

**RACHEL'S DINNER**

TELEPLAY

BY

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE DAY

An establishing shot of a good-sized house built around 1910, well-maintained but modest. Behind it a one-car garage, built to echo the house, is separated from it by a driveway. A late model Dodge Caravan is parked there.

It is 3:00 on a winter afternoon; the light is starting to fade.

Titles run as we move from the front of the house to the back, tracking through the windows the movements of KRISTINE SCHMIDT, 44, wholesome, quietly attractive. She walks from the living room into the dining room, opening a tablecloth. She spreads it on the table, and then goes into the kitchen.

Behind the house now, we see her open the back door and look impatiently out into the driveway. Then she peers toward the street. Not seeing what she thought she heard, she pops back in again.

KARL SCHMIDT, 47, Kris' husband, past fighting trim but not yet out of control, stands near one of the windows, looking down. Over his dress shirt he wears a deerskin vest that fit him when he was seventeen, the year his father gave it to him, but which now he clearly cannot button.

He is shaking the crumbs from a toaster oven into the sink, SLAPPING its sides to dislodge them all.

INT. KITCHEN DAY

Kris is working on a casserole by this time, pouring canned onion soup over green beans.

KARL

It's a wonder this antique doesn't explode. I can't even see the element. Anybody-

JENNIFER SCHMIDT, 16 and a knock-out, dressed as if Elaine Ford may drop in any minute to interview her for a modeling job, is, at arm's length, grating cheese over a potato dish.

JENNIFER

(finishing for him)  
Anybody here ever heard of an oven tray?

RACHEL SCHMIDT, 70, but energetic and healthy, looking more like 60, appears in the doorway to the dining room. She is dressed inexpensively, but tastefully, and she looks terrific.

KRIS

Well, Rachel Schmidt, you sly dog.  
You never told us to get dressed  
up.

Rachel steps into the kitchen, holds her arms out and models in place, then she walks toward the oven. She elbows Karl playfully as she passes him.

RACHEL

(to Karl)

And I heard your crack about my antique  
exploding. I've only had it nine years.  
Be gentle with it. I expect my  
appliances to outlive me.

Rachel pulls the ham out.

RACHEL (cont.)

Time to gussy this ham up, Kris.

Kris brings some pineapple rings over and starts arranging them on the ham. Karl, who is poking a screwdriver around inside the toaster oven now, walks over behind Kris and Rachel.

RACHEL (cont.)

Where is Michael?

JENNIFER

Mr. Sports Illustrated? Take a wild  
guess.

Karl walks over to the counter where Jennifer is working. Rachel walks toward the dining room, calling loudly.

RACHEL

No TV sports before dinner, you monkey.  
Come here and help set the table, pronto.

As she turns back, the phone rings and Rachel answers it. The activity in the kitchen continues around her.

RACHEL (cont.)

Hello...Yes, she is, Nancy Harmon. When  
are you coming to eat with us? You're  
not wearing underwear on top of your  
clothes again...Well, I'd be afraid

to go out in daylight, too.

As she talks on the phone, Rachel fusses with what Jennifer has been working on, and monitors the other preparations for dinner.

Jennifer hovers near the phone to talk with her friend, and MICHAEL SCHMIDT, 11, dressed in jeans and a sweat shirt, with a sports headband on, flies into the kitchen and slides across the linoleum in his socks toward his dad. Karl is struggling with the toaster oven again. When Michael reaches his dad, he tries a few fake karate moves on him.

MICHAEL

Dad, Lambeer and the Pistons are ten points down against the Bulls. Can't we eat in the living room?

Kris hands Michael a stack of plates, and pulls his headband down into a blindfold.

KRIS

(to Michael)

No lemon meringue pie for deserters.

Karl sees his brother-in-law's (DAN) car pull into the driveway, and clear displeasure registers on his face. Rachel notices Karl's look as a car door SLAMS in the driveway, followed by two more. Rachel looks out the window and hurries off the phone.

RACHEL (cont.)

(handing Jennifer the phone)

I'll take that as a yes. Okay, you're free.

Michael takes the plates into the dining room. Rachel walks toward the back door.

KARL

Hurry now, the king and queen have arrived.

