

Infallible

A Warning/Exploration/Thought Experiment/Game of the New Young Gods

by Sean Cox

a 24 Hour RPG
writtin for RPGGeek's
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From Sabin K Wed Sep 23 13:22:48 2015
Date: Wed, 23 Sep 2015 13:22:48 +0000 (UTC)
From: Sabin K <ThatsMissQueen3943@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: Sabin K <ThatsMissQueen3943@yahoo.com>
To: Everyone <List_All_Contacts>
Subject: Gods
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: multipart/alternative;
boundary="-----_Part_411497_1264219357.1443032568938"
Content-Length: 11935

So I think a god just killed my friend or something worse.

We were on a road trip. Kind of impromptu. He just asked who wasn't busy and who could drive him someplace far off. I agreed. he said no smart phones, no internet, no social media. I thought, "cool. Get off the grid. Less FaceTime, more real face to face" time you know? I thought it was a social statement he was trying to make.

Well he had this fire in him. A panic almost. And he was frantically scribbling away in this notebook. I ask him to take over driving for me because I'm not feeling well, and he reluctantly agrees. Says he needs the time to write, but he's afraid to say aloud what. Crazy stuff, but this whole trip is crazy and fun and impulsive, so I don't think much of it. I get tired. I want to stop for the night. He says he can down a bunch of coffee or something and we can power through it. He'll do all the driving. I say no. not in my car do we drive 24 hours straight. So we get a hotel. He insists no wifi, bad signal. His stay off social media kick, right?

Well, he's been scribbling away all night on his bed, and I'm tired so I say I'm turning out the lights. He steps out. Wakes me up when he comes back in, still writing. Disappears into the bathroom. I can't get back to sleep so I pull out my smart phone. No biggie, right? I mean, the purpose is to enjoy us time (which he has not made enjoyable), so I can steal a minute while we're apart to check my feeds. I go on Twitter just to let everyone know about this crazy adventure I'm on when suddenly I hear him talking to someone in the bathroom.

I take a peek through a crack in the door and there's this blue haired teen. Didn't see him come in. I guess my friend brought him with him when he came back? So they are arguing, things are getting tense. Blue kid says, "You're going to get on twitter and take back everything you said about me!" and then bam! poof! My friend is just gone. And I start getting tweets from him, saying Twitter is his life now. He never had a twitter account. But get this, his account is trying to talk to me. Telling me things as if he were in the room with me. I can see his profile picture looking at me. Not staring straight forward like some pictures do, but actually watching. Following me with its eyes. And the blue kid is just gone. I think he did some magic or something so I panic. Collapse into a crying heap on the floor. I mean this can't be real, right?

Then I see these pages, what my friend has been writing for the past day. I read them, and holy hell guys, I think the god of Twitter just turned him into an account. Like no body, just living 140 characters at a time. I'm scanning the pages in to spread the word, but here's the gist in case you can't read his handwriting.

Gods are real. They are formed when enough people care strongly enough about a thing. As such, new gods are formed every day, and like anyone born yesterday, they aren't the smartest or completely in control of what they can do. They are omnipotent and infallible, they can't fail, but they can still screw

things up and make things worse while technically succeeding.

Each of these gods, unless something terrible happened to the old god of something broad like war or wind, is the god of something specific like Apple products or Starbucks or beards or vinyl. (I think hipsters make new gods every day). In that one narrow field, they will do what they want the way they want it to happen 100% of the time. In a broader but related domain of influence, they will get things perfectly right 40% of the time. The other 60% even though they did what they set out to do, they screwed things up somehow. They also have other minor areas where they dabble, totalling 100%, but with no area exceeding 25%.

When acting, unless they are 100% guaranteed to succeed, they have to make a check to see how well they do. Essentially, how close to their perfect outcome did they come. The value of their domain plus random chance (1-100) gives you a rough idea of how often they succeed and how close they get. 99% is almost perfect. 3% or 4%? Success by the most abstract definition but things went horribly wrong, not the way the god wanted. When they compete, Perfect ability (100) trumps lesser. Some ability trumps no ability. Better trumps not as good. And equally good is pure chance.

