

SCENE 1. A CITY PARK IN AUTUMN.

Four teenage youths sit in coats and hats, passing a joint.

SANDER
(Coughing)
Fuck. This is some good shit.

ROB and JANE snicker.

SANDER
What?

JANE
Pass it here.

ROB snickers again.

JANE
This is Gary's shit.

SANDER
So? Maybe he got some new shit.
All I'm saying is, I've only had,
like, two hits, and I'm fucking
baked.

ROB
You get baked off oregano.

SANDER
I do not.

ROB
You do too. Remember Damian's
shit? That was, like, all oregano,
and you fell off your bike.

SANDER
That's bullshit. That shit got me
high as hell. Besides, I think I
had the flu.

Nothing happens for a while, except that the kids cough
occasionally, rub their hands together, and pass the
joint.

ROB
Hey Adam, did you do the geography
homework?

ADAM
Not yet.

ROB
Can I copy it during lunch?

ADAM
As long as you don't burn it this time.

JANE
All I've got is shake. You guys gonna throw down on this one?

SANDER, ADAM, and ROB all pass her bags of pot. ROB's is large and full.

SANDER
Damn! Lemme see that shit. This is some beautiful shit, Rob.

ADAM
Where'd you get it?

ROB
I got it from some girl at that party up north.

JANE shakes her head and makes a face at ROB behind SANDER's back. ADAM looks away.

SANDER
I thought you weren't going to that party.

JANE studiously breaks up buds on a battered notebook. ROB looks like a deer in headlights.

ROB
Uh... Yeah. I wasn't going to go, but uh... You know my boy Gerardo? He paged me with his emergency code at, like, midnight, and said that that girl from St. Francis was there, and that she asked about me. So, it was, like, too late to call. But I scored some killer buds.

JANE
What about the girl?

ROB
Uh... She was, like, already passed out in the bathtub.

JANE

What a shame.

ROB lights a cigarette. JANE lights a cigarette. SANDER lights a cigarette. Nothing happens for a while, except that the joint gets passed around.

ROB

Man, I am stoned.

SANDER

You remember when we were smoking and a squirrel fell out of the tree and we were all like, "what the fuck?"

JANE

That was some funny shit.

SANDER

Seriously.

ADAM

Do you think animals get embarrassed?

SANDER

Yeah, man. Haven't you ever watched a dog take a shit?

ROB

That's nasty, man. You're a freak.

SANDER

Not like that!

JANE

Who took my lighter?

ROB

We need to build, like, an eternal flame...

JANE searched her pockets very slowly, and eventually finds a lighter. She relights the joint and passes it. Nothing happens for a while.

ROB

Man... I haven't been this stoned since...

Silence. JANE shivers and pulls her coat close around her.

JANE

It's cold.

There is a very bright flash, like lightning. In the afterglow, there is the spectral form of an eight year old child standing in front of them. He stares straight ahead.

CHILD

Take me home.

As the light fades, so does the image of the child.

SCENE 2. RESIDENTIAL CITY STREET ON A SUNNY FALL AFTERNOON.

A short, middle-aged woman, SUZANNE, power walks down the street in a jogging suit with a no-nonsense haircut and a shitty little dog. She approaches a serene elderly couple who are out for a stroll.

SUZANNE

Hello, Irene. Hello, Chandler.

CHANDLER tips his hat.

IRENE

Hello, Suzanne.

SUZANNE

(Power walking in place)

I hope this construction isn't too much for you. Patrick, at Streets and Sanitation, he told me they don't usually repair potholes this late in the season, but I told him they were unsightly and dangerous, and he said "You're the boss." Of course, I put in a good word for him with O'Leary.

IRENE

Oh, my. I don't know what we'd do without you.

SUZANNE

(Beaming)

That's what you elected me to do. You folks enjoy your day. I bet we won't get too many more like this.

SUZANNE power walks away. Halfway down the block, she greets a man laden with heavy grocery bags.

SUZANNE

(Power walking in place)

Hi, Jerry.

JERRY

Hello, Suzanne.

SUZANNE

Jerry, I've been meaning to talk to you.

JERRY

What's on your mind?

SUZANNE

Well, I don't want to stir up trouble, but it's about the children.

JERRY

What's the matter?

SUZANNE

I don't want to alarm you, but a few days ago, I saw your Clara walking with Damian Ensberg.