RACHEL

(surprised, turns to Karl)

Who put a burr under your saddle today?

Kris starts to open the door and MELINDA CLOUGH, 19, tall and a little gangly, attractive in a less obvious way than Jennifer, rushes in.

KRIS

What are you doing here?

MELINDA

I got home on Friday. I waited to surprise you. Oh, Grandma, it's so good to see you.

Rachel and Melinda hug. HELEN CLOUGH, 43, thinner and a little shorter than Kris, dressed a bit less casually than the Schmidts, appears in the doorway, carrying a dessert box. Jennifer cuts her conversation short and rushes over to greet Melinda.

HELEN

Hi, Mom. You look terrific. Our world traveller's back. Doesn't she look great?

(taking off her coat)

Love agrees with her.

MELINDA

Don't start, Mom.

DAN CLOUGH, 48, looking substantial, sports coat over a cashmere sweater, comes in behind Helen. The chorus of greetings continues as Michael returns for silverware, but something is wrong. There is some unstated tension between Karl's family and Dan. He notices it but does not acknowledge it.

DAN

Hello, Kris. Karl. Jennifer, you look more beautiful than ever today.

RACHEL

(ushering them)

I want to hear all about Spain, and this love business, but not yet. Everyone grab something. The ham's all set. Let's go sit down.

Karl is leaning against the counter, staring at Dan without greeting him. Karl turns then, picks up the toaster oven and hangs it over the garbage can. He starts to cut the cord with a knife.

KARL

Say good-bye to the past, Mom, and hello to microwaves.

RACHEL

Don't you dare, Karl.

Rachel hurries over just in time to catch the toaster oven as Karl cuts through the cord. He stands there, staring again at

Dan, who is carrying coats toward the living room. He returns Karl's stare.

RACHEL (cont.)

What's got into you? Give me that cord. I'll ask someone else to fix it.

Kris carries the ham into the dining room, and everyone follows, carrying something. They all get arranged, Rachel at the head and Karl at the other end. Dan pulls out Rachel's chair for her. Michael and Jennifer butt heads over who sits where, as usual. The family has done this countless Sundays: for a minute, the tension seems to recede, and they enjoy their routine.

As Karl carves, Kris and Helen hold the plates for him in turn, adding helpings from the side dishes and then passing them along. People wait to eat until everyone is served.

RACHEL

So, I want to know all about this mysterious love.

MELINDA

Oh, it's no big deal. Mom shouldn't-

HELEN

No big deal. What did you tell me yesterday? Read your postcard and let the family decide.

MELINDA

Nobody wants to hear my postcard.

MICHAEL

I do.

He grabs the postcard from Melinda and reads it quickly to himself.

MICHAEL (cont.)

(mispronouncing)

What does con todo mi amor mean?  
And who's Carlos?

MELINDA

It means, with all my love, in Spanish, you little toad.

Michael acts as if he is about to throw up at the mention of love, then he starts to eat. Kris stops him: they're waiting for Karl to finish carving, so they can say grace. Karl finishes the carving and sits down.

RACHEL  
Time to eat. Who has a grace they  
want to offer?

MICHAEL  
Me.

JENNIFER  
(pushing him)  
Rub a dub dub, thanks for the grub,  
yay God, is not a grace, nerd.

Michael pushes her back.

RACHEL  
I think I better pinch-hit for  
you today, Michael.  
(bowing her head)  
Thank You for letting my family be  
here again, and for this food.  
Most of us try to forget the hard  
times, so help us remember and  
learn, and most of us keep getting  
lost, so please leave a light in the  
window for us.

EVERYONE  
Amen.

HELEN  
Mom, that was sweet.

Everyone digs in, flattering Rachel on her cooking, but Rachel isn't quite ready to begin. She notices Melinda putting her postcard away.

RACHEL  
(to Melinda)  
You hold on to all your letters, Melinda.  
(shooting a look at Michael)  
Hold on tight. You know, when your  
grandfather was on strike, the worst  
one, in 1937, when he and the others  
took over the Number 4 Plant in  
Flint, I cooked all his food. I brought  
it down to him, every day for all  
44 days of the strike-

HELEN and KARL  
(along with Rachel)  
...every day for all 44 days of the strike.

