

The Incantations

by Richard Tornello

Facing her spell casting table, cigarette in hand, waving back and forth, smoke spiraling up to the roof, jars and books a jumble, Josie, the senior family witch begins her traveling incantation:

*"As it should be,
The world folds in upon itself,
The membrane is pierced.
Tomorrow and yesterday are the same
Attainable.
Brush away the dust
Open, it must."*

But Josie sort of messed up. She forgot to put the correct coordinates as well as the subjects to be moved into the body of the incantation. Something had to go. The spell had been cast. It's just the way it is.

A Town Center, famous for nothing more than being in one of the richest counties in the USA, located in some far off VA district, and all its associated subdivisions and all the people therein, disappeared. Where it went -- nobody knew. Redistricting became a political necessity. That screwed things up in Richmond big time. The tax base that fed the politicians and the huge construction business, that supported the local pols, was altered too. Instead, a large gray impenetrable fog was all that was left in that very space.

Josie has the feeling something has gone very awry. "Oops, it happens. Got to find my book. I know I put it somewhere. A bother, always misplacing things." She laughs to herself. *Oh well. Life is full of surprises. They'll get over it whoever they are. I'm sure I'll hear about it.*

Meanwhile, still back in our humble universe, Josie is looking under piles of piles of papers. Three calendars are laid out with dates circled and no notes for the necessary reminders, and additional books piled beneath, astride and on top of the calendars. "Oh dear now what did I do with that book of instructions? I know it was here, or was it there? Or," she turns and looks at the calendars, "or there?"

"Hmm... I'll find it later; I know I put that book in a safe place. I just want to go visit my family across the Great Way."

The telecommunications device beckons. *"Madame, an incoming visitation."*

"What, Mirror? Who is it?"

Before the mirror can respond a vision appears and a strained voice associated with it begins, "Mother, have you been working outside your local area? You've gone non-local again or so we've heard. You know they are going to take your incantation license away if you keep this up."

"Dear boy, what are you talking about? I haven't left the home. I've been looking for...What book was that? I was about to visit your sister."

"Mother, your incantation book. You're looking for your incantation book. You're going to get us all in trouble. You need the book if you can't remember the proper standard operation formulas."

"How can I do that? I'm just an old witch, an antique. My powers are feeble. I need my books."

"That's just what I said, you need your book." And Mother, your powers, they are not feeble. You're just forgetful, you've always been. Remember when you kept going back and forth in time-space before you realized you didn't complete the geolocation portion of the incantation? Eight hours of what should have been a fifteen minute trip.

"Or how about the time when you nearly burned your laboratory down when you attempted from memory, I must remind you, to run three or four spells at the same time? Well, now I think you just displaced a whole subdivision to another universe!"

"*No me diga*, you don't say. I hope it has a nice view."

"Mother, no more. Please. Just call and we'll arrange a teleport. It will be nice. You're going to get us all in trouble."

"I don't like having my molecules rearranged. I never feel right after reassembly. And the preparations, the new travel rules, it's such a bother. An old witch has her pride. Why would anyone bother an old witch?"

"Mother, it is simply... it's just, information realignment. The teleport machines are safe. In fact it really does make things better in the brain department," said her son.

"My brain is fine for an old witch. I am antique. I like me just the way it is, and just the way I am. Now where is my book? Besides I like the old manner of folding time-space. It's neater and less prone to mistakes. Look what happened to Prince. He's a frog in some marsh. They scrambled up his atomic structure. You thought I didn't know or remember did you?"

"It can happen, Mother," her son said, demurring.

Waving her long skinny fingers at the mirror Josie proclaimed, "Not Time-Spacing. BTW, Is anyone complaining about the missing whatever it was?"

"Subdivision, Mother, a missing subdivision, with eight thousand homes and a town center... No one is complaining, yet. In fact I think that some of what you might have done is a great service. But *this can't happen again!*"

"You're correct; it can't, not with time-space-folding. Sub what? How many ... oh boy, a big one this time."