JERRY

Hmm.. Oh yes, I've met the boy. They had a school project together.

SUZANNE

Oh, well, I'm sure it's alright then. It's just that Betty, Betty Landau? She's one of the counselors over there. Betty said that Damian is a truant, and that he smokes cigarettes and marijuana, and that they suspect him of selling LSD.

JERRY

Hmm, well...

SUZANNE

Not that it's any of my business of course, who Clara is hanging around with. It's just that if it were my Sander...

JERRY

Well, better these eggs home.

SUZANNE

Bye, Jerry.

JERRY

Bye.

SUZANNE turns a corner and sees a small crowd of gawkers out front of a high rise apartment building. There is an area cordoned off with police tape. A squad car sits out front. There is blood on the sidewalk, and chalk outlines of two bodies. JOLLY PETER paces back and forth near the scene. He is a dirty, unshaven, man in a ragged brown trenchcoat. Two policemen, RANDY MORAN and MARTY NOONAN, are filling out paperwork. SUZANNE waves her arms over her

head as she runs up to the crowd.

SUZANNE

Randy! Randy!

RANDY

Good morning, Mrs. Hamilton.

SUZANNE

What's going on, Randy?

RANDY

Double homicide, ma'am.

SUZANNE

In my ward? Oh dear, oh dear.

JOLLY PETER

(Mumbling and staring at
the blood stain)

The sidewalk drinks the blood. The
blood of judgement.

RANDY

Young couple. Just finished at the
university. Pushed from the
seventh floor.

SUZANNE

Heavens! Who would do such a
thing? And why?

RANDY

That's what we're trying to figure
out, ma'am.

JOLLY PETER

The scythe takes the young, and
the scythe takes the old, bundled
as one sheath.

RANDY

It's a shame. They had their boxes
packed and everything. They were
moving, probably today or
tomorrow.

JOLLY PETER farmer-blows a huge wad of snot onto the
sidewalk between SUZANNE and RANDY, and then wanders off.
RANDY notices a black Cadillac turn into the nearby alley.

RANDY

Marty will answer any other
questions for you, Mrs. Hamilton.

I have to go look for clues in the alley.

RANDY hurries away.

SUZANNE

Pleased to meet you, Marty. I'm Suzanne Hamilton, Alderman, but please just call me Suzanne. Randy and I go way back. My son, Sander, is good friends with Randy's daughter, Jane. Wonderful girl. Wonderful girl. And Randy is just so polite. Sometimes I can't stand it. So tell me, do you have any leads?

MARTY

(Without looking up)

Yup.

In the alley, RANDY stands beside the Cadillac. The window rolls down slowly, and a hand reaches out to take to take the notebook from RANDY's hands.

VOICE FROM CAR

Double homicide?

RANDY

Yeah, that's what we're thinking.

VOICE FROM CAR

It looks more like a suicide pact to me.

RANDY

Suicide, Sweet Tony? That's gonna be tough.

VOICE FROM CAR

You're a talented man, Randy. Talented and rich.

RANDY

It's such a shame...

VOICE FROM CAR

A shame?

RANDY

Yeah, Sweet Tony, a shame. Did you see the rack on that girl? It's a shame.

The notebook is passed back to RANDY. The Cadillac drives away. RANDY tears off a sheet, balls it up, and throws it in the dumpster.

SCENE 3. A 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 cornfields, 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.

SCENE 5. A DARK CAFE.

Aging hippies and youths from various counter cultures mill around drinking coffee. There is a stage with a lectern and shitty banners that say "Stop Police Brutality" and "Free Mumia." A punk kid nurses his guitar for the last bit of feedback, and bows to moderate applause. JIM takes the stage, smoking a cigarette, and opens his notebook on the lectern.

JIM
Hi, everybody.

JIM elicits minimal response.

JIM
It's a pleasure to be here. I, uh... I like to do what I can to support police brutality. I mean, to oppose it. You know. Anyway, I um... I have two poems.

JIM shuffles some papers and clears his throat.

JIM
They're still, you know, rough drafts. I wrote them at work today. So hopefully they'll be more polished soon.

In back, LISA takes a swig from a flask. A well-dressed, slightly older, man comes to stand next to her.

MAN
Hi, I'm Kurt. I couldn't help but notice you drinking by yourself, and wonder 'what is a pretty woman like that doing drinking by herself?'

LISA offers KURT the flask. KURT takes the flask and drinks.

