# DIAL H FOR HAPPINESS

by

Allan Amenta

Allan Amenta 403 E. Vickie Avenue Santa Maria, CA 93454 (805) 922-7010 Fax: (805) 928-6236 aa34ferry@verizon.net WGAw No. 1122782 FADE IN

EXT. MODERN HIGH-RISE IN MID CITY - DAY

It is a many-storied apartment building within a cluster of high-rises.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO HIGH-RISE - DAY

Well-heeled, well-groomed people are leaving and entering. The scene radiates big-city affluence.

EXT. HIGH RISE - DAY - ABOVE GROUND

We are up high moving directly toward a particular window on the 21st floor. As we approach this window, we momentarily focus on the crowded street below to accentuate the vertiginous height at this level of the building.

CLOSE ON WINDOW

Through the window we see four-year-old LINDA MORRISON sitting on the floor speaking into a plastic toy telephone. Soon, we hear her voice.

LINDA

Mommy says if I'm good she will take me shopping today, and I won't need a baby-sitter.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - DAY - ON LINDA

Linda is alone in the room speaking into her toy telephone. In the b. g. on a night stand is a child monitor that picks up sounds in Linda's room that can be heard on speakers in the kitchen and elsewhere in the lavish apartment.

LINDA

But I have to be real good, cause I made Daddy mad, and when Daddy gets mad, he scolds Mommy, too. She stops speaking, then listens intently, pressing the receiver closer to her ear. As she listens, she frequently giggles.

LINDA

If we go shopping, you can come with us. It will be lots of fun. I'll ask Mommy.

INT. BREAKFAST ALCOVE OFF KITCHEN - DAY

PAUL MORRISON, 38, sips coffee while reading a newspaper as his wife, ISABEL, 35, pours herself a cup.

ISABEL

It's a shame about that
Larrabee boy down the hall.
I heard his face was pretty
battered and bruised. It's
not the first time, either.
They ought to lock his father
up and throw away the key.

Paul speaks without looking up from his newspaper.

PAUL

Everyone knows the guy's a big jerk, Isabel.
A real creep.

ISABEL

He's a lot worse than that. He's a bully.

PAUL

Well, it's none of our affair.

ISABEL

Somebody ought to do something about that man. Bullies like him always seem to get away with it, don't they?

PAUL

Let well enough alone. Live and let live. That's my motto.

CLOSE ON CHILD MONITOR ON KITCHEN COUNTER

We hear Linda GIGGLING. Finally, she bursts into SCREAMS of laughter.

LINDA (off speaker.)
Oh, you're so funny. You're
always making me laugh.

ON SCENE

Isabel and Paul glance at the monitor. Paul grimaces sullenly, and shakes his head.

# PAUL

Again with that damn toy telephone! I could hear her yakking into it at three in the morning. How many times must I tell you to do something about it?
I've scolded her, but she doesn't listen to me.

# ISABEL

She's only a child, Paul. She's imitating all those people she sees talking on their cell phones. Children have imaginary friends they talk to. It's only a stage.

# PAUL

She's almost five for cripes sake! Old enough to know the difference between a toy and the real thing. She drives me crazy with all that damn yakking, and giggling, and screaming.

I'm fed up. Put a stop to it.

# ISABEL

You know what your trouble is, Paul? You were a bachelor for too long. Kids were never your thing. I'm surprised we even have one child. Sometimes I doubt whether you were ever a child.

PAUL

Don't hand me that crap. You should talk. I doubt if anyone's going to elect you Mother of the Year.

ISABEL

What do you mean?

PAUL

You thought I didn't see you slap her the other day.

Isabel is rattled by Paul's remark.

ISABEL

It was just a love tap. I told her I was sorry.

PAUL

Don't tell me. Tell it to that high-priced head-shrinker of yours.

Isabel glowers at him. Linda's GIGGLING VOICE continues.

LINDA (off speaker)

You keep making me laugh.

PAUL

There she goes again!
She's getting to be like
all the other spoiled brats
in this building. Too many
toys, too many luxuries.
Like the way you grew up
in your rich Daddy's house,
sucking on your silver spoon.
Not me. I had to work my butt
off to get where I am.

ISABEL

Here we go for the umpteenth time with your tedious story of how you pulled yourself up by the bootstraps and earn more money than all those college men you call shmucks and schnooks. ISABEL (cont'd)

You have a lot of unresolved issues, Paul. About lots of things -- money, education, children. Maybe you're the one who should be seeing a psychiatrist.