"Yes Mother, you sent a huge land mass to another universe! Please. Besides when it comes to travel, Time-space folding is so slow. It takes forever. We would rather have you here in seconds as opposed to minutes."

"It's not forever and you know that. Besides, time-folding is a comfortable manner and one can enjoy the view. Not like zip zap now you're here, then you're not, and then you're there, maybe. So, is anyone complaining about the missing whatever you called it?"

"I just told you, you moved a whole subdivision and a town center. And no, not yet anyway. You can't do that. I told you."

"Told me what, when? Where is my book? I'm antique you know. When are you coming out here? Pretty funny -- a whole subdivision. You think I don't remember. It takes some time to sink in, but I do get it eventually. You said you'd be here when?"

"But you screw up mother! Someone is going to get mad, and eventually take your incantation powers away."

"You said you'd be here when?"

"Soon -- very soon, mother, soon. Don't change the subject and please, and don't guilt trip me."

Josie smiled to herself. This was fun. At least, he calls. This was another unintended benefit. She said, jumping on the obvious, "A new discovery! And now we have a third method of transport, Time-space, teleport and now, Ta-DA, a drum roll please, the guilt-trip. I like number one and three the best. You can keep your DNA scramble with all the associated rules and mathematics for travel now. What a pain. An old lady can't just fold time-space any more and travel with dignity."

"Mother, that's... it's is not fair. TSA rules, you know and... As you would say, 'Life's not just, get over it.' So please... "

Smiling, she tunes out the communication.

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While at the same time:

The Town Center building, of YOUR NEW HOME TOWN, as the banner proclaimed, is presently a Planck length away from this, our universe as you and I, dear reader, experience it, and is now tightly tucked into another universe. It suddenly showed up, right the middle, and on top of an Olympic sized pool, with just a slight crash, its mass accounted for. That was followed by a monster splash, caused by displacement, a law that had to be obeyed.

The whole subdivision associated with The Town Center landed in an airfield not five miles to the north of the pool. The incantations that were cast, held for a soft arrival, so no one was physically injured, just shaken up.

Mental anguish, another matter altogether, controlled by a totally different set of governing laws, and not normally associated, or rarely considered with physical movement, was definitely not taken into consideration by the prime mover on this one. In fact, the mental anguish factors were totally and utterly forgotten. In fact they were not even remotely thought of.

Now, all the new arrivals in this other universe, as well as its regular inhabitants, scratched their collective heads in wondered how in this world no one was hurt, and more importantly, what the hell had just happened. And since the original inhabitants, those being of sound mind anyhow, pondered if this was a Home Town, as the banners proclaimed, where the hell was the associated business that could, in all actuality support a real town?

"This is totally bogus. How are we going to afford all this?" someone yelled.

"Consider the strain on the infrastructure, schools, roads, water and who knows what else," exclaimed another!

"This isn't a game of SIM, this is real life. It's our lives," shouted yet one more concerned citizen standing in a crowd with others.

There were no immediate answers to those questions, just evil eye stares from the officials of the Home Owners Association who were not at all used to being questioned about anything, ever, at all. The officials were still gathering their collective wits about them, conferring among themselves on what just happened, and what to do about it. Their public relations sock puppet, all smiles, addressed the population in front of the Town center, by standing behind a window, just in case, and proclaimed, "Be calm, be calm, everything will be just fine. We're professionals and we know what we're doing. There is no need for concern. We are used to handling these and other related problems. Go about your business. You can trust your HOA. Everything will be JUST FINE."

The Your New Home Town subdivision, which was in what was a previously wooded stretch of land that been bulldozed to make way for the Your New Home Town's useless existence, now sat upon an international airfield. The Home Owners Association of this Your New Home Town subdivision quickly analyzed the situation, realized there were untold opportunities, and began to assert its power by initially demanding and promulgating the following statement by nailing it to the somewhat uneven front door of the Town Center:

By the powers invested in HOAs, (with the scribbled in additional after thought),
throughout the known universe:

1: All aircraft, no matter what the corporation's logos and past color schemes might have been, or covered by previous laws and constitutions, must be of the same color with matching interiors.

