

KRAMER VERSUS KRAMER

by

Robert Benton

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - ADVERTISING AGENCY - MIDTOWN - EVENING

WIDE SHOT

A large and very comfortable office over-looking St. Patrick's Cathedral. At the moment the office is filled to bursting with men and women, slumped in chairs, sitting on desks, all of them very tense. Among the crowd of people we note: MURRAY FISHER, a young and very ambitious junior executive and PHYLLIS BERNARD, an attractive woman in her early thirties. She is a lawyer with the agency.

At the moment, TED KRAMER, nice-looking without being what you would call a matinee idol, paces back and forth. His tie is loosened, he checks his watch every fifteen seconds. Clearly he is very distraught.

TED
(predicting the worst)
They're not gonna call... I tell you
they're not gonna call. I blew it. I don't
know what I did wrong, but I -

REVERSE ON JIM O'CONNOR

Ted's boss and good friend. He is in his middle fifties, nattily dressed with the slightly bleary look of a heavy drinker. He sits back in his chair with his feet propped on the desk and a drink in one hand.

O'CONNOR
(not unfriendly)
Ted, will you take it easy? Revlon's not
about to drop an account that represents
more than two million in gross billing
receipts in a small agency like this,
without making us sweat. Now just relax,
okay? Everything's gonna be fine.

TED
(at this stage, nothing
will help)
I don't think so, Jim. Maybe I shouldn't
have -

Sound-effect: The phone rings. Everyone freezes. As O'Connor reaches for the phone,

CUT TO:

INT. CHILD'S ROOM, KRAMER APT. - EVENING

The room is dark, the only light coming from a small night light. We SEE a beautiful five year old boy (BILLY KRAMER). He lies in

bed, half asleep. HOLD FOR A BEAT as a beautiful woman (JOANNA KRAMER) leans over, kisses the child and hugs him tightly to her.

JOANNA
(intense)
I love you, Billy...

BILLY
(drowsy)
I love you too, mommy... Good-night...

ON JOANNA

She gets up from the bed and starts toward the door of the child's room.

JOANNA
Sleep tight...

BILLY
Don't let the bedbugs bite...

Joanna stops in the doorway, silhouetted against the light. She turns, takes a last look at her son, then steps outside.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

ON JOANNA

Now that the light is brighter, we can SEE her more clearly. In her mid-thirties, she is beautiful, dressed in a style that can best be described as Bloomingdale's. HOLD FOR A BEAT as she leans against the door. It is clear from her expression that she is terribly upset. Then, making up her mind, she crosses to a closet and takes out a suitcase.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HER as she carries it into the bedroom, lays it out on the bed and opens it.

PAN WITH HER as she crosses to a closet, grabs an armload of clothes and dumps them helter-skelter into the suitcase.

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

It is a few minutes later, the news has obviously been good because there is a general celebration in progress.

Jim O'Connor, now standing, raises one hand for silence, then making a toast.

O'CONNOR
Here's to Ted Kramer.

Cheers and good-natured jokes.

O'CONNOR
(putting an arm around
Ted squeezing him
tight)

I wanna tell you something about this
little runt. He went out there and sold
the shit out of Revlon and that's why we
got the account. It was his idea, it was
his concept, right down the line...

More hoots and cheers. People start to yell "Speech."

TED
(embarrassed, but
cannot stop grinning)
All I can say... All I can say is this is
maybe one of the five best days of my
whole life...

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - KRAMER APT. - EVENING

Joanna stands at the medicine cabinet, going through it, packing
things in a travel kit: rollers, deodorant, makeup, birth control
pills. She starts to take a small bottle of perfume that has only
an eighth of an inch of fluid left inside, hesitates, then puts it
back.

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

Now some time has passed, most of the crowd has gone and only the
regulars are left.

TED
(in the middle of a
story)
So anyway Jim and I are making the pitch,
right? And all of a sudden this old guy
starts to cough and I keep on going and he
keeps on coughing and I keep on going and
he keeps on coughing and -

Murray Fisher leans over, shakes Ted's hand.

MURRAY
(interrupting)
Congratulations, Ted. That was a hell of a
job.

TED
(surprised)
Where you goin' Murray, it's early?

MURRAY
Got to get home.

TED
(glancing at his watch)
Oh, Christ, I'm late... I gotta get out of here.

(however, instead of going, he settles back and resumes his story)
So anyway, I look over and this old geezer is starting to turn blue and I swear to God the only thing I can think about is that this poor sonofabitch is gonna die on me and screw up the pitch.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - KRAMER APT. - EVENING

INSERT: A long and meticulous list that Joanna is making out of the phone numbers and addresses of doctors and hospitals, of what the various medicines are for, and of the foods that Billy is and isn't permitted to eat.

WIDER ANGLE

As Joanna puts the finishing touches on the list and carefully arranges it on top of the kitchen counter next to a box of unsweetened, whole grain cereal and a jar of honey.

Note: It is this same set of notes that Ted will later unthinkingly throw away.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MIDTOWN - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

As the doors to the outer lobby open and Ted and O'Connor appear. Ted starts to hail a cab, O'Connor stops him.

O'CONNOR
Hey, what's the rush? C'mon, walk me a couple of blocks.

TED
Jim, I've got to go. I'm already late -

O'CONNOR
Listen, Ted... I just want to tell you, when old man Schmidt retires next year, I've got a pretty good feeling they'll kick me upstairs...

He turns and starts to walk off down the street, Ted, of course, follows.

O'CONNOR
... and when they do, I just want you to
know I'm takin' you along with me.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

CLOSE ON JOANNA

As she goes through her jewelry case, taking some things, leaving others. In the B.G. we SEE a framed photograph of Billy, smiling, looking into the camera.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

ON TED AND O'CONNOR

Tracking with them as they walk.

O'CONNOR
(feeling no pain)
Y'know, Ted, I mean what I said back
there. You did a hell of a job on this and
I want you to know I'm turning the whole
show over to you.

TED
(thrilled)
Wow!

O'CONNOR
I mean it Ted, you're running this one.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

The suitcase is now full. Joanna zips it shut and looks around to make sure that she hasn't forgotten anything.

Then, she hefts her suitcase and starts out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

Joanna carries in the suitcase, sets it by the front door, then she crosses to the living room and sits down at the dining table.

CLOSER IN ON HER

She takes out a list made on the back of an old envelope. As she begins to review it, checking off some items:

OFF SCREEN Sound: A key turning in the lock.

As Joanna looks up...

CUT TO:

HER POV

As the door swings open to reveal Ted Kramer, an enormous grin on his face, a bottle of champagne in his hand. He is so full of himself that he doesn't notice there is anything wrong.

Note: Throughout the entire scene he carries the bottle of champagne, never putting it down.

TED

I thought you might just like to know that at five-fifteen this afternoon we were officially handed the Fire and Ice account by Revlon.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

JOANNA

(she takes a deep breath, then:)

Ted, I'm leaving you.

TED

That represents a gross billing in excess of two million -

(hearing her)

What?!

Joanna opens her purse, takes out her keys and wallet.

JOANNA

Here are my keys. I won't be needing them any more.

Note: Ted does not for a moment believe that his wife will really leave him. All he can think of right now is that he will have to spend the rest of the evening coping with one of her moods.

TED
(sardonic)
I'm sorry I'm late, all right? I'm sorry I
didn't call - I was busy making a living.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

Joanna doesn't even bother to look up at him. She opens her purse,
takes out her wallet and begins removing credit cards.

JOANNA
My American Express... My Bloomingdale's
Credit Card... My check book -

TED
(the martyr)
Okay, okay... What is it this time? What
did I do now?...

JOANNA
(ignoring this)
I took two thousand out of the savings
account. That was what I had in the bank
when we got married.

TED
Joanna, whatever it is, believe me, I'm
sorry.

JOANNA
Here are the slips for the laundry and the
cleaning. They'll be ready on Saturday.

TED
(hard lining it)
Now listen, before you do something you'll
really regret you'd better stop and think
-

JOANNA
(not bothering to look
up)
I've paid the rent, the Con-Ed and the
phone bill, so you don't have to worry
about them.

She checks off the last item on her list as her husband watches,
dumbfounded.

JOANNA
There, that's everything.

Joanna gets to her feet and starts toward the front door. In an
instant Ted is after her.

TED
(panic starting)
For God's sake, Joanna, would you at least
tell me what I did that's so terrible!
Would you do me that little favor?

ON JOANNA

At the door.

JOANNA
Look, it's not your fault, okay? It's me.
It's my fault - you just married the wrong
person.

TED
(placating her)
So we've got problems. Everybody's got
problems - that's normal -

Joanna opens the door and they step out into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE KRAMER APT. - EVENING

JOANNA
Ted, you're not listening to me. It's
over, finished.

TED
I'm listening, Joanna - believe me, I'm
listening. My wife is walking out on me
after eight years of -

JOANNA
(bitter)
You just don't get it, do you?
(as though to a child)
I - am - really - and - truly - leaving -
you.

TED
I heard you, Joanna. I promise I heard
you.

JOANNA
No you didn't.
(quietly)
You didn't even ask about Billy.

TED
(stiffening)
What about Billy?

JOANNA
I'm not taking him with me.

TED
What?

JOANNA
(tears start)
Ted, I can't... I tried... I really tried
but... I just can't hack it anymore...

TED
C'mon, Joanna, you don't mean that. You're
a terrific mother -

JOANNA
(from her gut)
I am not! I'm a terrible mother! I'm an
awful mother. I yell at him all the time.
I have no patience. No... No. He's better
off without me.
(unable to look at Ted)
Ted, I've got to go... I've got to go.

TED
(desperate)
Okay, I understand and I promise I won't
try and stop you, but you can't just go...
Look, come inside and talk... Just for a
few minutes.

JOANNA
(pleading)
NO!... Please... Please don't make me
stay... I swear... If you do, sooner or
later... maybe tomorrow, maybe next
week... maybe a year from now...
(looking directly at
him)
I'll go right out the window.

Sound-effect: The elevator approaching.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

There is nothing more that can be done, this is the last moment of
intimacy.

TED
(quiet)
Where are you going?

JOANNA
I don't know...

The elevator door opens, Joanna steps inside.

TED
Do you want me to help you get a cab?

Joanna shakes her head. The elevator door closes behind her and it
starts to descend.

ON TED KRAMER

He stands for a moment, stunned, unable to move. Then he turns and races back into the apartment.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM as he rushes across to one of the living room windows, throws it open and leans out.

HIS POV

Looking down to the street from the eighth floor. We SEE Joanna step off the curb and hail a passing taxi.

TED
(calling out)
Joanna!?... Joanna?!

Either she doesn't hear him or else she pays no attention. She gets into the cab, closes the door behind her and it drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. APT. - NIGHT

ON TED

As he stands for a moment watching the taxi as it disappears. Then, slowly, he closes the window, turns, and AS THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM, walks into the bedroom.

The bedroom is a mess: the closet door stands open, inside Joanna's section is empty except for some shoe-boxes and a few dresses that are scattered across the floor. Several dresser drawers have been pulled out and their contents emptied.

HOLD IN A WIDE SHOT as Ted wearily picks up one of the dresses and hangs it back on its hanger in its proper place, ready for Joanna's return. As he continues straightening up the room,

THE CAMERA SLOWLY FADES TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - VERY LATE AT NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

Ted Kramer paces back and forth, eyeing the phone. Then, coming to a decision, he crosses to it, picks up the receiver and starts to dial.

CUT TO:

EXT. APT. BLDG. - LATE AT NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

The building is dark except for the Kramer apartment which is ablaze with lights. HOLD as we HEAR:

Sound: The phone ringing. Then:

WOMAN'S VOICE
(obviously asleep)
Huh... Hello?

TED
(righteous)
All right, Thelma... That's it. I've had it. You can call your good friend Joanna Kramer and tell her enough is enough, okay? I mean, I don't know what I did, but you can tell her she's made her point.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Ted, what are you talking about?!

TED
Don't play innocent with me, Thelma. You know perfectly well what's going on.

WOMAN'S VOICE
(exasperated)
Ted, I don't understand a word you're saying. Where's Joanna?

TED
Ha! You tell me.

Sound-effect, as Ted slams down the receiver.

Instantly a light is turned on two floors below.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

ON THE FRONT DOOR

As we HEAR:

Sound-effect: the doorbell rings.

A moment later Ted opens the door and THELMA PHILLIPS enters. She is a neighbor (Apt. 6-B) and Joanna Kramer's best friend. About four months ago Thelma and her husband Charley were divorced. Until then the two families had been very close, the Kramer's son (Billy) being about the same age as the Phillips' daughter (Kim). With the divorce, however, the Kramers tried to remain friends with both Thelma and Charley and that has caused a certain amount of friction.

Thelma is an attractive woman in her mid-thirties. She dresses well, works out religiously at Jack LaLanne's and goes to a therapist twice a week. She is also given to acting the lay analyst with her friends. Thelma is generous with her advice, sharing the wealth so to speak. With all of this she is kind, loyal and a loving friend. At the moment, however, she is all business.

THELMA
(looking around,
suspiciously)
All right. What's going on?

ON TED

From his attitude it is clear that there is no love lost between them.

TED
All right, Thelma, you want to know what's going on? I'll tell you what's going on. I'll tell you exactly what's going on.

THELMA
Look, Ted, all I -

TED
(starting to really roll)
I came home tonight. We just got the Fire and Ice account at the agency. Do you know what that means?! Do you understand what that means? It means that it was maybe one of the five best days in my whole life.

THELMA
Ted, all I wanted to know was where -

TED
(not letting her get a word in edgewise)
I walk in the house and before I can say "How are you?", "Did you have a nice day?" before I can say anything. Pow she's out the door.

THELMA
OhmyGod. Didn't she say anything? She must've said something.

TED
(sarcastic)
Yeah, she said it wasn't any use talking anymore.

THELMA
Ted, don't be so hostile.

Ted draws himself upright with the dignity of the Ambassador to the Court of St. James. However, during the following, he begins pounding the pillows on the couch into shape with real vehemence.

TED

Hostile?

(pow)

Me?

(whack)

Thelma, I'm not hostile.

(thud)

I am anything but hostile.

(sock)

But if you want to know what I am. I'll tell you what I am. What I am is, I am hurt. I am very hurt. And I just want to know one thing, okay? Just one thing... Why? That's all I want to know... Why?

THELMA

(how to say this)

Ted, Joanna and I used to talk a lot and... well, she told me a lot of... ah, things about the two of you.

TED

(instantly nervous)

Things? What kind of things?

THELMA

(clearly she knows more than she's willing to say)

I mean... things. Ted, Joanna's very unhappy and -

TED

(flash of anger)

Listen, Joanna Kramer's got a goddamn good life. She's got a husband that loves her. She's got a terrific kid. She's got a wonderful home -

THELMA

(getting mad herself)

What d'you know about how Joanna felt? You went off to an office every morning and you'd come dragging home at seven or eight every night and as long as dinner was on the table you thought everything was swell.

TED

Did it ever occur to you guys that Joanna Kramer's not the easiest person in the world to live with?! Did it?! For one thing she's always thirty minutes late. You can set your watch by it -

THELMA
(exasperated)
So she's late. What's the big deal. That's just a way of saying, "Pay attention to me."

TED
(not listening)
Two. She is getting to be a real hermit or recluse or whatever it is you call it. Thelma, do you know where I could be in this business if I had a wife that entertained or went out socially -

THELMA
Oh for shit's sake, Ted, you are the most selfish human being I have ever met. No wonder she said you came first, then Billy, then, if there was anything left over, she got the scraps.

TED
Joanna said that?

Thelma nods.

TED
Then how come she never said anything like that to me?

THELMA
Maybe she didn't feel like she should have to. Maybe she felt like if you'd been paying any real attention to her to start with, maybe you would've noticed.

TED
(stung)
Boy, you guys are really something, y'know? I'd like to know one thing, okay - just one little thing. Did you tell Joanna she should leave me?

THELMA
(stiffly)
No.

She turns and starts toward the front door, Ted at her heel.

TED
Y'know something Thelma - you are the typhoid Mary of divorce. I mean it. Joanna and I never had any trouble until you and Charley split up.

THELMA

Ted, divorce is a terrible thing. I know, I went through it. You've got to believe I did everything I could to get Joanna to stay.

(pause)

But I'll tell you something. You may not want to hear it, but it took a lot of courage for Joanna to do what she just did.

TED

I'd like to know what the hell kind of courage it takes to walk out on your husband and your child?

CLOSE ON THELMA

That stops her dead in her tracks. She had always assumed that Joanna took Billy with her when she left.

THELMA

Joanna left Billy? She didn't take him with her?

Ted shakes his head. There is a long beat of silence.

THELMA

(stunned, quiet)

Oh Shit.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - EARLY MORNING

WIDE SHOT

It is a beautiful sunny morning and the super stands in front of the building hosing down the sidewalk. HOLD as a garbage truck enters FRAME and the garbage men begin loading sacks of trash into the back of the truck. As it begins to grind up the garbage with an ungodly sound, THE CAMERA PANS UP TO THE EIGHTH FLOOR WINDOWS.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY KRAMER'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

MEDIUM SHOT

Billy Kramer lies in his bed, fast asleep.

