

you see? You're not just a sick woman. That would be too easy. The truth is . . . there's been perverseness—and willfulness of attitude—in many of the things you've done. At the center of—of a sick psyche, there is a sick spirit. But I love you. And we have no other choice but to forgive each other.

*(She looks down, her speech finished. PEARL, wearing a robe, enters the room.)*

**Kramer vs. Kramer**

Columbia Pictures/A Stanley Jaffe Production, 1979

Screenplay by Robert Benton

Based on the novel by Avery Corman

Directed by Robert Benton

Time: 1979

Place: New York City

Ted and Joanna are a young couple in their thirties who live in a comfortable building on the Upper East Side with their six-year-old son, Billy. Ted is a successful advertising executive, and Joanna does not work outside the home. Without warning Joanna leaves Ted and Billy and goes to California in an effort to find an identity apart from her roles as wife and mother. Ted is left solely responsible for Billy. This causes some drastic changes in his life. Caring for Billy has even taken priority over his job. The result is that Ted is fired.

Joanna returns to New York, asking for a divorce and custody of Billy. Ted is deeply attached and committed to his son and wants legal custody. In an effort to prove himself a worthy father, he furiously scrambles to land a job and eventually accepts a position for which he is over-

**INFO**

qualified. Shortly thereafter a painful custody trial ensues.

Monologue One. At the trial Ted takes the stand.

Monologue Two. Joanna has been awarded custody of Billy. Ted has prepared Billy to go with his mother, and they are both waiting for her to arrive. When Joanna buzzes the apartment from the lobby, she asks Ted, over the intercom, to come down alone to talk to her. Ted arrives in the lobby, and she speaks.

**Monologue One**

TED

*(speaking quietly)*

**START**

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. 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.

**END**

Monologue Two

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 . . . 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.)*

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.

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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?

**Norma Rae**

Twentieth Century-Fox/Martin Ritt/Rose and Asseyev, 1979

Screenplay by Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank, Jr.

Directed by Martin Ritt

Time: 1978

Place: Henleyville, Georgia

Norma Rae Webster, thirty-two, mother of two, has lived in Henleyville all her life. Like most of the people in town, she works at O. P. Henley, the local textile mill. The TWU (the Textile Workers Union of America) has sent a representative from New York, Reuben Warshovsky, to try to unionize the mill. Reuben, a city boy, is very much out of