2: Fuel trucks and fire trucks must be parked out of sight of the boarding gates and the control tower, no matter how inconvenient or how much a total disregard for the public safety that order might be. It must look good, always. We decide what good is.

3: *any* alterations or repairs *for any reason* to the runways or structures must be approved by the standards committee with written approvals by the airport's neighbors before any work begins. Any unapproved construction will be torn down and the culprit(s) fined.

4: Forthwith all rudders must be turned to the right when aircraft are parked, anywhere.

5: Failure to abide by the laws will result in fines followed by reposition and sale of said property, and loss of landing rights.

The people complied. The HOA's staff was so pleased. They had lots of practice getting laws passed to support them. Back There, in the universe from which they sprang, they had the builders donate lots and lot and lots of money for the reelection of those who would go along with them. These people here were easy. This usurpation was a cake walk. The locals had no clue what just happened. At first, the rationale, maintaining property values, seemed to make sense to all the nonflying public, and they accepted the governing rules. But after careful thought some questioned the reality behind these proclamations.

HOA committees are staffed by retired bureaucrats and frustrated individuals with nothing better to do than make arcane and inane rules that they can't even justify except to declare those are the rules. Many of these members could use an enema to help clear out their brains thereby possibly, and this is a remote possibility based upon intimate experience, think and reason things out as human beings a bit better rather than take what any old builder thought would be a positive way to keep the unsold property in some resemblance of monotonous organizational order as rote, which can be defined as: *an "outline; a fixed, habitual, or mechanical course of procedure: the rote of daily living"*.

This whole mind-set was converted into a mantra, repeated by the board of directors. It went something like this: "The HOA only there for the benefit of the people and property we serve." They all repeated this at the beginning and end of any and every statement when questioned, about anything. Eventually, any statement no matter how insane, inane, moronic, and idiotic, if repeated enough times, with the concomitant voice of authority, will be believed.

And so it goes.

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Mysterious objects turning up in this universe had happened in the past, but never this size, and never to this degree. Most of the time it was a person who had no idea what happened but seemed to be relieved once they understood where they were and how to play the game. They usually had the upper hand on political manipulation coming from this, our universe. Many found their way to government positions such as Attorney Generals, Governors, Mayor, Supreme Court justices and upon the rare occasions when the electorate all drank from the same *smiley pitcher*, President.

The one *everyone* remembers was an old fat drunk, drugged up guitar player in white who appeared in a nudist colony. He called himself a king. *Some king*, they all thought. Who and where would anyone put up with that?

However, when he sobered up and lost some weight, he didn't play or sing too poorly. People thought he was a bit off his rocker since he kept asking for his blue suede shoes. Yet the king was good for a gig on Friday night at a local bar, but for anything else, he could have used a good writer.

The responses to these *new gifts* are as diverse as the original folk who live here. The most common statements go something like this, "Another gift from the gods in the pool, and now this HOA thing-a-ma-jig. What have we done to deserve this?" Some actually wonder out loud. They are put to the torch quickly by the Property Management folk. They breach no insult and are quick to fine any one who dares question their beneficent edicts. Extreme punishment for any infraction is by far the best medicine. It is actually mentioned as such in the training manuals in the Home Owners management certification training program. Another highly recommended activity is to donate to local and state politicians which will have the effect of enhancing the legal status of the governing statutes in the HOA's favor.

For everyday use, a normal logical argument goes something like this: "Do you want someone with a pink plane next to you? We're here to make your property valuable. Why would you doubt us? Our rules are for the betterment of society. Deviation is a form of unsocialized behavior and we don't want that, *do we?*"

"Pink isn't so baaa..." begins one older, original resident of this wrapped up tight, in another dimensional universe.

"Fine him \$50.00 a day for a month and tow his aircraft away," the huge employee of the Property Management Bund, officially known as the MFWIC, commands. "And put a lien on his home too. Anyone else have a problem?" She looks around at the assembled voting members of the new geolocated Home Owners & Airport Association. They cower at the display of self granted power.