HOLD FOR A BEAT as we HEAR:

OFF SCREEN Sound: From the street below, the garbage truck grinding up garbage.

A moment later, Billy opens his eyes, struggles to his feet and, AS THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM, trudges sleepily out of his room, across the hall and into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

As the child stands in front of the toilet, eyes closed, we HEAR:

OFF SCREEN Sound-effect: as the child pees noisily.

Then, when he is finished, he turns and, without bothering to flush the toilet, shuffles down the hall and into his parents' bedroom.

HIS POV

The bed is empty, there is no sign that anyone has slept in it.

ON BILLY

A look of suspicion on his face, he turns and starts back down the hall toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

As Billy enters, looks around.

HIS POV

Ted Kramer, still fully dressed, looking like the wrath of God is asleep in the chair.

ON BILLY

As he marches across to his father.

BILLY
Where's mommy?

ON TED

His eyes open, he looks around startled.

TED
Huh?... Oh God... What time is it?

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

BILLY
(suspicious)
The little hand is on the six and the big hand is on the nine. Where is mommy?

TED
(trying to pull himself
together)
Oh, Christ... Ah, yeah... you want to know
why mom's not here, right?

Billy nods.

TED
(bullshit)
Okay, I'm going to tell you... It's like
this. Mommy and daddy had a little
argument and mommy decided she wanted to
go off by herself for a little while. You
know how sometimes you get mad and want to
go off and be by yourself? Well, it's like
that, okay? Okay.
(subject closed)
Now how about some breakfast?

Ted struggles to his feet and THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH THEM as they
start toward the kitchen.

BILLY
When is mommy coming back?

TED
(lying)
Soon. Very soon.

By now they are inside the kitchen, Ted looks around.

HIS POV

There, on the kitchen cabinet is a box of "natural grain" cereal,
a jar of honey, some wheat germ, and a banana, with carefully
written instructions from Joanna underneath.

ON TED

He takes one look at the note, crumples it up and tosses it in the
wastebasket.

TED
(the camp counselor)
I'll tell you what, kiddo - why don't I
fix us some French toast?

BILLY
(impressed)
Wow! French toast, really?

TED
(the camp counselor)
Sure. Didn't I ever tell you French toast
was my specialty? I'll bet I never told
you that. Now then, the first thing we
need is...
(trying desperately to
remember)
... eggs! Right?

Billy nods. Ted opens the refrigerator and takes some eggs.

TED
This is terrific... isn't this terrific?

As Ted begins the process of making French toast, it soon becomes obvious that he has no idea of what he is doing. What follows is a symphony in incompetence on Ted's part. He breaks the eggs into a bowl and ends up with most of the shell mixed up with the egg. Then he takes a piece of bread and drops it into bowl.

TED
(saying it will make it
so)
I'm having a good time... Are you having a
good time?

ON BILLY

Watching all of this with increasing apprehension.

BILLY
You forgot the milk.

TED
(still the camp
counselor)
That's right. You're absolutely right...
It's been a long time since I made French
toast.

Ted takes a container of milk, pours it into the bowl so that it is filled to the brim. Then he sloshes the bread around until it is half-dissolved.

TED
Look at this, isn't this something?!

He lops off a huge hunk of butter, drops it into an omelet pan and turns up the flame.

ON BILLY

Watching. He looks as though he is about to throw up.

BILLY
What about my orange juice?

TED
(the counterman)
Right. One O.J. coming up.

He opens the refrigerator and starts to get the orange juice. As he does, black smoke begins to billow ominously from the frying pan.

BILLY
(scared)
Daddy!!!

Ted turns, spots the smoke.

TED
Don't worry... Everything's fine...

He lunges for the handle of the frying pan, which by now is very hot. He grabs it, lets out a howl of pain and the whole mess, frying pan, butter, bread, goes crashing to the floor.

CLOSE ON TED

Suddenly all the rage comes pouring out.

TED
Goddam! Son of a bitch!

REACTION - BILLY

Terrified.

WIDE SHOT

As Ted kneels down and begins to clean up the mess.

TED
(to himself as much as
to Billy)
It's okay. It's gonna be okay...
Everything's going to be all right.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON A BUS

As it pulls to a stop. The doors open and a stream of mothers and children get off. Among them we spot Ted Kramer with Billy. As they start across the street, Ted reaches down and takes hold of Billy's hand. The moment they get to the far side, Billy takes his hand away from Ted's and wipes it on his pants. Clearly Ted's hands are very sweaty.

CLOSER IN ON THEM

As they start down the block toward Billy's school.

CLOSER IN ON THEM

BILLY

When is mommy coming back?

TED

Soon. I told you before, very soon.

BILLY

(nervous)

Will she pick me up after school?

TED

No. If I'm not here, you go home with
Thelma and Kim.

BILLY

What if she forgets?

TED

(weary)

I'll call Thelma and remind her, okay?
Don't worry.

They walk in silence for a few steps, then:

BILLY

But what happens if she's on her way to
school and she gets runned over by a truck
and killed? What happens then?

Ted looks at Billy in amazement.

WIDE SHOT

As the two of them enter the school and disappear from view.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE, TED'S AGENCY - DAY

ON THE ELEVATOR DOORS

As they open and Ted steps out looking like the wrath of God. THE
CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM as he crosses the waiting room toward the
inner offices.

ON THE RECEPTIONIST

Glancing up as he passes.

RECEPTIONIST
(cheerful)
Congratulations, Mr. Kramer.

ON TED

Looking at her like she has lost her mind. Nevertheless he continues on, passing through swinging doors into a long corridor lined with secretaries' desks and offices leading off of it. Suddenly a younger man rushes up, grabs Ted's hand and starts to pump it vigorously.

YOUNG MAN
Terrific news, Ted.

Another nut. Ted smiles at the man, humoring him and continues toward his office. O'Connor appears, throwing his arm around Ted, squeezing him in a bear hug.

O'CONNOR
Hey... Look who was out celebrating last night.

Suddenly Ted realizes that all these people are congratulating him for getting the Fire and Ice account.

TED
(trying to appear
nonchalant)
Uh, Jim... Can I talk to you?

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted and O'Connor sitting across from one another. O'Connor has just heard the news.

O'CONNOR
Jesus Christ. That's a real blockbuster.
(shakes his head)
I always figured you guys had it made.

TED
(morose)
You want to know the real kicker? The real kicker is, for the first time in my life - the first time - I feel like a loser.

O'Connor nods sympathetically. Actually he is praying that Ted won't start to cry.

O'CONNOR
(stiff upper lip)
Listen, don't let it get you down.
(doesn't believe it for
a second)
You're going to be fine.

TED
(toujour gai)
Me? I've never been better. I mean having
my wife walk out on me after seven years
of marriage agrees with me just fine.

O'CONNOR
Look, Ted, I'm the oldest whore on the
beat, okay? Three marriages, two
divorces... You're gonna be okay.

TED
(wishful thinking)
I'm going to be okay. The way I see it,
Joanna'll come home, it's just a matter of
time.

O'CONNOR
(emphatically)
She'll be back...

Ted nods in agreement. There is a beat of silence as both men
consider Joanna's imminent return. Then:

O'CONNOR
(trying to be tactful)
But... just in case... I mean, just on the
off chance she doesn't. What are you going
to do about the kid?

TED
(the wind goes out of
him)
I don't know, Jim. This whole thing has
happened so... Pow - like that.

O'CONNOR
(a friend having to say
something very
difficult)
Look, it's none of my business, so you can
tell me to butt out, okay? But if you want
my advice, you'll send Billy away to stay
with relatives for a while. Just until you
get yourself straightened out.

TED
(doubtfully)
I don't know, Jim...

O'CONNOR
(the Dutch uncle)

Ted, this may sound a little rough, but we've just landed the biggest account in the history of this agency, right? And now it's up to us - that's you and me - to deliver the goods. Ted, you're my main man, and if I can't depend on you a hundred and ten percent, twenty-four hours a day, because you're worried about a kid with a runny nose -

TED
Jim, I appreciate what you're saying. I mean it, but I really think Joanna's coming back.

ON O'CONNOR

Clearly he doesn't believe this.

O'CONNOR
I hope you're right, Ted... I really hope you're right.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - KRAMER APT. - DAY

INSERT: TIGHT ON AN ENVELOPE

It is postmarked Denver, Colorado. The letter is addressed to Billy Kramer and it is from Joanna.

ON TED

As he rips open the letter.

TED
Billy!

ON BILLY

He sits in the living room watching television, a chocolate doughnut in one hand and a remote control device for watching television in the other.

Off-screen Sound: a Saturday morning kiddie program from the television set.

BILLY
(focused on T.V.)
Uh, huh...

TED
You got a letter from mom.

Instantly, Billy turns down the volume of the television.

BILLY
(excited)
When is she coming home?!

ON TED

As he starts to read, slowly, carefully, so that Billy can absorb it.

TED
"My dear, sweet Billy: Mommy has gone away. Sometimes in the world daddies go away and mommies bring up their little boys. But sometimes a mommy can go away too, and you have your daddy to bring you up."

As Ted continues to read, Billy starts turning up the sound on the television, using the remote control device.

TED
(raising his voice so he can be heard)
"I have gone away because I must find some interesting things to do for myself in the world. Everybody has to, and so do I. Being your mommy was one thing, but there are other things and this is what I have to do. I did not get a chance to tell you this, and that is why I am writing you now."

By now the volume from the television is so loud that Ted has to shout to make himself heard over it.

TED
"I will always be your mommy and I will always love you. I just won't be your mommy in the house. But I will be your mommy of the heart. And I... "
(he looks up, about to tell the child to lower the volume)
Billy.

HIS POV

Billy sits, watching television with an almost ferocious intensity on his face, doing his best to block out Ted's voice.

ON TED

He watches his son for a second, then carefully refolds the letter, puts it away.

TED
(as he reaches across,
turns down the sound on
the T.V.)
It's okay... It's okay. We'll talk about
it some other time.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - KRAMER APT. - LATER THAT DAY

CLOSE ON THELMA

Reading Joanna's letter.

THELMA
Oh, God... OhmyGod...

She finishes the letter, looks up at Ted.

THELMA
What are you going to do?

TED
I don't know, Thel... This whole thing has
happened so... Pow, like that.

THELMA
I mean, what are you going to do about
Billy?

TED
(stiff)
I'm gonna keep him, why?

THELMA
Look, this is nothing personal, but I
don't think you can do it.

TED
Thelma, I've lost my wife, I'm not losing
my child.

THELMA
(backing off)
All right... Okay... But let's get
something straight, right now. I mean, I'm
sorry about what happened between you and
Joanna, but it's not my problem,
understand?

REVERSE ON TED

He nods.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

THELMA
I'm not going to have you calling every
fifteen minutes just because you can't
find a hot water bottle, understand?

Ted nods.

THELMA
I've got enough trouble raising my own
kid. I don't need another one. Got it?

TED
Got it.

THELMA
You're on your own, understand?

TED
I understand.

THELMA
You're sure?

TED
I'm sure.

ON THELMA

A long pause, she looks at him with all the warmth of a top
sergeant facing a raw recruit. Then:

THELMA
All right. Who's Billy's pediatrician?

ON TED

He hasn't the foggiest idea.

THELMA
(machine-gun delivery)
Ed Davies. 230 East 76th Street. 472-8227.
Fifty bucks a house call, thirty for an
office visit. Write this down: I'm not
telling you twice. What's the nearest
hospital?

ON TED

As he grabs a piece of paper and starts writing frantically.

TED
Wait a minute! Wait a minute!

THELMA
(not waiting)
Lenox Hill. 77th Street between Park and
Lex. The emergency number is 327-0800.

TED
Slow down... Slow down...

CUT TO:

INT. TED'S BEDROOM - DAY

WIDE SHOT

Ted stands in the middle of the room, sorting out a huge pile of dirty clothes. Thelma sits on the edge of the bed, watching.

THELMA
Colors in one pile, white things in
another and shirts in a third.

In the BACKGROUND we SEE the bathroom door as it opens and Billy Kramer steps out, freshly bathed and wearing clean clothes.

THELMA
(without looking
around)
Brush the teeth. Hang up the towel and
flush the toilet.

Billy immediately turns on his heels and heads back into the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - DAY

CLOSE ON A SILVER CIGARETTE BOX

That is inscribed, "Ted and Joanna Kramer, Married April 4, 1970."
HOLD FOR A BEAT then Ted's hand reaches into FRAME and picks it
up.

MEDIUM SHOT TED

As he takes the cigarette box and balances it on a stack of scrap books, photographs, ash trays, etc., etc., that he is carrying. He crosses to another table, picks up a framed photograph of Joanna and Billy and piles that on top of everything. We realize that Ted is going through the apartment from top to bottom and methodically cleaning out every trace of Joanna that he can find.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

As Ted goes through the room, picking up Billy's clothes which have been strewn every which way.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM as he carries them into Billy's room.

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Billy is fast asleep, the only light coming from the night lamp on the dresser. Ted dumps the soiled clothing in a hamper, hangs up Billy's jacket, then he neatly folds the boy's sweater and crosses to the dresser.

CLOSER IN ON THE DRESSER

As Ted opens a drawer and starts to put the sweater away. Suddenly he spots something.

CUT TO:

HIS POV

There, in the drawer, sitting on top of a pile of clothing is one of the photographs of Joanna that Ted put away this afternoon. Billy has retrieved it and hidden it here, hoping that Ted wouldn't find it.

CLOSE ON TED

As he takes a long look at the photograph, then turns to his son.

HIS POV

Billy asleep, tangled up in the covers.

ON TED

He removes the photograph from the drawer, crosses to the bed and places it on the nightstand nearby so that Billy will be able to see the picture of Joanna when he wakes up in the morning. He sits for a moment longer on the side of the bed and reaches across and smooths down his son's rumpled hair.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. TED'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

ON TED

Clearly in a rush, loading his briefcase with work to do that evening. He starts for the door and THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM as he walks along the outer office corridor, heading for the elevator. As he passes the door to O'Connor's office:

TED
(calling out)
'Night, Jim.

O'CONNOR (O.S.)
(calling out)
Hey, Ted. C'mon in. I wanna' talk to you.

Reluctantly Ted stops, turns around and walks back to the door to O'Connor's office.

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

O'Connor sits back in his chair, his feet propped on the desk a drink in one hand.

O'CONNOR
(jovial)
What's the big rush. C'mon in, put your feet up, have a drink.

REVERSE ON TED

Hanging in the doorway, clearly anxious to leave.

TED
Can't do it tonight. Gotta pick up Billy.
I'm late.

O'CONNOR
(paying no attention to that)
Listen, I heard a terrific joke today.
There's this Polish skydiver -

TED
(urgent)
Sorry, Jim I've got to go. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

And before O'Connor can say anything he is gone.

REVERSE ON O'CONNOR

Obviously displeased. He sits for a moment, drumming his fingers on the desk top, then reaches for the phone and starts to dial. A moment later:

O'CONNOR
Murray? Jim O'Connor, why don't you drop
by and have a drink...

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON

WIDE SHOT

As Ted emerges from the building, starts to hail a cab.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE, EAST EIGHTIES - LATE AFTERNOON

WIDE SHOT

As the cab pulls to a stop. Ted leaps out and rushes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - APARTMENT BLDG. - LATE AFTERNOON

The elevator doors open and Ted steps out.

THE CAMERA PANS WITH HIM as he crosses to the doorway of an apartment, rings the bell.

CLOSER IN

As the door is opened by a pleasant-looking woman in her thirties. This is MRS. KLINE. She has the slightly haggard look of someone who has just survived a birthday party with eight five-year-olds. In fact, behind her we SEE an abundance of crepe paper and balloons.

TED
(apologetic)
Mrs. Kline, I'm sorry I'm late, but -

MRS. KLINE
That's all right, but I'm afraid Billy was
a little nervous...
(she glances off
screen)

THEIR POV

Billy, his coat on, his goody bag in his lap sits alone on a bench in the foyer.

The moment he sees his father, he gets up and starts for the door.

BILLY
(to Ted, accusingly)
You're late.

TED
I'm sorry, pal, but I had a meeting and -

BILLY
(to Mrs. Kline anxious
to get away)
Goodbye.

MRS. KLINE
Goodbye, Bill. Thank you for coming.
(calling out to her son
in the next room)
Mark. Say goodbye to Bill.

MARK (O.S.)
(preoccupied)
Bye.

BILLY
Bye.

And he hustles his father out into the hallway. Once door is shut behind them:

BILLY
(sullen)
I was waiting a long time.

By now they have crossed to the elevator. Ted rings the bell.

TED
(this ain't exactly the
greeting he's expected)
It wasn't so long, I'm only...
(checking his watch)
... twenty minutes late.

The elevator doors open.

BILLY
All the other mothers got here a long time
ago...

And the doors close, blocking them from view.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

Ted and Billy sit at the dining table, a large pizza between them. Ted is working hard, trying to establish some kind of rapport with his son. Billy is silent, he picks at the slice of pizza in front of him.

TED
(more of the camp
counselor)
How was school today?

BILLY
Okay... Same as usual...