RACHEL

Never mind those two.  
Fred wrote me love letters on the  
backs of their purchase orders.  
I was only seventeen, younger than  
you are, but I can still remember  
what it felt like, wanting to see him,  
wanting to just do something ordinary  
like sit and eat a sandwich with him.

(laug

Everyone but Michael pauses from eating to appreciate the emotion  
of the moment.

KRIS

All the Schmidts are romantic. Karl  
wrote poems for me the year we were  
engaged.

Karl looks embarrassed, and Kris leans over to kiss him. Michael  
can't stand to see his parents kissing, and focuses the attention  
on himself.

MICHAEL

Hey, I won our public speaking  
contest, for reciting "The Shooting  
of Dan McGrew," and not just in class,  
in front of the whole school.

RACHEL

(standing, very dramatically)  
A bunch of the boys were whooping it up  
in the Malamute saloon;  
The kid that handles the music box

Suddenly, Helen stands up and joins in...

HELEN and RACHEL

was hitting a jag-time tune;  
Back of the bar, in a solo game,

Michael, amazed that Rachel and Helen know his poem, and not to  
be outdone, jumps in here himself. The three of them finish the  
stanza together, standing.

MICHAEL, HELEN and RACHEL

sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,  
And watching his luck was his  
light-o'-love, the lady that's  
known as Lou.

RACHEL

(laughing)  
Lord, I thought we had suffered the  
last of that awful poem when you  
learned it, Karl.

Without warning, Dan stands up, puts his arm around Rachel's  
shoulders, and delivers the final two lines of the poem.

DAN  
I'm not so wise as the lawyer guys,  
but strictly between us two,  
The woman that kissed him and-  
pinched his poke- was the lady  
that's known as Lou.

Suddenly, Karl leaps to his feet and raises his glass toward Dan.

KARL  
It's true, most of us aren't so wise  
as you lawyer guys. So here's a toast  
to you, Dan Clough, the attorney in our  
family, and to your prestigious firm of  
poke pinchers, Abrams, Clough, and Walsh,  
home-stealers, factory-closers,  
defenders of all corporate commissions,  
blood-suckers extraordinaire.

By the end of Karl's toast, all we can hear is the CLINKING of  
knives and forks against plates. Tension blankets the table.

HELEN  
There's a better time and place than  
this, Karl.

RACHEL  
Do you want to let me in on what you  
two are talking about?

KARL  
I'm talking about Dan, your successful  
son-in-law. About Dan's firm, and  
about my job. Tell Mom, Dan. Go ahead.  
Explain it to Michael and Jennifer.  
Melinda just got home, explain it  
to her.

Dan sits down and resumes eating.

DAN  
We discussed this on Friday. I asked you  
specifically not to raise this matter  
here, today.

KARL

(getting very upset now)

It's not a matter, Dan. It's my life,  
for God's sake.

(to everyone else)

Hey, I'm sorry. Don't let me spoil your  
dinner. This is a Honey-Baked Ham.  
Mom had to drive all the way to Albion,  
to Dembowski's, to find it. None of  
the markets here in Jackson can  
carry it anymore. Damn city's falling  
apart. Dan can explain that too, can't you?  
So, please, enjoy your meal. Don't let  
my problems ruin dinner, whatever you do.

Karl throws his napkin onto his plate and goes into the living  
room. Kris looks at Rachel apologetically, then follows him.  
Helen and Michael sit down, but Rachel remains standing.

BREAK ONE

INT. DINING ROOM DAY

The chairs where Karl and Kris were sitting are still empty.  
Michael is eating with his normal abandon, but he is well aware  
of the tension in the room. The others are picking at their food,  
none of them wanting to speak first.

RACHEL

(to Jennifer)

Bring the potatoes, honey. I'll get  
the ham. I want to keep this food warm.

Rachel and Jennifer get up and start for the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN DAY

Rachel and Jennifer come into the kitchen. They put the food back  
in the oven, and Rachel turns it on low.

RACHEL

Now what's this flap about your  
father's job?

JENNIFER

Dan got him fired, that's what Mom said.

RACHEL

That's impossible. Your father works for Jackson Castings, not for Dan. He can't fire him.

