

FIASCO



BLOOD OPERA

TITLE

CREDITS

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BOILERPLATE

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

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

THE SCORE

THE NAIL THAT STICKS OUT GETS HAMMERED DOWN

Duty, honor, structure. It binds us all together towards our divine purpose and keeps order, but it rules a man from birth until death, and it favors some while demanding from others.

If the rules could be bent for just this one time, if the gods could shift their affections only slightly, we could find some small measure more than fate has set aside for us.

That is, of course, if everyone else stays in their place afterward...

[For more, see the Notes section in the back]

MOVIE NIGHT

Ran, 13 Assassins, Kagemusha, Onmyoji, Seven Samurai, or the like. This playset is inspired by every movie where people thought they could manipulate the system, or where they drove towards duty while secretly hoping for some other reward. In the end, the system always wins, and death is the easy road.

RELATIONSHIPS...

1 MARTIAL

- Long forgotten masters
- In the same Sumo stable
- Disciples of Forbidden Arts
- Student and Crippled Master
- Rival Swordsmen
- Aggressive Lord and Weak Neighbor

2 SPIRITUAL

- Travelling Shinto priests
- Temple Guardian and Patron
- Zen brothers
- Enlightened One and Faker
- Oracle and Most Prestigious Client
- Interpreters of Buddha's Wisdom

3 DUTY

- The One Who Does the Work and The One Who Gets the Credit
- Hatamoto and Lord
- Husband and Wife
- Exiled Prince and Host Family
- Parent and Child
- Assassin and the one who "Holds the Leash"

4 ILLICIT

- ◻ Thief and Fence
- ◻◻ Oracle and Most Secret Client
- ◻◻◻ A peerless beauty and an unscrupulous collector
- ◻◻◻◻ Spy and Courtesan
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Drug Addict and Dealer
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ Men of Christ

5 ROMANTIC

- ◻ Childhood friends
- ◻◻ ... In spite of marriage to another
- ◻◻◻ Soul Mates, though neither has confessed it
- ◻◻◻◻ In love with the same woman
- ◻◻◻◻◻ "Close" women of the same house
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ Across the class divide

6 LAW

- ◻ Interpreters of Buddha's Law
- ◻◻ Magistrate and Speaker for the Dead
- ◻◻◻ Bounty Hunter and Bounty
- ◻◻◻◻ Thieves, sentenced to death
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Slave trader and Customer
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ Forger and Blackmailed Lord

...THREE FEET FROM DEATH

NEEDS...

1 TO CONVINC

- ...the Emperor of an unbelievable danger
- ◻◻ ...the Guardians of Hell to let you pass
- ◻◻◻ ...your enemies that you are no threat
- ◻◻◻◻ ...foreign devils
- ◻◻◻◻◻ ...the spirits of your ancestors to rest
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ ...your countrymen to action

2 TO GET YOUR HANDS ON

- ...a small patch of land
- ◻◻ ...foreign rifles, forbidden by the Emperor
- ◻◻◻ ...any information worth selling
- ◻◻◻◻ ...the Shogun's wife
- ◻◻◻◻◻ ...the earthly remains of your former ally
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ ...the Seal of the Emperor

3 TO PROVE WORTH OF

- ...your ancestor's blade
- ◻◻ ...your clan's reputation
- ◻◻◻ ...the ransom you cost
- ◻◻◻◻ ...war
- ◻◻◻◻◻ ...an uneasy truce
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ ...the omen over your birth

4 TO KILL

- ...the entire Koga ninja clan
- ◻ ...every man who has denied you
- ◻ ...the son of your son's killer
- ◻ ...anyone who saw or heard
- ◻ ...publicly, so no one can deny you the glory
- ◻ ...a lifelong friend, before it goes too far

5 TO EARN

- ...back your daughter
- ◻ ...back your lands
- ◻ ...a future for someone else
- ◻ ...the right to death on your terms
- ◻ ...passage out of this suffocating country
- ◻ ...the animosity of the gods themselves

6 TO REGAIN HONOR

- ...by winning an upcoming duel
- ◻ ...by losing an impending battle
- ◻ ...by breeding "worthy" horses
- ◻ ...at any cost
- ◻ ...by reclaiming your lord's stolen armory
- ◻ ...by taking an eye for an eye

...THREE FEET FROM DEATH

LOCATIONS...