LISA
Hi, Kurt.

Onstage, JIM drops a sheet of paper and chases it as it blows across the the stage. After he grabs it, he returns to the mic and laughs nervously.

JIM
Sorry, I needed that. I mean, I don't have it memorized yet, because it's so new.

JIM adjusts the mic clumsily and gets some feedback. He starts snapping his fingers rhythmically

JIM

I saw the man walk the street; The
cops were there, on their beat;
They scowled as he moved his feet;
The man was black, it wasn't neat;
That he had dreads; Upon his head;
They needed a man from his
location; To take downtown to the
police station; To face a charge;
Of someone at large; They could
not catch, To put behind latch;
and key, in jail; he's get no
bail; The man resisted; The cops
insisted...

KURT

This guy's a loser.

LISA

Yeah.

JIM

With club and fist; He could
resist; No longer ; They were
stronger ; They took him bloodied
off to jail; One more time, the
system fails; When he gets out, no
restitution; instead he'll meet
with destitution...

KURT

Let's get out of here.

LISA

Yeah, okay.

KURT and LISA leave.

SCENE 6. AN ADOLESCENT'S MESSY BEDROOM.

SANDER listens at the door to his room, then lies on the floor by his bed and reaches up into the bedframe. He pulls out a key, goes over to his dresser, and unlocks the top drawer. He takes out a bag of weed, a lighter, and a pack of cigarettes. The drawer also contains a crappy pipe, a bottle of beer, several Victoria Secret catalogues, a bottle of lighter fluid, and a bottle of peach schnapps. SANDER puts on a hooded sweatshirt and sunglasses, and is pulling on his jacket when there's a knock at his door and the door opens. He jumps and turns around.

SUZANNE

Where do you think you're going?

SANDER

I'm going to meet Adam.

SUZANNE

Where?

SANDER

At his house.

SUZANNE

I don't like you walking around at this hour.

SANDER

Mom! It's only 9 o'clock!

SUZANNE

And your bedtime is 11.

SANDER

I'm 15 years old, Mom. I don't have a bedtime.

SUZANNE

I know you got home late last night.

SANDER

I was only a few minutes late. Adam and Jane get to stay out until midnight, and Rob doesn't have a curfew at all.

SUZANNE

Well, it's not my fault that I love you and I worry about you. There's a murderer in our neighborhood.

SANDER

We live in Chicago! There's always a murderer in our neighborhood.

SUZANNE

Well, that's hardly going to convince me to let you go out gallavanting around the neighborhood. These weren't hoodlums of "gang bangers." They were a nice young university couple, not much older than you.

SANDER

So I'm never going to get to out again? I have friends, Mom!

SUZANNE

You've been spending an awful lot of time with Jane lately. Is she a potential girlfriend?

SANDER

Mom!

SUZANNE

Why are you wearing sunglasses? It's dark out.

SANDER

It's what kids do these days. You wouldn't understand.

SUZANNE

It's what drug users do. It's all over the papers. You won't impress Jane by looking stupid.

SANDER

I'm not trying to impress Jane! And I don't care if you think I look stupid. Are you going to make me stay home? Do I need to call Adam and tell him to do his homework by himself?

SUZANNE

Mrs. Richards told me that your homework showed a "lack of dedication." Now it's okay if you want to go hang out, but don't take me for a fool.

SANDER

So I can go?

SUZANNE

You can go, but I want you to go straight to Adam's and come straight home, and I want you home by 11.

SANDER puts in his headphones and turns his walkman way up.

SANDER

Thanks a lot.

SANDER leaves the house. The crappy little dog barks at him the whole time. He turns down the first alley and tries to light a cigarette, but it's too winder. He puts his face into the corner of a doorway, obscuring all vision of the alley, headphones still blaring, and spends several seconds lighting his cigarette. He continues down the empty alley to the park where ROB, JANE, and ADAM sit on a bench, smoking a joint.

ADAM

The paper said it might snow tonight.

ROB

It'd be sweet if they closed school.

JANE

It's not even freezing out.

ROB

I know, I'm just saying it'd be sweet.

SANDER walks up, grooving awkwardly to his music. He take off his headphones.

SANDER

Shit, man. Let me hit that. I need to get stoned.

JANE takes one more long drag and gives the joint to Sander.

ADAM

What's the matter?

SANDER

My mom is so fucking crazy!

JANE

Dude, it's dark out. What's with the sunglasses?