JENNIFER

Well, somebody sure did, because Dad brought all his office stuff home and stuck it in the garage Friday afternoon. I looked through it, and found the pictures of me and Michael, the ones he kept on his desk, shoved inside a box under his old drafting table.

(she falters)

And last night at dinner, Daddy said the plant was being sold, and that all the managers had been fired.

RACHEL

I can't believe that.

JENNIFER

(getting worked up)

It's true, I hid in the hall last night and I heard Mom and Dad arguing. Dad was yelling about Dan being a crook and Mom was crying. I never heard Mom cry like that.

(starting to cry)

Grandma, how can I go to college if Dad doesn't have a job? I don't want to end up at Central State, working as a waitress nights to pay my tuition. All my friends will be going to parties and I'll be-

RACHEL

(taking her by the shoulders, firmly)

Stop it, Jen.

(pause)

Your father is a capable man, and he'll take care of his family.

Rachel takes Jennifer's hands and turns them up so she can look at her palms.

RACHEL (cont.)

(indicating Jennifer's hands)

And what about these, they're too delicate to carry food? Come off it. Maybe you forgot the kind of family we are.

JENNIFER  
(pulling away)  
What does that mean?

RACHEL  
Now just calm down. What I mean is  
you better not pity yourself. How  
do you think your father feels?  
(pause)

When your grandfather had his foot  
shot off in his gun turret over  
Germany, he used his radio cord  
for a tourniquet, because that was  
all he had. He would have bled  
to death halfway back to England  
if he hadn't. He used what he had.

They hear RAISED VOICES from the living room, and stop to listen.

RACHEL (cont.)  
After the hospitals, when Fred came  
home, he couldn't stand up for nine  
hours on an assembly line, so he  
started to learn patternmaking.  
I was working in the old Fisher  
Plant then, putting jeeps together,  
until they fired me and gave my job  
to some soldier who'd come home.

JENNIFER  
That isn't fair.

RACHEL  
No, it wasn't, but it happened, and  
we needed money, so I went to work  
as a waitress-- it was all I could get.  
Your dad was a baby then, and I had to  
lug him to the restaurant with me.  
Between him screaming and the customers  
grousing and the mean cooks, oh God.  
(pause)  
I used to have dreams about running  
away, alone, I really did.

JENNIFER  
You would never do that, Grandma.

RACHEL  
Well, I didn't, and I was grateful  
I didn't, but odd things can happen  
in bad times.

Rachel gets up and opens a drawer, rummages around in back and brings out an envelope. As she stares at it, we hear Karl SHOUT in the dining room, and then a door SLAMS.

Rachel folds the envelope and puts it in her sweater pocket. Kris comes into the kitchen, and walks toward the window.

KRIS

I'm sorry, Mom. You know Karl when he gets hurt.

RACHEL

Quick to fight and just as quick to feel bad over it. He was always that way.

KRIS

It's different this time. He's really scared. I've never seen him like this. He broke down last night, and started sobbing.

(pause)

I realized, I've never seen him cry before, not even when Fred died.

Outside, Karl climbs into his Caravan and starts the engine. Rachel and Jennifer join Kris now at the window.

RACHEL

This won't help anything.

EXT. DRIVEWAY DAY

We look through a filmy windshield at Karl, who is debating with himself as he looks in the rearview mirror.

Suddenly he throws the van into reverse and backs into Dan's car, smashing one of the headlights. Then he pulls ahead and turns the engine off. More frustrated than satisfied, Karl jumps out to survey the damage. He stands looking at the busted headlight for a few seconds, and then he begins to kick the unbroken one.

From the women's point of view, we see Dan running around the side of the house. Rachel hurries out the back door, and she intercepts him.

RACHEL

Dan Clough, go right back in the house.

Taken aback by Rachel's tone, Dan stops. He looks at Karl, decides nothing good can come from confronting him at this moment, then he turns around and goes back to the house.

Karl is still kicking the headlight with his heel, but he can't break it, and he's almost hysterical with frustration.

RACHEL

Karl. Karl.

KARL

I can't even break the damn headlight.

RACHEL

You already broke one.

Karl stops kicking and looks at her, as if he is five years old again and doesn't know what he should do. Rachel hugs herself in the cold.

RACHEL (cont.)