PAUL

That'll be the day.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - DAY - ON LINDA

She is talking on her telephone.

LINDA

I think I'll go tell Mommy.

Clinging to the telephone, she races out of the room. .

INT. BREAKFAST ALCOVE OFF KITCHEN - DAY

Linda rushes in still holding the toy telephone.

LINDA

Mommy, I want to tell you something.

Isabel glances at the sullen Paul.

ISABEL

Not right now, Dear. Later.

Linda gazes at her parents and senses their dark mood.

LINDA

All right, Mommy. I'll tell you later.

Paul rattles his newspaper angrily, glances at his watch, and rises from the table. He glances sharply at Linda, then at Isabel.

PAUL

Remember what I said about that phone.

Would you feel better if we charged Linda for her phone calls that annoy you so much? I'm beginning to think a four-year-old may be too much competition for you.

PAUL

You know, Isabel, there are times when that tongue of yours ought to be tied -- maybe like something else of yours.

ISABEL

In that case you'd be depriving yourself of the opportunity to intimidate another child.

PAUL

You mean discipline. So I'm a little stern at times. What's wrong with that? Kids need discipline. Especially these days. It didn't hurt me any.

(glancing at watch)
Well, I'm going to be up to
my ears in meetings all day,
So I'll be a bit late tonight.

He walks away. Isabel stiffens and follows him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Isabel trails Paul into the living room as he heads toward the hallway door.

ISABEL

A little late? No doubt stopping off at your favorite barroom for your usual pick-me-ups with your macho buddies.

(a beat)

Or maybe for a quickie with some pick-up.

He grabs her wrist and squeezes it tightly. Isabel winces.

PAUL

Your insinuations are getting a bit stale. And maybe you're getting a bit stale, too. And don't talk to me about boozing. You've been in your cups often enough when I've come home.

ISABEL

Let go. You're hurting me.

Linda appears and gazes at her parents with troubled eyes. Paul releases his grip, glares at Isabel and Linda, then leaves in a huff. Isabel is rigid with anger. Finally, she slumps into a chair, sobbing. Linda tries to comfort her.

LINDA

Don't cry, Mommy. We'll go shopping and everything will be all right.

Isabel dabs her eyes with a handkerchief.

ISABEL

Not today, Dear. Mommy doesn't feel well. We'll do it tomorrow.

LINDA

But you promised, Mommy, if I was good. And I've been good, haven't I?

ISABEL

Yes, you've been good, very good, but I don't feel well. Why don't you go to your room and play.

LINDA

But you promised!

Isabel loses patience and explodes in anger.

Stop it! Stop pestering me! Just go to you room!

LINDA

You're mean, Mommy. You and Daddy both.

Linda begins crying and rushes off to her room.

Isabel sighs, and for a few moments stares blankly into space. Soon, she gets up and goes to the living room bar, which is amply supplied with liquor.

She pours herself a whiskey, takes a sip, savors it, then returns to her chair. She takes another sip and settles back in the chair. It is obvious she relishes this boozy respite.

Soon she hears Linda's voice over the monitor in the living room.

LINDA (off speaker)

Mommy isn't taking me shopping today. She broke her promise.

ISABEL

(sighing to herself)
What am I going to do
with that child?

She drops her head back on the chair, her face full of anguish.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - DAY

Linda is talking on her toy telephone

TITNDA

I don't like it here.
Mommy and Daddy are
always fighting and
yelling at each other.
And Daddy's always
scolding me. You never
yell at me. I'm scared.
I'd rather be with you.

#### INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It is now early afternoon. Isabel is dozing in her chair, her empty whiskey glass in her hand. Suddenly, the doorbell rings. She awakens, startled and disoriented.

Noticing the glass, she hastily moves to the bar and hides it behind the liquor bottles. She then fumbles in the drawer of the desk, removes a small canister of breath sweetener, and sprays her mouth.

As she heads for the door, she straightens her clothes and tries to regain some semblance of order and sobriety. At the door, she hesitates for a moment and takes a deep breath before opening it. She gasps when she sees the visitor.

ISABEL

Dad!

FATHER Surprise! Surprise!

Her FATHER steps into the living room. He is a man in his sixties, well-groomed, and quite prosperous looking. Isabel tries to control her nervousness.

ISABEL

What brings you to the city? I know how much you hate to leave that country estate of yours.

FATHER

And a very lonely estate it's been with your Mother gone these past six years. Well, I may be officially retired, but I still have some business that brings me into town every so often. And it's always a good excuse to see my only daughter and that beautiful granddaughter of mine.

