

WRITER'S EDITION



IS OUR QUEEN A  
EAST END KILLING  
**GANGSTER** HIDE  
CRET DIAMOND  
YSIDE **LONDON**  
O FAT FOR HER  
**GRAHAM** OF CH  
TERROR PLOT TO  
CH **WALMSLEY**

# GWO1 GANGSTER LONDON WRITER'S EDITION

## CREDITS

Playset written by Graham Walmsley

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Edited by Steve Segedy

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*Gangster London* was Playset of the Month, February 2010.

## BOILERPLATE

This playset is an accessory for the *Fiasco* role-playing game by Bully Pulpit Games.

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For more information about *Fiasco* or to download other Playsets and materials, visit [www.bullypulpitgames.com](http://www.bullypulpitgames.com).

If you'd like to create your own Playset or other *Fiasco*-related content, we'd like to help. Write us at [info@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:info@bullypulpitgames.com).



"When you play, play *hard*." - Theodore Roosevelt

# THE SCORE

## A NASTY PIECE OF WORK

A dead body, a Cockney drug-dealer selling from the back of the kebab shop, three suitcases full of blue flake cocaine and an unexploded World War Two bomb—these are a few of the things that make for a proper East End fiasco. This Playset is for fans of films with a certain ugly, stylish sensibility.

Maybe you're just a working-class bloke looking to catch a break, and your mate from the pub knows a guy who has a sure thing. Only it's not a sure thing and then your mate's dodgy girlfriend gets involved, and then the Russians find out what you've done and it's all going to go tits-up, isn't it?

## MOVIE NIGHT

*Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, The Bank Job, Sexy Beast.*

## WRITER'S EDITION?

This is a special edition of *Gangster London*, including Will Hindmarch's exploration of using *Fiasco* as a writer's tool. See page 12 for more information.

# RELATIONSHIPS...

## 1 WORK

- ◻ Me and this bloke I used to work with
- ◻◦ Me and my boss from work
- ◻◦◦ Me and this bloke from work
- ◻◻◻ Me and this bloke who fixed our car / plumbing / electrics
- ◻◻◻◻ Me and this bloke I bought something off of
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Me and my doctor / lawyer / accountant

## 2 FRIENDSHIP

- ◻ Former cellmates
- ◻◦ Army buddies
- ◻◦◦ This bloke from down the pub
- ◻◻◻ "I saved his life, you know"
- ◻◻◻ "I've known him since school"
- ◻◻◻◻◻ "We're just mates, we're not like shagging or anything."

## 3 ODD

- ◻ Alcoholics Anonymous
- ◻◦ Salvation Army
- ◻◦◦ Young Conservatives
- ◻◻◻ Socialists
- ◻◻◻◻ Environmental campaigners
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Probation officer and criminal

## 4 ROMANCE

- ◻ Secret lovers
- ◻◻ Married
- ◻◻◻ Separated
- ◻◻◻◻ On-again, off-again partners
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Stalker and stalkee
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ Don't like each other much, but can't stop shagging

## 5 CRIME

- ◻ Criminal boss and underling
- ◻◻ Gamblers
- ◻◻◻ Small-time housebreakers
- ◻◻◻◻ Con man and mark
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Drug dealers
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Hoodies

## 6 FAMILY

- ◻ Siblings
- ◻◻ Cousins
- ◻◻◻ Distant relatives who have never met
- ◻◻◻◻ Parent and child or stepchild
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Uncle / aunt and nephew / niece
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ Parent-in-law / son- or daughter-in-law

**...IN GANGSTER LONDON**

# NEEDS...

## 1 TO GET LAID

- ...to prove something
- ...to get something you want
- ...to forget about getting dumped
- ...to rekindle an old romance
- ...for the first time
- ...for the last time

## 2 TO GET SOME ANSWERS

- ...about Ned's "Four o'clock meeting in Brixton"
- ...about someone's infidelity
- ...to a question of parentage
- ...from the police, about an unsolved crime
- ...about the accident that still haunts you
- ...about Shelley's commitment to the enterprise

## 3 TO GET REVENGE

- ...on Steps and his crew
- ...on the Russians who humiliated you
- ...on a co-worker
- ...on a television personality
- ...on a family member
- ...on a police detective