The answer by the assembled masses to the visual display of benevolent power was expressed in something similar to the following: "The way of the gods are mysterious, who are we to

question?" This is usually stated in unison, with solemn grace born of this truly awe inspiring incident. This would be followed by a more specific verbal legitimizing condemnation, in this case, "Pink, oh not a good color. He deserved that. Yes."

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Facing her spell casting table again, books laid out with the formulas written in bold, cigarette in hand, waving back and forth, smoke spiraling up to the roof, jars and books still a jumble, as always, Josie, begins her traveling incantation:

"As it should be --"

Smiling, she continues:

*"As it should be. The world folds in upon itself,
The membrane is pierced.
Tomorrow and yesterday are the same,
Attainable.
Brush away the dust
Open, it must.
TSA is a bust."*

Her mirror reports in a manner that could be construed as polite boredom, *"Madame, you have another message... from your son."*

"Yes dear, how are you. We haven't spoken for a while. That's not nice. I'm antique you know. You should call more often."

Sputtering, *"Mother*, what did you do with that part of the government? And I just spoke to you not a while ago. You disconnected!"

"I don't have a strong constitution. Dear, please don't yell. It's not polite. Didn't I teach you manners?"

"Yes Mother, you did, but this... Mom, come on, please...." He is cut off again with the wave of her hand.

Josie looks at her crystal ball and smiles, and whispers to no one in particular, "One down; a few more to go. What pains in the ass they all are and utterly useless too."

"Now*where* did I put my cigarettes? I liked it when I could smoke anywhere and travel in style.

"Now what was it I wanted? I'm always forgetting something."

"Madame, incoming visitation."

"Not now mirror, I'm resting." She inhales, her long skinny fingers holding her cigarette aloft, exhales and smiles. "This one should be good."

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In this other, Home Town universe, after the initial shuffling of executives and official pronouncements, the HOA and TSA people were getting along famously. They think alike, act alike and push people around alike, all without recourse.

They've organized the whole planet to look exactly alike. No body or government asks any questions. They are all enjoying the ultra-strict regularity that this form of organization lends to what was an otherwise unkempt manner of government, where the in the past, the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness were once the stated aims.

The ruling elite consider themselves to be almost divinely appointed shepherds considering the nature of their present existence. They are there to protect and guide, as shepherds are wont to do.

And so it goes.

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"This is flight 1776, we'd like permission to land on runway number 1," radios the pilot. (The HOA had done away with the old runway naming system. Who really understood that 'compass heading divided by 10' business, anyway?)

"Pilot, has your company paid your HOA dues?" demands the new HOA appointed MFWIC now in control of the Air Traffic Tower operation.

"Who is this? What the hell are you talking about? This is a loaded heavy coming in for a landing, where is the Air Traffic Controller?" demands the pilot. "I'm low on fuel and we must land!"

The tower radios back again, "Have you paid your dues and landing fees? If you land we will impound and then sell your plane. Then, by the Virginia State laws that allows us, and you should have a copy, we will have you arrested, and all the baggage on board sold at auction."

The pilot is sweating. He can't believe this is actually happening and speaks firmly into the mic, "It's not my fucking plane. I'm only the pilot. Call the company, damn it. I have to land, and I will land VFR if I have to. I have people on board. What rules, when and where were they ever put in place? What is the matter with you people? Are you insane?"

The new ATC MFWIC, sitting in the control tower, her body dripping off of the seat, states clearly and calmly, "Sorry, but those are HOA rules. We have to maintain the standards and all. It's in the rules. You should have a copy of the rule book. It's not our problem that you don't have a copy of the standards and guidelines. There will be no landing without current dues paid and all planes must comply with the governing HOA standards before they may land. And in this universe, my dear pilot, HOAs have magical powers that trump local, state and sometimes even federal laws. They will be obeyed."

THE END

This is a story of pure fiction, fake-believe, a fairy tale. Any resemblance to any self governing, intrusive, rule making, self perpetuating body is pure coincidence, as is any resemblance to persons living, dead, mythological, or self-important.

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