The only way to kill them is to destroy the importance of what they are based on (if people lose interest in disco, the god of disco stops being a god and instead just some disco obsessed person), or to put them in a situation in which they cannot succeed, thus disproving their infallibility and forcing their deity mantle onto someone else.

Spread the word. They killed my friend. They have to be stopped. Use these notes to imagine what it's like to be them so we can understand how they work and how to resist.

-K.S.

thought exercise
In fallible: An ~~Explanation~~ of the new young gods
by "Sean Cox" ~~writing~~

Gods are real. Gods. Plural. Gods for everything, for anything important enough for us to place our hopes and wishes upon. Do not ask how I know this. The less I speak of myself and how I learned this, the better. I shall not speak of specific gods whose identities I have uncovered, nor shall I give true information of myself. Even now I am on the move, having just crossed state lines a half hour ago in the passenger seat of the car of someone I trust. I doubt I have more than 24 hours before I am found. It is now 3:08 pm on September 22, 2015. Let us hope I see 23. But I do not write for pity or martyrdom, but to help us understand these young gods, for, though they no doubt hunt me for knowing and what's more sharing, are young, and though they are all powerful and infallible, they are not perfect and do not know everything. They cannot fail, but success can come in many colors, some tragic. This, then, is a thought experiment if you will, a game, to help us understand these new gods, how they think and feel and act, so that we might better survive until they learn wisdom. So, since my clock is ticking, let us get started.

Who are these new Gods?

We don't know, not easily at least. They look and act just like us. Religious texts have it backwards, They are formed in our image. They have names and clothes and foibles. Some even have jobs. For this thought experiment, you need to imagine a person on the street. A normal person with their own attitudes, opinions, and

ignorance. Now give him ~~a~~ limited ~~and~~ omnipotence, especially over one narrow thing. Something like smart phones or coffee. You can imagine something like the sea, or war but those have been important to a lot of people for a very long time, and thus, unless something happened to the previous god of war, he is likely too old, and now too wise and experienced to be a god for us to worry about. The old gods have long ago learned ~~to~~ too work their will much more carefully, or at least keep their hands off ~~it~~ unless it is important. No, we will imagine we are a young god of new importance, or the rebirth of an older god who no doubt has enemies & responsibilities for which he is not yet ready to work. Pick your domain, what you are a diety of, be it broad and weak or narrow and strong. If it is a narrow domain, write 100 next to it, and choose a broader ~~category~~ category under which it falls. Give that broad category a 40. For instance, if you imagine a god of smart phones, that would be a 100, with something like Technology being a 40. If you chose a broad domain, assign it an 80.

Because these young gods are like children or teenagers, they are still trying to find out who they are. As such, they are dabblers. Pick a few other broad domains and distribute among them values which do not exceed 25 and whose sum does not exceed 100. These values represent the probability that the diety you have imagined will use their infallible omnipotence to act within that sphere of influence, that domain, and not make a total mess of things. As you can see, these "hypothetical" gods typically make things worse when they use their power, much like the Greek gods of old, who themselves were young and new to the Greeks. And done. Just like that, a god created.

Realization: Gods are very dabbles. They are collective belief made real. These gods are not domains, aren't they? A rising on the gods, but half out the most common share? Who who worship this particular god?

So what do we know about these Gods?

They are young. Less than a hundred years, some even younger, maybe a few years. Brand loyalty breeds new niche gods, every day. Some only live a few years, the product of flash in the pan fads. Some are the products of new ideas or philosophies. Any time something becomes really important to enough people, a god is born, an amalgamation of all the people who hope and pray and believe and want. We know that they exist as long as enough people care enough about ~~the~~ ^{deity's} domain. If people stop caring, the deity fades away, leaving only a person ~~with~~ with a love for something no one cares about. If you've ever seen an old man who seems personally offended that no one cares about, say disco or British knights tennis shoes, it's probably a former god. The other way to get rid of a god, temporaryish though it is, is to trap him in a situation in which it is impossible to succeed. At this point, the infallible god becomes fallible, and his power leaves him and starts over in a new body somewhere. A new god of slap bracelets. A reborn god of oil.