## 4 TO GET RESPECT

- ◻ ...from the London criminal underground
- ◻◦ ...by showing everybody who the real boss is
- ◻◦ ...from your lover, by keeping an unfortunate promise
- ◻◻ ...from a family member, by backing their plan
- ◻◻ ...from yourself, by standing up to a bully
- ◻◻◻ ...by going straight at last

## 5 TO GET RICH

- ◻ ...by ripping off a dealer
- ◻◦ ...by running eastern European prostitutes
- ◻◦ ...by robbing a family business
- ◻◻ ...by working a political deal in the neighborhood
- ◻◻ ...by opening a kebab shop
- ◻◻◻ ...by finding a buyer for these diamonds you “found”

## 6 TO GET OUT

- ◻ ...of London before the Russians find you
- ◻◦ ...of debt, through one last bold deal
- ◻◦ ...of a relationship gone dangerously sour
- ◻◻ ...of your interminable marriage
- ◻◻ ...of an obligation to a powerful criminal
- ◻◻◻ ...of England before Scotland Yard catches up with you

**...IN GANGSTER LONDON**

# LOCATIONS...

## 1 RESIDENCES

- ▣ Flat 253, Broadwater House
- ▣ "The Rivings"
- ▣ 23 Mulberry Grove
- ▣ Raddeston Place
- ▣ Villa El Mariachi, Costa Del Sol
- ▣ The Squat

## 2 HOUSES

- ▣ Penthouse
- ▣ Auction House
- ▣ Whorehouse
- ▣ Family house
- ▣ Country house
- ▣ Warehouse

## 3 LANDMARKS

- ▣ The British Library
- ▣ The Tower of London
- ▣ The River Thames
- ▣ Canary Wharf
- ▣ The Millennium Dome
- ▣ Kew Gardens



## 4 FOOD AND DRINK

- Ali's Cafe
- ◻ The Crown and Anchor
- ◻ Grabber's Nightclub
- ◻ Stan Fish's Gentleman's Entertainment Club
- ◻ The Ivy
- ◻ The Royal India Tandoori

## 5 WORKPLACES

- Reiman, Losser and Reiman, a large bank
- ◻ The pig farm
- ◻ Jacob Fein, jeweller
- ◻ Captain Comic, books and graphic novels
- ◻ Bulldog English's specialist bookstore
- ◻ The Paper Recycling Plant

## 6 ODDITIES

- Cat rescue home
- ◻ Royal Northern Hospital
- ◻ The Lodge of the Masonic Order of the Stars
- ◻ A synagogue
- ◻ Locker 3867 At Waterloo Station
- ◻ "You Do Not Ask What Goes On Back There"

**...IN GANGSTER LONDON**

# OBJECTS...

## 1 UNFORTUNATE

- ▣ Forty chickens in eighty cages
- ▣◦ Hydroponic cannabis-growing facility
- ▣◦ Collection of priceless stamps, ruined
- ▣◦◦ “Peckham Rolex” electronic ankle monitor
- ▣◦◦ Dead body
- ▣◦◦ Ten thousand leaflets about Jesus

## 2 TRANSPORTATION

- ▣ Motorbike
- ▣◦ Nondescript white van
- ▣◦◦ Subaru Impreza 5-door wagon
- ▣◦◦ Milk float
- ▣◦◦ Speedboat
- ▣◦◦ Rolls Royce

## 3 WEAPON

- ▣ Sawn-off shotgun
- ▣◦ “Jesus Christ, it’s a fucking katana!”
- ▣◦◦ An unexploded World War Two bomb
- ▣◦◦ Antique duelling pistols
- ▣◦◦ Three hand grenades
- ▣◦◦ A water pistol that looks like a real gun

## 4 INFORMATION

- ▣ Angus' mysterious last words
- ▣ A conversation you shouldn't have been listening to
- ▣ A contract; maybe a legally binding one
- ▣ An encrypted CD
- ▣ Property deeds
- ▣ Compromising photographs

## 5 VALUABLES

- ▣ Ten thousand pounds in 5 pence pieces
- ▣ An arse-load of diamonds!
- ▣ Vintage car
- ▣ "All you need to know is: what's in here is fucking valuable."
- ▣ Suitcase full of cash
- ▣ Purebred cat

## 6 EXTRA-LEGAL

- ▣ The strongest weed you will ever smoke
- ▣ Three suitcases full of blue flake cocaine
- ▣ Five thousand fake passports
- ▣ Six Romanian asylum-seekers
- ▣ Floor plans of a Ministry of Defence establishment
- ▣ "This is the most dangerous weapon you have ever laid your dirty little hands on."

