, grandkid of E and Grandpa. *Arrogant*.

Identify which played character is the oldest.

Sharing Your Feelings

Each character, one by one starting with the oldest, takes a turn and chooses one of the following:

- You **love** someone here. Tell them.
- One of your relatives **drives you nuts**. Tell them.
- You **admire** one of your relatives but you would never say it out loud. Tell us anyway.
- You have fond memories of **hijinks with Grandpa**. Say three words that tell the whole story, like “Fishing. Beer. Bikini.”
- You **love everyone** here. Tell your whole family you love them.

Family Warmup

As a group, describe what happens every year on Grandpa’s birthday. It’s always a big deal, it’s always fun, and you always do the same things—it’s tradition, after all.

Make a short statement about your experience at Grandpa’s yearly birthday party. Build on what others have shared. You may wish to include one of the following:

- Charades, high stakes poker, or other games, strange **activities**, a beloved excursion
- A spectacular failure of a cake, a cherished prank, or other **shenanigans**
- Some **indulgence** Grandpa only gets on that day that everyone dreads, like watching his favorite film or his awful karaoke
- **Gossip** and intrigue about present and absent family members: Who is getting high in the shed, which cousin’s macramé skills are superior, trivial arguments.

Stop after everyone has had a turn and the feeling seems wholesome and real.

The Meeting

We are here to decide something. First this: Great-grandpa, Grandpa’s dad, buried these in the yard, and the dog recently dug them up. Who should get them, and why?

- A museum-quality ancestral **whaling harpoon** from 1830.
- A **piece of cheese** an ancestor took a bite of in 1860 before joining the army.
- A 1902 Zacharie Astruc **painting** of impressionist flowers, value unknown.
- A cheap walnut veneer **dining table** with Grandpa’s initials carved into it.

There’s another important decision you all need to make as a family. As a group, choose one:

- T or R is **running for elected office**. Will the family be unified in their support? Who will contribute to the campaign? Who is working for the other candidate?
- It’s time to **sell the ancestral house** where most of you grew up. Why now, all of a sudden? Who will handle the details? Who doesn’t want it to be sold?
- T, D, S, or (especially!) E has a **new romantic interest**. Will the family accept them? How soon is too soon to talk about marriage? Why aren’t they here?
- E, D, or S has an **expensive need** related to a crime or an art project. Who will help them? *Should* they be helped?
- T, H, or R has incurred embarrassing and perhaps illegal **debt**. What did they do—or not do? Who can help them cover it? What happens if it isn’t covered?
- **Something else** you’ve all thought up!

Now you have a really nice family with some important things to discuss.

About Grandpa

A good Grandpa will cause controversy and highlight the other characters to keep the conversation going.

Possession

The first person to be Grandpa just decides to get possessed. This can happen at any time, but don't be shy about it.

Grandpa's possessions last 1-3 minutes. Keep it brief and memorable.

Grandpa always begins possessions by saying **"Back in my day..."**

Grandpa ends possessions end with **"See you later, but not if I see you first, [CHARACTER]."** This indicates who will be possessed by Grandpa next, whenever they are ready. Feel free to change these phrases to fit your ghostly relative.

The possessed indicates that they have returned, perhaps by shaking their head as if coming out of a daze. They have no memory of what transpired and should ask for a brief, one or two sentence recap—which may or may not be entirely accurate.

No repeats until everyone has been possessed by Grandpa at least once.

Playing Grandpa

Grandpa should be a fun problem to have at the family meeting, not a nightmare. When you are asked to take on the role of Grandpa, follow these rules and you can't go wrong.

When you play Grandpa:

- You love *everyone* here.
- You know best and are not especially interested in other, lesser opinions.
- You have seen some shit and aren't shy about sharing.
- You want the family to grow.
- You have a favorite, and that favorite often shifts.
- You *love* everyone here.

So be crotchety! Be opinionated! Be prickly, but remember you love these people. You want them rolling their eyes, but not because they hate you.

Don't

- Punch down.
- Talk in an accent.
- Be racist or homophobic or awful.
- Do stuff that will make your friends feel bad in real life. Being Grandpa isn't alibi to be ugly.

Don't be a bad Grandpa.



Practice Possession

Take turns being possessed by Grandpa and passing him around using **“Back in my day”** and **“See you later, but not if I see you first, [CHARACTER].”** When you are possessed, as Grandpa, choose one of the following:

- Tell us how much you love **one of us**.
- Tell us how much one of us **drives you nuts**.
- Tell us which one of us you **secretly admire**.
- Tell us a **fond memory** you have with one of us. Say three words that tell the whole story, like “Bicycle. Ramp. Hospital.”
- Tell us how much you love **all of us** in a way that is also annoying.

Start the Meeting

When you are ready, start the meeting. As mentioned, anyone can be the first to be possessed by Grandpa.

Play should last about 45 minutes.

The oldest character begins play by telling everyone why you are gathered here.

