

FIVE WORDS

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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We believe in literacy, curiosity, and creativity. Through these things individuals, societies, and the entire world are enriched and transformed. The Fate + Fiction line was created to help uphold and promote these values.

Building Better Worlds
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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

A screaming comes across the sky. We panic. This is what we do.

The day that they came was a spectacular global event that couldn't be shut out by any government cover-up schemes. It didn't stop the Powers That Be from trying. They always tried. Anything beyond their ken or control was necessary to hide from the populace. It was always that way.

On the surface we fought hard to preserve the public façade of, "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This was the bright and shiny face that they wanted to portray.

The slick underbelly of reality was always more sinister. You were safe as long as you never told anyone that you were not stupid, happy and numb. In the blinding ignorance the state we lived in was more of the, *Ignorance is Strength*, *Freedom is Slavery*, and *War is Peace*.

If you started to notice what was going on around you, it was best to keep your mouth shut about it. It was best to keep yourself stupid, happy and numb. Sit on the couch, watch the cable, eat the popcorn, get diabetes, grow cancer and be a productive tax-payer with a \$10,000 debt to American Express. That is, unless you wanted to be classified as part of the lunatic fringe and get the interesting looks from the folks that believed you had just started to see the dust bunnies under your furniture coming for you wearing black suits and sunglasses, or the ghosts who were gang stalking you, making you a target with their laser eyes.

No, when they came there was no hiding the fact that they were here. Their arrival was a bold statement and a slap in the face of the Powers That Were. The initial contact was nothing short of too many clichéd reactions that anyone could have predicted. The scientists rejoiced. The geeks were proud. The military hunkered down and tried to protect their nations. The others just sat in awe. They could only watch what was going on.

They visitors waited patiently for us, like a parent whose child was throwing a tantrum. Eventually the child runs out of energy and forgets why they are having the fit in the first place. We weren't much different. The conflict ran for weeks. Collectively the world threw just about everything that it had at the newly arrived visitors.

Conventional weaponry didn't really do much against the shields. One of the former Eastern Bloc countries tried biological weapons. That was a sad mistake. Nearly 700,000 Albanians died through that exchange. After that, the United Nations announced that they couldn't afford a nuclear exchange with the aliens that seemed to just watch us scramble like ants underneath a magnifying glass.

Theories were exploding all over the internet and news media outlets. Twitter and Facebook couldn't keep up with the traffic. There was just too much load on the servers. It was the same with YouTube and just about every other social media networking site across the globe. Everyone had an opinion and everyone was

Situation Aspects

It was best to keep yourself stupid, happy and numb.

The setting values conformity, and the best way to conform is to keep you from speaking out against the things that are obviously wrong.

Everyone had an opinion and everyone was scared.

The human condition in a nutshell.

They visitors waited patiently for us, like a parent whose child was throwing a tantrum.

The aliens have arrived, and their arrival has made people behave in irrational ways. The aliens, in turn, don't say or do anything.

was scared. We panic. It's what we do.

Most of the aboriginal cultures sat and waited to see if the new gods were going to be a new hope as foretold or if the impending apocalypse was coming. Others, so frightened of the fear of change, began to take radical action against themselves and their families. Suicide cults began to mushroom throughout the United States.

In America's Heartland, life came to a standstill. Crops withered and died as many of the folk responsible for tending the farms that fed the country huddled together in basements and storm cellars waiting for the end to come. Gangs came out of the urban centers and took over large portions of abandoned countryside simply because the National Guard was backing up the regular Army and the local police were just trying to take care of their own families.

Still, the visitors waited in the skies for all of us to finish. Death by any number of means took a good portion of the population out before things truly changed. It was our final trembling scream. We were rolling in the floor and screaming for no reason other than we were afraid. It was that fear nearly ruined us as a race.

It was a good thing that we were the only ones that were panicking. Ever watchful and patient, our visitors floated above our homes and cities and waited for us to come to the realization that were suffering from our own insanity. They were teaching us a lesson in temperance that we desperately needed.

Eventually the war machines had finally come to a standstill. People started to come out from their hiding places and walk around in the light again. One by one, self-appointed despots and dictators grew bored with their cardboard kingdoms and just left their empires underneath the shadow of the massive alien crafts that were just hanging in the sky. The seeds of change were planted during those initial times of terrible darkness.