**...IN GANGSTER LONDON**

# A CHAV-TASTIC INSTA-SETUP

## RELATIONSHIPS IN GANGSTER LONDON

For three players...

- \* Friendship: Mates from prison
- \* Crime: Drug people
- \* Family: Siblings

For four players, add...

- \* Romance: Secret lovers

For five players, add...

- \* Community: Church friends

## NEEDS IN GANGSTER LONDON

For three players...

- \* To get revenge: On the Russians who humiliated you

For four or five players, add...

- \* To get rich: By opening a Kebab shop

## OBJECTS IN GANGSTER LONDON

For three or four players...

- \* Weapon: A water pistol that looks like a real gun

For five players, add...

- \* Unfortunate: Collection of priceless stamps, ruined

## LOCATIONS IN GANGSTER LONDON

For three, four or five players...

- \* Food and drink: The Crown and Anchor

# USING FIASCO AS A WRITER'S TOOL

We asked our friend, author and game designer Will Hindmarch, to say a few words about using *Fiasco* as a writer's tool. Will being Will, this simple request turned into an epic investigation into the nature of the writer's process, and the intersection of word count and exhilarating play. Much of what he has to say appears in *The Fiasco Companion*, but—Will being Will—he also gave us a very thorough worked example that included a meaty and kick-ass script.

The script is worth reading for entertainment alone, but when coupled with his thoughts on repurposing *Fiasco*'s Setup phase in the service of writing, it is a slice of fried gold.

## WILL HINDMARCH SAYS...

This won't be entirely "in a writer's head," but it'll be lonely fun. I've wanted to write a one-act play (or something like it) based on a *Fiasco* Playset for some time, so let's see how it goes.

To give this a shot, I took Graham Walmsley's Playset, *Gangster London* and drew a little three-sided play space out of it. I didn't roll dice. I just picked things that I thought intersected in interesting ways, grabbing what struck me as compelling options off the list—but not necessarily the most compelling items. I wanted to challenge myself to work with somewhat more subdued selections.

As soon as I started picking Relationships, though, a story started to emerge. It was everything I could do to avoid sorting out the whole story at once—to "break it," as TV writers say. I wanted some things to emerge naturally through the telling.

As of this writing, I've laid out the cards, assigned Relationships, a Need, a Location, and an Object and I'm ready to write.

# THE SETUP

JONNY

RELATIONSHIP

SMALL TIME  
HOUSEBREAKERS

OBJECT  
INFORMATION  
OVERHEARD  
CONVERSATION

RELATIONSHIP  
FRIENDSHIP

I SAVED HIS LIFE  
ONCE, YOU KNOW

NEED  
TO GET RICH  
SELLING DIAMONDS  
YOU ... FOUND

IAN

ODDITIES  
YOU DO NOT ASK  
WHAT GOES ON  
BACK THERE

NICK

RELATIONSHIP

ODD  
ALCOHOLICS  
ANONYMOUS

GANGSTER LONDON: AN EXERCISE

Written by  
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Based on “Fiasco: Gangster London”  
by Graham Walmsley

EXT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE - DAY

It's a tiny little ground-level garage in London's East End, one in a row of look-alikes crammed into the rear arches at the base of a big brick building. A big blue door blocks off the garage from the alley it would open onto. A lorry wobbles down the cobblestones outside.

Two blokes, IAN (26, in skinny jeans and a sweatjacket) and NICK (42, regular jeans and a wind-breaker) stride up the alley and enter the garage.

INT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE - DAY

IAN waves NICK in and pulls the big blue door shut behind them. As IAN fiddles with the lock, NICK takes a few HESITANT STEPS into the garage. There's no car, just a table and chairs under a low, arched ceiling, and a narrow red door on the back wall.

NICK

You know, this is my  
first time here.

IAN

I know.

NICK

You guys own this place?

IAN

Almost. We're hoping to get  
it paid off soon. In time to  
sell it when the gallery  
owners eventually make their  
way down here.



NICK  
Almost. So you and Jonny  
share a mortgage or  
something?

IAN  
Or something. Not to any  
bank, if that's what you're  
thinking.

NICK nods.

