

SCENE 3. DINGY COFFEE SHOP

The place has no customers except for a MIDDLE AGED WOMAN, sitting in a booth, smoking, drinking coffee, and staring straight ahead. JIM PETERSON, wearing a Jimi Hendrix t-shirt, ripped jeans, and a waiter's apron, pushes a button on a coffee machine and sits at one of the tables. He stares at a notebook, chewing on his pen. LISA McIVOR sits at the opposite corner of the table, looking occasionally at JIM and frowning when he isn't paying attention to her. She is skinny, and more fashionable than the surroundings, in a punk-but-cute kind of way.

JIM
(Yelling into the
kitchen)
Hey, Guillermo! What rhymes with
'destitution?'

VOICE FROM KITCHEN
I don't know, man, 'restitution?'
Why don't you buy yourself one of
them rhyming dictionaries?

JIM
Restitution! I like it! Thanks!

LISA rolls her eyes and runs her foot down Jim's leg. He smiles slightly and keeps writing. LISA bites her lip. ADAM and JANE enter. LISA gets up and goes into the back.

ADAM
Hey, Jim.

JANE
Hey, Jim.

JIM
Hey guys, what's going on?

JANE
Not much. What are you working on?

JANE looks at the notebook. JIM smiles sheepishly and covers what he's written.

JIM
Just a poem. There's an open mic
tonight against police brutality.

JANE
Cool.

LISA
(Calling from the back)
Hey Jim, will you come help me
with this?

JIM jumps up and hurries into the back. LISA grabs him by the shirt, shoves him into the bathroom, follows him in, locks the door, and starts kissing him.

Back out front, JANE and ADAM help themselves to coffee and an ashtray, and sit in a booth. JANE lights a cigarette.

ADAM
I was up most of the night reading
about mass hallucination.

JANE
How can people share a
hallucination?

ADAM
There are websites all about it,
but they're the same websites that
talks about ghosts and bigfoot,
and UFOs.

JANE
Rob was freaking the fuck out. The
whole time he was walking me home,
all he would say was 'what the
fuck?' 'what the fuck?'

ADAM
I was freaking out, too. I don't
even want to know what Sander was
doing. He's always kind of
freaking out already.

JANE
It's almost like my brain is
refusing to interpret the whole
thing. There's no way to fit it
into anything I believe in, so
it's, like, easier to deny it.

ADAM
Yeah, but it isn't so hard to
think that there are things out
there that are outside of what we
can understand. I mean, science
has it's limits, right?

JANE
Yeah, I mean, I'm as spiritual as

the next atheist, but last night... Thinking about it gives me the shivers. I guess mass hallucination sounds more reasonable than a ghost, but fucking shit, it's all crazy!

ADAM

I found the website for a group of paranormal investigators who seem really respectable. They completely reject some things, like demonic possession, but they believe in other things, like residual energies. Two of them even have PhDs.

JANE

Did you write to them?

ADAM

Yeah, at like 4 in the morning. The main guy, Jackson, wrote me right back. He wants to come take some readings.

GUILLERMO comes out of the kitchen and picks up Jim's notebook. He reads a few lines, snorts, and tosses the notebook back on the table.

In the bathroom, LISA starts to undress JIM.

JIM

(whispering)

I don't think this is a good idea.

LISA gets really mad, shoves JIM back out into the hallway, and locks him out. JIM looks confused. LISA sits down on the toilet and pulls a syringe out of her bag.

SCENE 4. MIDWEST INTERSTATE AT NIGHT

A VW bus drives past cornfield, blasting one of Frank Zappa's more obscure recordings. JACKSON drives. JACKSON is a large white boy hippy with dreads. POLLY sits shotgun. POLLY is a frail-looking hippy. BLAIR and JASON sit in back, jammed in among boxes and books and equipment. BLAIR is decked out like a beat poet and smokes all the time. JASON is the square. JACKSON takes a heroic drag off a fat joint and yells over the music.

JACKSON

It's a dubiously-received notion,
even within the Cult of the
Reliable.

BLAIR

Yeah, man, yeah.

JACKSON

It all comes back to the idea of
intercession, as opposed to
succession.

JACKSON takes another huge hit, passes the joint to POLLY, and starts sipping on the coffee that he had been holding between his knees.

BLAIR

Dig, man, dig.

JACKSON

Once you bind yourself to a claim
like that, you're chained to the
whole damn Hegelian March of
Truth, off into the sunset in one
straight fucking line!

JASON

So are we going to stop and piss,
or what?

JACKSON

Christ, Jason, this is the third
time since we got to Pennsylvania.

