

CRACKING YARNS

KRAMER VS KRAMER – Adapted for screen by Robert Benton
Based on the novel by Avery Corman
Hero's Journey & [Emotional Journey](#) breakdown by [Allen Palmer](#)

1. TED'S WORK DOMINATES HIS LIFE

Advertising creative, TED KRAMER, should be heading home but he's seduced to stay longer by promises of future career advancement (INCOMPLETE) from his boss O'CONNOR (ORDINARY WORLD).

2. TED'S WIFE IS LEAVING – AND NOT TAKING THE KID

Arriving home late, Ted is immediately on the phone back to work and isn't listening when his wife, JOANNA, says she's leaving – (UNSETTLED) – and that she's not taking their 6 year old son, BILLY (CALL TO ADVENTURE).

He tries to talk her out of it (REFUSAL – RESISTANT) but she walks out without even taking a suitcase. He berates his neighbour MARGARET (MENTOR) for her complicity but she says Joanna has been very unhappy (INCOMPLETE).

3. TED'S NOT MUCH OF A PARENT

Ted's disastrous efforts at making French Toast (TESTS-DISORIENTED) and the revelation he doesn't know which grade his son is in make it clear he's not been much of a father (INCOMPLETE). His boss (SHADOW) is worried that Ted's work is going to suffer, and says Ted should get Billy to go stay with relatives (AMBIVALENT). However Ted says work is his priority (INCOMPLETE).

4. THIS ISN'T A TEMPORARY THING

Ted isn't engaging with Billy (INAUTHENTIC) and gets upset when his son spills soda all over his concepts so he's not thrilled when a letter from Joanna says she's not coming back. (CROSSING THE THRESHOLD – COMMITTED).

5. TED STRUGGLES WITH WORK/HOME BALANCE

Ted removes every vestige of his wife from the apartment (DISORIENTED) but when he finds Joanna's photo in Billy's drawer he restores it.

Ted and Billy settle into a workable routine but they're not communicating (INAUTHENTIC) and when he arrives late for an important work meeting it shows he's serving two masters and pleasing neither.

6. TED'S STILL THINKING ABOUT JOANNA

Ted has become friends with neighbour (SHAPESHIFTER) Margaret (APPROACH) and they both admit that they still think about their ex's.

7. TED AND BILLY HAVE IT OUT

As Ted is copping it from his boss for missing an important deadline (ORDEAL), Billy rings him at work to dispute his 1-hr TV limit. That night, Billy provocatively pushes over the boundaries (ORDEAL) and they both say they hate one another (CONFRONTED).

8. TED'S BOND WITH BILLY DEEPENS

Later, Ted returns to tuck in a sleeping Billy and they both apologise (REWARD). Ted also allays Billy's fears that his mother left because of him.

At a Halloween pageant, Ted is the only Dad among a sea of Mums (REBORN) and he's relieved when Billy recites the lines they've clearly rehearsed.

As Ted drops Billy at school, it's clear he's now immersed in his son's life (REBORN) but clouds are gathering: watching them is Joanna (ROAD BACK).

9. BILLY FALLS & JOANNA WANTS HIM BACK

When Margaret is distracted, Billy falls and badly injures his eye. A distraught Ted carries him to the hospital and sits with him during the ORDEAL of having the wound stitched (REBORN).

Ted doesn't blame Margaret and she's moved when he asks her if she'd look after Billy if anything happened to him (REWARD).

Joanna calls to arrange a meeting. She says that she's now in a better place and wants Billy back (ROAD BACK). Ted is outraged and says he'll fight her tooth and nail for custody (DESPERATE).

10. TED GETS FIRED

Just when Ted has learned that his legal costs will be considerable, he's fired by his boss (ORDEAL) because he's been too distracted by his parental duties.

On Christmas Eve, with the court case less than 2 weeks away, Ted is relentless in trying to find another job, eventually taking a position with less responsibility and a lower salary because it will help his case (REBORN).

11. BILLY IS REUNITED WITH HIS MOTHER

On the eve of the case, Ted is devastated when he has to give Joanna access to Billy and his son runs to his mother's open arms (DESPERATE).

12. THE CASE GOES WELL

Ted's lawyer, SHAUNESSY makes Joanna look flaky, Margaret testifies that he's a great Dad, and Ted looks like he's got a shot at custody when he turns the feminist argument (DECISIVE) and challenges the assumption that a child will be better off with its mother than its father (RESURRECTION).

14. TED LOSES YET WINS

The judge decides in favour of Joanna and both Ted and Billy are devastated. However, when Joanna was about to take her son home, she realised he already was (COMPLETE) and wants Billy to remain with Ted (ELIXIR).

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