IAN (CONT'D)  
Have a seat.

NICK does. IAN doesn't.

IAN (CONT'D)  
Fancy a Coke?

NICK  
You didn't bring me down  
here for a Coke, did you  
now?

IAN  
(beat)  
No.

NICK  
Then what?

IAN  
I wanted to talk to you  
about something.

IAN walks in a slow circle around the table.

NICK  
You want to sit?

IAN  
I want to stand.

NICK  
Okay.

IAN  
So...

NICK  
(cheeky)  
What is it, my son?

IAN  
I have a job coming up. A  
meeting. Me and Jonny do.  
And...

NICK  
You're afraid you'll take a  
drink.

IAN  
I'm thinking I have to. I  
know I want to, even though  
I don't want to, but I'm  
thinking I have to.

NICK  
Ian.

IAN  
I know!

NICK  
Ian.

IAN  
I know.

NICK  
I think I'll take that Coke  
now.

EXT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE – CONTINUOUS

A YOUNG BLOKE (26, ratty jeans and a hoodie) walks up to the big blue door and PAUSES. He reacts, as if he hears something. He peers through a crack in the door, then puts his ear to it.

INT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE – CONTINUOUS

NICK sips Coke out of a can. IAN paces.

IAN

It's an important meeting, though. It's about, you know, it's about our future. Mine and Jonny's.

NICK

If you start drinking again, Ian, you have no future.

IAN

I know that, don't I?

NICK

Then you can't be serious about this. Take the meeting and just don't drink.

IAN

I can't do that.

NICK

Have a fucking Sprite!

IAN

I can't do that. You don't know these people. I need to look hard in front of these gents if I want them to take me seriously, don't I?

NICK  
You need to decide where  
your future lies, my son. If  
you go back into the bottle--

IAN  
I'm talking about one drink.

NICK  
--then I can't help you.

IAN  
Fucking great sponsor.

NICK  
I am. I am a fucking great  
sponsor. This is tough love,  
mate. I saved your life  
once, you know, and I'm not  
going to give you fucking  
permission to put it back in  
the fucking bottle now, am  
I?

IAN  
I'm not looking for--

NICK  
Hell you're not. Let me ask  
you this, young man: Why  
can't Jonny go?

IAN  
Alone?

NICK  
Yes.

IAN  
Because.

NICK  
That's a crap answer. Why  
can't he go on his own?

IAN doesn't answer.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Is he not up to it? No  
minerals? No sense for this  
sort of thing?

IAN  
He might... you know.

NICK  
No, I don't know.

IAN  
He might... fuck it up.

EXT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The YOUNG MAN looks around, then puts his ear  
back to the door.

INT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

NICK slurps soda and scratches his beard. IAN  
stands still.

NICK  
That's because Jonny's  
something of a fuckup, Ian.

IAN  
Jonny's great at what he  
does, but first  
impressions...

NICK  
Yeah.

IAN resumes pacing.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Then here's what you do. You  
bring a flask.

IAN  
I do?

NICK  
You do. A flask with tea in  
it.

IAN  
Really.

NICK  
Fucking iced tea or apple  
juice or whatever you like.  
You drink out of that.

IAN  
And if they pour me a shot?

NICK doesn't say anything.

IAN (CONT'D)  
What do I do if they pour me  
a fucking whisky?

NICK  
Then you decide whether you  
and I are ever to speak  
again, Ian.

A KNOCK shakes the big blue door. A key works  
the lock.

IAN  
Shit.

IAN rushes to the door but is too late. The  
YOUNG MAN from outside has it open.

IAN (CONT'D)  
Hey, mate.

NICK

(beat)  
Hello, Jonny.

JONNY

Nick. Didn't expect to see  
you here in our villainous  
lair.

NICK

Wouldn't think so.

JONNY

Everything all right, then?

IAN

Everything's fine. Good,  
even.

JONNY

You shites don't look it. Am  
I interrupting?

IAN

We were just--

NICK

Not at all. I'm just off  
actually. Said what I need  
to say.

NICK stands up and heads for the red door.

NICK (CONT'D)

Loo through here?

IAN and JONNY both puts hands out to stop  
NICK.

IAN

No!

JONNY

Fuck, mate, no!

IAN  
We don't have a loo here.

NICK  
(beat)  
All right.

IAN  
Yeah. Sorry.

