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Page 1 of 2

# Great escape **artists**

Imaginations run wild when four siblings plan their family business's next strategic move

## Belinda Seeney

The Shakhovskoy siblings sit around a dining table, discussing the zombie apocalypse.

All agree the military training Simon, 33, received in the Australian Army would make him most likely to survive the post-human world. He, on the other hand, nominates Giovanna, 30, as the family's dark horse, labelling her "a badass".

When it comes to their weapon of choice, the four are divided.

Giovanna and youngest brother Paul, 27, would arm themselves with a samurai sword, she drawing inspiration from Tarantino flick *Kill Bill*, he channelling Michonne from cult television show, *The Walking Dead*.

Simon jokes a dragon was his first choice until a *Game of Thrones* plot twist necessitated a strategic rethink, settling on a battle axe instead.

The trio dissolves into laughter when Matthew, 35, loads a shotgun into his hypothetical arsenal.

"Where will you get the bullets, Matt?" Giovanna teases her eldest brother.

"My pocket," he shrugs.

The laughter intensifies.

"You'd need pretty deep pockets.

Oh Matt, you're going to die first," Giovanna jokes.

"You'll be the first to go," Paul adds with glee.

"Shotgun? Rookie. This is why you're not going to survive," Simon says, shaking his head in disbelief.

The quartet are Directors of the Extraordinary, the interactive entertainment and education company they founded in 2014 with Escape Hunt Brisbane, the city's first

dedicated escape game venue. Its success propelled them to develop "gamified" corporate exercises and educational programs.

The kitchen war council is ready for its next project: Containment.

The large-scale strategy game takes over Brisbane Powerhouse for 12 days this month, "infecting" players with a zombie virus and giving them 60 minutes to find a cure.

"It will be over four levels but once players enter the game, they'll be completely isolated from the general public, immersed in the world and won't break from that world until they exit the game," Simon says.

Actors will emulate the undead and blockbuster sets will create a zombie wasteland.

Containment aims to replicate the success of their 2015 experience, "The Great Escape From Boggo Road Gaol", billed at the time as "Australia's largest mass escape game". Over 10 days, 1500 inmates were locked in the former jail's cells, 80 at a time, and given 90 minutes to break out.

"It was our first foray into something bigger and more exciting than four walls," Giovanna says. "Our imaginations went wild after that."

The siblings grew up in Indooroopilly and Fig Tree Pocket with their parents Margherita and Greg, who are their cheerleaders and occasional set builders. After high school – Giovanna at Brigidine and her brothers at Marist College Ashgrove – the siblings pursued

different career paths. Matt applied his business and economics degrees to international social enterprises, Simon served as an army engineer for 10 years, Giovanna was a social worker specialising in child health and protection and Paul worked as a graphic designer.

"Because we are all so different we all just get along really well and are able to focus on our own little parts of the business," Simon says.

Matt says, "We all really enjoy working together. When it comes to creating new ideas and products, we all come together into that space and have really cool brainstorming sessions."

**CONTAINMENT, Oct 18-29, Brisbane Powerhouse, [brisbanepowerhouse.org](http://brisbanepowerhouse.org)**



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Page 2 of 2



**ACTION PLAN** ... Paul, Matt, Giovanna and Simon Shakhovskoy's next project is Containment. Picture: AAP/Renae Droop