He kisses Isabel, then studies her face. She tries to evade his penetrating look with small talk.

Have you had lunch? If not, I can whip up something.

FATHER

I'm fine But I'm not so sure about you.

(studying her closely) You've been crying.

ISABEL

Lack of sleep, that's all.

FATHER

You can't kid a kidder, Kiddo.

Isabel can't hold back tears, and she embraces him.

ISABEL

Oh, Dad!

FATHER

What's wrong, Dear?

ISABEL

We're at each other's throats again.

FATHER

What is it this time?

ISABEL

You know how Linda loves to talk on that toy phone of hers. Well, Paul just can't stand it. He wants me to take it away from her.

FATHER

Well, we both know that husband of yours isn't exactly Mister Rogers. Seems he has a lot to learn about kids.

ISABEL

Linda does talk into that phone most of the day.

ISABEL (cont'd)
And even in the middle of
the night at times. It's her
imaginary friend she talks to.
At her age I'd hate to split
up that cozy friendship.

Her Father chuckles.

FATHER

Especially when you once had your own imaginary friend. Remember?

Isabel drifts into a brief reverie.

ISABEL

Yes. Esperanza. I had almost forgotten.

FATHER

How did you ever come up with a name like Esperanza?

Isabel laughs.

ISABEL

Probably inspired by that
Spanish nanny you and Mother
brought back from one of your
trips to Europe. How she hated
to be called Nanny. 'No Nanny,'
she would say, 'I'm Duenna.
Nanny is British. Duenna is
Spanish for governess.'

FATHER

She was a doozy, all right. I think she was still fretting about England's victory over the Spanish Armada.

(changing subject)
You want me to speak to Paul?
Even with that chip he carries
on his shoulder, maybe I can --

Isabel laughs ruefully.

The last time you two had a talk, it almost erupted into World War Three.

FATHER

Your husband has a thing about rich folks. He thinks they never earned their wealth. But he didn't seem to mind marrying into money, did he?

(a beat)
I never thought you two had
much in common. But I wish
I could help.

ISABEL

We'll just have to work it out ourselves, Dad.

FATHER

How's the little one?

ISABEL

Napping, I hope. At least I haven't heard one of her phone conversations for a while.

FATHER

I'll sneak in and have a look.

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Linda is asleep clutching her toy telephone. Isabel's Father enters and gazes at her lovingly. He pats her little behind and whispers to her.

FATHER

Sweet dreams, little one.

He walks to the window and peers down at the street 21 stories below.

EXT. CITY STREET SCENE - DAY - FATHER'S POV

There's a moving river of pedestrians and vehicles.

#### INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Isabel's Father returns from Linda's room.

#### FATHER

Little Miss Precious is sleeping like a top. I looked out her window and almost got a nosebleed from the height. I know it's none of my business, but isn't it about time you and Paul moved into a house somewhere away from the city. A high-rise is no place to bring up a child. And God knows, you two certainly can afford it.

# ISABEL

I'd love to, Dad. But Paul's a city boy. He's lived in apartments all his life. You couldn't pry him out of this building. He wouldn't know what to do with himself as a homeowner. Can you imagine him pruning roses in the garden?

# FATHER

You must pay a small fortune in rent here. And all that money could be going toward a beautiful home somewhere. In the country, or the suburbs. I never liked the idea of my granddaughter being up so high. It just doesn't seem safe.

#### ISABEL

She's not going to fall out, if that's what's worrying you. Her window is sealed tight. We made sure of that.

### FATHER

The world isn't what it used to be, Isabel. It's not a safe place anymore. And a skyscraper like this one -- well, you know what I'm talking about.

I do, Dad, and I appreciate your concern.

He glances at the liquor bar, then turns to Isabel.

FATHER

My Dear, I think you'd better go easy on the hard stuff.

ISABEL

What do you mean, I haven't --

FATHER

I think you know what I mean. Remember, you have a child. And remember, you can't kid a kidder, Kiddo.

(a beat)

Well, that's my little lecture for the day. Time to be on my way. Hug the little one for me.

Isabel walks him to the door. He kisses her cheek, sighs, then speaks a quiet word to her.

FATHER

Where's it all going to end, my Dear?

After seeing him out, she goes to the bar, pours another drink, and leaves the room.

INT. BREAKFAST ALCOVE OFF KITCHEN - DAY

Isabel enters and sits in the alcove with her glass, solemnly pondering her Father's parting words. Soon, she hears Linda's voice over the kitchen monitor.