JONNY  
There's a pub up the alley.  
You can piss there.

NICK  
Right. Well.

NICK crosses to the big blue door.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Ian, my son, you let me  
know?

IAN  
Right.

NICK  
Ta, then, boys.

NICK leaves.

IAN and JONNY stand in silence for a moment.

JONNY  
I miss anything?

IAN  
No. I just, you know, no.

JONNY  
Alcky talk, then?

IAN  
Yes, actually.



JONNY  
(nodding)  
You ready for tonight?

IAN  
(beat)  
Yes.

INT. CROWN AND ANCHOR PUB - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

We're upstairs at the Crown and Anchor, a narrow, worn-down, badly lit pub. All the tables are empty except one, which is ringed by three surly blokes in leather coats. The remains of game birds lay scattered on four plates for four people sat around the table:

IAN and JONNY sit together on one side. Opposite them are a pair of gentlemen in patterned suits. One wears a WHITE SCARF (60s), the other wears DARK GLASSES (30s) with tortoise-shell rims.

A pint stands in front of IAN, untouched.

IAN  
So we're sorted, then?

WHITE SCARF  
If you accept our terms for the first delivery, to prove yourselves...

IAN  
(looking at Jonny)  
We do.

WHITE SCARF  
Good. Then future deals should be considerably more lucrative. For us both.

(MORE)

WHITE SCARF (CONT'D)

Boys, I think your days of moving silverware and Blu-Ray players are over.

DARK GLASSES

(accented)

Welcome to big time.

IAN

Thank you.

JONNY

Yeah, thanks, you two. What do you say we celebrate?

IAN looks at JONNY.

JONNY (CONT'D)

No?

WHITE SCARF

Fine idea.

WHITE SCARF snaps his fingers and twirls a finger in the air. A waiter brings over SHOT GLASSES and A BOTTLE. He POURS.

IAN looks from the shot glasses to JONNY, who doesn't return the look.

WHITE SCARF and DARK GLASSES raise their glasses. JONNY does likewise, and finally looks to IAN... Who gently raises his.

JONNY

(to Ian)

To the future. To not working alone.

WHITE SCARF

To bigger things.

Everyone but IAN drinks. One of the BODYGUARDS nods his head toward IAN and says something in a foreign language. IAN looks from the BODYGUARD to JONNY and, eyes on JONNY, drinks.

BEGIN MONTAGE – JONNY AND IAN DRINK:

- JONNY and IAN at a nightclub with DARK GLASSES and his BODYGUARDS, where JONNY hands IAN a shot and then pats him on the belly

- JONNY and DARK GLASSES with their arms around each other, singing, while IAN rubs his eyes

- IAN with his hand in the air to get a bartender's attention

- IAN tosses his flask in the garbage

- IAN tosses back a shot

- JONNY, elated, hands in the air, as IAN drops a shot into a Guinness

- IAN up in some BRICK OF A BLOKE's face. Their eyes wide, their neck veins bulging.

- JONNY backing IAN up, pointing a finger in the BRICK's face, yelling until his face is red.

- IAN and the BRICK brawling. IAN's in a headlock. JONNY's on the BRICK's back.

- DARK GLASSES sits in a booth full of smiling women, laughing

- IAN and JONNY kicking the shit out of the BRICK, who's on all fours on the club floor

- IAN, battered, on all fours in the club bathroom, puking in a toilet. Alone.

INT. IAN AND JONNY'S FLAT - MORNING

A mobile chimes. JONNY, bleary, goes over to IAN, who's bruised and passed out on a couch, and fishes IAN's mobile out of his jacket.

CLOSE ON MOBILE SCREEN:

"FROM: NICK

I need to talk to you. It's about work."

JONNY clicks REPLY and types out "Meet me at the garage right now"

JONNY snaps the mobile shut.

INT. IAN AND JONNY'S GARAGE - DAY

JONNY's sitting at the table when a KNOCK comes at the blue door. JONNY walks over and lets NICK in. JONNY locks the door behind him.

NICK looks around.

NICK  
Where's Ian?

JONNY  
You don't want to talk to Ian, I don't think, Nick.

NICK  
What's that supposed to mean?

JONNY  
Ian's pretty sure you don't want to see him, not after last night.

NICK

(beat)

I see.

JONNY

He thinks you're pretty  
furious with him. He wonders  
why you want to piss on his  
chances.

