ALL WE HAVE IS US

A GAME FOR 3-6 PLAYERS BY **CASEY LUCAS**

BRIEF

You did it. The dust has settled and you survived. After a dramatic jailbreak, your crew of highly-trained professionals must now scatter to the winds. You know in your guts that you will never see one another again. But you are all old friends, so saying goodbye isn't going to be easy.

All We Have Is Us is a game for 3-6 players and one facilitator inspired by classic heist and jailbreak stories. But rather than replaying the job itself, this experience is designed to inspire reflection on a simple question that doesn't have a simple answer: if you knew the end was coming and you'd never see your friends again, what would you share? What would you confess?

MATERIALS

FOR PLAYERS: This game is designed to be played over video chat programs such as Discord, Zoom, or Google Hangouts. This and a healthy imagination is all the players need.

FOR THE FACILITATOR: The facilitator, hereafter referred to as **Mission Control**, will require additional materials: one numbered notecard per player (or a sheet of paper folded into eighths), a pen, a timer, and one postcard per player to be mailed after the game.

RUNTIME: 45 minutes or so depending on number of players

SETUP

1. Ensure every player knows how to turn off their camera and mute their mic on your video chat system without disconnecting from the call.
2. Read players the **Brief** and then the **Player Characters** sections. Give them a couple of minutes to flesh out their character concepts.
3. Number your players 1 through however many there are on your paper/notecards, then while they go through player setup, write down the **roles** and **wounds** they choose.
4. Mission Control then sends each player a **secret** by private message and tells them some details (or shows them the photo) of **one postcard each**.

PLAYER CHARACTERS - PREGAME

You are a member of an elite team who just busted someone out of incarceration. As we establish our crew, we should also establish our **setting**. Where did you break your friend out of? A standard jail? A government black site? A holding cell at an airport? A futuristic cyberpunk jail for dissidents? A POW camp? How long had the Escapee been incarcerated before you broke them free?

Next, determine what each player's **role** was in the jailbreak. Here are some example roles. The only one required is the escapee. Other roles could be: computer specialist, lookout, getaway driver, weapons specialist, muscle, scout, diversion, lockpicker, medic, financier, inside man, etc. How did the jailbreak occur? What technology was used? Were any of your team or any innocents hurt along the way?

Lastly, the most important aspect of character creation for this game: every member of this team is carrying a **wound**. This is some aspect of their past or personality that causes them great pain to think about. The sort of thing you'd regret forever or save for a deathbed confession, if you were even the type to confess on your deathbed. There are some examples on Page 4 if you are stuck.

Ruminate for a moment on your wound. When you know what it is, private message it to Mission Control, and they will message you **a secret** in return.

At the end of Setup, every character should know: the setting, their role, their wound, and a secret prompt given to them by Mission Control. Mission Control should have a copy of each of these written down. (These notes are only inspiration to facilitate roleplay, so if details get forgotten in the heat of the moment, please don't stress it.)

PLAYER CHARACTERS - GAMEPLAY

Over the course of gameplay, you will be guided down memory lane by **Mission Control,** who will prompt you to reminisce about the ups and downs of your jailbreak, your narrow brushes with defeat, and your victory. But deep down, you know the real purpose of this call: it's time to say goodbye. Because now that you've broken the Escapee out, their jailers will never stop hunting you. Now is your chance to say goodbye.

One by one, players will find their audio/video connections severed from the others as Mission Control initiates **Countdown Events.** These will end with a player's feed going dark and silent. Once a player has been silenced, they enter the second phase of the game: listening. Each player will have the opportunity to hear their fellow jailbreakers grieve for them, or perhaps confess their sins to those remaining. In this game, what comes after you're separated from your friends is just as important as what you say to them before you go.

MISSION CONTROL - PREGAME

As Mission Control, you take the role of the coordinator of a successful escape mission. You've pulled the strings from afar, communicating with your team via radio, computer, cell phone, whatever it takes. You have gathered the team for their final briefing before it all goes dark. This role will still play a part in the narrative but be aware that your goal here is to facilitate the players' stories.