ADAM

What'd she do?

SANDER

She was all like "Don't go out! There are murderers out there!" and she was getting all hysterical and shit. I was like "Mom, I've got to have friends, ok? We live in Chicago, there are always murderers out there."

JANE

That's not a very good argument.

ROB

Why's your mom freaking out about murderers?

SANDER

Two students got pushed from their apartment and fell, like, seven stories or some shit.

JANE

Oh shit. Was that right over there on Thornwood? There's all that police tape up over there.

ADAM

Yeah, the brown building with the flower pots with beer bottles in them. The paper said it was a double suicide, though.

SANDER

All I know is, my mom was freaking out.

JANE

Yeah, it must have been suicide. I mean, those buildings have security and everything.

ROB

Who wants to kill a couple students, anyway? Come on, Sander, puff, puff, pass!

JANE

Man, this neighborhood is going fucking crazy. You know how Mr. Foster hasn't been there all week? I heard he just locked himself in his apartment and he won't come out or answer the phone, or anything. They know he's not dead because he yells shit at anybody who knocks on his door.

ROB

Weird, man. My brother says that when he does inventory at the cafe, all sorts of weird shit is missing. Like, two chairs and crate of tortillas.

Silence.

ADAM

Did you guys tell anybody about last night?

ROB

No.

JANE shakes her head.

SANDER

Hell, no, man.

ADAM

Me either.

ROB

I been thinking about it all day.

Everybody nods and mutters in agreement.

ROB

I mean, after that shit, it's like "fuck it." You know?

SANDER

Yeah, man.

ADAM

No, not really.

ROB

It's like, why bother? It's all bullshit. School and everything. Why not just join a monastery and

get it all over with?

ADAM

Get what over with?

ROB

I don't know, man. It's like, all we do in life is try to make sense out of shit, right? And then some shit just blows all that away. So why bother?

JANE

Dude, are you tripping?

ROB

It kind of feels like it.

SANDER

Maybe the weed last night was laced with something. Maybe we really were tripping.

ADAM

What did you see, Sander?

SANDER

There was a light, and then there was a kid, and then he was gone.

ADAM

That's what I saw, too.

SANDER

Maybe it was some kind of optical illusion.

ROB

No, man. There was a kid, and then there wasn't. It was ghost, but I don't believe in that shit.

JANE

My grandmother believes in ghosts. When my great grandmother died, there was a necklace that my grandma really wanted, but my great aunt really wanted it, too. They fought about it and then they felt bad and decided to bury it with my great grandma. Then, like, fifteen years later, after my great aunt died, my grandma had her picture taken, and in the

picture she's wearing the necklace.

ROB

My brother's girlfriend, Lisa, believes in ghosts too. She told me this story... it was, like, this old woman who died in this room, and then later they saw a window with a shadow behind it, but there was nobody there.

JANE

That story sucked.

ROB

It was, like, through the blinds or some shit. Fuck you.

JANE

(To Adam)

Tell them about the investigators.

SCENE 7. A DINGY WAREHOUSE.

A rolled up \$100 bill moves along a foot-long line of cocaine on a cardboard box, over the course of twenty or thirty seconds. SWEET TONY sits up, wiping his nose. He and FREDDY BABY sit on crates in a warehouse.

SWEET TONY
Fucking post office.

FREDDY BABY
Yeah. What's the problem?

SWEET TONY
I'm supposed to get a package today, but it ain't come through yet. Ordered it off the internet.

FREDDY BABY
Yeah? I got guys down there. Maybe I can get it through for yas. What's it, like, some books from that amazon place? I saw them in the papers. Hot shit.

FREDDY BABY takes a monster line of cocaine off a box.

SWEET TONY
Nah, I'm getting me a kid.

FREDDY BABY
A kid, Sweet Tony?

SWEET TONY
Yeah, Freddy Baby, you know, like, a small child.

FREDDY BABY
Off the internet?

SWEET TONY
Yeah, from Malaysia or some shit.

FREDDY BABY
Whatchya wanna a kid for for?

SWEET TONY
You know them Malaysians. They're good with their hands. I figure I'll put him work making documents.

FREDDY BABY
What kind of documents, Sweet

Tony?

SWEET TONY

I dunno, Freddy Baby. Just documents, ok? Quit busting busting my balls, alright?