NICK

Really. He said that.

JONNY

Sure he did. He said you  
wanted him to throw away  
everything we'd worked for.

NICK

I know what he's worked for.  
I know what he's thrown  
away. I saved his life, you  
know?

JONNY

Sure I do. I know what  
you've done for Ian.

NICK

Right, then.

JONNY

If you want to talk work,  
let's talk.

NICK

Without Ian?

JONNY

I'll take it to Ian.

NICK

I don't think--

JONNY

I'm no fuckup, Nick. I'm good at what I do. Just not so much at first impressions. Right?

NICK

(beat)

Right. This isn't... I'm not talking about a "job" job. Not exactly.

JONNY

Let's hear it.

NICK

I just have some things I want moved. Sold.

JONNY

Uh huh.

NICK

Family things.

JONNY

You understand we don't pawn things, don't you, Nick?

NICK

I don't want these pawned. I want them turned into quid and quietly. My sister can't know what happened to them.

JONNY

What are we talking about?

NICK

I'm sorry?

JONNY

What things?

NICK  
Jewelry.

JONNY  
Oh yeah?

NICK  
Yeah. Diamonds. My sister  
came into them through her  
husband's side of the family  
and I don't think they know  
what they're worth. They're  
old. Twenties or thirties,  
at least. My sister's just  
going to sit on them.

JONNY  
And you want us to go get  
them.

NICK  
No! I... I'll get them. I  
want you to sell them for  
me.

JONNY  
When?

NICK  
Right away.

JONNY  
Wait. Do you have them now?

NICK  
I... Yes.

JONNY  
You have them with you right  
now?

NICK  
I brought them, you know,  
for Ian.

JONNY

Sure.

NICK

So, will you boys help me out?

JONNY

(beat)

Our cut is twenty percent.

NICK

Is that--

JONNY

That's a friendly rate, Nick. I'm not a villain.

NICK

Right, then.

JONNY

Now, then. Let's see what you've got.

INT. CROWN AND ANCHOR PUB - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

A pile of jewelry spills out of a plastic bag onto a sticky wooden table.

JONNY sits alone across from WHITE SCARF and DARK GLASSES, both standing, both dressed more casually than we saw them last. The bodyguards form a triangle around the table.

JONNY

So, what do you think?

DARK GLASSES and WHITE SCARF exchange looks.

DARK GLASSES

I think you are idiot.



JONNY

What? What?

DARK GLASSES

You think we are idiots?

JONNY

What? I don't--

DARK GLASSES

This is how you prove  
yourself to us? With this  
shit?

JONNY

What do you mean?

JONNY looks around at the bodyguards.

DARK GLASSES

These? Are fake.

JONNY

No, no. It's old, but--

DARK GLASSES

Aren't even very good fakes.

JONNY

They're... not diamonds?

DARK GLASSES

They're fucking fuck all!

JONNY

Oh, shit.

DARK GLASSES

We give you this chance.  
This one chance--

JONNY

Not one chance! Just let me--

DARK GLASSES  
--and you waste our time  
with this artificial shit!

JONNY  
No! I don't! I--

WHITE SCARF  
Do you think so little of  
us, Jonathan?

JONNY  
What?

WHITE SCARF  
Or are you so stupid? Such  
a...

DARK GLASSES  
Fuckup.

WHITE SCARF  
Such a fuckup?

JONNY  
You don't understand, I just--  
-

DARK GLASSES  
(to White Scarf)  
He's not answering.

WHITE SCARF  
Answer my question, Jonny.  
Is this skulduggery or  
stupidity? Are you a liar or  
are you stupid?

JONNY  
I...

JONNY looks at everyone, in turn.

JONNY (CONT'D)  
I'm stupid. I swear! I'm so  
fucking stupid!

DARK GLASSES  
Yes. You are.

WHITE SCARF  
And you've made us look  
stupid, haven't you?

JONNY  
Not on purpose. I swear. I  
fucking swear it.

WHITE SCARF  
Let's talk about how you can  
make it up to us, then.

JONNY  
Yes. Absolutely. Just tell  
me what to do.

WHITE SCARF  
Be a canvas.

JONNY  
A... I'm sorry?

DARK GLASSES  
Yes you are.