TED
Billy, don't eat with your fingers.

BILLY
(morose)
Sorry.

There is a long beat of silence.

TED
(like pulling teeth)
Well, I see the Yankees finally won a
game.

BILLY
Mom, I mean dad?

TED
Yeah?

BILLY
Can I be excused? I'm not hungry. I think
I'll go to bed.

TED
Sure. Too much birthday cake, right?

BILLY
(as he gets up from the
table)
I guess...

WIDE SHOT

As Billy shuffles off toward his room. Ted sits for a beat picking at the food on his plate.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH BILLY as he gets up from the table and walks into his room. HOLD IN THE DOORWAY as he takes off his shirt and pants and leaves them lying on the floor. The boy crosses to the closet, gets his pajamas and puts them on.

REVERSE ON TED

Standing in the doorway, watching.

TED
Goodnight.

ON BILLY

He starts to crawl into bed.

BILLY
(aloof)
'Night.

ON TED

THE CAMERA PANS WITH HIM as he crosses to where Billy dropped his clothes on the floor, picks them up.

TED
Listen, pal, I'm sorry, okay?

Silence.

TED
I know how you feel.

Silence.

Ted crosses, sits on the edge of the bed.

TED
Look, I remember one time when. I was a couple of years younger than you are now and... I was staying with this cousin of mine and my parents were supposed to come and pick me up by three, but it got later and later and they didn't and they didn't show up and I remember I got really scared that something had happened to them and I remember when they finally came instead of being happy to see them I was very angry and... Billy, I promise I'll never do that to you again, okay?...

Silence.

TED
Billy? Okay?

CLOSEUP BILLY

His face is turned to the wall. HOLD FOR A BEAT as we SEE him nod.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TED KRAMER'S APT. - NIGHT

Note: The following scene, which is written as one, is actually to be played so that each time we cut back to the woman who is being interviewed as housekeeper, it is a different woman: sometimes nervous and excited, sometimes large and lugubrious, with six shopping bags, sometimes looking like a headmistress at Dachau.

They are uniformly (until the last) unappetizing.

Throughout this, we SEE Ted becoming increasingly desperate.

WOMAN
(looking around
nervous)
It's very big... They didn't tell me it
was this big.

TED
(apologetically)
No... No, actually it's only two bedrooms.

SECOND WOMAN
(sniffing)
Phew... This place is a real pig sty.

TED
(defensively)
Look, my wife just walked out on me. Okay?
It's been a tough week.

THIRD WOMAN
Don't tell me your troubles, mister. I got
enough of my own.

Note: With the FOURTH WOMAN we begin on a CLOSEUP and PULL BACK to REVEAL that we are in Ted's office and it is the middle of the afternoon.

INT. TED KRAMER'S OFFICE - DAY

FOURTH WOMAN
The first thing is, I don't do floors.

At that point the door behind her opens and O'Connor pokes his head in.

O'CONNOR
Ted.

FOURTH WOMAN
(ignoring him)
Or windows. I come in at ten and I get
Wednesdays off.

O'CONNOR
Ted.

TED
(brisk)
I'll be with you in a minute, Jim.
(back to the woman)
You couldn't make that Saturday, could you?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

ON THE FIFTH WOMAN (MRS. WILLEWSKA)

She is a slightly built attractive woman in her early sixties.
There is a long pause as she looks around.

MRS. WILLEWSKA
What kind of boy is your son?

REACTION - TED

This is the first person that ever asked about Billy.

TED
(taken aback)
Well, he's... ah, he's a good kid. He's shy and... I think he's probably very creative and...

MRS. WILLEWSKA
Could I see him?

TED
Sure. He's right in here.

As they start toward the child's room.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

In the darkness we can SEE Billy, all scrunched up in the covers.
HOLD FOR A BEAT as the door opens and the light from the hall falls across the sleeping boy.

ON THE DOOR

Ted and Mrs. Willewska stand silhouetted against the light.

MRS. WILLEWSKA
Oh... He's very beautiful.

ON BILLY

As he stirs, in his sleep.

MRS. WILLEWSKA (O.S.)
Mr. Kramer, you are a very lucky man.

REACTION, TED

This is the first time since Joanna left that this has occurred to him.

TED
Mrs. Willewska, could you start on Monday?

CUT TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

ON BILLY AND TED

TRACKING JUST IN FRONT OF THEM as they wheel a shopping cart along the aisle. Ted has a shopping list in his hand.

Ted stops, takes a box of detergent off of the shelf, starts to put it in the shopping cart, when:

BILLY
(worried)
Mom, I mean dad...

TED
(his mind elsewhere)
Uh huh...

BILLY
That's not the right soap. We use the kind
in the green and yellow box.

TED
C'mon, there's not much difference -

BILLY
(firmly)
We use the green and yellow.

Ted looks at his son for a moment, then carefully replaces the detergent that he had originally picked and reaches for the green and yellow kind. They continue on for several steps and Ted stops again, this time looking for a dishwashing liquid. He starts to reach for one, stops, looks around at Billy.

Billy shakes his head.

Ted points to another.

BILLY
(shaking his head
again)
The pink stuff.

Ted takes a bottle of the pink stuff, puts it in the shopping cart and consults his shopping list.

TED
Okay, what color cereal do we get?

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND, CENTRAL PARK - DAY

WIDE SHOT

It is that same afternoon and Billy (his clothes are much dirtier by now) is running back and forth with a group of other children.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Walk him over to Bethesda Fountain and buy him an ice.

ON TED

He sits on one of the playground benches, the work he took from the office stacked beside him on the bench. Sitting next to him is a personable-looking man of about Ted's age. He is nattily dressed in a suit complete with vest, tie and polished Gucci loafers. We will call him THE SATURDAY FATHER.

Note: The Saturday Father and his daughter (a pretty young girl of about ten) will appear from time to time throughout the film. He is a divorced father, putting in his time, not giving a shit about the child. The Saturday Father insists on treating Ted as though they were members of the same secret fraternity. And he comes to represent Ted's nightmare of what might happen to him.

TED
(looking in the
direction of the voice)
What?

SATURDAY FATHER
Walk him over to Bethesda Fountain, buy him an ice. It'll kill twenty minutes.

TED
I've got a lot more than twenty minutes to kill.

SATURDAY FATHER
Tough...
(checking his watch)
... I get off duty at five-thirty.
(bored, anxious to make
conversation)
How long you been divorced?

TED
(surprised)
Three months. How can you tell?

SATURDAY FATHER

You've got that look. My lady and I split two years ago in August and I'm an old pro at this shit. First thing, stay away from the Children's Zoo. It's pure hell - if I never see another chicken, I'll be happy.

(calling out to his daughter OFF SCREEN)

I'm here, darling. Don't worry...

CLOSER ON TED

Finding this distinctly unpleasant. He glances around, looking for Billy.

HIS POV

The sprinkler area. Other children are running around, but there is no sign of Billy.

TED
(calling out)

Billy?

HIS POV

Another area of the playground. Billy is nowhere in sight.

WIDER ON TED

As he grabs his stuff and starts toward the exit of the playground.

TED
(louder)

Billy?

HIS POV

Looking in another direction. Nothing.

WIDE ON TED

Standing among a crowd of people just outside the entrance to the playground. He is looking around wildly.

TED

Billy?!

HIS POV

There in the distance is Billy Kramer, running as hard as he can away from Ted.

ON TED

TRACKING IN FRONT OF HIM as he starts to chase after Billy.

HIS POV - TRACKING FORWARD

It is clear that Billy is running with a purpose.

TED (V.O.)

Billy!

Billy pays no attention to him.

ON TED

TRACKING IN FRONT OF HIM as he continues to chase his son.

HIS POV - TRACKING FORWARD

Closer now, we can SEE that ahead of Billy is a woman that, from behind, looks remarkably like Joanna.

CLOSER ON TED

As he realizes what is about to happen.

CLOSER ON BILLY

Catching up to the woman.

BILLY

Mommy! Mommy!

A moment later he gets close enough to grab onto her skirt. As the woman turns around:

CLOSEUP WOMAN

Quite clearly it is not Joanna.

CLOSEUP BILLY

His face becomes impassive again. All the excitement vanishes.

BILLY

Oh. I thought you were my mommy.

CLOSEUP TED

His face reveals all of the pain that Billy's can't.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM, NURSERY SCHOOL - DAY

CLOSE ON A HOMEMADE CURTAIN

As it opens and Billy Kramer, wearing an outsized moustache, a makeshift cape and a stovepipe hat made from construction paper. He stands for a moment, looking around, finally he spots someone, grins and begins waving.

HIS POV

Across the room eighteen to twenty mothers (Ted Kramer is the only man present) are gathered, sitting on tiny chairs and at work tables watching as their children put on a show.

ON BILLY

Suddenly he forgets his lines, looks around nervously. A moment later a very pretty young teacher leans over, whispers in his ear.

TEACHER
Ladies and gentlemen...

BILLY
Ladies and gentlemen...

TEACHER
Welcome to the greatest show on earth.

BILLY
Welcome to the...
(he forgets again)

REVERSE ON TED

He leans forward mouthing the words as the teacher prompts Billy.

TEACHER
Greatest.

BILLY
Greatest...

TEACHER
Show.

BILLY
Show...

TEACHER
On earth.

BILLY
On earth.

Ted breathes a sigh of relief, his son having gotten through it.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THE CHILDREN PUTTING ON THE SHOW AND TED KRAMER SITTING IN THE AUDIENCE WATCHING:

A look of total pleasure on his face. From time to time when Billy does something particularly difficult, Ted nudges the woman next to him.

Note: In all of the shots of Billy we SEE the teacher there guiding, helping, over and over and over we cannot help but notice how attractive she is. Toward the end of the show Ted's POV occasionally follows the teacher rather than the child.

DISSOLVE TO:

WIDE SHOT

The show is over and the parents and children mill around eating popcorn, drinking lemonade from paper cups. Ted stands off to one side, talking to the teacher as Billy runs around.

CLOSER IN ON THEM

TEACHER

Mr. Kramer, I just wanted to tell you what a wonderful boy your son is.

TED

(clearly attracted to her)

I don't know... I've been worried...

(glancing around, making sure Billy is out of earshot)

I mean, with what he's been through and everything. I -

TEACHER

(solicitously)

No... No... Billy is doing just fine.

TED

(giving himself a few points)

Well, you know it's not easy raising a kid on your own and I thought if we could get together and, uh, discuss -

At that moment one of the class mothers interrupts, reaches across Ted and takes hold of the teacher's hand.

WOMAN

(effusive)

Barbara! Congratulations! When is the baby due?

TEACHER (BARBARA)

Oh, God. Not 'til August.

CLOSE ON TED

Inadvertently glancing at the teacher's stomach, nothing shows.

ON THE TEACHER

As she turns back to Ted.

TEACHER

Excuse me. You said you wanted to talk,
Mr. Kramer.

TED

(embarrassed)

Yes, but... ah, not now...

(checking his watch)

I've got an appointment... I forgot all
about it...

As Ted begins beating a hasty retreat,

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON TED

TRACKING IN FRONT OF HIM as he walks down the street carrying a large and elaborate papier mache art thing that Billy made in school.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN TED AND HIS POV:

As he manages to notice every single pretty girl that passes, thread his way through the crowd and still balance Billy's enormous work of art.

CUT TO:

INT. AGENCY - DAY

ON THE ELEVATOR DOORS

As they open, Ted squeezes off and AS THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM, he crosses the waiting room and enters the offices proper. He pauses at his secretary's desk and deposits Billy's papier mache thing. She jumps up from her desk, takes the papier mache thing and her notebook in hand, and follows Ted as he walks down the corridor towards O'Connor's office.

SECRETARY

Mr. O'Connor called. There's a meeting
with the Revlon people in the board room
and you're fifteen minutes late.

TED
(in a rush)
I know... I know.

SECRETARY
Mr. Schmidt can't have the figures on the
television buy until Monday.

TED
No. Uh, uh. Tell him I asked for it
Friday. I want it Friday. Period.

SECRETARY
Mr. Lombardo from packaging wants to meet
on Friday.

TED
Fine.

By now they have reached the board room. He enters without
knocking, his secretary still in tow.

SECRETARY
And Mrs. Kelsey called to ask if Billy can
come to Stephanie's birthday party on
Tuesday.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

The room is filled with executives in three piece suits and
O'Connor who is doing a lot of backing and filling.

TED
(as he enters)
Yes. Remind me to pick up a "Crying
Chrissie" doll at lunch on Tuesday.

ON O'CONNOR

Clearly he is very irritated at this.

O'CONNOR
(sardonic)
If it's all right with you, Mother Kramer,
can we get down to work now?

CUT TO:

INT. PHYLLIS BERNARD'S OFFICE - DAY

It is a real mess, legal files and law books scattered everywhere.
In the midst of all this chaos sits PHYLLIS BERNARD, as we said
before, she is about thirty, very pretty in spite of her glasses.

ON PHYLLIS

She looks up as Ted enters. It is clear from their attitude that they have known one another for a long time and are very relaxed together.

PHYLLIS

Hello, Kramer.

ON TED

He drops into a chair and shoves a stack of papers across the desk to her.

TED

Hiya, Phyllis. These are the Revlon contracts. I thought you ought to check them out.

PHYLLIS

Sure.

She takes the papers and starts to rifle through them, stopping every so often and making a note in the margin. As she does, we notice that the second and third buttons of her blouse have come undone and that she is not wearing a bra.

CLOSER ON TED

As he realizes this.

ON PHYLLIS

She glances up to ask Ted a question about some point or other, notices the direction of his gaze and, unselfconsciously buttons up her blouse.

She goes back to her papers as Ted continues to watch her.

ON PHYLLIS

Not looking up from her papers.

PHYLLIS

Yes.

TED

(baffled)

Yes, what?

PHYLLIS

(looks up, serious)

Yes, I'll have dinner with you.

CUT TO:

INT. TED KRAMER'S BEDROOM - LATE AT NIGHT

ON THE BED

Although the room is dimly lit, we can SEE quite clearly that Ted and Phyllis are in bed together. They have finished making love and Ted lies back, half asleep. Phyllis reaches across to the nightstand, puts on her glasses and checks her watch.

PHYLLIS

Kramer, I've got to go. I've got an eight o'clock closing tomorrow down on Centre Street.

TED

(half asleep)

Mmmmmph... I'll get you a cab...

But he makes no move to get up.

Phyllis gets to her feet and in the dim light we can SEE that, except for her glasses, she is naked.

PHYLLIS

(as she crosses the hall on the way to the bathroom)

That's okay. It's just that I've got these clients that are -

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

There is Billy Kramer, standing by the toilet, buttoning his pajamas. He looks up at Phyllis.

HIS POV

There stands Phyllis, naked as the day she was born, a look of stunned amazement on her face.

PHYLLIS

(softly to herself)

Oh, God.

Too startled to cover herself.

ON BILLY

He looks her up and down, then:

BILLY

(very serious)

Do you like fried chicken?

ON PHYLLIS

Suddenly remembering to cover herself.

PHYLLIS
(hoping desperately it
is the right answer)
Ah... Yes.

SHOT - PHYLLIS AND BILLY

BILLY
So do I...

And he shuffles off to bed. Phyllis waits, frozen until he disappears into his room. Then, she turns and flees back into the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

ON PHYLLIS

As she bursts into the room, closes the door behind her, leans against it.

PHYLLIS
(eyes wide)
I just met your son.

ON TED

Who has leapt out of bed and is scrambling into his pants.

TED
Like that?!

Phyllis nods.

TED
And?

PHYLLIS
He wanted to know if I liked fried
chicken.

TED
Do you?

Phyllis nods rather frantically.

TED
(grinning)
So what's your problem?

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - KRAMER APT. - EVENING

ON TED AND THELMA

Stand side by side. He is cutting, chopping, making some kind of stew. Thelma stands nearby watching, sipping a glass of white wine.

FROM OFF SCREEN we can hear Billy and Kim running around, playing.

TED

You ever think about getting married again?

THELMA

No, not really...

(she thinks for a moment, then:)

I guess it's different if you don't have children, but... I dunno, even if Charley and I don't live together, even if we're sleeping with other people, even if Charley was to marry again... He'd still be my husband. That stuff about "Till death do you part?" That's really true.

TED

(nodding toward a cookbook that is propped open nearby)

How many onions does it say to use?

THELMA

(without bothering to look in the book)

Three. And add some basil.

TED

(as he does)

D'you think you and Charley'll ever get back together again?

THELMA

No. I don't think so.

TED

C'mon, Thel. So Charley had a little fling. So what? All in all he was a pretty good husband.

THELMA

Look, I know this isn't gonna make any sense, okay? I mean forget the logic part... But I keep thinking if Charley really loved me, he wouldn't have let me divorce him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

WIDE SHOT

The Saturday Father and his daughter, clearly with nothing to say to one another, stand eating ices from a nearby vendor. THE CAMERA PANS AWAY FROM THEM across to Billy, Ted and Phyllis. She is dressed in a very nice suit, silk blouse, high heeled shoes and looks distinctly out of place in Central Park on a Saturday afternoon.

At the moment, Ted is trying to teach Billy how to bat.