FREDDY BABY

You gonna keep the kid at your house? I don't know. It don't sound like such a hot idea, if you ask me.

SWEET TONY

For one thing, I didn't ask you. For another thing, what's the kid gonna do? Go to the cops? He don't speak no English, he don't know where he's at, and he ain't got no papers. He sure as fuck don't want to get boxed up and sent back to Malaysia. Besides, most guys that's ordering kids is perverts and shit. I figure he'll be glad just making documents.

FREDDY BABY

You think he's ok, in a box at the post office?

SWEET TONY

What, are you some kind of Mother Theresa all of a sudden? He's fine. He's got food, he's got water. He's got air holes. He probably's even got them little peanuts.

FREDDY BABY takes a huge line of cocaine.

FREDDY BABY

A kid. Shit.

SCENE 8. AN OHIO CORN FIELD AT NIGHT.

The VW van is parked in a ditch by the highway. The corn has been harvested. Near a grove of trees at the edge of the corn field, JACKSON holds a paper and consults a small device. He walks toward the trees. POLLY, JASON, and BLAIR follow.

JASON
(whispering)
Are you guys sure it's okay for us
to be out here?

JACKSON
(Studying a device)
No, Jason. We're trespassing. We
are most likely in possession of
substantial quantities of
controlled substances. We are
parked illegally on the shoulder.

JASON
Is that a GPS receiver? When did
you get a GPS receiver? Can I see
it?

JACKSON
The GPS receiver is not a toy.

JASON
I just want to see it for a
minute. Those things are so cool.

JACKSON walks slowly, studying the device, turns slightly, and keeps walking.

JACKSON
Later.

JASON follows along, trying to look over JACKSON'S shoulder at the GPS.

JASON
What are you looking for?

JACKSON
I have coordinates for a sighting.
No little green men. Bright
lights. Lost time. I want to get a
look at the site and check for
psychic density points.

POLLY has caught up to walk next to JASON, a couple steps behind JACKSON.

POLLY
(To Jason)
Is that related to psychic mass?

JASON
Yeah, see, a psychic density point
is a place...

JACKSON
(Without turning or
looking up)
It's a place where the residual
psychic energies carry enough
weight to manifest themselves in
space-time.

BLAIR jogs up and hand JACKSON a joint.

BLAIR
I got this shit lit. Man, these
midwest winds are harsh.

JACKSON
(Walking quickly, taking
a long hit of the joint)
Thank you, Blair. Now, Polly, what
were we talking about?

POLLY
The weight of psychic energy.

JACKSON
Right. Psychically dense events--
violence, sex, etc.-- increase the
density of a certain space-time
coordinate. Rival theories suggest
either that this density fades
over time, or that psychic density
continually increases, and will
eventually create a singularity
and pull all matter toward the
physical sites of consciousness.
The latter school of thought is
popular among the religious,
particularly Catholics.

JASON
But places with great psychic
density attract not just matter,
but also other psychic masses...

JACKSON
So things that don't precisely
exist at a certain location or

time...

JASON
Like ghosts, or fire...

JACKSON
Or visions of the past or
future...

JASON
Or prevailing airs of
malevolence...

JACKSON
Can all be pulled to a place with
high psychic density.

BLAIR
Word.

POLLY
What could possibly have happened
way out here?

JASON
Indians or settlers could have
been massacred.

JACKSON
Psychic density can be exploited
for spiritual or religious reasons
as well. Consider the Aztecs and
their human sacrifices, or the
Greeks with their Dionysian rites.
The greatest psychic weight comes
from two things and two things
only-- ritualized killing, and sex
rites.

POLLY
Sex rites?

JACKSON
Sex rites.

JASON
Mystical priests, who relied on
manifestations of the unearthly to
legitimize their authority, found
that they could bend space-
thought-time with these rituals.
By surrounding themselves with
ostensibly mystical occurrences,
they were able to prove their

godliness.

JACKSON looks around. There is nothing but cornfields, with a house in the distance, and a small grove of trees. He turns quickly and strides back toward the van. POLLY looks around and shivers. Everybody hurries to keep up.

JACKSON

Jason!

JASON catches up and walks beside JACKSON, nearly jogging to keep up.

JACKSON

What's your take?

JASON

Any data on the family that lives in that house?

JACKSON

One brief interview-- a rather amateur one, I'm afraid. Turned up nothing. I'd hoped to arrive at a decent hour and get an interview myself.