WHITE SCARF  
Be a canvas. Be a canvas on  
which these men can paint a  
message for all of your  
filthy, idiotic, mouth-  
breathing, third-rate shites  
of cohorts to read. These  
men will paint them a  
picture, a picture in  
bruises, all over your  
miserable waste-of-flesh  
body.

(MORE)

WHITE SCARF (CONT'D)

And you will show your lowly  
scum-slurping wannabe-  
gangster brethren what  
happens when you waste our  
time.

DARK GLASSES

Then we hang you in a  
gallery for all your hipster  
friends to piss on.

WHITE SCARF

That's right.

JONNY

I... I...

JONNY opens and closes his mouth, trying to  
find words. As he searches, the triangle of  
muscle closes in on him.

FADE TO BLACK.

I gave myself about 15 pages to explore the setup I'd selected out of the Playset, without doing any major self-editing. I chose to write my piece in something approximating screenplay format because it's quick and, obviously, cinematic. It seemed to fit the material.

Notice, by the way, that I picked two elements—a Relationship and a Location—defined by dialogue. I wanted the challenge of rolling those into the telling, but ended up not getting both lines of dialogue directly into my piece. I didn't want to force it. (I could've kept writing to get to the scene in which the missing Location line is spoken outright, but I didn't get that far before I reached the 15 pages I'd set for myself.)

Almost immediately, I broke from *Fiasco's* scene-setting customs, though, and lost track of exactly which character each scene was about. My scenes were focused on dramatizing the facts established on the cards (because my imaginary audience presumably wouldn't have access to the cards). They were also mostly about more than one character at a time, which is just the way those scenes developed in the telling. I used the cards as a place to start, then got wrapped up in the story and didn't think to pursue the game's format through the rest of the exercise.

Put another way, this shows that those cards defining the spaces between characters are fruitful. It shows how stories—especially theatrical stories—are so often about the collisions of characters rather than the plight of single character. It shows how *Fiasco's* setups are wonderfully provocative and inspiring. With just a quick jaunt through a Playset, I immediately had a character dynamic interesting enough that I pursued it for fifteen pages of solo playtime, with ease.

Something I didn't do, at least not on purpose, was build the scenes around *Fiasco's* resolution method. I didn't build in specific turning points, hinges on which each scene results in a positive or negative outcome for each character. Such turning points emerged naturally, but not quite scene by scene.

This highlights, for me, how *Fiasco's* narrative architecture isn't quite the literal scene but rather a more compelling metric: the question. A *Fiasco* scene doesn't end until an important question is answered: good or bad, yes or no, success or failure. Which die is assigned? Which goals are met and which schemes are confounded? Where are the victories and where are the defeats?

Because the question and the scene all but overlap in *Fiasco*, you have little exposition. You have leaner stories. In play, we don't need to establish things like our Relationships, because we established them during the selection process. Our writers (the players) are our audience (the players). I've seen *Fiasco* groups establish facts on the ground and dramatize known story elements in actual play, but such things almost necessarily manifest only when they serve double duty, when they carry some interest beyond just exposition.

For example, in my exercise, I have a short scene that explains why two characters meet in the following scene. In play, we might establish the premise of a scene through out-of-character negotiation—behind-the-scenes talk where we're playing the parts of writers and directors, rather than actors. "Okay," we say, "this is a scene between Jonny and Nick, in the garage, after Jonny has responded to a text message on Ian's phone, so Nick thinks he's coming to meet Ian. Let's start it with Nick walking in to find Jonny, and just Jonny, waiting for him."

In my exercise, the outcome of that scene—a black die given to Jonny—results in a completely different scene that answers the question: *How does this scene turn out for Jonny?*

This would be fair game in a *Fiasco* session, I'll bet, though I've never seen it happen myself. This is what I mean by the question, rather than the scene, as the unit of play in *Fiasco*. The question—"What color die does Jonny get for this scene?"—could actually result in a whole scene that dramatizes the black die, showing us not how the scene goes wrong in the moment but, rather, how it leads to bad things for Jonny is a scene that follows right on the heels of the first scene, dramatically speaking. "Here are some diamonds to sell," Nick says to Jonny. Smash-cut to Jonny in trouble, discovering too late, in the follow-up scene after the black die is bestowed, that the diamonds are fakes. Jonny's turn ends with him being surrounded by gangster muscle... and then we're on to the next player.

– Will Hindmarch, 1 February 2011