

## The Springfield Travel Agency

Sociomancy existed long before Usenet. Just ask the Londoners who apparated gothic castles straight out of the chapbooks that they fiercely devoured, or the Sleepers of the 80s who had to put down tulpas of Lolth that DND nerds conjured to deal with their bullies. The birth of the internet did throw gas on the fire, though. The case of the Springfield Travel Agency illustrates this handily, along with the way Videomancy influenced Sociomancy.

Frank Gorsky was always a lesser devotee of the cathode altar. His old man made his living selling big box sets, so it was an easy jump from conceiving of television as the thing that provided his livelihood to the thing that provided him with charges. Old man Grosky's Videomancy was idiosyncratic. He thought television was the historian of the twentieth century, and that you'd get charges by watching the historic events it broadcast. Father taught son, and although Frank eventually encountered proper Videomancy, he always viewed television with his father's optimism. You never knew what it would show next.

He married, had a family, and life went on. His totemic programs were the evening news (your most plausible shot at a major) and whatever programs his family liked watching together, mostly cartoons and sitcoms. Frank lacked the cutthroat nature to be anything more than a pony. Sure, having the world beamed into his living room was a great thing, the sort of thing that colors a man's imagination, but it wasn't worth missing his son's violin recitals, company meetings, or his wife's cancer treatments. Videomancy was a useful way to sometimes tune the dial on life, making it as exciting or as predictable as he liked. A family secret he could teach his son.

On July 28, 2001, his son was hit by a drunk driver.

Alone, in his apartment, he didn't have much to live for. To make matters worse, the TV had turned on him, bringing him nothing but bad news, even though he never turned it off. He couldn't live like this.

Homer Simpson saved his life. After letting the evening news wash over him, an episode of *The Simpsons* started. He let it play on. It was funny. Really damn funny. Though it was forced, it was the first time Frank had laughed in weeks. He quickly made it another one of his totem shows. He watched it religiously; he went online to sing praises. Frank Grosky was probably the one person to consider Season 12 comedic genius.

It was online that he discovered Sociomancy, people who didn't just watch shows, they interacted with them, bringing fiction into reality. This stirred a new conviction in Frank. He wouldn't just take whatever life decided to offer, hoping for good. He could make his own good. The world of Springfield seemed to promise a brighter, safer future, than the world outside his window. One where no one got seriously hurt and problems could be solved within half an hour. He threw himself into researching the occult underground to complete this end.

With that the Springfield Tourism Agency was born. Primarily a Simpson's fan site, just with a semi-secret plotting site for a new Otherspace attached. Though, of course, reading back old posts, it's possible that the site's users had no conception of an Otherspace, believing that they were just making a portal to "the real Springfield".

The site spread through to other Sociomancers in the Simpsons fandom as well as among other occult burnouts. Frank would vet each new member to the secret part of the site himself in the early days to make sure they were on the level and weren't involved in any sort of "dangerous magik". He had heard too many stories about innocent people getting possessed via chain letters or strange rumors of things like competitive eye biting to let it have a home on his site. Any discussion of rituals was banned on sight. However, as the site grew in popularity, Frank had to amend these policies. The approval process was delegated to trusted mods. Teenage skimmers and bodybags were gonna carry on with or without his approval. He might as well teach them first aid and what to do if a friend ODs or has alcohol poisoning. Even though that section of the site had a long post saying essentially "the best prevention is not to get involved" he still couldn't shake the feeling that this sort of information ultimately encouraged people to take bigger risks.

How does a lesser magi convince a group of more hardcore chargers that his ideas are worth following? For one, he doesn't. The site was, for the most part, a place to discuss the latest episode of a cartoon sitcom. However, he was also thoughtful and genuinely took the time to listen to all of his community members, whether they were chargers or not. Frank was charismatic and had a bringing things into focus that gave people direction. He had a way of giving people something to believe in, and that can paper over a lot of problems. Every member of the secret forum took on the name of a minor Simpsons character, in a telephone-like understanding of the mechanics of the Invisible Clergy. No one was allowed to claim a main character. Frank came the closest. He was Grandpa Simpson. He taught them that you shouldn't accept the cruelties of the world, you can remake a better one. Such sentiments would echo through Web 2.0. This idea, although not solely his, would lead to events that would horrify him. He taught them something else too. His forum signature was "It'll happen to you, too."

One of his main mods was Alex Beckman AKA Jessica Lovejoy. Her brother was a Mak, putting it in her head that through magik everyone could come together and make the world a better place, where nothing bad happened. To two siblings going through their parent's brutal divorce, the promise of Mak Attax was powerful. 9/11 broke her brother. It was the end of an era, the failure they'd never bounce back from. It taught Alex you can't avoid bad outcomes. Repress something down one way and it'll just pop up somewhere else. Embrace what you fear. That led her to becoming an Entropomancer, skateboarding to work on the freeway and messing around with the deep fryer as the Maks' dream slowly burbles down the drain like spilled McFlurry. Having the same goals of protecting society, Frank was sympathetic to the Maks, which is how he and Alex met. They grew to be unlikely friends. Alex's family had all accepted that their lives had gone to shit, so it was nice to have someone who believed in something he was doing. Frank appreciated Alex's bullshit detector and her greater experience in the occult underground. Alex didn't really agree with Frank's attempt to permanently move to a cartoon bunker, but hell,

it'd be cool to visit a cartoon world. Alex was also one of the main voices to push Frank out of his safetyist instincts.

The other main mod is Dan Karson AKA The Rich Texan. An investor who stumbled onto the site and decided to give the overwhelmed Frank some pointers regarding magik and the underground. Dan explained he was a plutomancer and once informed about the STA he offered to do various workings on the group's behalf. He could metaphysically bribe popular opinion in their favor, as long as his friends could supply the needed cash.

In actuality, Dan was an avatar of The Two-Faced Man testing out a theory. The aftershocks of that September morning played havoc on his firm. Everyone, after all, wants to be the lucky ones that ride a disaster to great returns while everyone else has their pants down, but therein lies the problem. How do you know what'll happen in advance? What if you were to nudge a few controlled disasters into existence? Delightfully devilish, Dan.

Take that Otherspace for example. If it went rotten in just the right way it'd be exactly the kind of controlled chaos his firm could profit off of. Dan had it all lined up. If the STA never got their Otherspace off the ground, then Dan could just bleed Frank and the other ponies dry for supposed "charges". If they did make it happen, he could put his plan into action.

The only way Dan wouldn't succeed is if the STA utterly succeeded on their portal opening, or wildly failed, say, by sending a major metropolitan area tumbling into Springfield.