So what do we do with this knowledge?

Now that you and ~~whatever~~ whatever friends you have present, have imagined these hypothetical gods and know a bit about how they work, what do you do? Ah, there's the rub. You're a person with the intellectual maturity of a teenager, or maybe if we're very lucky, an early 20 year old. You have absolute power but not much idea how to use it well. What would you do? That's ~~what~~ what they do. All the ~~poor~~ poor decisions and good intentions and selfishness coupled with ~~absolute~~ omnipotence. What do they do? More like what don't they do?

Let's say hypothetically, yours truly offended a certain young technology deity who shall remain nameless. Suppose a person

Pardon the illegibility. I'm going to wait until it gets better to write more.

Look over driving support can't write any more.

realization: God is
 reckless and
 uncertain of his
 powers early on
 when young because
 they represent a
 new concept to
 a society struggling
 to learn the uses
 and limitations
 of this new thing, the
 god must learn
 come to terms
 with his power

with a considerable internet following made a reasonable and persuasive argument against a certain very popular website. Suppose the God of that site wanted bad things to happen to that someone as a result. That god could attempt to just poof that someone to him or snap his fingers to ~~kill~~ him. But he isn't a god of death or teleportation, so that would most likely not work the way he wants. It would end up all Monkey's paw - bruce Almighty no good for anyone. More than likely, unless he were in dire straits, he would rely solely on his domain of influence. That's where my 24 hour timeline comes in. I figure as self-obsessed as we are, likely I have less than a day before someone tags me on social media or gets me in the background of a selfie. No doubt he's already circulating some fake missing persons post to find me. Hence writing this to you on yellow legal paper and staying off the grid. Maybe it will buy me some time. I've said too much.

We've stopped for the night. I've been driving all day because my friend wasn't driving fast enough. She ~~wasn't~~ wasn't keen to let me dose up on caffeine and drive through the night so here we are. I made sure the hotel we stayed at doesn't have wifi though. ~~I don't~~ Even if my friend doesn't tag me, she may see a post he made and he could use his powers to persuade anyone who reads the post to rat me out. He can do anything in general if he doesn't mind the consequences, but when it comes to his ever popular domain, he can do anything perfectly with no hiccups.

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So what ~~can~~ can we do?

Try to understand them. Get inside their heads. Pretend to be them so we can stay ~~on~~ on their good side, stay one step ahead of them, maybe even defeat them. And how do we do that?

With this communal thought exercise. One person can be the universe. Everyone else can pretend to be infallible little gods doing what superpowered teenagers do. Deal with all their emotional baggage in unconstructive ways while figuring out the world and yourself while gaining wisdom and coming to terms with the limits of your omnipotence.

The friend representing the universe as it exists now will describe how things are, what is happening in the world and beyond. You, as gods, describe how you bend reality to your will. If what you declare is within your domain, you succeed without a hitch. If it is not, the universe gets to decide how you ~~succeed~~ ^{succeeded} but not the way you wanted.

Again, think monkey's paw. Think about how all of Bruce's attempts to answer prayers met with unforeseen consequences in Bruce Almighty. To figure out the likely hood of your will going south, you will need to generate a number between one and one hundred and add any value you may have associated with that domain. The ~~universe~~ universe decides whether that value applies and can be added or not. If the total is 100 or more, the act succeeds exactly as you wish. If the ~~task~~ ~~total~~ total is not higher, the act still succeeds. You are infallible, but things go wrong in some unforeseen way as a result. Ways to generate a #: dice, stopwatch, app, = Rand between (1,100)

God vs. God or What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?

pardon the
typos.
so sleepy

If one god has total mastery of a relevant domain (~~low~~^{value}) and another doesn't, the ~~more~~ actual ~~deity~~ deity of the domain wins. Both their tasks succeed, but the ^{100%} deity ~~fails~~ decides how things don't work out for the ~~low~~ loser and favor his own will. (God & smart phone auto wins against god & sea to ^{can't drop on phone & call})

If neither god has total mastery ^{but} both have some degree of familiarity, the lower value rolls first with higher narrating the failure. Then the higher value rolls with the universe narrating the outcome.