TED

Now look, you hold it like this...
(he places Billy's
hands on the bat just
so)
... and you swing like this...
(taking him through the
motions)

ON PHYLLIS

Watching. She can't believe what she's seeing. Finally, she can't stand it any longer.

PHYLLIS

(impatient)

No, no, no, Kramer. That's not how you do
it. Look... .

She crosses to Billy, gently takes the bat from him and demonstrates.

PHYLLIS

... you hold it like this...
(showing him her grip)
Farther down the bat. And you swing like
this...
(to Ted)
Throw me one.

ON TED

As he gives Billy a look that says, we have to humor her. He throws a ball.

ON PHYLLIS

As she swings, connects and slams a ball in a long, looping fly that goes at least two hundred feet.

ON TED

Watching the ball disappear in the distance, he turns back to Phyllis, open-mouthed.

CLOSE ON PHYLLIS

Embarrassed, she grins, shrugs and hands the bat back to Billy.

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

O'Connor, Murray and the Art Director are in O'Connor's office as the door opens and Ted enters, carrying a pile of papers, charts, graphs, etc., etc.

TED

Okay, Jim. Here's the report on.

He stops in mid-sentence, looks around.

HIS POV

On the walls are a series of mock-ups of the various Fire and Ice ads, none of which are what Ted and O'Connor had agreed upon.

TED

(surprised)

What the hell is this?

O'CONNOR

(innocent)

Murray had some ideas about the Fire and Ice campaign and he had the art department make up a few roughs...

(weakly)

I think they're kind of interesting.

TED

(bugged)

I don't. Jim, this isn't anything like what we talked about. It's not even close.

MURRAY

(oily)

Ted, basically it's still your concept.

O'CONNOR

(chiming in)

Murray just added a few things, that's all.

TED
Now hold it right there, I'm the one that
went in and sold Revlon on this idea to
start with, remember? You said I was going
to be -

Sound-effect: The phone rings.

O'Connor picks it up.

ON TED

O'CONNOR
Yeah?

He listens for a moment, then hands the phone to Ted.

O'CONNOR
It's for you.

ON TED

As he takes the receiver.

TED
(puzzled)
Yes?

Then, embarrassed, he turns his back and lowers his voice.

TED
Look, Billy, I told you before, one hour
of T.V. a day, that's the rule... No...
(clearly, Billy is
giving him an argument)
I don't care what the other mothers do...
Listen, I can't talk now, I'm in a
meeting...
(firm)
Billy, I'll talk to you later, good-bye.

Note: During the phone call, the CAMERA PANS AWAY to Murray &
O'Connor, looks of bored Condescension and smug superiority on
their faces.

Ted hangs up the phone and turns back around.

MURRAY
(smooth)
Ted, I appreciate what you're saying, but
I really think you're just too close to it
right now.

O'CONNOR
(quickly)
Murray's right.
(reassuring)
Look it's just some ideas, okay? I mean
nothing's locked in cement. I promise you
this is your show...

ON TED

Not very reassured.

O'CONNOR
Trust me on this one, Ted...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

Ted is sitting at the dining room table, working. Spread out all across the table are layouts, rate sheets, etc., etc. Billy sits across from him drawing on a pad with felt-tipped pens. HOLD FOR A BEAT, then:

BILLY
(worried about something)
Mom, I mean dad...

TED
(busy)
In a minute...

A beat of silence then:

BILLY
What do you do when an elephant sits on
your fence?

Silence.

BILLY
You get a new fence.

TED
(he hasn't heard a word)
C'mon, Billy. I'm trying to work for God's
sake...

Another beat of silence, then Billy reaches for his glass of Hawaiian Punch and accidentally tips it over, spilling purple liquid across all of Ted's papers.

Instantly, Ted is on his feet, yelling.

TED
Goddamnit, can't you watch what you're
doing!

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

BILLY
(quiet)
I'm sorry.

TED
Je-sus Christ! I catch all kind of shit at
the office because I'm not pulling my
weight because I'm busting my butt trying
to be a decent goddamn father and -

BILLY
I'm sorry.

TED
(sardonic)
That's terrific. That's really terrific,
but I notice I'm the one that's cleaning
up this -
(noticing an important
paper covered with
grape juice)
Oh, crap, I'll have to do this one over.

BILLY
(starting to help)
I'm sorry.

By now there is nothing the boy can do right.

TED
Look, it's after your bedtime, okay? Just
do me a favor and go to bed, okay?

Billy gets to his feet, collects his stuff and walks into his
bedroom. HOLD ON TED who sits for a moment, then gets wearily to
his feet and as THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM crosses to the door of
Billy's room. He stops in the doorway, looks OFF SCREEN.

HIS POV

Billy struggling to get his pajamas on, having a hard time.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

TED
Look, I'm sorry I yelled, okay?

BILLY
(quiet)
That's okay.

TED
It's just... I've been catching a lot of
flack at the office...

BILLY
That's okay...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

ON THE DOOR TO O'CONNOR'S OFFICE

As it opens and Phyllis comes out. In the background in O'Connor's office we SEE O'Connor and Murray, talking, laughing.

THE CAMERA TRACKS ALONGSIDE Phyllis as she walks to Ted Kramer's office and opens the door without knocking.

PHYLLIS
How about lunch, Kramer. I'm buying.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT, MIDTOWN - DAY

ON TED AND PHYLLIS

As they sit across from one another. A waiter stands over them, setting drinks in front of them.

WAITER
Perrier and lime...
(placing a drink in
front of Phyllis)
... and scotch with soda.
(putting Ted's drink in
front of him)

The waiter bustles away.

TED
Okay, Phyllis, what's up?

PHYLLIS
Kramer...

She breaks off, uncertain whether or not to go on. Then, making up her mind, she reaches across, takes Ted's scotch and soda and drinks half of it down in one gulp.

PHYLLIS
(in a rush)
O'Connor's out to get you. He's going to
take the Fire and Ice account away from
you.

TED
(stunned)
What?!?

Phyllis nods.

TED

(angry)

I don't believe it! That's crazy! Why
would Jim do something like that?

Phyllis polishes off the rest of Ted's drink.

PHYLLIS

(angry herself)

You want to know why? I'll tell you why...
(signaling to the
waiter)

Another scotch and soda for the gentleman.
(back to Ted)

I'll tell you exactly why. Because you're
not his buddy anymore. Because he can't
count on you to sit around the office
every night until eight or nine and shoot
the shit with him.

TED

I can't. I've got Billy to take care of.

PHYLLIS

(exasperated)

You dope. O'Connor doesn't give a damn
about Billy. All he wants is somebody
that'll hang around with him every night
so he won't have to go home.

TED

(stiff)

I don't believe you.

The waiter sets Ted's drink on the table in front of him. He
starts to reach for it, but Phyllis is quicker.

PHYLLIS

(taking a stiff drink)

All right. Okay. But tell me something,
Kramer. Who do you think is palling around
with O'Connor these days?

Ted shrugs.

TED

How should I know?

PHYLLIS

Murray.

REACTION, TED

Stunned, but trying to be nonchalant.

TED

So... what's so terrible about that?

PHYLLIS

(would like to take him
by the shoulders and
shake him until his
teeth rattle)

Oh, for God's sake, Kramer. You have got
to be the world's most naive human being.

(leaning forward)

Murray has gone in and changed every
single ad you've done on the entire Fire
and Ice campaign. Every layout... Every
idea... Every single thing, right down the
line.

TED

No. No, I don't believe it. Jim O'Connor
would never let anything like that happen.
He gave me my shot in this business. If it
wasn't for Jim O'Connor I'd be - I don't
know where I'd be. He's a wonderful man...

PHYLLIS

(apologetic for having
upset Ted)

Kramer, I'm sorry. All I was trying to do
was -

TED

(cutting her off)

I don't want to hear another word against
him. Not another word. He's a wonderful
man... a wonderful man...

CUT TO:

INT. TED KRAMER'S OFFICE - DAY

INSERT: The finished proof of the ad that Murray had done, that
Ted had seen in O'Connor's office.

ON TED

TRACKING WITH HIM as he steams out of his door and marches along
the corridor to O'Connor's office.

SECRETARY

(as Ted brushes past
her)

I'm sorry, Mr. O'Connor is in conference.

But it is too late. Ted barrels into O'Connor's office without
bothering to knock.

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

O'Connor is alone in the office. He looks up startled as Ted comes barging in.

TED
(furious)

All right, Jim. You said I was running this show, right? You said no decisions without my approval, right?
(brandishing the ad)
Well what the hell is this? What's going on, Jim?

O'CONNOR
(embarrassed)

Well, ah... I thought it over and I decided we're doing it Murray's way.

TED
Jim, this is garbage. This isn't anything like what we talked to Revlon about. None of it. You can't -

O'CONNOR
(tough)

That's my decision, Ted and that's final.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING AREA - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

ON BILLY

Who sits looking down at the plate of food in front of him as though it was a coiled rattlesnake about to strike.

BILLY
What is it?

ON TED

Preoccupied, jumpy. He is eating, but he doesn't taste a thing.

TED
Salisbury steak.

BILLY
I hate it.

TED
You don't hate it. We had Salisbury steak last week and you liked it fine.

BILLY
(stubborn)
No I didn't. I hate the brown stuff. It's gross.

TED
(strained patience)
All it is is onions and gravy.

BILLY
I'm allergic to onions.

TED
You are not allergic to onions. You've had
them lots of times.

BILLY
(sullen)
I want a pizza.

TED
(trying not to lose
patience)
No. This is fine. Just take a bite, you'll
like it fine.

Reluctantly, Billy takes a tiny bite. He barely puts it in his
mouth before he spits it out with a great show of being physically
ill.

BILLY
I think I'm going to throw up.

TED
(getting pissed off)
Oh, for God's sake... Here.

He reaches across and scrapes most of the sauce off of the meat.

TED
There, okay? Now that's just plain old
hamburger.

BILLY
Some of the brown stuff is still there.

TED
(through clenched
teeth)
Then eat around it.

BILLY
No.

TED
(anger building)
Now listen to me, young man. Do you know
what I had to go through to put this
goddamn food on the goddamn table?

BILLY
(obstinate)
I don't care. I hate it. I want pizza.

TED
(blowing up)
Not on your life. That's it. I've had it
with crap around this house. From now on,
no more pizza! Get it? Starting right now
you can eat real food like a normal human
being!

BILLY
No!

By now both of them are out of control.

TED
You want to know something?! You are a
spoiled selfish little brat! Now eat -

Billy takes his plate and looking his father straight in the eye
deliberately overturns it, spilling food everywhere.

ON TED

He is out of his chair like a shot, crosses to Billy and jerks him
to his feet.

TED
(yelling)
Goddamnit! Go to your room!

He half-carries, half-drags the child kicking and screaming into
his room. THE CAMERA TRACKS ALONGSIDE THEM.

BILLY
(at the top of his
voice)
Owww... You're hurting me... You're
hurting me... I hate you... I hate you...

TED
(seething)
You're no bargain either, pal.

BILLY
I want my mommy... I want my mommy..

By now they have reached Billy's room. Ted dumps him on the bed
unceremoniously and starts out of the room.

BILLY
(sobbing)
I want my... mm... ommy... I want mmmy...
mommy...

TED
(at the door)
Tough shit. You're stuck with me.

And he slams the door behind him.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT

The dining area. Ted sits down and tries to resume his meal alone.

BILLY (O.S.)
(sobbing, fighting to
catch his breath)
I want my... mmmo... mmy. I want mmy
mmo... mmy...

CLOSER IN ON TED

As he lifts his glass to take a drink and we can SEE that he is shaking like a leaf.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

ON TED

As he finishes doing the last of the dishes, dries his hands and looks around to make sure that everything has been put away. He flips off the light and, as THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM, he walks from room to room, turning off the lights, until he reaches the door to Billy's room which is still closed. Ted hesitates for a moment, then eases open the door and steps inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

TED'S POV

Billy lies sprawled across the bed, all tangled up in the covers.

ON TED

As he crosses to the sleeping child and starts to straighten the covers.

BILLY
(tentatively)
Daddy?

TED
(all anger gone)
Yeah?

BILLY
I'm sorry...

TED
(kisses him)
That's okay, pal. Go back to sleep. It's
very late.

He starts to get up, when:

BILLY
Daddy?

TED
Uh huh?

BILLY
(very quiet)
Are you... gonna go... away?

ON TED

Stunned at the question.

TED
Of course I'm not going away. I love you
very much. I'll be right here.

There is a beat of silence, then:

BILLY
(it comes pouring out)
That's why mommy left... isn't it? 'Cause
I was bad...

The boy begins to weep.

TED
(he puts his arm around
Billy and holds him
close)
Oh, Christ... Oh, Christ...
(he thinks for a
moment, then:)
No, pal. Your mom loves you very much. The
reason she left didn't have anything to do
with you.

(pause, this is very
painful)
Look, I don't know if this will make any
sense to you, okay? But I'll try and
explain. You see the reason your mom left
was because... Well, I guess it was
because I kept trying to make her into a
certain kind of person... Make her be the
way I thought a wife was supposed to be.
Only she wasn't like that. She was...
(smiles to himself)
Well, she wasn't like that. And now, when
I think about it, I can see she tried very
hard to be like I wanted - very hard. And
(more)

TED (Cont'd)
when she couldn't, then she tried to tell
me about it. Only I wouldn't listen. I
guess I thought that if I was happy, that
meant she was happy too. Only she wasn't.
The truth is, the only reason she didn't
leave a lot sooner was because she loves
you so much. Joanna stayed until she
couldn't stand me any longer and then she
left... But it wasn't you, pal. It wasn't
you.

There is a long beat of silence as Billy thinks about this.
Clearly an enormous burden has been lifted from his shoulders.
Finally:

BILLY
Is mom ever coming back?

TED
You mean for good?

Billy nods.

TED
I don't think so.

BILLY
(thoughtfully)
Oh...

Ted gets to his feet, starts for the door.

TED
Now go to sleep. It's very late.

BILLY
Good night.

TED
Sleep tight.

BILLY
Don't let the bedbugs bite.

TED
See you in the morning light.

BILLY
Dad?

Ted pauses in the doorway, smiles.

TED
Yes?

BILLY
I love you...

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

A SERIES OF TRACKING SHOTS

As Ted runs along beside Billy, who is learning to ride a bike. Then, in the last shot, Ted lets go of the bike and runs along just behind. Slowly as Billy gains confidence he speeds up, leaving Ted farther and farther behind. Finally, as Billy glances over his shoulders.

CUT TO:

TED'S POV

As the boy, by now a considerable distance away, turns and waves.

ON TED

Waving back, a grin of enormous pride on his face. He glances around, embarrassed to make sure no one is watching and wipes tears from his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON A BUS

As it pulls to a stop and a mob of mothers and children get off. Among them we spot Billy and Ted Kramer. THE CAMERA PANS WITH THEM as they cross the street and enter the school building. THE CAMERA CONTINUES IT'S PAN across the street, to a Coffee Shop with large plate glass windows facing the school. There, standing in the window, watching, is Joanna Kramer. HOLD AS THE CAMERA SLOWLY ZOOMS IN ON HER and we SEE a look of overwhelming pain on her face.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND, CENTRAL PARK - AFTERNOON

ON TED AND THELMA

Sitting on a bench, the area around them is stacked high with toys that the kids have brought with them to the park.

OFF SCREEN we can HEAR Billy and Kim racing around, playing.

TED
(a little too casual)
Thel, you ever hear from Joanna?

THELMA
(also with deliberate
nonchalance)
Not for a couple of months. The last time
I heard from her she was living in San
Francisco.

TED
(surprised)
California?

THELMA
(watching him)
Uh, huh... She said she had a good job,
was playing a lot of tennis. She wanted to
know all about Billy.

There is a beat of silence, then:

TED
(the real question)
She ever ask about me?

THELMA
(lying)
Uh, huh... Yeah...

TED
What d'you tell her?

THELMA
I told her you're doing a pretty good job.

BILLY (O.S.)
Daddy! Daddy!

Ted glances around:

HIS POV

Billy and Kim are standing near the jungle Jim. Billy has a toy
airplane in his hand.

BILLY
Daddy, look! Presenting Billy Kramer's
Fantastic Superjet!

And he begins to race around the area, making jet noises and
holding the airplane in his hand.

REVERSE ON TED

Watching him, smiling.

ON BILLY

Weaving in and around the benches. He turns and starts back towards Ted. As he does:

QUICK CUT: INSERT:

Billy's foot, as he trips.

ON BILLY

As he starts to fall, still holding onto the airplane.

QUICK CUT: TED

Watching, horrified.

ON BILLY

As he hits the concrete.

ON TED

He leaps to his feet, starts toward the boy.

ON BILLY

As he looks up.

JUMP CUT IN TO EXTREME CLOSEUP

There is a terrible-looking gash running from his cheek into his hairline.

Kim screams at the sight of the blood.

BILLY
(terrified)
Daddy!