JASON

What about the subject?

JACKSON

A local man. By his own account, a hard working family man, with no penchant for drink. I'm almost...

JACKSON stops and studies the house in the distance. Everybody catches up to them.

JASON

What?

JACKSON

I'm almost tempted to go have a look in there.

JASON

(Worried)

Don't do it, Jackson. In my professional opinion, the house is unlikely to be the attractor. My money is on an Indian burial ground, or on a conglomeration of ebullience points.

BLAIR

Shit, man. It's cold out here. You two can discuss philosophy in the van.

JACKSON looks back at the house once more, and then turns to the van.

JACKSON

Very well, Blair. Chicago beckons.

POLLY walks beside JASON.

POLLY

What's an ebullience point?

JASON

It's a place with exceptionally low psychic mass. Whereas a place with high psychic mass pulls phenomena toward it-- we call it an attractor-- an ebullience point repels phenomena. A coincidence of nearby ebullience points can turn a psychically neutral location into a hot spot.

POLLY

What causes an ebullience point?

JASON

Generally, they are caused by a historical lack of human presence, but it is theorized that consciousness engaged in simple-minded pleasure-- contentedness without ecstasy-- has essentially the same psychic mass as unconsciousness.

POLLY

You're so smart.

JASON

(Beaming)

Northern Ohio has more per capita Bigfoot sightings than any other area in North America.

JACKSON, walking ahead of them, overhears this exchange and looks hurt.

SCENE 9. A BUSY STREET.

JOLLY PETER shuffles down the sidewalk in a grimy trenchcoat. He stops suddenly, backtracks a couple steps, stoops down with a groan, and pulls a rock out from under a bush. He holds it up to the sun, then puts it in his pocket. He walks into a park, approaches a tree, looks around to see if anybody is looking, pulls off a leaf, and puts it into his pocket. On his way back to the sidewalk, he kneels down, scrapes up a handful of dirt, and puts it in his pocket. He continues walking down the sidewalk. ADAM walks toward him. JOLLY PETER holds out his hand, and ADAM hands him a dollar as he walks past. JOLLY PETER puts the dollar into his pocket. He walks out onto the rocks along the lakefront. The wind whips his coat all around him.

JOLLY PETER

Traveler. Here? Traveler. Here!
Bound to the earth. Bound. Gagged.
Gagging?

JOLLY PETER takes all of the objects out of his pocket, balls them up together, spits on them, and throws them as far as he can out into the lake. He closed his eyes, and then nods, stroking his heard, as is receiving instructions. He shudders and his eyes go wide.

JOLLY PETER

No!!!

SCENE 10. A QUIET CITY STREET.

ADAM arrives home to find three tents pitched in his front yard. JACKSON is shaving, using the side mirror of the VW bus.

JACKSON
Adam Bell?

ADAM
Yes?

JACKSON takes one last stroke with his razor, wipes his face and hands meticulously with a towel, and then offers his hand to ADAM.

JACKSON
I'm Jackson, from the Paranormal Investigation Firm. My associates are still asleep. There was an incident with the mailman, but I believe I was able to smooth things over.

JACKSON beats on the side of one of the tents.

JACKSON
Time to break camp, boys!

JACKSON opens the other tent. He watches POLLY sleep for a few seconds, then touches her and whispers to her.

JACKSON
Rise and shine, Polly.

BLAIR and JASON emerge from one tent, sleepy and disheveled. POLLY crawls out of the other tent. JACKSON turns to ADAM.

JACKSON
What do you say we go get some coffee?

SCENE 11. SWEET TONY'S KITCHEN.

SWEET TONY and FREDDY BABY are looking into a large cardboard box, the contents of which cannot be seen. The kitchen is clean, of moderate size, with slightly out-of-date appliances and linoleum.

FREDDY BABY
This kid don't look Chinese to me.

SWEET TONY

I said "Malaysian," numbnuts.
You're thinking of "Asian."

FREDDY BABY

I thought Malaysians was Asians,
too. This kid looks pretty white
to me.

SWEET TONY

Shit, Freddy Baby, you're right!
They was out of Malaysians, so I
got me a Russian kid instead.

FREDDY BABY

What's that on his face, Sweet
Tony?

SWEET TONY

I think it's a scar. Look, he's
got 'em on his chest, too.

FREDDY BABY

Shit, Sweet Tony. This kid don't
look so good. Somebody sure worked
him over.