If one has passing familiarity and the other none, proceed as above.

If neither knows what they are doing and have no familiarity with the task at hand, they both roll simultaneously with the universe narrating all outcomes but ~~the~~ describing consequences going wrong relevant to how badly the roll failed to reach 100. Resolve ties in the same way.

What else do you need to know? It isn't uncommon for gods to hang out in groups. They or "ganthrons" as the more literate ones call themselves. They can sense each other. They tend to be selfish and so expect intergroup and intragroup conflicts to arise. A clever person will use this to their advantage. Oh, promises. Gods have a weird relationship with lies and promises. They can lie a promise (ie make a promise they don't intend to keep) without issue, but if they make a promise they intend to keep and don't, it counts as fallibility. Something about saying they will do something and meaning it makes a failure to do so a fallibility. Also, Gods can fail on purpose with no problems.

Pardon had
familiarity. She is making me
turn lights on. Just write by
street light memory

they
must be
there is no choice
when is no choice
no hope
succeed

It was too dark by the streetlight, plus there's the chance some teenager ~~checking~~ checking in to the hotel with his family will quite by accident snap a picture of me, share it on the internet and I will be caught. Unlikely given that our hotel has no wi-fi and is in the mountains so it will be hard to get signal, so I'm in the bathroom. Here's the terrifying thing. I want you to understand how broad and abstract a domain can be. I'll try to make it as clear as I can without thinking too much. Gods are thoughts and desires made manifest. Their thoughts become reality. As such, any thought I may have ~~may be~~ ^{related} to his domain may be heard, like a lone guitar chord struck. In a city, many others will be thinking harder about him so finding my single specific thought may be ~~hard~~ hard. The ~~catch~~ trade off is that he is ubiquitous in the city, so if I don't think or do anything, ~~he~~ he may still find me because someone near me is almost certainly paying him homage. Here, where life is simple, if I think too much on it, though I am far off if he does care to listen in this area, I am likely the only note playing in his song. Which brings me to this bathroom. When I entered, I thought I might write in the shower in hopes that I could safely have light (no one to accidentally ~~steal~~ post about me. Don't think of a pink elephant. So when I enter, the room is dark except for a weird glow at the soap shelf in the bathtub. The same sort of glow you might get from a smartphone on a charger in a dim room. Which made me think of smartphones which made me think of social media which made me think of him.

So what does all of this mean for me? For you? I can't stop thinking about warning everyone. I've been afraid. My fear of this technology feeds into the god because it is part of him, my thoughts. So he fears ~~me~~ me? Or is he mad because I simply undermine his power? Or is it pride that drives him, embittered because I have pointed out his many flaws. His worshippers do tend to be a bit vain and narcissistic, thinking their thoughts, even the dumbest ones deserve, no need to be read by the rest of the world.

But I'm warning you. Maybe they will sense your fear. Maybe this thought experiment you play with your friends will call the gods down on you. We should not fear. They will be molded by our fear. Nor should we feel superior because we never accidentally caused an earthquake just to stop an untimed blog post from going up. For then they will feel smug and superior.

We should feel compassionate toward these new gods. They are young, afraid, confused. They feel muncible, powerful! Like they know everything. They are teenagers. If we fear them, if we push them, shout them down, they will only lash out. We do not need to be police. We need to be TV parents. Not Disney Channel TV parents who are clueless idiots, for these are the authority figures the creators of these new gods grew up exposed to. No, we need to be ~~the~~ ^{Corey's} parents on Boy Meets World. Beaver and Wally's parents. We need to be understanding. Let them know it's okay to not know everything, not to care when people laugh & make fun. To be thoughtful, to consider their actions & the consequences that follow. To listen to