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO CENTRAL PARK - AFTERNOON

ON THE ENTRANCE

As Ted, carrying Billy, wrapped in his coat, comes barreling out of the park, nearly knocking over several people with shopping bags, and begins running like hell WITH THE CAMERA TRACKING JUST IN FRONT OF HIM. In the BACKGROUND we SEE Theima and Kim chasing after him. THE LENGTH OF THE TRACKING SHOT SHOULD BE MUCH LONGER THAN WE EXPECT. IT SHOULD, IN FACT, COVER THE THREE CITY BLOCKS

BETWEEN THE KRAMER APARTMENT AND THE HOSPITAL, ACROSS STREETS WITHOUT STOPPING FOR THE LIGHT, ALONG CROWDED SIDEWALKS WITHOUT STOPPING, ENDING FINALLY ON THE EMERGENCY ENTRANCE TO THE HOSPITAL. IT MUST BE GENUINELY SUPERHUMAN, GENUINELY HEROIC.

CUT TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM, EMERGENCY SECTION, HOSPITAL - DAY

ON TED KRAMER

He is covered with Billy's blood, it is on his face, his shirt, his trousers. At the moment 'he stands helpless, watching as, Off-Screen, a surgeon examines Billy's wound.

SURGEON (O.S.)
(calm, reassuring)
That's good, Billy... That's a brave boy... Now then, how's that? Now we've cleaned it out...

WIDER SHOT

Billy lies on the examining table with the doctor bending over him.

SURGEON
There. That wasn't so bad, was it?

Billy doesn't say anything.

SURGEON
Now then, you just wait here, Billy. I want to talk to your dad for a minute.

The doctor motions for Thelma to wait with Billy and he crosses to Ted who stands in the doorway.

CLOSER IN ON THEN

SURGEON
(low voice, again calm and reassuring)
Your boy is very lucky, Mr. Kramer. One inch over and it would have caught the eye.

REACTION TED

SURGEON
But I'm going to have to take some stitches.

TED
(flat)
How many?

SURGEON

Ten.

Ted closes his eyes, there is a sharp intake of breath.

SURGEON

Because of the position of the wound and your son's age, I don't think there will be much of a scar. Otherwise I'd call in a plastic surgeon.

Ted nods.

SURGEON

Now, I'd advise you to wait outside. It'll be eas -

TED

(like a shot)

No.

SURGEON

(reasonable)

Mr. Kramer, there's -

TED

(softly, but with real
vehemence)

Fuck you. He's my son. I'm staying with him.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON TED

He holds his son tightly while the doctor stitches up the boy's wound. From THIS CAMERA ANGLE we can SEE Ted's face, but only the back of Billy's head. Although we do not see the stitches being made, we do SEE the doctor's hand, with the needle and surgical thread as it moves into and out of view with a slow, steady rhythm. Billy's hand clutches Ted's so tightly that the knuckles are white.

BILLY

(softly, as each stitch
is taken)

Ohhh... Ohhhh... Ohhhhh...

TED

(whispering to his
child)

It's okay, son... I'm here... Just a little more to go... Don't worry, son... I'm here...

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

It is late, only a few lights are still on.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

ON BILLY

He lies in bed, fast asleep, his head swathed in bandages. THE CAMERA PANS AWAY FROM HIM across to Ted, who sits in a nearby rocking chair, watching his son. HOLD FOR A BEAT, then Ted gets to his feet, walks quietly to the door and steps out into the hall, closing the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

Thelma having washed and dried the dishes is now wiping off the top of the counter top, more to keep busy than anything else. She looks around as Ted enters.

THELMA

How is he?

REVERSE ON TED

Standing in the doorway. He hasn't changed his clothes and he is still covered with blood.

TED
(nods)

He's okay... Thel, can I ask you a favor?

THELMA

Sure.

TED
I don't mean a little favor. mean a big F favor.

Thelma nods. She watches Ted closely. He doesn't look at her.

TED
Thelma, if I die -

THELMA
(aghast)
What?

TED
(quickly)
I didn't say I'm going to die, but if I
should -

THELMA
(deeply upset)
Don't say that! I don't want to hear you
say that!

TED
(firmly)
Thel, listen to me. If, on the million to
one shot that I should -
(correcting himself)
That anything should happen to me. Would
you take care of Billy?

THELMA
(amazed)
Me?! You want me to take care of Billy?!

TED
I thought about it a lot and you're the
only person I know that I trust with him.
I mean, if anything happened to me, he'd
be okay with you. You're a good mother.

Silence. Thelma looks away from him.

TED
(hastily)
I know it's not an easy thing to answer.

Silence. She still cannot look at him.

TED
Look, if it's too much responsibility -
Thelma nods, unable to speak.

TED
You're sure?
She nods again.

TED
Thank you, Thel. Thank you very much.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

MEDIUM SHOT ON BILLY

As he lies in bed asleep. Some time has passed and Billy's bandage
is much smaller. HOLD ON HIM as we HEAR OFF SCREEN Sound: From the
street below, the regular six-forty-five garbage truck that serves
as Billy's alarm clock.

HOLD ON BILLY

As he wakes up, struggles to his feet.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM as, eyes closed, he stumbles into the bathroom, pees, and still not remembering to flush the toilet walks into the bedroom and wakes his father. As the child turns and walks toward the kitchen, THE CAMERA HOLDS ON TED. He heaves himself to his feet and, eyes closed, in much the same manner as his son, stumbles into the bathroom. He automatically flushes the toilet without bothering to look, walks into the living room, opens the front door and picks up the paper. As he starts into the kitchen, he meets Billy coming the other way carrying two plates, a doughnut on each.

THE CAMERA NOW TRACKS WITH BILLY as he walks into the living room, carefully sets the plates on the dining table, crosses to the television set, and turns it on. He returns to the table, and sits down as Ted appears carrying two glasses of orange juice and vitamins. He takes a seat in the chair opposite Billy and opens his paper and starts to read.

HOLD ON THEM as they sit without talking, eating their breakfast - the only sound, a children's cartoon program coming from the T.V. From time to time Ted glances up from his paper to look across at the cartoon.

HOLD ON THEM as we SEE that they have become roommates in the best sense of the word.

EXT. TED'S OFFICE BLDG. - MIDTOWN - DAY

WIDE SHOT

It is a gray, cloudy day in mid-November. Snow is falling.

Sound-effect: a telephone ringing. Then:

TED'S VOICE
Hello?

JOANNA'S VOICE
Ted?

TED'S VOICE
Joanna?

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT, ISLE OF CAPRI - NIGHT

ON THE DOOR

As Ted enters, looks around. The Maitred'hotel approaches. From his attitude, it is clear that Ted and Joanna were regular customers.

MAITRE D'HOTEL

Good evening, Mr. Kramer. We haven't seen you for a long time. Mrs. Kramer, she waits for you in the back.

TED

Thank you, John.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH TED as he walks toward the back room of the restaurant. Several waiters approach and say hello, the piano player looks up and smiles. As he reaches the door to the back room.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM

TED'S POV - JOANNA

She sits against the wall, a glass of white wine in front of her. She is dressed simply and no longer has a tan. Nevertheless, Joanna is still stunningly beautiful. HOLD ON HER FOR A BEAT as she looks up, smiles.

ON TED

He stands watching her, his knees weak. It is impossible not to fall in love with her all over again.

TWO SHOT

As he crosses to her table, sits down.

JOANNA

Hello, Ted. You look well.

TED

So do you.

The waiter appears, carrying a scotch and soda. He sets it down on the table in front of Ted.

WAITER

The usual, Mr. Kramer.

TED

(not taking his eyes
off Joanna)

Thanks, Gino.

The waiter nods and promptly disappears.

JOANNA

How's the new job?

TED

Fine.

There is a self-conscious pause. From the bar, the piano player begins playing a new song. From Ted and Joanna's reaction, it is clearly a song that has meant a great deal to them in the past. They listen for a moment, then:

TED

Look at us, Joanna. Just like any old married couple having dinner. Who would believe it.

JOANNA

Yes... How's Billy?

ON TED

The question he has been dreading.

TED

He's great... except...
(not looking at her)
... Except he had... he fell and he cut his face. He... He has a scar, Joanna, from about here to here.
(indicating where and how big)

There is a beat of silence. A moment of shared feeling.

TED

(he has to say it to someone)
I can't help but feel somehow... it's my fault. I keep thinking I could've done something - stopped it...

JOANNA

You can't tell it from a distance, Ted.

For the first time he looks up at her.

TED

What?

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

JOANNA

I've seen him.

TED

You have?

JOANNA

A few times. Sometimes I sit in that coffee shop across the street and watch when you take him to school.

ON TED

Speechless.

JOANNA

He looks like a terrific kid.

TED

He is...

(he still can't get
over it)

You sat in that coffee shop across from
school -

JOANNA

(completing the
sentence)

Watching my son... Ted, I've been living
in New York for the past two months.

TED

(amazed)

You've been living here, in the city?

JOANNA

(a deep breath)

Ted... The reason I wanted to see you... I
want Billy back.

TED

You want what?!

JOANNA

(firm)

I want my son. I'm through sitting in
coffee shops looking at him from across
the street. I want my son.

TED

Are you out of your mind?! You're the one
that walked out on him, remember?

JOANNA

(trying to explain)

Ted, listen to me... You and I, we had a
really crappy marriage -

(hastily)

Look, don't get so defensive, okay? It was
probably as much my fault as it was
yours... Anyway when I left I was really
screwed up -

TED

Joanna, I don't give a -

JOANNA

(she will be heard)

Ted, all my life I'd either been somebody's daughter or somebody's wife, or somebody else's mother. Then all of a sudden, I was a thirty-two-year-old, highly neurotic woman who had just walked out on her husband and child. I went to California because that was about as far away as I could get. Only... I guess it wasn't far enough. So I started going to a shrink.

(leaning forward, very sincere)

Ted, I've had time to think. I've been through some changes. I've learned a lot about myself.

TED

(like a shot)

Such as?

Silence.

TED

(boring in)

Come on, Joanna, what did you learn? I'd really like to know.

Silence.

TED

(relentless)

One thing, okay? Just tell me one goddam thing you've learned.

There is a beat of silence, then:

JOANNA

(quiet, determined)

I've learned that I want my son.

ON TED

He reacts as though he has been slapped.

TED

Joanna, go be a mother. Get married, have kids. Don't get married, have kids. Do whatever you want. I don't give a damn. Just leave me out of it - and leave my baby out of it.

JOANNA

Ted, if you can't discuss this rationally

-

TED
(getting to his feet)
Joanna, go fuck yourself!

And with that he turns on his heels and stalks out of the restaurant.

CUT TO:

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

A large, very plush office: lots of antiques, beautiful nineteenth century paintings on the wall along with autographed photographs of at least three ex-Presidents of the United States. Sitting behind a large and imposing desk is JOHN SHAUNESSY, a handsome, formidable man in his early sixties. He is well-dressed, a cornflower in his buttonhole, that sort of thing. At the moment, Shaunessy leans back in his chair as Ted finishes his story.

TED
(leaning forward,
intense)
Look, she walked out on her own child,
right? That's desertion, right? Mr.
Shaunessy, I'm telling you it's an open
and shut case.

SHAUNESSY
First, there's no such thing as an open
and shut case. Especially where custody is
involved. Got it?

Ted nods.

SHAUNESSY
Second, the burden is on us to prove your
ex-wife is an unfit mother. That means I'm
going to have to play rough and, if I play
rough, you can bet they will too. Can you
take that, Mr. Kramer?

Ted nods.

SHAUNESSY
Third, it'll cost you five thousand
dollars.

REACTION TED

That's an astronomical amount of money to him.

SHAUNESSY
That's if we win. If we lose, you could
end up having to pay your wife's court
costs as well.

TED
(determined)
Fine.

SHAUNESSY
Good. You've hired yourself a hell of a
lawyer, Mr. Kramer.
(down to business)
How old is the child?

TED
Six.

ON SHAUNESSY

He shakes his head.

SHAUNESSY
That's tough. In most cases involving a
child that young, the court tends to side
with the mother.

ON TED

Agitated. This is not what he wanted to hear.

TED
But she signed over custody. Here...

He digs in his pockets, pulls out a piece of paper and thrusts it
at the lawyer.

SHAUNESSY
(glancing at it)
I'm not saying we don't have a shot, but
it won't be easy...
(thinks for a moment)
Mr. Kramer, do me a favor. There is
something I find very helpful in matters
like this. I sit down and make a list of
all the pros and cons on an issue. I
actually write them down and look at them.
I want you to do that, okay? Then, after
that, if you're really sure you want to
retain custody of your child - then we'll
go in there and whip their asses.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - LATE AT NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

Ted sits at the dining table, the supper dishes have been pushed
aside. He has a legal pad in front of him and is writing. THE
CAMERA DOLLIES IN CLOSER.

INSERT - TED'S POV

The legal pad. On one side Ted has written "Pro" and on the other, "Con." Underneath "Con" Ted has written a long list of the drawbacks involved in keeping Billy: Sex Life, Money, Possibility of Remarriage, Sleep, Emotional Dependence. The "Pro" side of the list is empty.

ON TED

He sits for a moment, staring at the list, then he crumples the paper, gets to his feet.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

ON THE DOOR

As Ted enters. He crosses to Billy's bed where the child is fast asleep, sits down on the edge, and starts to rub the child's back.

TED
I love you Billy Kramer.

BILLY
(half-asleep)
I love you too daddy.

Ted kisses the child, gets to his feet and starts toward the door.

TED
Sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite...

BILLY
(almost asleep again)
See you in the morning light...

CUT TO:

INT. O'CONNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

O'Connor stands with his back to Ted, looking out the window. From the beginning this is clearly an awkward and unpleasant moment.

O'CONNOR
(scared to do what he
is about to do)
Look, ah... Ted. I just got word from the
guys at Revlon and... ah they did some
marketing tests on our campaign and the
results were...

CLOSE ON TED

Hold on him listening as it slowly dawns on him that he is being fired.

O'CONNOR
(stiff)

Disappointing. It only pulled a fourteen share and they were hoping for a twenty-five minimum, and... ah... they're not very happy and... Well, the guys have decided they want to... ah, re-think the entire concept and... Look, I don't like having to do this, okay?... But... I mean, what I mean is... ah, I'm going to have to... ah, let you go -

TED
(not really sure he
heard right)
Are you firing me, Jim?

ON O'CONNOR

He still has his back to Ted.

O'CONNOR
C'mon, Ted, don't get emotional. Okay?
(whining)
Look, this isn't exactly an easy thing for me to do, y'know? I swear Murray and I did everything we could, but those sons of bitches were out for blood. I mean it was all I could do to keep the account inside the shop... Look, I promise, if I hear of anything I'll let you know first thing.
Ted, I want -

O'Connor looks around.

O'CONNOR
Ted?...

HIS POV

The room is empty, the door stands open and Ted is gone.

O'CONNOR'S VOICE
Ted?...

CUT TO:

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

As Ted grabs a picture of Billy from his desk, takes his jacket and coat and stalks out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

TRACKING ALONGSIDE TED

As he walks along the street in a state of total shock. Behind him, in the windows of expensive stores we note Christmas decorations.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, EMPLOYMENT AGENCY - DAY

WIDE SHOT

Ted sits across from the interviewer, a polished young man in his middle twenties, very efficient, he sounds a bit like a tape recording.

INTERVIEWER

(glancing at a form Ted
has filled out)

Ummm, hmmm... umm, hmmm...

(the good news)

Well, this looks very good.. Of course

(the bad news)

... you understand this is the worst time
of the year to look for a job.

TED

(panic)

What?! What do you mean, I don't
understand.

INTERVIEWER

(patronizing)

Mr. Kramer, nobody even thinks about
leaving their job until after they get
their Christmas bonus.

TED

Look, you don't understand. I need a job.
I've got a kid and -

INTERVIEWER
(smooth)
I understand and I'm absolutely sure
something wonderful will turn up...
(ending any further
discussion)
... after the first of the year.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON A TELEPHONE BOOTH

Ted stands inside, talking on the phone. AS THE CAMERA DOLLIES IN CLOSER, he hangs up the receiver and takes the employment section of the New York Times which is filled with listings he has circled and crosses off one. He goes on to the next, takes a dime from the stack on the shelf in front of him and starts to dial.

CUT TO:

EXT. TED KRAMER'S APT. HOUSE - EVENING

ESTABLISHING SHOT

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

ON TED

Who stands at the sink doing the last of the dishes. A dishtowel is tucked into his belt, serving as an apron. HOLD ON HIM as we HEAR:

Sound-effect: The phone ringing.

Ted wipes his hands, picks up the phone.

TED
Uh, huh?

SECRETARY'S VOICE
(from the phone)
Mr. Kramer? Please hold for Mr.
Shaunessy...

Then, a moment later:

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
Ted? They've set the court date. I just
heard today... It's...
(checking his notes)
January sixth.

TED
(despair)
Oh, Christ... John, there's some- thing I
ought to tell you. My... ah, situation
has... changed. I lost my job.

There is a long pause, too long.

TED
John?

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
(thoughtfully)
Ted, I won't lie to you, we don't have a
hope in hell of winning a custody hearing
if you're out of work.

Ted doubles over the phone like he has been hit in the stomach.

TED
(softly, but with real
feeling)
Good Christ, Joanna, just get the hell out
of my life.

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
Ted? Are you there?