SWEET TONY

Shit.

FREDDY BABY

Maybe we oughta, you know, take
him out for ice cream or
something.

SWEET TONY

Ice cream?

FREDDY BABY

Yeah, kids love that shit.

SWEET TONY

I don't think I oughta be seen on
the street with him.

FREDDY BABY

Well, maybe I could go get some
ice cream and bring it back.

SWEET TONY

Yeah, Freddy Baby, all right. Go
get some ice cream.

SCENE 12. THE COFFEE SHOP.

ROB and SANDER and JANE sit in a booth, smoking and drinking coffee. The SMOKING WOMAN sits and smokes. JIM is taking an order from RANDY and MARTY, who are in uniform, carrying guns. The phone rings.

JIM

I'm sorry, I have to get that. I'm really sorry. We're short staffed today. I'll be right back.

JIM rushes to the back, answers the phone, and start taking an order for delivery. Several people are standing by the door, waiting to be seated. JIM grins at them apologetically. ADAM enters, and walks past the people waiting, followed by JACKSON and his crew. ADAM waves to JIM, who holds the phone between his ear and his shoulder to wave back. The phone slips out and crashes onto the counter. JIM picks it up again quickly and grins sheepishly at the waiting crowd.

JIM

Sorry, sir. I'm sorry. Will you repeat that last part, please?

LISA storms in, passing JIM without a word. She hangs up her coat violently, ties on an apron violently, stomps up to MARTY and RANDY, and then smiles sweetly.

LISA

What can I get for you guys today?

All the investigators and all the kids are crammed into a single large booth. LISA storms up, slams coffees down on the table, and then storms away, without addressing them.

JACKSON

What lovely service.

ROB

That's Lisa, my brother's girlfriend. She's got moods.

JIM touches LISA hesitantly as she passes him. She turns on his angrily.

JIM

Hi, sweety.

LISA

(Icily)

Hi.

JIM

Are you okay? I couldn't find you last night after the open mic.

LISA

I had a headache. I'm trying to work, okay?

LISA leaves. JIM pulls a chair up to the end of the booth where everybody else is sitting, sits in it backwards, and lights a cigarette. ROB adds sugar to his coffee for a full ten seconds.

JIM

Hey, guys. Who are your friends?

JACKSON

My name is Jackson. These are my associates, Polly, Jason, and Blair.

JASON

Hey, man.

BLAIR

What's up?

POLLY

Hey.

ROB

This is my brother, Jim.

JACKSON

Together, we make up the Paranormal Investigation Firm. We arrived in Chicago this morning to look into some strange phenomena.

JIM

Cool, like the X-Files?

JACKSON

Yes, but real.

JIM

'Cause I love that show.

Awkward silence.

BLAIR

You know, I'm not the choosiest man when it comes to coffee, but this stuff is really bad.

Awkward silence.

JIM

Well, better get back to work.

JIM take a final drag of his cigarette, shorts it, and leaves. At another table, the RANDY and MARTY are talking.

MARTY

I don't know, Randy. It doesn't sit right with me. I think those kids were pushed.

RANDY

Dammit, Marty. How long have we been partners? Twelve years, we've been partners.

MARTY

What's your point?

RANDY

Thanks a fucking lot! That's my point.

JIM arrives, with a coffee pot.

JIM

More coffee, Mr. Moran?

RANDY

Yes, please. Thanks a fucking lot, Marty. Thanks a fucking lot.

SWEET TONY enters, flanked by two large men. He stands by the "Please Wait To Be Seated" sign for a while, looking important. When nobody notices him, he calls across the restaurant.

SWEET TONY

Jim!

JIM rushes to the door.

JIM

Hi, Mr. Giamatti.

SWEET TONY

Hi, Jim. Did Randall leave a note for me?

JIM searches the pockets of his apron and pulls out a fat envelope. SWEET TONY opens it in such a way that JIM cannot see the contents and thumbs through a bunch of \$100 bills.

JIM
Here you go, Mr. Giamatti.

SWEET TONY
Thanks, Jim. Please, call me Tony.

JIM
Sure, Mr. Gia... I mean "Tony."

JIM slaps SWEET TONY jovially on the shoulder. One of the large men flanking SWEET TONY steps forward, as if to kick JIM's ass, but hesitates and looks at SWEET TONY, who shakes his head, but looks put off by being touched. An awkward silence ensues.