JASON

Yeah, all right, I can't help it.
A small bladder is one of the
physiological crosses I have to
bear, along with weak knees and
male pattern baldness. The coffee
doesn't help. Can we stop the
fucking van already?

JACKSON
Can you wait twelve miles?

JASON
Yeah, I guess.

JACKSON
There's a filling station in
twelve miles.

BLAIR
Word, man. My hot bean extract is
down the dregs, and I've been
fiending for some beef jerky.

JACKSON
So let's start again, and this
time let's not stray into...

BLAIR
Let's avoid the pitfalls of...

JACKSON
...monodirectionality.

POLLY
So what do we know?

JACKSON
Start with the event this time.

BLAIR
The incident.

POLLY
Four children, out late and likely
on drugs, all experience an
identical vision, in which a child
appears in a flash of light,
speaks to them, and disappears.

JACKSON
Good, Polly, good. You're still
learning. Anybody else?

JASON
At approximately 23:00, in a park
in Chicago, a child appears for a
span of three to four seconds.

JACKSON
Right! Those other details, the
children-- we'll call them
adolescents so as to distinguish

them in terminology from the child-- the drugs, the flash of light, all imply causality. Would the child have appeared if the adolescents hadn't been there? If they hadn't been on drugs? Was the flash of light a related, or merely concurrent phenomenon? These are the things you have to ask yourself, Polly, that get lost when the event is framed too broadly.

POLLY

But if you don't include the children, I mean the adolescents, then you lose the most plausible avenues of investigation.

JACKSON

You're a bright girl, Polly, but you're new at this. Jason and Blair have been doing this for five years now, and I've been in related fields now for ten years.

BLAIR

He's got a degree.

JACKSON

I have three, but that's not the point. The point, Polly, and I say this with the utmost respect, because you're a bright girl with lots to offer, is that in this particular matter, you don't know what you're talking about.

JASON

You see, Polly...

JACKSON

It's ok, Jason, I've got it. Now, Polly, the whole notion of Dynamics of Proof, the main doctrine separating us from the Cult of the Reliable, is based on multidirectionality. Using the event as Point Alpha, we can return to the adolescents. That is, they can be implied if they are found to be logically necessary. They can be appended at Beta, or Gamma, or even at Psi sub

three. On the other hand, if Alpha is constructed in such a way that the adolescents, or any other perceptive body, is requisite to the event...

JASON

...you've already started making assumptions. Shit! Can we just pull over? I really have to piss.

JACKSON

Only a few more miles, Jason. Do you understand, Polly?

POLLY

I think so, but why include the time of the event, or the place, or the duration?

JACKSON

Ahh... Good question.

BLAIR

It's like, exposition, man.

POLLY

It just doesn't seem consistent, is all.

JACKSON

But you see, it's all about consistency.

JASON

It's about spacetime.

BLAIR

It's some pretty heavy shit.

JASON

No pun intended.

BLAIR

Huh? Hey, man, can I get the sack? That Point Alpha shit always kills my buzz.

JACKSON passes a huge bag of marijuana back to BLAIR.

JACKSON

Imagine a four dimensional Euclidean space.

POLLY
You mean, coordinates?

JACKSON
Exactly. Coordinates for the
entire universe at every point in
time.

POLLY
Okay.

JACKSON
Now even though we can't actually
visualize this, it isn't so far
for us to conceptualize.

POLLY
Right.

JACKSON
What is hard to conceptualize, is
how the spacial-temporal
relationships between phenomena
are adjusted in hyperbolic
geometry, once you allow for the
possibility of psychic mass.

POLLY
I think I follow you.

JACKSON
There are theories-- theories,
mind you-- that a detailed mapping
of events that occur outside the
sphere of monodirectional reason,
would yield certain patterns that
would lead to understanding, if
not prediction.

BLAIR
Like a treasure map.

JACKSON
No, Blair, not really. Anyway,
such a mapping would have been
ludicrous before the advent of the
computer. Now, however, there are
entire mainframes at MIT whose
computational energies are
redirected under the cover of
darkness to address this very
question.

POLLY
So we feed them data.

JACKSON
Exactly.

POLLY
It still seems to me that this
particular data is extraneous to
the statement of the event.

JACKSON
We have to start somewere.

The camera switches to outside the van. From inside, we
hear the following exchange.

JASON
Fuck it. I can't take it any more.

BLAIR
Uhn, man, what are you doing? Stop
that!

JASON
Ahhhh...

BLAIR
Man, you are nasty.

A gas station coffee cup is tossed from a rear window, and
the van rolls on.