Come back inside. Come on.

BREAK TWO

INT. DINING ROOM DAY

Michael is still trying to eat, but all the commotion is making it difficult. Everyone is seated again. Rachel takes the envelope out of her sweater, unfolds it, and places it by her plate, smoothing it flat.

RACHEL

I have something important to say. When you live alone, even a short time like six years, you learn to appreciate your family more than anything else. This is our family meal, and we come here to enjoy each other. That doesn't mean there won't be problems-- there will. But let's get to the bottom of this one and have done with it. Whatever has happened, it isn't so terrible that we can't solve it.

Michael makes a move to leave.

MICHAEL

I'm out of here.

RACHEL  
(motioning him back)  
You're old enough to hear this,  
young man.

KARL  
Mom, Jackson Castings is in trouble.  
I got laid off.

RACHEL  
Jennifer told me. Why?

KARL  
We've been struggling for over a year,  
and the bank finally threw in the  
towel on us.

DAN  
Threw in the towel? Your accounts  
receivable are off 40 percent, and  
First Detroit's been loaning you  
payroll for six months.

KARL  
(ignoring him)  
Dan's firm has been appointed trustees of  
Jackson by the bank, and their first  
act was to unload all the dead wood,  
including me.

DAN  
I removed myself from any part of this  
trusteeship, I told you that.

KARL  
How about the profit sharing part?

DAN  
I won't glorify that with an answer.  
What good would a month's notice  
have done you?

KARL  
What am I, a cow in the chute at the  
slaughterhouse? I don't get told  
until the last second? Forget business.  
I'm your brother-in-law, for God's  
sake. Where's your loyalty? Did it  
ever occur to you that Jennifer...

Karl can't finish the question. He walks over to the sideboard, behind his mother, and turns his back to the table. He looks at the row of family pictures there.

MELINDA

Dad, why didn't you warn Uncle Karl?

HELEN

Don't get involved in this, honey.

KRIS

Why not, Helen? She's part of the family. That's actually the question most of us have. Why couldn't Dan care more for his family than for some account?

DAN

Hey, look, you're beating a dead horse. Grey iron castings are 19th century technology. Who are you kidding? The Defense Department...

RACHEL

Be careful, Dan. My husband put in thirty-five years at Jackson Castings. It isn't just some old plow-horse you can shoot in the head and sell for glue.

DAN

I don't mean anything personal, Rachel. You know how I felt about Fred. But times have changed. The Japanese have thermoplastic injection plants in Indiana that run in the dark with robots, 24 hours a day, and they still can't meet demand.

KARL

(turning, a couple of pictures  
in his hands)  
Leave it to you to want robots, Dan.

DAN

Hey, what am I supposed to do, put my job on the line for a company that's going under anyway? They said they'd force me out if I let you know early. Somebody has to handle the sale of Jackson-

KARL

Yeah, like somebody has to perform autopsies.

Karl holds out one of the pictures for Dan to see.

KARL (cont.)

Remember this? 1965, U. of M. Intramural Baseball Champs, Karl Schmidt and Dan Clough, co-captains. That was the weekend Helen came to visit, the weekend I introduced you two.

JENNIFER

That was a mistake.

RACHEL

(sharply)

Jennifer.

HELEN

This is getting out of hand. Karl, we're sorry, okay. You're a great engineer. You'll find another job. You got severance pay, and you've got sixteen years in. Use some pension money, go up to Grayling and hang out in the cabin, go hunting, relax.

KRIS

(to Helen)

I guess Dan forgot to mention that pensions are frozen. Karl will be eligible for his in the year 2003, when it will be worth maybe a third of what it is now, if we're lucky.

(pause)

Maybe you've lived in Farmington Hills too long, Helen. Maybe you don't have to think about mortgages and car payments and-

HELEN

Oh, spare me, Kris.

KRIS

(angry)  
I make 21,000 a year before taxes,  
and right now Karl has three months  
severance pay, also taxable, so  
don't get high and mighty with me.  
I'm your family, remember? I know you.

MICHAEL  
I could sell Amway after school, Mom.

At this remark, everyone at the table realizes what they've been  
doing, and they all grow quiet. Kris puts her arm around Michael.

