

BAD JUJU

FATE + FICTION

is our line of original and classic short stories. Situations, characters, and other elements from the story are expressed as Fate RPG Aspects. Read and enjoy the stories on their own, then mix the Aspects you like into your own Fate Core or Fate Accelerated game!

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Fate Core System
Fate Accelerated Edition
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Fate was originally
created by Rob Donoghue
and Fred Hicks

By Gary E. Weller

Bergeron didn't want to go back to New Orleans. Somehow as the world evolved, into the shadowed neon culture that had grown out of the global economic shutdown, that had allowed private conglomerates to basically buy out several governments around the world, the Big Easy had remained remarkably Cajun.

There were bits and pieces of more modernization along the riverfronts and throughout the delta, but for the most part the denizens stuck to their roots and traditions. The money may have been coming out of Shanghai, but for those Cajun down in the Town, it was still, '*laissez les bons temps rouler*,' rather than, '*yǒ u yuán qiā nǐ lái xiā nghuì*.' Still, destiny was a funny thing.

He didn't have a choice but to accept the job. Francis Bergeron knew it was going to be clustered seven ways from Sunday because it was New Orleans, but he couldn't get by the picture. She had a winning smile and a fair complexion. It wasn't the fact that she was a girl, or the fact that she was cute. More than anything else, he took the job because of who she was.

The crest on the sweatshirt was unmistakable. Black and red backgrounds peeked from the middle of the teal. Bergeron knew it was the Seal of Tulane before he saw the castles and the moons. *Non Sibi Sen Suis*, the words came back to him as if he had just walked out from his graduation ceremony. They were ingrained into what he did now – not for oneself, but for one's own. Her name was Sheila Thibodaux, but Bergeron already knew that. Sheila was his cousin.

Tracking Sheila down wasn't the issue, Bergeron had found her easy enough. He knew who to talk to and how to negotiate passage through the bayous and bogs. It came with knowing the area. The chrome in his body and the ocular implants just made it much easier to negotiate the price. It was still hard to believe that most of the folks in the Parishes throughout Louisiana were still frightened of the technology that was in use today.

Many of the folks he had to use to find her were sorely in need of both a barber and a dentist. The undereducated and superstitious lot would often drop a broom over their doorstep when he left them or drew *veve* on the ground in ash and salt like he was some sort of Loa in flesh. Bergeron had no patience for their ignorance.

The harder part for Bergeron was the fact that when he found Sheila, she had seemed to leave a vacancy in her mind. Stage makeup and mud was smeared all over her face creating a skull emblem. Somehow she had either found or lugged a pseudo-silk top hat and matching suit out to the old plantation. It hung on her loosely, as if it were meant for someone else. Chromed mirrorshades were planted on her face and a long pipe stuck in her teeth slowly let aromatic grey smoke drift up.

"Sheila?" Bergeron knelt beside the slowly dying fire she had laid out. He stared hard at her seeing his frown in the mirrorshades straddling her nose.

"Passe!" the word was almost spat out. Her voice was not her own. Bergeron readjusted his hand on the grip of the assault rifle he was carrying. She took another draw on the pipe and blew it in his face.

Situation Aspects

The global economic shutdown that had allowed private conglomerates to basically buy out several governments around the world.

It's a cyberpunk world, where corporate interests trump the needs of people, and government services probably aren't available to lower economic classes.

The Big Easy had remained remarkably Cajun.

"Cajun" might not be as accurate as a "holding onto older ways and traditions". This is really just code for "magic exists in this setting".

"Look Sheila," Bergeron ignored the insult, "a lot of people are worried about you. What the hell are you doing here?"

"Our Sheila, she *mal pris*, her," a smile came across her face, twisting the skull makeup into a grotesque mockery of what it should have been. "I in here now, me. All she wan' do is fay dodo with tings she don' unnastan', her. Fooyay, fooyay." She took another long draw on the pipe and let the smoke spill out of her mouth.

Bergeron felt the itch to end the conversation and get her to a hospital. It was obvious that whatever she had gotten into was pulling on some serious brain cells. The hallucination alone narrowed down the list of drugs that Bergeron could attribute to her condition.

"Ain' no *chem gris gris* that do it, ma Grand Tahyo, you." Another wicked smile crossed her face. "Mon Cherie, she tied fo' true, but weren' no chem, only voodoo."

"All right," Bergeron scowled, "enough of this 'Boo Radley' crap!" He reached up and pulled off the mirrorshades to check her eyes. Bergeron was no stranger to the multiple adversities and maladies of the human condition. As a bounty hunter and former soldier he had seen too many corpses in all states of condition.

Sheila's eyes were glazed over. The green that was so vibrant were now milky and grey. Bergeron drew back and threw the shades down and raised his assault rifle. The dead eyes looked at him as the face smiled and bellowed out a great laugh that seemed to echo throughout the former plantation.

The body stood up from the place it was sitting and drew on the long pipe again. A twisted and decrepit smile flashed across what was Sheila's face and then the corpse blew him a kiss, letting the pipe smoke out in a long stream.

"Now what you t'ink?" the thing asked Bergeron as it began to walk towards him. Bergeron opened fire. Flesh and bits of bone along with the suite and hat spat out from behind Sheila's body as the former soldier followed his training. Still the thing kept walking towards him.

"How we gonna play Madame now, you?" a scowl crossed what was left of Sheila's face. "Be cam now, you. We gonna go fay dodo now." Bergeron remembered firing until he was out of ammo and then the sudden calm.