TED
Yeah.

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
Any prospects?

TED
(trying to make himself
believe it)
Don't worry. I plan to have something
within twenty-four hours, John.

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
(amazed)
How the hell are you going to do that?

TED
(grim)
I don't know.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - EMPLOYMENT AGENCY - DAY

WIDE SHOT

The same young man sits across the desk from Ted.

INTERVIEWER

(smirk)

Mis-ter Kramer, as I mentioned yesterday, this is a very bad time of year to look for work. Now I'm sure we'll have something for you by mid-February, March at the latest.

CLOSE ON TED

Leaning forward, impatient.

TED

I need a job, now.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

The interviewer gives Ted a weary look. Then he starts to flip through the card file.

INTERVIEWER

(going through the motions)

No... No... No...

Finally he pauses at one card, pulls it out.

INTERVIEWER

(doubtfully)

There might be something at J. Walter Thompson. But...

(shaking his head)

... I don't think they're really serious. The position's been open for two months and...

(shrugs)

They may just be on a fishing expedition.

(cheerful)

I'm sure you'll be much happier if you wait until after the first -

TED

(checking his watch)

Call up the people at J. Walter Thompson. Set up an appointment at four.

INTERVIEWER

(politeness strained almost to the breaking point)

Mis-ter Kramer, it's...

(checking his watch)

... almost four now. It's the Friday before Christmas. Nobody is going to want to -

TED
(leaning forward, tough
as nails)
Either you call and set up the
appointment, or I'll call. And if I call,
you lose the commission.

INTERVIEWER
(arch)
My, we are a hot shot aren't we?

Ted is already on his feet and halfway out the door.

TED
You bet your ass.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE ADVERTISING MANAGER, J. WALTER THOMPSON - LATE
AFTERNOON

It is dark outside and the lights are on in the office. From
beyond the door, we can hear the sounds of a Christmas office
party in full swing.

ON JACK ACKERMAN

The advertising manager. A balding man in his mid-forties, he
wears a suit, complete with vest. At the moment he sits behind his
desk listening to Ted's spiel, from time to time he glances at the
resume on the desk in front of him.

TED (O.S.)
So, Mr. Ackerman, as you can see from my
resume, my experience in setting up the
leisure package concept means that I've
spent a lot of time working along the same
lines as your multiple buys and your
regional advertising ideas. I know the
pitfalls, but - and this is more important
- I know the potential revenue for the
company inherent in these programs.

ON TED

As he finishes. He sits back, pleased with himself.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

ACKERMAN
Well, Mr. Kramer, I must say this has been
very impressive. I'd like to think about
it and get back to you.

TED
(leaning forward)
Mr. Ackerman, is there anyone else that I
should see before you come to a decision.

ACKERMAN
Mr. Spencer, our Advertising Director.

TED
(no time to waste)
Could I see him right away?

ACKERMAN
(taken aback)
I'm sorry, but he's leaving this evening
for a two-week vacation. I'll set up
something the moment he gets back.

He gets to his feet, starts to shake Ted's hand, ready to end the
interview.

TED
I'd like to see him now - before he
leaves.

ACKERMAN
Mr. Kramer, I don't think -

TED
(means it)
I want this position very much.

Ackerman gives Ted a long, considered look, then:

ACKERMAN
Wait here.

He turns and goes out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTER OFFICE, J. WALTER THOMPSON - LATE AFTERNOON

The large room is crowded with secretaries, junior executives,
researchers, editors, ad-men, etc., etc. They all have drinks in
their hands and there is a good deal of kissing and general
conviviality going on.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH ACKERMAN as he steps out of his office,
closes the door behind him and makes his way across the room to
MR. SPENCER, the Advertising Director. At the moment, Spencer
stands with his coat over one arm and a drink in his hand talking
to a very pretty young woman. Ackerman approaches him, whispers
something in his ear. Spencer shakes his head and points to his
watch. Ackerman says something else and finally, with a look of

weary resignation, Spencer excuses himself from the pretty young woman and follows Ackerman back to his office. THE CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM. As Ackerman opens the door to his office, THE CAMERA IS ANGLED so that we can SEE past them, into the office where Ted stands waiting.

ACKERMAN
(as they enter)
Mr. Spencer, Mr. Kramer.

SPENCER
(not wasting any time)
So you're the go-getter. All right, you've got ten minutes.

As the door closes behind them, blocking our view, THE CAMERA PANS UP to a clock over the door. It reads five-fifteen.

MATCH DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. ACKERMAN'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

ON A CLOCK

Which now reads five twenty-two. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL Spencer, now sitting in Ackerman's chair, his feet on Ackerman's desk. Ted has just finished his pitch.

SPENCER
(sipping his drink)
That's very interesting, Mr. Kramer. I must say, it's very interesting. Let me think about it. I'll let Jack...
(indicating Ackerman)
... know and he'll get in touch with you.

Spencer gets to his feet, starts to retrieve his coat.

ON TED

As he decides to take a gamble.

TED
Excuse me, I believe you said I had ten minutes.

ON SPENCER

Almost at the door, looking around.

SPENCER
Well?

ON TED

Checking his watch.

TED

That means I've got two minutes left. I understand you're paying twenty-five.

Spencer nods.

TED

(a deep breath, then a
real huckster)

All right, I'll tell you what I'm gonna do
- I'll take the job at twenty-two-five.
Now, that's twenty-five hundred less than
you're offering. The only thing is, you
have to say yes right now. Not tomorrow.
Not next week. Not after the holidays.
It's worth it to me for a yes right now
and I'll take twenty-five hundred less.

There is a long beat of silence as Spencer and Ackerman look at one another. They were clearly not prepared for this.

TED

(watching them)

Today only. One day only. Twenty-two five.

SPENCER

Mr. Kramer, can we talk privately for a moment?

TED

Certainly.

CUT TO:

OUTER OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

ON TED

As he steps out of Ackerman's office, sits down. Now, all of the fear, all of the anxiety that he has been fighting down comes welling up. What if he pushed too hard? What will he do if he doesn't get a job? If Ted Kramer could fall to his knees and pray, he would.

CROSS-CUT WITH THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

That swirls around him. We notice in particular, one very pretty young woman flirting with a number of men. She is wearing a dress with straps, one of them has broken and she has patched it with a piece of masking tape.

Finally the door to Ackerman's office opens and he steps out.

ACKERMAN
Mr. Kramer?

Ted jumps to his feet, starts into the office.

CUT TO:

INT. ACKERMAN'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

ON SPENCER

He looks at Ted carefully for a long time, then:

SPENCER
(grins)
Welcome aboard, Mr. Kramer.

CLOSEUP TED

There is an instant of relief, then, with astounding cool:

TED
Well, gentlemen, I'm pleased to be with
you.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As they shake hands, say their good-byes. THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH TED as he makes his way through the Christmas party that is still going strong. Then, suddenly, as he passes the very pretty woman we noticed earlier, he turns and kisses her.

QUICK CUTS

As a look passes between them, a sudden chemistry, something we have not seen in Ted before.

TED
(steps back from the
astounded girl, grins)
Merry Christmas.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON A BUS

As it pulls to a stop, the doors open and, along with the usual flood of mothers and children we SEE Ted and Billy. THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH THEM as they walk to school. Billy is talking a mile a minute, describing in minute detail the plot of an episode of "I Dream of Jeannie." Ted listens intently, then, almost involuntarily, he glances over his shoulder in the direction of the Coffee Shop.

HIS POV

There, standing in the window, watching, is Joanna.

ON TED AND BILLY

As they continue to walk. Ted's eyes remain on Joanna. As they reach the door to the school, Ted looks at his son.

TED
(kissing Billy good-
bye)
You're a terrific kid, Billy Kramer.

He stands watching as Billy rushes off into the building. Then he turns back and once again looks in the direction of the Coffee Shop.

HIS POV

This time there is no one there.

CUT TO:

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT

HOLD FOR A BEAT as we HEAR:

OFF SCREEN Sound: A telephone ringing. Then, a moment later:

TED'S VOICE
Hello?

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
Ted? John Shaunessy here. I just got a
call from your wife's lawyer. She wants to
see the kid.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

Ted Kramer, the phone cradled against his ear is cleaning up the remains of one of Billy's attempts to make the perfect peanut butter sandwich.

CLOSE ON TED

Horrified.

TED
What?! She wants what?!

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
(he's been through this
a million times)
She's the mother. That means she's within
her legal rights.

TED
(agitated)
John, what if she kidnaps him. I've heard
all these -

SHAUNESSY
(the patience of a
saint)
Look, Ted, I don't honestly think she
would go to the trouble of suing you for
custody of the child if she was planning
on kidnapping him.

TED
(doubtful)
I don't know, John... I mean, to be
brutally honest, I'm not so sure what kind
of mental shape Joanna's in right now.
Y'know she admitted she was seeing a
shrink.

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
(a flicker of interest)
You ever see her talk to the walls?

TED
No, but -

SHAUNESSY'S VOICE
Then you don't have a choice. Have Billy
at the Seventy-Fifth Street entrance to
Central Park, Saturday at ten.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIFTH AVE. SIDE OF CENTRAL PARK - DAY

ON TED AND BILLY

TRACKING IN FRONT OF THEM as they walk along the Central Park side
of Fifth Ave. From their attitude it is clear that each of them,
for their own reasons, is very nervous.

TED'S POV - TRACKING FORWARD

About half a block away Joanna paces back and forth. She hasn't
seen them and it is clear that she is as nervous as they are.

ANOTHER ANGLE ON TED AND BILLY

Ted stops, turns to Billy and gives him a last-minute check. Then, spotting a smudge he takes his handkerchief, spits on it and wipes the child's chin. Now satisfied, he takes Billy's hand and they continue. Suddenly:

CLOSEUP BILLY

As he spots his mother.

BILLY

Mommy!

QUICK CUT: JOANNA

As she turns, spots Billy, starts to run.

ON BILLY

TRACKING WITH HIM as he lets go of Ted's hand and starts to run flat out toward his mother. She kneels, opens her arms wide for him and he goes barreling into her, almost knocking her down from the impact.

JOANNA

(somewhere between
laughter and tears)

Oh, Billy... Oh my Billy... Oh my son...

WIDER SHOT

Joanna gets to her feet and takes Billy's hand.

JOANNA

(to Ted, but looking at
Billy)

I'll have him back at six.

And they start off in the opposite direction.

ON TED

Realizing that Billy has not said good-bye, has not looked at him once.

JUMP CUT TO:

WIDER SHOT

Ted stands helpless, watching them leave.

JUMP CUT TO:

WIDER SHOT

Ted, now almost lost from view on the crowded street, still hasn't moved.

FADE TO BLACK

WIDE SHOT

Ted and Phyllis, getting ready to go to bed. They look like a couple that has been married at least five years. Ted is busy talking as he takes off his tie, jacket and starts to unbutton his shirt. Phyllis is getting undressed also, hanging things in the closet, putting things away in drawers. But as Ted continues to talk, she watches him apprehensively, it is clear that something is wrong.

TED
(he has become an
armchair lawyer)

So, naturally, you assume that since
Joanna left, that would be a compelling
point against her, right?

PHYLLIS
(thoughtful)

Right.

TED
But it doesn't work that way. A major
decision was handed down by the Appellate
Court in 1969 - in the case of Haskins vs.
Haskins.

PHYLLIS
Kramer -

TED
Now in Haskins vs. Haskins the court ruled
in favor of the mother, thus establishing
a precedent for awarding the child to the
mother even though she previously
abandoned the baby.

PHYLLIS
Kramer... There's something I ought to
tell you.

TED
Yeah?

PHYLLIS
I've been offered a job in Washington with
H.E.W.

CLOSE ON TED

Lie stops what he is doing, turns to her.

TED
And?

PHYLLIS
(a deep breath)
I'm going to take it.

REACTION - TED

He sits down on the bed.

PHYLLIS
It's a very good job - too good to pass
up. I'll be handling funding for the
whole...
(she stops, sits beside
him on the bed)
Look, I...
(she means love)
... "like" you a lot. And you...
(she means love)
... "like" me, okay? Maybe if it was a
year from now, maybe things would be
different...

TED
(quiet)
But it's not a year from now, is it?

She shakes her head, then, reaches out and touches him.

PHYLLIS
I'll miss you, Kramer...

INT. KRAMER APT. - DAY

ON THE FRONT DOOR

It is open and standing in the doorway is an attractive woman, a bit overweight and very serious. This is DR. ALVAREZ, the court-appointed psychiatrist.

ALVAREZ
Mr. Kramer?

TED
Yes?

ALVAREZ
I'm Dr. Alvarez, Judge Atkins asked me to
look in on your son and prepare an
evaluation sheet.

TED
Oh, yes. Won't you come in.

Dr. Alvarez enters the apartment. Ted helps her off with her coat.

ALVAREZ
Where is the child?

TED
He's in his room, playing.

ALVAREZ
Good. I'll see him in there.

As Ted carries her coat to the closet, Dr. Alvarez walks into the living room, looks around.

ALVAREZ
Mr. Kramer, do you ever have sex in here with anyone?

TED
Doctor, I attempt to conduct my social life discreetly. At the moment I am seeing no one.

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

ALVAREZ
Does that distress you?

TED
Not particularly.

ALVAREZ
What does?

TED
The prospect of losing my child.

ALVAREZ
(makes some notes,
then:)
Very well, I'd like to see him if I may.

They cross to the door of Billy's room. Ted opens it.

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - DAY

THEIR POV

The room is a mess, blocks are stacked everywhere. Billy sits in the middle playing with his toys.

ON TED AND DR. ALVAREZ

They stand in the doorway.

TED
Billy. This is Dr. Alvarez. She would like to talk to you.

BILLY
(looking up from his
toys)

Sure.

There is an awkward pause as Ted remains in the doorway.

DR. ALVAREZ
(pointedly)
I'd like to talk to Billy privately.

TED
(embarrassed at being
caught)
Oh, yeah...

Reluctantly, Ted leaves, closing the door behind him.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH HIM as he crosses the living room to the couch where he has a stack of legal books and a number of note pads spread out. He is obviously continuing his legal education. THROUGH OUT THE FOLLOWING, THE CAMERA REMAINS ON HIS FACE.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)
What do you have here, Billy?

BILLY (O.S.)
Detroit.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)
Have you ever been to Detroit?

BILLY (O.S.)
No. But I've been to Brooklyn.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)
I see you have people there. What are
their names?

BILLY (O.S.)
That's Kim... and this one's Thelma and
that's Mrs. Willewska and this is daddy
and that's Batman and over there is Robin.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)
What about your mommy?

BILLY (O.S.)
Oh, sure. Here, this can be mommy.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)
Do you like to be with your mommy?

Ted by now has given up all pretense of working. He wags his pencil in the direction of the door.

TED
(the defense attorney)
Objection. You're leading the witness.

BILLY (O.S.)

Sure.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)

What do you like best about her?

BILLY (O.S.)

Lunch in a restaurant.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)

What do you like best about your daddy?

BILLY (O.S.)

Playing.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)

Tell me, does your daddy ever hit you?

REACTION - TED

Eyes wide. He starts to get up.

TED

Objection.

BILLY (O.S.)

Sure. Lots of times.

This brings Ted all the way to his feet. He starts across the living room headed for the door to Billy's room.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)

(interested)

When does he hit you?

Ted has his hand on the doorknob, about to enter.

BILLY (O.S.)

He hits me on the planet Kriptarium, when I steal the buried treasure from the famous peanut butter factory.

ALVAREZ (O.S.)

In real life when does he hit you?

BILLY (O.S.)

(laughing)

My daddy doesn't hit me, silly. Why would my daddy hit me?

CUT TO:

EXT. MODERN OFFICE BUILDING, MIDTOWN - DAY

WIDE SHOT

It is a Saturday afternoon. HOLD FOR A BEAT as we SEE Ted Kramer and Billy approaching. Billy is talking a mile a minute. Ted

listens intently, absorbed in the boy's description. As they turn into the entrance of the office building:

INT. CORRIDOR, J. WALTER THOMPSON - DAY

WIDE SHOT

A long corridor with desks for secretaries lined up next to doors leading to smaller individual offices. As they approach a door in the foreground that bears a small sign reading, "Ted Kramer":

TED
(interrupting Billy,
who is still in the
middle of his story)
See. That's my name.

BILLY
(looking at the sign)
It's my name too.

TED
Right.

As he opens the door:

CUT TO:

INT. TED KRAMER'S OFFICE - DAY

It is a pleasant enough office, but nothing spectacular, windows that look out over Fifty-seventh Street, simple Formica furniture, that sort of thing.

ON THE DOOR

As they enter.

BILLY
(he stops dead in his
tracks at the sight of
the office)
Wow!

TED
(pleased)
You like it?

Billy crosses to the window, presses his nose to the glass, looks out.

BILLY
Wow! Is this really where you work?

Ted nods, walks over to the desk and begins collecting paperwork to do over the weekend. As he does, Billy goes through the office, sitting in every chair, looking in every drawer.

BILLY
Is this really your desk?

TED
Yep.

BILLY
Is that really your chair?

TED
Uh huh...

BILLY
Wow! That's neat. Can I sit in it?