LINDA (off speaker)

And maybe you can come and see me. We live way, way up high in this big, tall building.

Isabel listens and begins sobbing again. She swallows her drink, then slumps on the table, convulsed in tears.

LINDA (off speaker) You can take the elevator. Push the button that says number twenty-one.

Isabel gets up and leaves the room.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - DAY

Linda is still talking on her telephone. Isabel opens the door slightly and listens.

LINDA (O. S.))
And we can play together
and talk and have lots of
fun with my toys and dolls.
I don't have fun anymore,
except when I talk to you.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LINDA'S ROOM - DAY

Isabel closes Linda's door quietly, then leans against the wall wearily. We can still hear Linda's voice faintly as she continues chattering on her telephone.

ISABEL
Oh, God, I'm lost.
Help us, please!

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR - NIGHT

Paul, slightly tipsy, is leaving the bar with JAKE and BILL, two of his well-heeled and presently well-oiled cronies.

JAKE

Hell, Paul, we were just getting wound up. Do you have to leave so early?

BILL

He's got a family, Jake. A wife and kid. It's not like the old days of our wild bachelorhood.

Jake leans against Paul unsteadily.

JAKE

Well, I guess you'll have to do as Bill says. Return to the bosom of your family. Give them my regards.

PAUL

Yeah, sure, I don't think my wife will appreciate your regards.

(spotting a taxi)

Taxi!

The cab pulls over. Paul gets in and waves to his cronies as it pulls away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ON LIQUOR BAR

Isabel is sitting on one of the bar stools sipping a drink. The door in the b. g. opens and Paul enters. Isabel doesn't look up.

PAUL

Am I home early enough for you?

ISABEL

It depends on whether you're returning.as Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde.

PAUL

One of my buddies said I should be getting back to the bosom of my family.

ISABEL

He must have you confused with a real family man.

PAUL

I see the cocktail hour has already started. Or was it even earlier? Mind if I join you?

ISABEL

Why not? Half of the bar belongs to you.

Paul pours himself a drink, then sits on a bar stool.

PAUL

Well, how was your day?

ISABEL

My Dad dropped by.

PAUL

Oh? And what did Dear Old Daddy Big Bucks want?

ISABEL

Just a social visit. And to see Linda.

PAUL

That's all. Nothing about all his stocks and bonds and real estate?

TSABEL

Dad rarely talks about those things.

PAUL

Oh, excuse me. I forgot that old wealth never speaks about such sordid things as money. They just prefer to pile it up year after year and live on all the interest. And they teach all their brats the eleventh commandment — never, never touch the principal.

ISABEL

Believe it or not, there's something to be said for old wealth. They usually don't have to flaunt their money and position and indulge in conspicuous consumption like people who never had it and don't know what to do with it when they get it.

PAUL

There you go again, tossing those big college words at me. (mimicking)

Conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption.

As Isabel and Paul bicker, Linda appears in the b. g, unseen by her parents.

ISABEL

(acidly)

How about philistine?
Try that big college word
on your tongue. Old wealth
isn't just about money.
It's also about style,
taste, culture, and good
manners. Things evidently
beyond your comprehension.

As her parents continue to squabble, Linda covers her ears, then bolts away to her room.

Paul pours himself another drink, downs it with one gulp, and fills his glass again. For a moment he stares at his glass morosely. Then, in a rage, he grabs a dictionary from a bookcase and thrusts it at Isabel.

PAUL

Here, look up some more of your fifty-dollar words to throw at me, you snobbish son of a --

He stops short of completing his sentence. His breathing is heavy, and his eyes fiery with anger.

ISABEL

I don't think some of the words you were about to say are in that dictionary.

Suddenly, the monitor in the living room comes alive with Linda's voice.

LINDA (off speaker.)
Mommy and Daddy are fighting
again. I don't like it.

Paul, now heavy in his cups and full of rage, shoots a killing look at Isabel.

PAUL

Damn it! I told you to do something about that miserable toy! Well, I'll put a stop to it. He shoves his bar stool away and rushes headlong toward Linda's room

ISABEL

Paul! You're drunk. You might hurt her! Paul!

Isabel is hysterical, and she races after Paul.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Linda is sobbing into the toy telephone.

LINDA

Mommy and Daddy are always fighting. I'm afraid.

Paul appears in the doorway and begins snapping at Linda.

PAUL

Didn't I tell you to stop fooling around with that phone? Now, come on, give it to me.

Linda shrinks away from Paul but keeps talking into the telephone.

LINDA

Daddy wants to take my telephone away from me.