End the Meeting

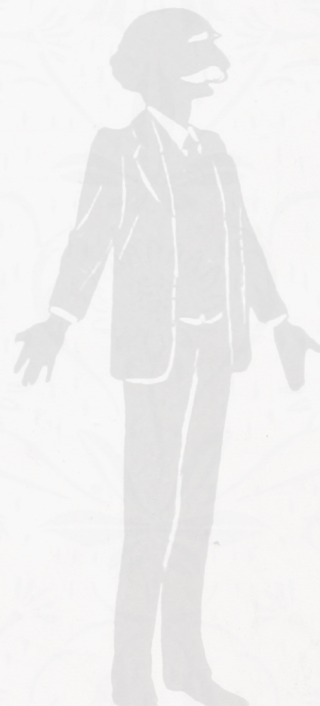
The meeting can end any time after:

- Everyone has gotten a chance to be possessed by Grandpa *and*
- Time is up or all the family issues have been happily resolved *or* you’ve run out of things to talk about and the game has run its course.

The oldest character’s player formally ends the meeting, which ends play. A good way to do this is to say something like **“Thanks for coming to the family meeting, everyone. That was...enlightening, but I guess we’ll have to leave it there for now.”**

After Playing

We hope you have a light, fun game, but you never know how things will land with folks. Make sure you take some time after playing to chat informally and make sure everyone is feeling good before going your separate ways.



Cheat Sheet: The Family

The Meeting

We are here to decide something. First this:

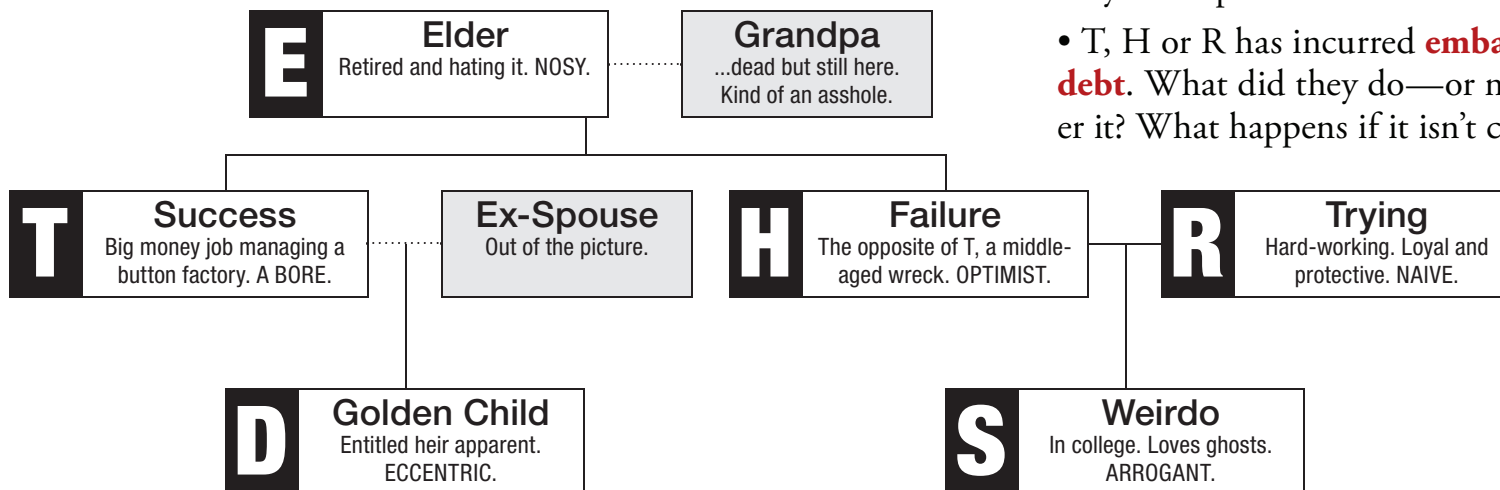
Great-grandpa, Grandpa's dad, buried these in the yard, and the dog recently dug them up. Who should get them, and why?

- A museum-quality 1830 **whaling harpoon** with a family legend attached.
- **A piece of cheese** an ancestor took a bite of in 1860 before joining the army.
- A cheap walnut veneer **dining table** with Grandpa's initials carved into it.
- A 1902 **Zacharie Astruc painting** of Impressionist flowers, value unknown.

The Other Issue

There's another important decision you all need to make as a family. As a group, choose one more:

- T or R are **running for elected office**. Will the family be unified in their support? Who will contribute to the campaign, and how much? Who will volunteer? Who is already working for the other candidate?
- It's time to **sell the ancestral house** where most of you grew up. Why now, all of a sudden? Who will handle the details, and who decides who will get the money? Who doesn't want it to be sold?
- T, D, S, or (especially!) E has **a new romantic interest**. Will the family accept them? Does the family even like them? How soon is too soon to talk about marriage? Why aren't they here?
- E, D or S has **an expensive need**—they bonded out of jail or need funding for an art project. Who will help them? Should they be helped?
- T, H or R has incurred **embarrassing and perhaps illegal debt**. What did they do—or not do? Who can help them cover it? What happens if it isn't covered?



Cheat Sheet: Grandpa

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Cheat Sheet: Prep

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Practicing Possession

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