JIM
Did you guys want to eat or anything?

SWEET TONY
No thank you, Jim. Good bye.

Back in the booth, everybody sips their coffee.

JACKSON
...violence. Or sex.

ROB nods, looking confused. ADAM purses his lips. JACKSON lights a cigarette. BLAIR lights a cigarette. ROB lights a cigarette. SANDER lights a cigarette. POLLY lights a cigarette. JASON lights a cigarette. ROB hands JANE a cigarette.

JANE
No, thanks.

ROB gives JANE a puzzled look.

JANE
Marty's here. He hates it when I smoke.

JASON
But isn't the other cop your dad?

JANE
I smoke in front of him all the time. I just don't like smoking in front of Marty.

JACKSON
As I was saying... Ritual violence and sex are the most expedient ways to increase psychic density.

Witchcraft and works of "evil"--
if you like using such archaic
terms-- tend to be directed to
such ends.

Blair: Shit, man, I'm gonna step out for some fresh air.

(Blair leaves.)

Adam: So you're saying that what we saw might have been a vision of the past or the future, pulled to us by emotionally powerful events that occurred close to us in the fourth dimension.

Jason: This kid's bright.

Jackson: There are various other phenomenological or gravitational explanations, but that's a reasonable, if simplistic, answer.

Sander: So people actually do sex and violence to try to bring spirits and other weird phenonema to a place?

Rob: "Do sex"?

Sander: Stop it, Rob!

Jackson: The space-time displacement caused by such events can often be pawned off as magic on the fearful or ignorant. You guys are young, but you seem smart. You may have been indoctrinated into the Cult of the Reliable, but you still seem amenable to other points of view.

Jane: So what was it that we saw?

Jackson: It's hard to say. A child. Whether from the past, or the future, from your own imaginations, or another's... it's hard to say. We'll plot the points, and investigate local density and ebullience.

Jason: Honestly, the odds of finding an identifiable source for any given phenomenon are low, but often we can catalogue related phenomena.

Jackson: The field is still in an embryonic stage. Tycho Brahe collected data for years and years, and built off the data of numerous predecessors, before discerning the elliptical patterns of the heavenly bodies and drinking himself to death in the king's feast hall.

(Blair returns and sits down. His eyes are severely bloodshot, and he sways slightly in his seat. Rob and Jane look at each other and smile. Blair lights a cigarette slowly.)

Blair: Shit, man. Point Alpha's, like, always there. From either direction.

Jackson: That's not what we're talking about, Blair.

Blair: Word.

(Marty comes over to the booth. He sniffs the air and looks

suspiciously at Blair.)

Marty: Hello, Jane. How's everything?

Jane: Good, Marty. How are you?

Marty: Good. How's school?

(Randy calls from near the exit.)

Randy: Hey Marty, are we leaving or what?

Jane: It's alright. I mean, it's boring. You know, public school. I got an 'A' on my chemistry homework today.

Marty: Sure, yeah. You're a smart kid, Jane, I know you'll do alright.

Jane: Thanks, Marty.

Randy: C'mon, Marty!

Marty: Have a good one.

Jane: Have a good one, Marty.

(Marty leaves. Jane lights a cigarette. Up front, Lisa comes up to Jim and slides her arm around him.)

Lisa: Hey, baby.

Jim: Hey, sweetie sweet.

Lisa: Hey, baby, I need to borrow some more money.

Jim: Sure, baby. How much?

Lisa: \$200.

Jim: \$200?

(Lisa looks like she might start to cry.)

Lisa: Please, Jim? I have to refill my prescriptions, and you know how expensive that is without insurance.

Jim: It makes me so mad how the man keeps us down.

(Lisa puts her hand on Jim's arm. Back in the booth...)

Adam: So what sorts of related phenomena might there be?

Jackson: Well, the naive answer is that there are causes and effects. The Principle of Multidirectionality forces us to reject these terms, as they imply linear causality, but for initiates such as yourselves, they may prove to be a useful framework.

Polly: As I understand it, the "causes" are events, often deliberate, which impact the psychic density at a certain point, and the "effects" are other phenomena that cannot be explained

by linear reason.

Jackson: Good, Polly, but "impact" is a noun. Please use it as such.

Sander: So there might be people out there who are trying to draw strange phenomena to us?

Jackson: Groups of people, usually. Cults.

Jason: ...the kind that justify the stigma attached to the word.