Isabel arrives at the doorway as Paul staggers closer to Linda in a fury.

PAUL

I said give me that damn phone!

Linda screams, cowers, and moves farther away from Paul. But he hovers over her.

ISABEL

Paul, she's only a child!

Paul yanks the phone from the screaming Linda, brushes by Isabel, and stalks back to the living room liquor bar. He yells back at Isabel.

PAUL (O. S.)
You tell that kid I want
to talk to her. Right now!

Isabel grabs Linda's hand and escorts her into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ON LIQUOR BAR

As Isabel and a sobbing Linda arrive, Paul pours himself another drink.

ISABEL

Haven't you had enough for one day?

PAUL

I'll tell you what I've had enough of.

(grabs toy telephone)
This! This lousy toy and all
her lousy chattering. It stops
now. Today. Capeesh?

He slams the telephone on the bar, and the receiver dangles from its cord off the edge. He pulls Linda toward him.

PAUL

No more toy telephone, little girl! You understand? Little girls should be playing with their dolls.

Isabel now seems helpless, defeated, and devoid of the gumption she had shown earlier. Linda pulls away from Paul, glares at her parents coldly, then hurries toward her room.

PAUL

Hey, little girl. Where do you think you're going?
I'm not finished yet.

Linda turns and repeats the cold, silent glaring at her parents.

LINDA

I'm going with him.

As Linda skips away, Paul and Isabel exchange puzzled looks.

PAUL

What the hell's she talking about?

ISABEL

Who knows what's going on in that fanciful head of hers. You scared her half to death. And me, too.

(calling after Linda)

Linda! Linda!

PAUL

Come back here this minute,
little girl!

Linda ignores both them and continues toward her room.

INT. DOOR TO LINDA'S ROOM - NIGHT - ISABEL AND PAUL POV Linda enters her room and closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ON LIQUOR BAR

Isabel pours a drink for herself.

ISABEL

I'll tuck her in soon, but first, a nightcap. A day like today calls for a generous one.

As she begins sipping her drink, she notices an odd look on Paul's face.

ISABEL

Paul!

(no response)
Paul! What's wrong?

Paul is staring at the toy telephone's receiver dangling from the bar. His face is taut and anxious.

CLOSE ON PAUL'S HAND

It is moving unsteadily toward the telephone receiver.

ON SCENE

ISABEL

Paul! What is it?

Paul puts a finger to his lips to shush Isabel. He grabs the dangling telephone receiver and puts it to his ear.

TIGHT ON PAUL'S FACE AND RECEIVER.

His eyes widen, and his face darkens into disbelief.

PAUL

Who -- who is this?

ISABEL

Paul, what are you doing? Have you lost your senses? You're talking to yourself into a toy. If this is a joke, it's not very funny. You'd better sober up.

Paul is listening intently to a voice apparently on the toy telephone.

PAUL

Yes, yes, I'm Linda's father.

Isabel stares at Paul in disbelief.

ISABEL

My God, Paul, are you losing your mind?

PAUL

Yes, I'm listening.

As Isabel watches in near hysteria, Paul listens, his face grave, and drained of the anger and arrogance he had displayed earlier. He keeps listening, mesmerized.

You're scaring me, Paul, I'll call the doctor.
Maybe You need a rest.

Paul is still listening. Finally, he speaks into the telephone in a voice hollow and apprehensive.

PAUL

Yes, I got the message. I'm not sure I understand.

Isabel is beside herself.

ISABEL

What message? What are you talking about?

Paul places the telephone receiver on the bar and stares vacantly into space.

PAUL

It was a voice. A man's voice. He said 'Folks who put me in in a passion, may find me pipe to another fashion.'

ISABEL

You're making all this up just to torment me.

Isabel snatches the toy telephone from the bar, puts the receiver to her ear and listens for a moment. But she snaps her head back quickly and covers her ears.

ISABEL

Oh! My ear! That hurt! A weird kind of sound, l like a flute or an oboe Right through my skull.

PAUL

He said something else, too. Grown-ups, he said, should keep their promise.

ISABEL

Promise? What promise?

PAUL

To love, respect, and protect their children.

ISABEL

Those words you heard about a pipe. Somehow, they sound familiar. Tell me again.

PAUL

'Folks who put me in a passion, may find me pipe to another fashion.'

Suddenly Isabel screams.

ISABEL

'Pipe to another fashion"
I remember what they mean.
I read them a long time
ago. Oh, God! Linda!