RACHEL  
(to Michael)  
You won't have to do that, honey.  
(to the adults)  
Can you hear yourselves? Thank God Fred  
isn't alive to see this.

KARL  
Why? It's what he figured would happen  
to me, isn't it?

RACHEL  
That's not true, and you know it.  
How can you say that about your father?

KARL  
Oh, come off it, Mom. He was no  
saint. He did his share of-

RACHEL  
He worked every day of his life that  
I knew him, almost fifty years. Every  
day he wasn't in a hospital bed he  
worked for this family, except when  
he was in the war.

KARL  
Yes, he did, and he never let us  
forget about it, did he? Mr. Perfectionist,  
Mr. Salt of the Earth, down in the trenches,  
fighting the ruthless bosses. The day  
I made Engineering Manager he wouldn't  
even talk to me in front of his  
lunchpail buddies.

RACHEL  
That's ridiculous..

KARL

You weren't there. I went to tell him at lunch, and he made some lame joke about working for his own kid, what's the world coming to, or some crap remark like that. Then he clammed up. He wouldn't even look at me.

RACHEL

He came up in a different time, Karl. He saw Walter Reuther kicked down a flight of steps and beaten unconscious. He saw friends shot during strikes. Things like that leave scars on a man.

KARL

And he passed the scars on.

(pause).

Are you telling me you forget what happened when I was Michael's age? That psycho kid, Arlen what's-his-name who worked at the Esso station. He thought I had stolen some gas cans, so he came out, pulled me off my bike and beat me up. He was sixteen, Mom. He knocked one of my teeth out, and then Dad got him his job back.

RACHEL

He didn't get him his job back.

Karl is beginning to get very upset here.

KARL

Don't give me that blinders routine. I saw Dad the next day, sitting with that kid and the station owner, laughing, saying I probably deserved it if I wasn't going to fight back, even if it wasn't me that stole the cans. What kind of a father says that about his son?

RACHEL

Maybe he wanted to teach you-

KARL

That's not the way, Mom. Except when we were hunting, Dad wouldn't give me the time of day.

HELEN

For God's sake, Karl, you're 47 and

Dad's dead. When do you give up on this war with him?

KARL

You don't know how I feel. You and Dad. You were always so perfect for him. Perfect piano playing, perfect little dresses, perfect rich husband.

RACHEL

Karl, that's enough.

KARL

What was so wrong with me?  
(starting to lose control)  
I played hockey; I was never mean enough for him. I went to Vietnam. Was it my fault they stuck me in supply at Long Binh?  
(tears start in his eyes)  
Go to college, but don't forget I damn near died working to get you there. Be an engineer, but stay at Jackson Castings so I can send your damn blueprints back for re-measuring all the time. Work your way up to manager, but don't notice it when I won't talk to you. What was so wrong with me?  
(sobbing now as he talks)  
What was it? What did he want, Mom?

Michael goes over to his dad and puts his arms around him. There is a stunned silence at the table, and Rachel picks up the envelope by her plate. She opens it. Inside, there is a letter, and inside the letter, a photograph.

RACHEL

I don't think he knew what he wanted. Your father was tough. He knew how to work, and he knew how to fight. And I saw too much of both.

(pause, to Karl)

RACHEL (cont.)

Can you remember when I took you and ran away?

Karl, along with everyone else at the table, looks shocked.

RACHEL (cont.)

You were only three. We had just moved to Jackson; my whole life was piled up here in boxes.

(indicates rooms in the house)  
Your father was drinking a lot then.  
I know his foot hurt him something  
awful, but that didn't forgive everything.

(pause)

One day I really couldn't take anymore.  
I took you, and I took the car, and I  
drove. It didn't matter where.

(laughs)

It was a couple of days...I got as far  
as Denver before I realized what was  
wrong. I missed him, and I became so  
angry with myself for missing him that  
I started to pound the steering wheel  
and cry. Then you began to scream, and  
I turned around.

Rachel reaches behind her and picks up a picture of Fred from the  
sideboard. She puts it on the table in front of her.

RACHEL (cont.)

You don't always have to throw something  
away when it breaks. You can try to  
fix it. I loved your father, and he was  
not an easy man to love. When he had a  
feeling, it scared him, and then he  
wrote a letter. 45 years of marriage,  
I've got a trunkful of those letters.