"Das right now, you," the voice was his own, but not. "You jus' listen to Baron Samedi now. *Laissez les bons temps rouler, bebette.*"

About *Bad Juju*

by Berin Kinsman

I hope you enjoyed Gary's story. That would make me happy, and I know it would make Gary happy. Yet even if you didn't, I hope you can see how even a piece of fiction you don't like can be mined for ideas, and ways that those ideas can be remixed and reimaged and used as material for your own Fate RPG game.

Now let's deconstruct the story, pick out some of the elements that are present, and discuss ways that you might use those as possible Aspects in your own Fate RPG game. Understand that the following interpretations are only *my* interpretations, and not the only possible interpretations. The object of Fate+Fiction is to help you learn how to mine stories for pieces and parts that you can adapt for your own purposes.

Let's begin by trying to summarize the story. We've got a cross between cyberpunk and voodoo going on. A man used to technology wandering into a city dominated by older ways and traditions, and finding himself ill-equipped to deal with it. It's a fish out of water story, and one full of juxtapositions. There should be plenty of story ideas to mine from these contrasts and contradictions.

The Situations

There are as few Situation Aspects that we can pull out of this story. These Aspects, or something like them, can then be adapted to your own Fate game. Let's take a look.

The global economic shutdown that had allowed private conglomerates to basically buy out several governments around the world.

And here we establish the fact of the setting, that it's a cyberpunk near-future where corporations have openly displaced the governments. There are far-reaching implications to that; governments, at least democratic ones, are supposed to answer to people. Corporations answer to shareholders. Invoke that when you need to tap into corporate power. Compel it when you run up against a lack of government services, or something that doesn't benefit corporate interests.

The Big Easy had remained remarkably Cajun.

In this cyberpunk world, New Orleans remains remarkably old fashions and tied to old ways and traditions. That's code for "voodoo is real" in this story, in case you missed it. It establishes that things like loa and magic exist, and characters are able to utilize them.

The Characters

Now let's examine the characters in the story. For your own Fate game you don't need to use these exact characters. Look at existing player characters and supporting characters, and see who might fill the same roles in relation to the Situation Aspects. Who might the relevant Character Aspects, or something similar, be appended to?

Francis Bergeron is our viewpoint character, the fish out of water, the guy from the corporate-dominated world entering the less-technological city where magic holds sway. He can be any player character without a background in magic.

Bergeron didn't want to go back to New Orleans.

This implies that he knows the city, he doesn't like the city, and he might even fear the city a bit. As Bergeron's player, I'd Invoke this when making checks related to gaining knowledge within and about the city. As gamemaster, I'd Compel it to freak him out and throw him off his game.

Character Aspects

Bergeron didn't want to go back to New Orleans.

The implication is that he knows things about the city, he doesn't like the city, and he maybe even fears the city a bit.

Situation Aspects

The chrome in his body and the ocular implants just made it much easier to negotiate the price.

Bergeron isn't just enhanced, those enhancements allow him to charge a premium for his services.

Consequences*Consequences of magic*

Using magic might lead to other things, like possession, death, and becoming the zombie slave of a supernatural being.

Boosts*Magic and technology don't mix.*

Magic might be a boost when used against unnatural things like technology, because only natural forces can resist it. Or vice-versa.

The chrome in his body and the ocular implants just made it much easier to negotiate the price.

This establishes a couple of facts. First, that Bergeron is augmented. Second, that the augmentations allow him to charge a premium for his services. It also implies that these things are rare, at least in lower-tech New Orleans. As Bergeron's player, I'd Invoke this for any situation where having cyberware will help me, and in negotiating fees.

Sheila Thibodaux is our token magical character. She knows how these things work, but apparently she made some bad rolls and it got away from her. Or maybe not. She could have willingly given herself over to attain some larger goal. It's a loose plot thread that can be explored in an expanded story.

Loa are voodoo spirits, who grant favors to people in return for sacrifices of luxury items and occasionally loaning them your body. Or at least, that's the Hollywood version of voodoo. *Baron Samedi* is one of the most prominent loa. They're characters in that they interact with player characters and make magic work. You can Invoke a relationship with loa, and they can Compel you to do things based on that same relationship.

Consequences

Not every action has a clear or specific consequence, and sometimes we need to dig a little bit to discover them within a story. Here's what I found.

Possession

A Consequence of doing business with a loa, or messing with magic, is that things might take over your body and not give it back. You may or may not have gotten what you were asking for.

Zombification

Another possible Consequence of messing with magic. You could die, become undead, or your dead body could be used by other forces for their own ends.

Boosts

Boosts are another set of elements that don't always make themselves explicit within a story. It often takes some probing and a little bit of imagination to discover something that could potentially provide a Boost in a Fate game.

Chromed mirrorshades

This isn't in the story, and I'm just speculating here, but the chromed mirrorshades made me think about the relationship between magic and technology. It wasn't until the mirrorshades went down that Bergeron got whammied. Did they hold back the power? Can magic, assumed to be "natural" or "better than natural", affect technology, which is unnatural? Does tech give a character a boost for resisting magic, because metal isn't meat? If so, did Bergeron get a Boost to resist possession because of his ocular implants?

The argument could be made in the other direction as well. Many cyberpunk settings hold that an increase in cyberware equals a loss of humanity. Maybe that means less of a resistance to magic, because you have less humanity to fight with, and a smaller pool of humanity is easier to dominate. Magic would then get a Boost when used against chromed-up characters. It's a philosophical debate that you can have, and it will impact how both magic and technology work in your own Fate RPG setting.

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