Panic-stricken and clutching Linda's telephone, Isabel rushes frantically toward Linda's room. Paul follows.

INT. DOOR TO LINDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Isabel and Paul arrive at Linda's door, Paul flings it open, and they enter.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is empty and deadly quiet.

We scan the entire room, moving past Linda's toys, dolls, books, playthings, games, and pictures on the walls. Isabel and Paul search the closet and underneath the bed. Linda is nowhere to be found. Isabel calls out frantically.

ISABEL

Linda! Linda! Are you hiding somewhere? Playing hide and seek? Come out, come out, wherever you are, my Darling. Tell Mommy where you are, and I'll play wth you.

ISABEL (cont'd)

(a beat)

Maybe she didn't come into the room, Paul.

PAUL

We both saw her go in, and we would have seen her if she came out

ISABEL

Maybe she came out and we didn't see her.

Isabel rushes out of the room, and we follow her as she frantically and hysterically races around the apartment searching every room, and all the closets, bathrooms, and nooks and crannies. Finally, she gives up the search in utter defeat and drags herself back to Linda's room.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Isabel returns to Linda's room as Paul is examining every inch of the window.

PAUL

It's sealed tight, like it has always been. No one could climb twenty-one stories, and no one could come through this window from the outside. It couldn't be kidnapping. Impossible.

He stares out the window shaking his head. Isabel joins him, and they both gaze at the star-studdeded sky.

PAUL

I can't figure it out. It's weird. Maybe we better call the police.

Isabel is in shock, her eyes vacant, her face expressionless, her voice almost a whisper.

ISABEL

It won't do any good, Paul. She's gone.

ISABEL (cont'd)

My baby. Gone. He took her away. Just as he did all those other children.

PAUL

Who? What other children?

ISABEL

The Piper. People have to pay the Piper when they don't keep their promises. He's the one you heard on Linda's phone. He's the one we put in a passion.

Still holding the toy telephone, Isabel slumps on Linda's bed. Slowly, as though in a trance, she begins speaking into the telephone in a lugubrious monotone.

ISABEL

My baby. I want my baby back. Bring her back. Please.

As she continues moaning, Paul tries to comfort her

ISABEL

Bring her back. Please!
I beg you. Bring my baby back

Suddenly, the doorbell rings and unnerves the two of them. Isabel screams.

ISABEL

Linda's back, Paul! He heard me!

PAUL

Stay here. I'll go.

Paul hurries from the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ON HALL DOOR

Paul opens the door. He's startled to see Mrs. Larrabee, a neighbor living on the same floor. She is quite agitated.

PAUL

Missus Larrabee!

(glancing into the hall)
I thought it might be -well, we were expecting
someone else.

MRS. LARRABEE
I'm sorry to bother you
at this hour, Mister Morrison,
but have you seen our Jimmy?
He didn't join us for dinner
after I called him, and we
can't seem to find him. No
one else on our floor has
seen him, either. Naturally,
I'm worried and --

Beset by his own troubles, Paul cuts her off.

PAUL

Look, Missus Larrabee, it's a bad time right now, my wife and I are --

The anxious woman is oblivious to what Paul is saying, and she keeps on talking.

MRS. LARRABEE

Funny, we never saw or heard him leave the apartment. The last time I saw him he was in his room talking on the cell phone we gave him for his birthday. He's been doing that a lot lately. He talks to a special friend, and they have a great time laughing and joking. Seems like they talk for hours. Teen-age stuff, I imagine.

PAUL

Are you speaking about your boy who was hurt? I heard about it this morning.

Paul's question unsettles Mrs. Larrabee, and she responds nervously in her attempt at covering up the truth behind her son's injuries.

MRS. LARRABEE
Uh, well, yes, he -- he
had a little accident
the other day. The foolish
boy rode his bicycle off
a curb and got himself
all banged up. You know
how kids are.

Mrs. Larrabee pauses, as though in a trance.

MRS. LARRABEE (cont'd) I wish I knew where my boy was. I'm afraid his dinner is getting cold.

For several moments Paul stares gravely at the disturbed woman before speaking.

PAUL

Please come in, Missus Larrabee. I think you'd better talk to my wife.

Mrs. Larrabee gazes at Paul with a puzzled look.

She hesitates, then finally enters the apartment. Paul closes the door after her.

FADE TO BLACK

Over BLACK SUPER the Quotation:

And to Koppelberg Hill his steps address'd, And after him the children press'd; Great was the joy in every breast . . . And the Piper advanced, and the children follow'd.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN - Robert Browning

FADE OUT