(pause)

But Karl, he loved you as much as Helen.  
Don't be mistaken about that. He just  
couldn't show you. The last week he was  
alive, he wrote you a letter. He told me  
to save it until you needed it.

Michael sits down again. Rachel opens the letter and reads.

RACHEL (cont.)

Dear Karl,

When you read this, I will be gone.  
Good riddance is maybe what you feel.  
I would not blame you, but pray to God  
you do not get what I have. It is a  
fish-hook caught in the guts that someone  
is pulling. I have been thinking all week of  
my father. I never told you about him.

As Rachel reads, we see the pictures of Fred and Rachel, and Fred  
and Karl, on the sideboard behind her.

RACHEL (cont.)

He was cruel to my mother after I was born, and later to me. We had two pigs it was my job to feed, but I was afraid of them. Don't laugh, I was. I said I fed them when I did not, and one of them died. I moved that stiff pig for three days. If he looked out the window, he saw it moved. Then I got sick, and he had to feed them. He made me pay for that, and I never forgot. When I yelled-

Rachel stops here, and looks at Karl. She gets up and brings the letter over to him. She stands behind his chair, and puts her hands on his shoulders.

RACHEL (cont.)

(to Karl)

I think you should finish it.

She shows Karl where she stopped, and he picks it up.

KARL

When I yelled at you, I saw my father's face, yelling at me. Forgive me. The day you became Head Engineer, the others came up to tell me, "Now you work for your kid, Fred. Keep the union secrets." And I told them, he deserves it, he got A's, he graduated from the University of Michigan, I was shouting, I was so proud of you. I tried to tell you, but I could only tell your mother.

(pause, Karl is sobbing)

KARL (cont.)

You are the best engineer I ever knew. When I made the patterns from your drawings, I felt like they were alive. I was proud to work in the same company with you. I wish I told you. I wish I could kiss you, for no reason on earth, once before I die. I love you. You are my son. Please remember me. Your father.

Karl can barely finish the letter, but his tears now are tears of resolution. Helen puts her hand on Karl's, and Rachel kisses his head.

RACHEL

(pointing)

You forgot the P.S..

KARL

P.S. Ask your mother about the photograph.  
(laughing through his tears)  
Oh, God, leave it to him to put a P.S.  
on his last letter.

Michael picks up the photograph sitting on the envelope.

MICHAEL

What is it, Grandma?

RACHEL

(laughing)  
It's your grandfather's foot, 100  
feet in the air.

Jennifer and Kris lean over to inspect the picture in Michael's hands. Rachel walks around the table as she talks.

RACHEL

I had forgotten all about that.  
Karl must have been away then.  
When Jackson Castings turned 50,  
GM gave them a truck for the top  
of their building. The paper  
wanted a picture, but the  
photographer they sent over was  
afraid of heights. So your grandfather  
volunteered to climb up the crane  
and take the picture for him.

RACHEL (cont.)

But when he got up there, he messed up  
and photographed his own foot.  
(to Karl)  
He must have wanted you to see that.

MICHAEL

(still looking at the picture)  
It looks like a football.

RACHEL

I want to say one more thing.  
My father helped me and Fred out  
once, when we needed it, and he  
said something I'll never forget.  
He said, "There are no loans in  
good families, only help."

Rachel takes the photograph from Michael and hands it to Karl.

RACHEL (cont.)

Your father and I bought some bluechip stocks when you and Helen were young, and when they were affordable. With reinvestment, they're worth about 60,000 now.

Karl begins to object, but she shushes him.

RACHEL (cont,)

We helped Helen and Dan once, when Dan was just starting out. Needing help is nothing to be ashamed of. It's only if you need it, Karl, and it's not a loan. You'll do the same for your kids someday. You're that kind of man.

(pause)

Maybe it's time you and Kris got your own business going, and saved her from that bookkeeping job she keeps complaining about.

MICHAEL

Hey, I've got a complaint. I'm starved, and I don't want to end up being moved around the lawn like that pig.

Relieved laughter, TABLE BABBLE up as people begin eating again.

The camera moves out the dining room window and dissolves to an

EXT. HOUSE DAY

FADE OUT