TED
Sure.

Billy plops himself down in Ted's chair, swivels around.

BILLY
Did mommy ever see this?

TED
No, she never did.

BILLY
Are you going to get remarried?

TED
I don't know. I hadn't thought much about it.

BILLY
Are you going to remarried Phyllis?

TED
(shaking his head)
No.

CLOSE ON BILLY

There is a long pause, then:

BILLY
Will you and mommy get remarried?

Ted stops what he is doing, looks across at Billy:

TED
No, son. Daddy and mommy will never get remarried.

BILLY
(looking around Ted's office)
Boy, I bet you if mommy ever saw this she'd remarried you.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING

CLOSE ON AN ALARM CLOCK THAT SITS ON A NIGHTSTAND

As it rings, THE CAMERA PANS ACROSS and we SEE Joanna sitting in bed wide awake, smoking. As she puts out the cigarette she has been smoking and starts to get out of bed,

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - TED KRAMER'S APT. - EARLY MORNING

ON TED

Who stands with a cup of coffee in his hands, looking out the window, but not seeing anything. HOLD FOR A BEAT, then he checks his watch and starts for the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. JOANNA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

ON JOANNA

As she selects a very conservative suit from her closet.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY KRAMER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

WIDE SHOT

As Ted, now fully dressed, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, conservative tie, leans over Billy and wakes him.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Joanna sits across from her lawyer as he talks to her, intently, giving her last-minute instructions.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

ON TED KRAMER

Taking Billy to school. They stop at the entrance, Ted kisses his son good-bye and stands for a moment watching as the boy runs into the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

It is a bleak January morning, the streets around the courthouse are mobbed with people on their way to work. We SEE Ted Kramer, a tiny figure among hundreds, coming out of the subway. He crosses the street and starts up the steps of the large and forbidding courthouse.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

As Ted gets off the elevator and starts down the corridor, toward the courtroom. In the f.g., - standing by the door of the courtroom itself is John Shaunessy, he greets Ted, they shake hands and talk together for a moment. Then, as they enter the courtroom:

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM

ON THE DOOR

As Ted enters, looks around. Mrs. Willewska sits in one of the back rows, wearing her best Easter hat. Ted pauses by her, thanks her for coming.

Several rows in front of her is Thelma. Ted crosses to her, they talk quietly between themselves for a few moments. Then Ted moves on to a table at the front of the room where John Shaunessy waits.

ON THE DOORS AT THE BACK OF THE COURTROOM

As they swing open and Joanna, along with her lawyer, a MR. GRESSEN. THE CAMERA PANS WITH THEM as they walk to the front of the room and take their seats at the table opposite Ted and his lawyer.

CLERK

Oyez, oyez... The third Circuit Court of
the State of New York, Judge Atkins
presiding is now in session. All rise...

WIDE SHOT

As the judge enters, takes his seat.

Opening business of the court.

WIDE SHOT

As Gressen (Joanna's lawyer) gets to his feet.

GRESSEN

Your honor. As our first witness I would like to call Joanna Kramer.

TWO SHOT - TED AND SHAUNESSY

The lawyer leans across to Ted.

SHAUNESSY

(stage whisper)

Real direct. Motherhood... They're going right for the throat.

WIDE SHOT

As Joanna gets to her feet, crosses to the witness stand and is sworn in.

Note: Throughout the following, we continually CROSS-CUT to Ted Kramer, leaning forward, listening intently. It becomes evident that, in spite of himself, there are moments he feels great compassion for Joanna.

GRESSEN

Now then, Mrs. Kramer, would you tell the court how long you were married?

JOANNA

Six years.

GRESSEN

And would you describe those years as happy?

JOANNA

The first couple, yes, but after that it became increasingly difficult.

GRESSEN

Mrs. Kramer, did you ever work in a job while you were married to your ex-husband?

JOANNA

No, I did not.

GRESSEN

Did you wish to?

JOANNA

Yes. I tried to talk to Ted - my ex-husband - about it, but he wouldn't listen. He refuses to discuss it in any serious way. I remember one time he said I probably couldn't get a job that would pay enough to hire a baby-sitter for Billy.

GRESSEN

Tell me, Mrs. Kramer, are you employed at the present time?

JOANNA

Yes, I work for Jantzen as a sportswear designer.

GRESSEN

And what is your present salary?

JOANNA

I make thirty-one thousand dollars a year.

REACTION - TED

Stunned.

GRESSEN

(switching tactics)

Mrs. Kramer, do you love your child?

JOANNA

(emphatically)

Yes. Very much.

GRESSEN

And yet you chose to leave him?

There is a long pause, then:

JOANNA

(speaking carefully,
with great thought)

Yes... Look, during the last five years we were married, I had... I was getting more and more... unhappy, more and more frustrated. I needed to talk to somebody. I needed to find out if it was me, if I was going crazy or what. But every time I turned to Ted - my ex-husband, he couldn't handle it. He became very... I don't know, very threatened. I mean, whenever I would bring up anything he would act like it was some kind of personal attack. Anyway, we became more and more separate... more and more isolated from one another. Finally, I had no other choice, I had to leave. And
(more)

JOANNA (Cont'd)

because of my ex-husband's attitude - his unwillingness to deal with my feelings, I had come to have almost no self-esteem...

(with feeling)

At the time I left, I sincerely believed that there was something wrong with me - that my son would be better off without me. It was only when I got to California and started into therapy I began to realize I wasn't a terrible person. And that just because I needed some creative and emotional outlet other than my child, that didn't make me unfit to be a mother.

GRESSEN

(to the judge)

Your honor, I would like to place in evidence a report on Mrs. Kramer's therapy by her therapist, Dr. Elinore Freedman of La Jolla, California.

And with that he hands both the judge and Shaunessy a thick sheaf of papers. Then, turning his attention back to Joanna:

GRESSEN

Mr. Kramer, why did you set up residence in New York?

JOANNA

Because my son is here. And his father is here. As a mother, I don't want my child to be separated from his father.

GRESSEN

Mrs. Kramer, can you tell the court why you are asking for custody?

There is a pause, then:

JOANNA

Because he's my child... Because I love him. I know I left my son, I know that's a terrible thing to do. Believe me, I have to live with that every day of my life. But just because I'm a woman, don't I have a right to the same hopes and dreams as a man? Don't I have a right to a life of my own? Is that so awful? Is my pain any less just because I'm a woman? Are my feelings any cheaper? I left my child - I know there is no excuse for that. But since then, I have gotten help. I have worked hard to become a whole human being. I don't think I should be punished for that. I don't think my son should be punished for that. Billy's only six. He needs me. I'm not saying he doesn't need his father, but he needs me more. I'm his mother.

There is a beat of silence, then:

GRESSEN

Thank you, Mrs. Kramer. I have no further questions.

ON SHAUNESSY

As he stands, collects his papers from the table and, taking his own sweet time, crosses to Joanna.

SHAUNESSY

Now then, Mrs. Kramer, you said you were married seven years. Is that correct?

JOANNA

Yes.

SHAUNESSY

In all that time did your husband ever strike you or abuse you physically in any way.

JOANNA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Did your husband strike or physically abuse his child in any way?

JOANNA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Would you describe your husband as an alcoholic?

JOANNA

No.

SHAUNESSY

A heavy drinker?

JOANNA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Was he unfaithful?

JOANNA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Did he ever fail to provide for you?

JOANNA

No.

SHAUNESSY
(wry smile)
Well, I can certainly understand why you
left him.

GRESSEN
Objection.

SHAUNESSY
(switching his line of
questioning)
How long do you plan to live in New York,
Mrs. Kramer?

JOANNA
Permanently.

Note: During the early part of Shaunessy's cross-examination,
Joanna has been very forthright, very sure of herself. Now, as he
starts getting tougher, she begins to falter.

SHAUNESSY
Permanently?
(smiles, like a shark
smiles)
Mrs. Kramer, how many boy friends have you
had - permanently?

ON JOANNA

Her head snaps back as though she's been hit.

JOANNA
I don't recall.

SHAUNESSY
(boring in)
How many lovers have you had -
permanently?

JOANNA
(looks toward Gressen
for help)
I don't recall.

SHAUNESSY
More than three, less than thirty-three -
permanently?

ON GRESSEN

He is again on his feet, outraged.

GRESSEN
Objection!

JUDGE
Overruled. The witness will answer,
please.

JOANNA
(almost a whisper)
Somewhere in between.

SHAUNESSY
Do you have a lover now?

GRESSEN
(furious)
Objection!

SHAUNESSY
(to the judge)
Your honor, I would request a direct
answer to a direct question. Does she have
a lover?

JUDGE
I'll allow that. The witness will answer
please.

JOANNA
(in a whisper)
Yes.

SHAUNESSY
Is that... permanent?

JOANNA
(by now she is becoming
thoroughly rattled)
I... I don't know...

SHAUNESSY
Then, we don't really know, do we, when
you say "permanently" if you're planning
to remain in New York, or even to keep the
child for that matter, since you've never
really done anything in your life that was
continuing, stable, that could be regarded
as permanent.

ON THE PETITIONER'S TABLE

Gressen jumps to his feet.

GRESSEN
Objection! I must ask that the counsel be
prevented from harassing the witness.

JUDGE
Sustained.

SHAUNESSY

(a new attack)

Mrs. Kramer, how can you consider yourself a fit mother when you have been a failure at virtually every relationship you have undertaken as an adult?

GRESSEN

(red in the face)

Objection!

JUDGE

Sustained.

SHAUNESSY

I'll ask it another way. What was the longest personal relationship you have had in your life - other than parents and girlfriends?

JOANNA

(rattled)

Ah... I guess I'd have to say... with my child.

SHAUNESSY

(wonder, irony)

Whom you've seen twice in a year? Mrs. Kramer, your ex-husband, wasn't he the longest personal relationship in your life?

JOANNA

(reluctantly)

I suppose...

SHAUNESSY

Would you speak up, Mrs. Kramer? I couldn't hear you.

JOANNA

(louder)

Yes.

SHAUNESSY

How long was that?

JOANNA

We were married two years before the baby. And then four very difficult years.

SHAUNESSY

So, you were a failure at the longest, most important relationship in your life.

GRESSEN

Objection!

JUDGE

Overruled.

JOANNA
I was not a failure.

SHAUNESSY
(sarcastic)
Oh? What do you call it then - a success?
The marriage ended in divorce.

JOANNA
(so angry she forgets
her cool)
I consider it less my failure than his.

SHAUNESSY
(seizes on this)
Congratulations, Mrs. Kramer. You have
just rewritten matrimonial law. You were
both divorced, Mrs. Kramer.

GRESSEN
(on his feet)
Objection!

SHAUNESSY
(to the judge)
Your honor, I'd like to ask what this
model of stability and respectability has
ever succeeded at?
(to Joanna)
Mrs. Kramer, were you a failure at the
longest, most important personal
relationship in your life?

CLOSE ON JOANNA

Who sits silently.

JUDGE
Please answer the question, Mrs. Kramer.

JOANNA
(whisper)
It did not succeed.

SHAUNESSY
(suddenly fierce)
Not it... Not it, Mrs. Kramer - you. Were
you a failure at the most important
personal relationship of your life?

CLOSER IN ON JOANNA

Silence.

SHAUNESSY
Were you?

EXTREME CLOSEUP JOANNA

JOANNA
(barely audible)
Yes.

WIDE SHOT

Shaunessy smiles, turns his back on Joanna and walks back toward the respondent's table.

SHAUNESSY
No further questions.

CLOSER IN ON THE TABLE

As Shaunessy sits down next to Ted.

TED
(leaning over, in a
whisper)
Jesus Christ. Did you have to be so rough
on her?

SHAUNESSY
(tough)
Do you want the kid or don't you?

ON JOANNA

Shaken, she gets down from the witness stand, crosses to the petitioner's table without looking at Ted. She sits, leans across to her lawyer and whispers something in his ear. As he nods...

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM, LATER IN THE DAY

ON JIM O'CONNOR

Who sits in the witness stand. At the moment he is being examined by Gressen.

GRESSEN
Now then, Mr. O'Connor, how long did Ted
Kramer work for you?

O'CONNOR
Eight, almost nine years.

GRESSEN
And did you have a close personal
relationship?

O'CONNOR
(in a whisper)

Yes...

GRESSEN
And how did you find his work?

O'CONNOR
It was good. He was a hard worker, a lot of drive, a real hustler.

GRESSEN
And yet you fired him.

There is a long pause.

O'CONNOR
(looking down)
Ted was a good worker. But, ah... after his wife left him and he was taking care of the kid on his own, things started to change. Look, I know he had problems, I understand that. I've got problems, everybody's got problems. But I've got a shop to run, I can't let that kind of thing get in the way...

(quietly)
I guess I felt that Ted was letting his duties at home interfere with his responsibilities in the office.

GRESSEN
Thank you. I have no further questions.

Shaunessy stands up.

SHAUNESSY
Mr. O'Connor, does the agency still have the Fire and Ice account?

O'CONNOR
(up tight)
No.

SHAUNESSY
Mr. O'Connor, can you tell me where you are employed at the moment?

O'CONNOR
(stiff)
At the moment I am unemployed.

ON THE JUDGE

JUDGE
If the petitioner has no further witnesses, we will hear the respondent tomorrow morning at 9:30.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT

Ted sits at the dining table poring over law books, writing copious notes on a legal pad. Billy sits across from him drawing in a pad with magic markers. HOLD FOR A BEAT as Billy looks up at his father. It is clear that something is bothering him.

BILLY

Mom - I mean, dad?

TED

(not looking up)

Uh, huh?

BILLY

What did you do when you were little?

TED

(still involved in his
books)

I guess about the same kind of things you
do.

BILLY

Did you watch "I Dream of Jeannie?"

TED

(distracted)

Uh, uh... We didn't have television then.

ON BILLY

Eyes wide. He finds this hard to believe.

BILLY

You didn't have T.V.?

ON TED

He looks up for the first time, smiles.

TED

Nope. It hadn't been invented yet.

He starts to go back to work.

BILLY

(this is serious
business)

Was there apple juice when you were
little?

TED
Yeah, there was apple juice.

BILLY
Was there Burger King?

TED
Uh, uh. There was no such a thing as
Burger King.

BILLY
What else wasn't there?

ON TED

He takes a long look at his son, then closes the law book, puts
his notes away.

TED
Well, let's see... There wasn't
McDonald's. And there wasn't astronauts...
And there wasn't frozen yogurt. And there
wasn't...

As he continues on about what wasn't, we

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

ON THELMA

She sits in the witness stand being examined by Shaunessy. From
her attitude it is clear that she is very wrought up, that all of
this is taking a heavy emotional toll on her.

SHAUNESSY
Mrs. Phillips, how long have you known Ted
Kramer?

THELMA
Six years. Ever since Ted and Joanna moved
into the building.

SHAUNESSY
How often do you see Mr. Kramer and his
son?

THELMA
(to the judge, by way
of explanation)
Charley, my husband, and I are... divorced
and Kim, that's our daughter is about
Billy's age and the children play together
a lot. So, I guess we see each three or
four times a week.

SHAUNESSY
Can you describe the relationship between
Mr. Kramer and his son?

THELMA
It's beautiful. It's just beautiful. They
have a beautiful relationship.

ON GRESSEN

Getting wearily to his feet.

GRESSEN
(patronizing)
Objection, your honor. The answer is, to
be generous, very vague.

SHAUNESSY
Can you recall any particular incident
that relates to Mr. Kramer's care of his
child?

THELMA
(fighting a losing
battle with her
emotions)
Ted - Mr. Kramer, spends a great deal of
time with his child. I don't just mean
hours, I mean good time, involved time. He
reads to Billy. They play together. They
talk all the time...

(tears start)
He is a very... kind man... a very...
devoted father, and... and...
(she turns to Joanna)
And Joanna if you ever saw them
together... there wouldn't be a trial at
all...

(she breaks down,
weeping)
Oh, shit... I'm sorry... I'm sorry...

Note: during this we cross-cut to Joanna, who sits, staring at her
friend, shaken.

SHAUNESSY
(gently)
No further questions. Thank you Mrs.
Phillips.

GRESSEN
(without looking up
from his notes)
No questions.

Thelma leaves the stand and walks back to her seat.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

ON TED KRAMER

Sitting in the witness stand.

SHAUNESSY
Mr. Kramer, would you tell the court
exactly why you want to retain custody of
your child.

TED
(speaking quietly)
When Joanna -
(to the judge,
correcting himself)
- my ex-wife - when she was talking before
about how unhappy she was during our
marriage... Well, I guess most of what she
said was probably true. There were a lot
of things I didn't understand - a lot of
things I would do different if I could.
Just like I guess there are a lot of
things Joanna wishes she could change...
But we can't. Some things, once they are
done, can't be undone. Joanna says she
loves Billy. I believe she does. So do I.
But the way it was explained to me, that's
not the issue. The only thing that's
supposed to matter here is what's best for
Billy... When Joanna said why shouldn't a
woman have the same ambitions as a man, I
suppose she's right. But by the same token
what law is it that says a woman is a
better parent simply by virtue of her sex?
I guess I've had to think a lot about
whatever it is that makes somebody a good
parent: constancy, patience,
understanding... love. Where is it written
that a man has any less of those qualities
than a woman? Billy has a home with me,
I've tried to make it the best I could.
(more)

TED (Cont'd)
It's not perfect. I'm not a perfect parent.