1 REMOTE

- A village “forgotten” by the Empire
- A field of flowers by a lost coast
- A guard’s outpost on the edge of three provinces
- A deep cave where strange creatures linger
- A Shinto shrine to a lost god
- An island just inside the horizon

2 TRAVEL

- A “neutral” Lord’s prosperous inn
- Gate between neighboring warlords
- A trade-ship
- The Many and Vast Hells Beneath the Earth
- The road between the capitols
- A team of palanquin bearers

3 WEALTHY

- A warehouse of ancient relics
- Onsen full of beautiful people
- A private gallery
- A pleasure garden, inside a massive fortress
- The mint and treasury
- A theater, just outside court

4 FORBIDDEN

- ◻ A house church
- ◻◦ The tunnel under the border crossing
- ◻◦ The tanner's tent under the bridge
- ◻◻◻ Hunting grounds of the Great Wolf
- ◻◻◻ Resting place of the gods
- ◻◻◻ A fox's wedding

5 CASTLE

- ◻ Stables for war-horses and pack animals alike
- ◻◦ The hidden chambers where messages are encoded and decoded
- ◻◦ The front gates, closed off for years
- ◻◻◻ Icy cellars, where the screams don't echo
- ◻◻◻ Innermost chamber, where decisions are made
- ◻◻◻ The place to honor ancestors, and also track all debts

6 BATTLE

- ◻ A cleared field for honored duels
- ◻◦ The commander's tent
- ◻◦ The soldier's tents, packed too close for too long
- ◻◻◻ A battlefield, fresh with blood and eerily quiet
- ◻◻◻ A prison for those too cowardly for death
- ◻◻◻ The supply route, as yet secret from the enemy

...THREE FEET FROM DEATH

OBJECTS...

1 BEYOND REPROACH

- An exquisite blade no sheath can hold
- ◻ A regular audience with the Imperial Onmyogi
- ◻ Incense that “draws truth” from criminals
- ◻ A display of enemy skulls
- ◻ Prayer beads that are always answered
- ◻ An iron fan bathed in Dragon’s Breath

2 BARBARIAN

- A seedling from a curative foreign herb
- ◻ A foreign bean which is “stronger than tea”
- ◻ Three exotic women who speak only foreign tongues
- ◻ A canon, and enough powder for one devastating shot
- ◻ A transcribed manual of new forging techniques
- ◻ A sea chart detailing safe trade routes

3 HIDDEN

- A cache of weapons and armor, recovered from battle sites
- ◻ A simple looking hat, concealing a razor sharp garotte
- ◻ Enough grain, meats, and wine to last two years
- ◻ Enough poison for an entire village
- ◻ Refugees, willing to do anything to stay hidden
- ◻ Fine silks from the capitol, uncut, embroidered with gold

4 MAHO

- ◻ Another's soul in a mirror
- ◻◦ A kimono, infused with a spell to immolate the next who wears it
- ◻◦ Scrolls depicting a blood ritual and all but one ingredient
- ◻◻◦ A demon, hiding in a young girl's body
- ◻◻◦ Hair and fingernails
- ◻◻◻◦ A tanto, thirsting for the next belly to drink from

5 FORGERIES

- ◻ A contract on another's life
- ◻◦ A lord's mandate to these lands
- ◻◦ A peach of immortality from the Forbidden Kingdom
- ◻◻◦ Ida-ten's inkstone
- ◻◻◦ Jade Seal of Amaterasu
- ◻◻◻◦ Patrilineal ownership of a temple

6 TOKENS

- ◻ A child's doll set
- ◻◦ The first melon harvested this year
- ◻◦ A tusk from some ancient giant
- ◻◻◦ Snow from atop sacred Mount Fuji
- ◻◻◦ A theater puppet which speaks on its own
- ◻◻◻◦ A kappa's scale

...THREE FEET FROM DEATH

A BLOOD OPERA INSTA-SETUP

RELATIONSHIPS

For three players...

- * Student and Crippled Master
- * Thief and Fence
- * In Love with the same woman

For four players, add...

- * Bounty hunter and bounty

For five players, add...

- * Soulmates, though neither has confessed it

NEEDS IN A BLOOD OPERA

For three players...

- * ...To Earn: Passage out of this suffocating country

For four or five players, add...

- * ...To Regain Honor: By winning an upcoming duel

LOCATIONS IN A BLOOD OPERA

For three, four, or five players...

- * Forbidden: A tunnel under the border crossing

OBJECTS IN A BLOOD OPERA

For three or four players...

- * Maho: A tanto, thirsting for the next belly to drink from

For five players, add...

- * Hidden: Refugees, willing to do anything to stay hidden

NOTES

tone and accuracy

While making this playset, I struggled between using all those fun Japanese words and making the playset approachable. So whenever possible, I made an effort to be more generic, often to the point of ambiguity.

Many of the elements are from different time periods, but each group will decide for themselves if mixing those is okay.

Just do what feels right.

Also, beware the 4s. They all lead to death.

My vision for this playset is a slow, inevitable march to death. Movies like *Seven Samurai* and *13 Assassins* portray wonderful, believable, relatable characters who do the "right thing" even if that means they are going to die.

Often, the protagonists in these situations are actually doing what is "right," but are taking actions which violate societal canon or idiosyncratic laws. While no one involved wants them to fail, their actions cannot go unpunished.

Death is often the easiest path out, and the tragedy is that the very people who are willing to die are the ones that we want to keep on living.

That, is a Fiasco indeed.

-ARNOLD