Once your players have their **roles** and **wounds** created and you've written them all down, send each character an additional prompt: a secret they kept to themselves on the jailbreak job. For some ideas, see the examples on Page 4.

MISSION CONTROL - GAMEPLAY

Call "Action" to begin play. Call together the crew and congratulate them on successfully breaking the Escapee free. Ask the Escapee how they're doing, if they're safe, and let players take it from there. Ask prompting questions if things start slow: how did your jailbreak go? Was anyone discovered or hurt on the way out? Were there rad explosions? Or was this jailbreak more the tense, meaningful silences kind? Where is everyone holed up? Do you think you were followed?

Inform the crew that you aren't sure how long you can maintain their video connection and let them ad-lib amongst themselves to get into character.

Once a few minutes have passed, begin the **Countdown Events** with **Player 1** on your numbered paper:

At your mission control station, you see that something is about to interfere with a player's connection. Do they have to bug out because the Antagonists are on the way? Is their battery dying? Is something about to interfere with the signal?

Set your **timer** to count down for five minutes. Warn the players that they only have five minutes left with Player 1. (To add tension to the scene, you can loop a [low battery] or [pending alarm SFX] for the last few minutes if you wish.)

Let the players engage one another during these countdowns. Prompt them if they go quiet but let them spend this time saying their thank-yous and goodbyes.

When time runs out, the player suffering the Countdown Event should mute their mic and disable their webcam, listening and reflecting on what is said in their absence.

As the game wears on, allow your Mission Control persona to grow more desperate if that seems in character—these are your friends too, after all. The game ends when all cameras go dark. It's important to take a moment after this happens to allow players to fully absorb this last, final silence. Then skip to **Postgame**.

EXAMPLE **WOUNDS** FROM YOUR PAST

You got someone blamed for something.
You ran from an important problem.
You cheated on something/someone.
You joined the group on false pretences.
You sabotaged someone's career.
You lied to cover up a huge mistake.
You stopped at nothing to get your way.

You failed to protect someone vulnerable.
You threw a loved one under the bus.
You never tried hard when it mattered.
You stole something from someone dear.
You told a big lie by omission.
You failed to keep an important promise.
You caused someone's death via inaction.

EXAMPLE **SECRETS** ON THE JOB

Didn't really want to rescue the Escapee.
Lied about their qualifications for the job.
Sold out Player # in the past but regrets it.
Has always seen Player # as a rival.
Got wounded during the getaway and hid it.
Never cared if they made it out alive.
Was only there for revenge on the jailers.

Was only in it for the money… at first.
Has always had secret feelings for Player #.
Planned to sell the group out but then didn't.
Was blackmailed into going on the jailbreak.
Was supposed to be the one in jail all along.
Always secretly looked up to Player #.
Accidentally revealed the getaway path.

POSTGAME – PLAYERS

Sit for a moment. Think about what you witnessed. Think about what you shared. Regardless of how your signal was cut or why you lost contact with your team, you are alive. You got away. Now Mission Control will give you one final gift in parting. They have secured one last line of communication to another player: a postcard which they promise can be delivered securely. Use this postcard to let your friend know that you survived. Is there anything else you dare to say? Anything you held back? Either way, now's the time to let them know you made it (and maybe they're going to make it, too.)

POSTGAME – MISSION CONTROL

Once the game ends, leave your camera off for a few minutes. Let your players absorb everything they just went through together. Private message each player and assign them the name of another player—they will now write a postcard to this player and let them know that they survived. Players will DM you their messages and it is up to you to write them up and send the cards in a timely fashion. Now each player gets a real life memento of the game they played with their real friends and the bonds they forged with their roleplayed ones.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

If you play this game, I'd love to hear about it! I'm most active on Twitter as @CaseyLucasQuaid and can be reached by email at casey@dinopoloclub.com.