WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD...

A LARP OF CONVERSATION, RECONCILIATION AND SUPERHEROES FOR 6 PLAYERS

ROLL
FLIP
DRAW

WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD...

Well, This Is Awkward... is a game where players take on the role of estranged superheroes, reunited when they are all captured by their archenemy The Engineer. In the past, you fought side by side, protected and uplifted each other, grew together, worked to change the world...until you didn't.

Opposing principles, growing cynicism, conflicting priorities and classic resentment resulted in you all ultimately going your own ways. It's been at least five years since any of you have seen each other in the flesh, and longer still since there was any recognisable warmth between you.

And you've all just regained consciousness in the same cell.

Well, This Is Awkward... is designed to be played over Zoom or similar video-call software. It involves some world and character-building as a group, and then 90 minutes of play.

One player will need to act as facilitator during the world/character-building - this fundamentally consists of relaying the content of this pack to the other players as you go.

The 90 minutes of play is relatively open, and focuses on developing conversations and dynamics between the characters. During this time players can introduce new information, backstory and suchlike (in a 'yes, and' improvisational spirit) beyond what is established during the initial workshop. It's best suited to players who enjoy quite an open and light structure to their games, and play more interested in conversation and relationships than concrete action. as having gone quiet and not participating in conversation.

SAFETY TOOLS

If your group has preferred safety mechanics that work well for them, absolutely use these. However, the following are recommended:

Cut and Brake: each player has two cards, with 'cut' and 'brake' written on them. If a player's boundaries have been crossed or are about to be crossed, then a player (any player) can hold up the cut card to their camera for everyone to see. Pause the game and check in with everyone, only resuming when everyone feels safe and comfortable to resume. If a player doesn't want play to escalate, they can hold up the 'brake' card, to signal to other players that current content should not be escalated, and give them a chance to back off. Everyone must respect each player's right to play these cards, and they are not to be challenged; additionally, these are tools that go hand-in-hand with looking out for one another (they are not a replacement for basic conscientiousness in play).

Open Table: a player can leave the game (in this case, by turning their camera off, or simply going out of shot) and return whenever they need, without having to justify themselves. Their character is simply treated as having gone quiet and not participating in conversation.

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CHARACTERS

Begin by picking characters from the following overviews.

Phantom - can shape shift and mimic any sound they hear
The Dragon - can breathe corrosive acid and has super strength
Halo - can create defensive and damaging auras around themselves
Silver Ghost - can become weightless and turn near-invisible through turning reflective
Smoke Signal - can take on a smoke-like form, fly and control fire
Vortex - can control airflow, from directing winds to creating vacuums

These powers are deliberately somewhat open to interpretation; you will not be 'using' them or need to have precise parameters for them locked in during the game. Define for yourself how your power works, what its limits are, and any cost it may carry to use it. All share these with each other, so the group has a rough idea of everyone's powers. These should be roughly on a par with each other - making Vortex able to create a vacuum around a whole planet, whilst The Dragon's acid breath can only reach 5ft, for instance, won't work well given that you all fought alongside each other.

Once you have chosen your characters and defined your powers a little more, pick a 'mundane' name for your character - the one they were given at birth, before their powers appeared.

Change your names on your video call to '[Mundane name]/[Superhero name]'. What you call each other is down to you - someone trying to keep things professional might stick to superhero names, someone appealing to a shared and intimate history might use mundane names, someone trying to piss people off might pretend to have forgotten both of these!

Once you've named your characters, download only *your* character's file from the page where this pack was downloaded.

Each character's file contains the following:

- The reason they consider this situation to be a specific character's fault
- The reason any other character might consider this situation to be their fault
- The reason they'd never blame a specific character for this situation (they are sure someone else must feel similarly about them, but have no clue who or why anymore)
- Their 'tell'
- Some other character's 'tell'

Look over your information. Consider what it - coupled with your powers - says about who you are, your opinions and potential histories with the other characters. There will be some characters about whom you have very little information so far; consider what that means too.

Your 'tell' is a habit of yours - something that would be recognised as something typically you only by someone who knows you well and has spent a lot of time with you. It's a go-to motion, a default mode, or unconscious tic - the kind of thing that a friend would pick up on if doing an impression of you. It is not something you are doing non-stop, but something you often catch yourself doing.