It wasn't until we were done with our growing pains that the visitors started to move again. When the lights started to flicker on the massive ships it was news. They had been dormant for so long that the sudden burst of activity had been the topic of world-wide conversation.

It was five words that came to us across many of our electronic devices that really began the excitement. They apparently had the ability to tap into our communication networks to send the brief message. Fax machines, radios, mobile phones and computers around the world powered up and spat out the message to surprised users across the globe.

I remember tearing up when I saw them. I just couldn't believe what I had read.

"You called us, we came."

About *Five Words*

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. It's another fantastic Twilight Zone-type tale with a twist ending. After sending signals out into space, looking for intelligent life in the universe, when they do show up humans automatically assume the worst and self-destruct. The interesting thing in a game setting would be to never have the aliens emerge, using the final line in the story as the last line in the campaign, and play out the various ways individuals and groups of humans either lose their minds, or deal with the other people losing their minds.

The Situations

There are a 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.

It was best to keep yourself stupid, happy and numb. This is obviously a commentary on modern society, and opens up the setting to be interpreted anyway on the scale between serious and satire. As a gamemaster, I'm going to allow players who are sober, informed, and willing to sacrifice happiness for truth to Invoke this to get one over on a member of the "sleeping" masses.

The visitors waited patiently for us, like a parent whose child was throwing a tantrum. This establishes the fact that the aliens are just sitting there, doing nothing, while the humans are losing their frickin' minds.

Everyone had an opinion and everyone was scared. This is pretty the human condition all the time, exacerbated by the fact that aliens have shown up and are just sitting here, doing nothing. In the absence of facts like who they are and why they're here, people are providing their own answers and assuming the worst.

You called us, we came. The reason the visitors are here. Again, I'd save this to be the last line of the last session in the campaign. It would be my secret GM Aspect, which I could tap into, because it's the answer, the key, the implication that they're nice and benign and not the answer to all off the fears expressed throughout the rest of the setting.

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?

The visitors are cyphers, and should remain so. You don't need to make up anything about them, because you never see them. Their ships should be pretty nondescript and offer up no real information as to what they're like or what they want.

Character Aspects*The visitors*

We know nothing about them, and their ships are nondescript and offer no clues.

*The military.**Suicide cults.**The Powers That Were.*

There are no specific characters, but there are character types.

Consequences

The consequences of assumption

When you assume, you make an ass out of u and me. And destroy civilization in the process.

Boosts

Your beliefs are valid.

So are everyone else's. Welcome to the self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are no specific characters, but there are character types. These can be developed into possible roles for player characters, and the basis for stories and adventures.

The Powers That Were: governments and other organizations that held sway before the visitors arrived and the human race descended into anarchy. Presumably they're still technically in charge, and struggling to hold onto their power base.

The military and law enforcement are de facto agents of The Powers That Were, and will be trying to maintain order and regain control. There's not necessarily anything sinister about that, although the Situation Aspect about staying dumb and happy doesn't imply that they're all going to be altruistic and it to keep people safe.

Suicide cults as a scary thought, when you consider the emotional toll these people will take on their friends and family, and the real possibility that they'll take other people out with them.

There will also be all of the regular religious and political nuts, turned up to 11 and acting as if their darkest fantasies about the end of the world have been justified.

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.

The consequences of assumption: in games and fiction, as in real life, there are Consequences to making decisions and taking actions based on faulty or incomplete information. In this setting, everyone is writing their own reality and making it up as they go along. How I'd play that as a gamemaster would be to express information as what any given character would want to hear. It'd play to their fears, and interpret the information I provided through the filters of the characters' personal beliefs and biases. I'd play up things that supported their theories, and downplay information that didn't.

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.

Since the whole point of this story is that people are filling on the information void with the stories their telling themselves and each other, I would give a player a free Boost every time the discovered something that they felt validated their world view. It seems as if I am validating them, and rewarding them for discovering the truth or making some genuine advancement. What I'm really doing is bolstering the power of their own self-justifying delusions. It's wicked, I know.

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