(unconsciously echoing something Joanna said earlier)
I don't have enough patience. Sometimes I forget he's just a little kid... But I love him... More than anything in this world I love him.

SHAUNESSY
Thank you, Mr. Kramer. No further questions.

ON GRESSEN

As he gets up from the petitioner's table and crosses to the witness stand.

GRESSEN
(hard-lining it)
Mr. Kramer, by any chance have you ever had a woman in your bed while your child was asleep in the next room?

TED
I suppose.

GRESSEN
(pointedly)
So do I.

SHAUNESSY
Objection!

JUDGE
Sustained.

GRESSEN
(switching to another line of attack)
Mr. Kramer, isn't it true that you were fired from your last job not more than six weeks ago?

TED
(not losing his cool)
Technically, the agency lost a big account and seventy four people were let go. I was one of them.

GRESSEN
(snotty)
You were fired, correct?

TED
Yes, but I'm with J. Walter Thompson now. I don't think that will happen again.

GRESSEN
(snide)
Give them time...

SHAUNESSY
Objection, your honor! Counsel is
harassing the witness.

GRESSEN
(to the judge, pettish)
Your honor, I'm only examining the man's
employment record. He pretends to fitness
when he cannot hold a job.

JUDGE
Sustained.

ON GRESSEN

He is thoughtful for a moment, like a man trying to decide whether
or not to drop the bomb. Then, turning back to Ted:

GRESSEN
(very tough)
Mr. Kramer, did your child nearly lose an
eye when he was in your care?

REACTION - TED

Stunned. He looks across at Joanna.

QUICK CUT - HIS POV

Joanna looks away.

GRESSEN
(boring in)
Mr. Kramer, did you, or did you not tell
the child's mother that you were
responsible for the injury that
permanently disfigured your child?

Shaunessy is on his feet racing toward the bench.

SHAUNESSY
(vehement)
Objection! Your honor, counsel is raising
a question that is not germane to these
proceedings.

GRESSEN
(to the judge)
While the child was in the care of the
witness, he cut his face badly and is now
scarred.

JUDGE
(to Gressen)
Are you introducing the question of
negligence here, counselor?

GRESSEN
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE
I see. Well, you'll have to do better than
that. Do you have any affidavits to
support negligence?

GRESSEN
I do not, your honor, however -

JUDGE
This is an isolated incident, counselor,
unless you can prove otherwise.

GRESSEN
(back to Ted)
Does the witness deny the injury took
place?

JUDGE
(before Ted can say
anything)
No, counselor, I'm going to over-rule you
on this line of questioning.

GRESSEN
Then I have concluded my questions.

ON THE PETITIONER'S TABLE

Joanna sits, still not looking at Ted. She holds her face, one
hand shielding her eyes.

CUT TO:

ON THE JUDGE

As he makes his closing statement.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN LOBBY, COURTHOUSE - DAY

WIDE SHOT

Shaunessy and Ted stand talking, reviewing the case. Then the two
men shake hands, the lawyer waves goodbye, turns and starts back
into the building. THE CAMERA PANS WITH TED as he walks toward the
main exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE, COURTHOUSE - DAY

ON TED

As he comes out of the building, starts down the steps.

JOANNA (O.S.)

Ted.

He stops, turns:

HIS POV

There, standing waiting for him is Joanna.

CLOSE ON TED

His face a mask of cold anger. She crosses to him.

JOANNA

I'm sorry... I just mentioned it in passing. I never thought he'd use it.

TED

(sarcastic)

Yeah, well he did, didn't he.

JOANNA

Please, Ted. I never would have brought it up if I thought -

TED

I'm not interested, Joanna. Goodbye.

WIDE SHOT

As he turns and walks away from her, leaving her standing, watching him as he disappears.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON TED AND THELMA

It is a bleak winter's day. THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH THEM as they walk along, Ted carrying a bag of groceries, Thelma with cleaning. The children run around them, playing.

THELMA

You heard anything yet?

TED

(shakes his head)

Any day.

They walk in silence for several beats, each clearly lost in their own thoughts. Then:

THELMA

Ted.

TED

(preoccupied)

Uh, huh...

THELMA

(this is hard to say)

Ah, Charley and I are... Well, we're thinking about... I mean, actually we're sort of talking about maybe getting back together.

TED

(thunderstruck)

You and Charley?

Thelma nods.

TED

Really?

Thelma nods.

TED

(conflicting emotions)

Hey, that's terrific.

THELMA

(hastily)

Maybe. I said maybe.

(apologizing for her
good fortune)

What I mean is, ah... I don't think it'll really work out, but Charley seems to want it, so...

She leaves the sentence unfinished. They walk in silence for several more steps. Then she takes his hand.

THELMA

(can't help grinning)

Oh, God... Ted, I am really scared.

They walk in silence for a beat, then Ted looks OFF SCREEN, spots something:

HIS POV

The Saturday Father, restless, bored, walking with his daughter who is also bored. It is clear that they have nothing to say to one another. He looks around, spots Ted, waves and starts in his direction.

CLOSEUP TED

He reacts as though he has seen a vision of his own death.

TED
(to Thelma, urgent)
C'mon.
(to Billy and Kim)
Billy, Kim. Let's go.

WIDE SHOT

As Ted ushers them across the street, away from the Saturday Father.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S BAR, MIDTOWN - DAY

A crowded, rather posh watering spot. Shaunessy sits alone at a table for two, a drink in front of him.

REVERSE ON THE DOOR

As Ted enters, spots Shaunessy and starts in his direction.

CLOSER ON SHAUNESSY'S TABLE

As Ted sits down.

TED
Well?

ON SHAUNESSY

As he looks up at Ted, says nothing.

ON TED

He realizes that they have lost.

TED
Oh, Christ!

CROSS-CUTTING BETWEEN THEM:

SHAUNESSY
The judge went for motherhood straight
down the line.

TED
I lost him? I lost him?

SHAUNESSY

I can't tell you how sorry I am.

TED

Oh, no..

SHAUNESSY

(reading from a piece
of paper)

Ordered, adjudged and decreed that the
petitioner be awarded custody of the minor
child, effective Monday the 23rd of
January. That the respondent pay for the
maintenance and support of said child,
four hundred dollars each month. That the
father shall have the following rights of
visitation: every other weekend, one night
each week to be mutually agreed upon and
one half of the child's vacation period.

(looks up at Ted)

That's it.

TED

(grim)

What if I fight it?

SHAUNESSY

(matter of factly)

We can appeal, but I can't guarantee
anything.

TED

(determined)

I'll take my chances.

SHAUNESSY

It's going to cost.

TED

(his mind is made up)

Don't worry. I'll get the money.

There is a beat of silence, then:

SHAUNESSY

I've got to tell you something, Ted. This
time it'll be Billy that pays. This time
I'll have to put him on the stand.

CLOSE ON TED

As his last hope goes crashing to the ground.

TED

Oh, Christ no... I can't do that. I
just... can't...

(he looks up at the
lawyer in despair)

Excuse me... I'm sorry... I just...

That is all Ted can manage to say. He gets to his feet and rushes for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - DAY

ON THE ENTRANCE

As Mrs. Willewska comes out. Her eyes are red from crying. THE CAMERA PANS WITH HER as she turns up the street on her way to pick up Billy from school. THE CAMERA HOLDS IN POSITION as she meets Thelma. They stand talking for a moment, then Thelma turns and starts to run toward the building.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE TED'S APT. - DAY

ON THE ELEVATOR DOORS

They open and Thelma steps out. She runs to the door, begins to knock.

THELMA
(calling out)
Ted!... It's me... Ted?...

There is a beat of silence, then:

TED (O.S.)
(very quiet)
Please go away, Thel... I... I just have
to be by myself for a little while...

THELMA
Ted, I just heard...

TED (O.S.)
Please, Thel...

Thelma leans against the door and begins to sob.

THELMA
I'm so... sorry... Oh, Ted, I'm so
sorry...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - DAY

WIDE SHOT

As Mrs. Willewska brings Billy back from school.

CUT TO:

INT. KRAMER APT. - DAY

ON THE FRONT DOOR

It opens and Billy and Mrs. Willewska enter. Billy sees Ted and rushes across to him.

BILLY
(excited)
Daddy! You're home early. Did you get
fired again?

TED
(laughing in spite of
himself)
No, son, I didn't get fired.
(fake cheerful)
I'll tell you what we'll do, okay? How
about if we go to a Burger King and then
we watch a little T.V. and then we get
packed to go to the country tomorrow. Just
you and me... How 'bout that?

CUT TO:

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT

HOLD FOR A BEAT, then:

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - NIGHT

ON TED

He sits at the dining table, a typewriter in front of him. As he begins to type, hunt and peck system, we:

CUT TO:

INSERT - HIS POV

The page in the typewriter. We SEE and HEAR at the same time.

TED (V.O.)
Joanna... This is by way of introducing
William Kramer. He is a sweet child, as
you will see. He is allergic to grape
juice, but will more than make up for the
loss in apple juice. He is also allergic
to peanut butter from the health food
store, but not from the supermarket. Don't
ask me why.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON A CORNER MAILBOX

As Ted mails the letter.

TED (V.O.)
At times, in the night he will have
nightmares, one particular monster is
called The Face. The Face, as best as I
can determine, looks like a circus clown
without a body, and from what the
pediatrician says, and what I have read,
may be sexual fear of losing his penis, or
a fear of his own anger, or just a circus
clown he saw once.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON THE SAME MAILBOX

As a sack of mail is loaded into a truck.

TED (V.O.)
His doctor, by the way, is still Ed
Davies. The Sundafed is for colds, one
tablespoon every four hours. I will pack
it in the blue suitcase.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOANNA KRAMER'S APT. BLDG. - DAY

WIDE SHOT

A POSTMAN enters the building carrying a bag of mail.

TED (V.O.)
His best stories have been Babar and Winnie the Pooh up to now, with Batman moving up. His housekeeper has been Etta Willewska and she is the main reason for the note. She is a loving woman, conscientious, very concerned about Billy and more important, Billy cares about her.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY, JOANNA'S APT. BLDG. - DAY

ON A STACK OF MAIL

As it is dropped in front of a doorway. We SEE that the letter from Ted to Joanna is on top.

TED (V.O.)
I urge you to retain her. Her number is 722-8099, and I think she will take the job if it is offered. I'm sure other things will come up. Ask me what you need to and I guess eventually we'll talk...

CUT TO:

INT. JOANNA'S APT. - DAY

ON HER

As she finishes reading the letter.

TED (V.O.)
That's all I can think of, except to repeat what I said before, he's a terrific kid. I'm grateful for the time we've had together and I feel I am a better man because of my son... Ted.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

It is a clear, cold beautiful winter's day. Ted and Billy walk along the beach at the edge of the water. THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH THEM. There are several beats of silence as Ted tries to think of how to begin. Finally:

TED

Billy, sometimes when a mother and a father are divorced, there's a discussion about who the child should live with, the mother or the father. Now there is a man who is very wise. He's called a judge. And a judge has a lot of experience with divorces and he decides who it would be best for the child to live with.

BILLY

Why does he decide?

TED

Because... Well, that's what he does. He's a very powerful man.

BILLY

Like a principal?

TED

Bigger than a principal. The judge sits in robes in a big chair... The judge has thought a lot about us, about you and me and your mom, and he has decided...

(a deep breath)

... he has decided that it would be best for you to live with your mom Joanna in her apartment.

(fake cheerful)

And I'm very lucky. Because even though you'll live with your mom Joanna I'll get to see you once a week for dinner and a couple of weekends a month.

BILLY

I don't understand, daddy.

TED

(trying very hard not to cry)

What don't you understand, pal?

BILLY

Where will my bed be, where will I sleep?

TED

At your mom's. She'll have a bed for you in your own room.

BILLY

Where will my toys be?

TED

I'll send your toys there and I'm sure you'll get some new ones.

BILLY

Who will read me my stories?

TED

Your mom.

BILLY

(worried)

Daddy, what if The Face comes when I'm at
mommy's?

TED

Your mom knows all about The Face, okay?
Don't worry, she'll tell The Face to beat
it.

BILLY

Will you come and say good-night to me
every night?

Suddenly Ted can't stand it any longer.

TED

Look, it's getting cold. Why don't you go
inside where it's warm. I'll be along in a
minute.

Billy hangs back, watching Ted.

TED

Go on, scoot.

The boy turns and runs back along the beach toward the house.
Then, he stops, turns back to look once more at his father.

HIS POV - LONG SHOT

Ted stands at the ocean's edge, his back to CAMERA, weeping.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. KRAMER APT. BLDG. - DAY

WIDE SHOT

It is early Monday morning.

CUT TO:

INT. KRAMER KITCHEN - MORNING

ON TED AND BILLY

They stand side by side, like a surgeon and his assistant. Spread
out on the counter in front of them are the makings of French
toast. The following is done with great efficiency, in contrast to
the first time we saw them go through the same ritual. They work
in silence except for an occasional command. Each concentrating on
this last moment of closeness, each doing his best to avoid
thinking about Billy's departure. Finally:

ON BILLY

Looking at his father, trying to memorize the older man's face.

Ted turns, sees his son watching him.

TED
(with false gaiety)
Hey? What's doin' with that bread? Let's
see a little hustle around here.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - KRAMER APT. - MORNING

WIDE SHOT

Billy's bags are packed and stacked neatly in the living room.
Nearby, Billy and his father sit, silent, waiting.

Sound-effect: The intercom from the lobby buzzes.

CLOSER IN ON TED AND BILLY

Ted looks at his son, smiles. The boy smiles back.

TED
This is it, pal.

Billy, fighting back tears, nods.

Sound-effect: The intercom buzzes again.

Ted gets to his feet and starts toward the foyer.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - DAY

As Ted picks up the intercom:

TED
Yes?

JOANNA'S VOICE
Ted, it's Joanna. Can you meet me in the
lobby?... Alone?

And she hangs up before he can answer.

TED
(to Mrs. Willewska, in
the kitchen)
I'll be back in a minute.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - DAY

ON THE ELEVATOR DOORS

As they open, Ted steps out, looks around.

HIS POV

The lobby is dark, the only light coming from the window. Joanna sits off to one side, wearing sunglasses. She looks up as Ted approaches, a small smile on her face.

TED
(abrupt)
Okay, I'm here. Now why did you -

JOANNA
Ted, do you love him?

TED
Goddamnit, Joanna. What the -

JOANNA
(insistent)
Ted, do you love him?

He nods.

JOANNA
I love him too... I don't think I ever
knew how much until now.

There is a long pause as she looks at Ted, unable to speak.
Finally:

JOANNA
(a deep breath, then:)
Ted, when we got married it was because I
was twenty-seven years old and I thought I
should get married and... when I had Billy
it was because I thought I should have a
baby... and I guess all I did was mess up
my life and your life and -

TED
Joanna, what the hell is -

JOANNA
(urgent)
Please... Please don't stop me. This is
the hardest thing I've ever had to do..

ON TED

Struck by the urgency in her voice.

JOANNA

After I left... when I was in California,
I began to think, what kind of mother was
I that I could walk out on my own child.
It got to where I couldn't tell anybody
about Billy - I couldn't stand that look
in their faces when I said he wasn't
living with me. Finally it seemed like the
most important thing in the world to come
back here and prove to Billy and to me and
to the world how much I loved him... And I
did... And I won. Only... it was just
another "should."

(she begins to break
down)

... Sitting in that courtroom. Hearing
everything you did, everything you went
through... Something happened. I guess it
doesn't matter how much I love him, or how
much you love him. I guess it's like you
said, the only thing that counts is what's
best for Billy. I don't know, maybe that's
all love is anyway... Ted, I think Billy
should stay with you...

TED
(stunned)

What?

JOANNA
(she reaches out, takes
his hand)

He's already got one mother, he doesn't
need two... He's yours...

(her last ounce of
reserve crumbles)

I won't fight you for him any more. He's
yours...

TED
Oh, God... Oh, my God...

JOANNA
Only can I still see him?

TED
No more waiting in Coffee Shops... I
promise.

Joanna's last ounce of reserve crumbles, she begins to sob. Ted
puts his arms around her and holds her. They do not kiss. Then,
after a few moments she steps back.

JOANNA
(chin high)

Okay... I think I'll go talk to my son
now.

(wiping her eyes)
How do I look?

TED
Beautiful.

They step into the elevator and, as the doors close, blocking them from view, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

ON TED AND BILLY

TRACKING JUST IN FRONT OF THEM as they walk to the park. They are deep in conversation, although we are too far away to hear what they are saying. HOLD ON THEM and, as they reach the entrance to the park, Billy first, then Ted begin to run, overwhelmed with the sheer joy of being alive, of being together. As they continue to run, THE CAMERA PULLS BACK AND UP AND WE SEE that they are only two among thousands of parents and children in Central Park on a sunny afternoon. THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO PULL BACK until they are lost from view and it is...

FADE OUT

THE END