Tells play an important role in the game. When you all first awaken, trapped in The Engineer's lair, there is inevitable tension between you all. Conversation at the beginning of the game is limited to anything after you parted ways - your solo careers, your current problem, what you've seen of each other from afar and so on. As you orientate yourselves, realise what's happened, perhaps begin throwing around accusations and suchlike - tells are how you rebuild what you once had.

Whenever you see the tell listed as 'another character's tell' in your character file, smile at them. Whenever someone smiles after you do your tell, smile back. Enjoy these moments of recognition, a friend catching you out in a classic habit, a moment between two of you that might stand apart from the current conversation or action. Once this has happened a couple of times and you're confident that you've identified who the tell belongs to (or your tell has been identified), you and that player can talk about the time prior to you all parting ways. This might involve some tense or negative memories, but also includes fond reminiscing, how you worked together to solve problems, what you all got out of being together, and suchlike.

Tells should be as natural as possible, not telegraphed, performed, or forced. If you don't see anyone responding to your tell initially, wonder why, and let that feed into your role-play; try to avoid the temptation to make it unnaturally obvious.

BUILDING THE WORLD

Taking it in turns, each state a fact about an event in the group's past, using the contents of your character file and the conclusions you've drawn from them to help inspire you. You can use these to add to the canon of the world, including old enemies and suchlike.

These should be facts that are general enough to easily remember and build upon either your history as superheroes or as friends. No fact should directly contradict one that has already been established. These facts can endow other characters with traits or suchlike ('I fell out with Vortex specifically over their preference to capture, not kill, our enemies') but players retain the right to veto facts that endow them in ways they're not comfortable role-playing.

Do this three times to build up some of the characters' shared history. Players can take notes if they would prefer; these facts can be referred to by players during the game, but don't necessarily need to be remembered. More backstory and detail will be invented and developed during play, as part of conversation - you can reminisce about as-yet-unmentioned events or dig up not-yet- established grievances. This shared history is simply a framework to build upon.

Following this, each player takes a minute or two to describe where they last remember being, before waking up in this cell. Use this as a chance to paint a picture of your current disparate lives - some of you may still be functioning as superheroes, some of you might be hermits, some of you might be living under fake identities. In character, you do not necessarily know this about the other characters, but you're all loosely aware of how each other is doing.

FACILITATING THE GAME

The game itself will last 90 minutes. This is the length of time between everyone regaining consciousness, and you being sufficiently recovered to use your powers (and try to escape). The game will largely consist of dealing with the shock of seeing each other again, slowly getting reacquainted, rebuilding the rapport and trust between you all, and ultimately planning your escape (and perhaps even what you will do once you have escaped). How much time each takes will be unique to each player group; enjoy seeing how the dynamic between yours unfolds.

Set a timer for 90 minutes; this can be one player with an alarm set, or a countdown timer visible to everyone on the call if necessary (the latter is preferable). Whoever is currently acting as facilitator should read the following aloud to everyone:

We are all in The Engineer's lair. We are exhausted and too weak to currently use our powers, though we can of course speculate or plan how to use them once we're recovered. There is one door out of this cell. It cannot be damaged by The Dragon's acid or Halo's auras, and can physically only be opened from the other side. It requires a key code to open it, which is only known to nearby guards. Escaping will require solving these problems. As long as the cell's door is closed, the guards cannot hear our conversation. This is just between us.

The Engineer is known to manipulate perception; any technical glitches in the next 90 minutes should be treated as The Engineer's power to distort perception - it's not beyond her to interfere with our own perceptions of reality. If there are any glitches, this is a sign we might be being watched, and should briefly pause talk of escape if that is being discussed.

[Allow for any questions or clarifications players have about the above; if something is not made explicit within this pack, you can decide it as a group.]

In a moment we will all close our eyes; upon opening them, we will be our characters, regaining consciousness together in a cell in The Engineer's lair. We should try and see how long we can let the uncomfortable silence between our characters last.

Whoever speaks first must start by saying 'well, this is awkward...'

At 90 minutes, we will feel our powers begin to come back and say any final things we need to say to each other. We will then confirm we are all ready to attempt to escape, and focus on summoning our powers, which we will do by closing our eyes. When we open them again, we will be ourselves, and the game will be over.

[All any final questions.]

Everyone close your eyes, and in a moment, open them.

[Close your eyes; when you open them, start playing.]