

EDWARD FORD

by

LEM DOBBS

DO NOT COPY

A CAR

DAY

The driver's name is EDWARD FORD, a man in his late forties. In the passenger seat is LUKE, early twenties.

EDWARD FORD

... Jerry Tucker ... Shirley Coates
... Paul Newlan ... Mary Nash ...

LUKE

Come on - get to people I've heard of.

EDWARD FORD

Erville Alderson ... Louis Natheaux ...

Luke keeps shaking his head as Edward Ford pauses between each name. Edward Ford talks like a minor character in a Republic Studios oater. His complexion is like Lon Chaney, Jr. in preliminary make-up. His expression is one of extreme simplicity, hardly changing as emotion might dictate, a look of almost benign vacancy. This appearance is tempered by his manner, one that seems to speak of a certain basic American decency and honesty of character. On the whole he is not bright.

EDWARD FORD

... I. Stanford Jolley ...

LUKE

Oh, God.

EDWARD FORD

Clarence Kolb ... Peggy Stewart -
now, I coulda done things with her
- in fact, I saw her a couple years
ago out in Glendale and she still
didn't look half bad.

LUKE

You'd like to crawl in her cave, huh.

EDWARD FORD

Boy, you're disgusting.

LUKE

When I worked in the Cinema Bookshop
in London a guy came in who collected
anything on caves in the movies, can
you believe it? I was draggin' out
stills all day - TOM SAWYER, CAVE OF
OUTLAWS, JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE
EARTH -

EDWARD FORD

Henry Brandon.

LUKE
Henry Brandon, now we're cockin'.

EDWARD FORD
... Harry Davenport ...
(Luke still shakes his head)
Porter Hall ...

LUKE
(thinking)
- Porter Hall -

EDWARD FORD
... Ralph Morgan ... Henry O'Neil
... Bob Burns ...

LUKE
(sarcastic, never heard of him)
Bob Burns.

EDWARD FORD
Robert Cummings.

LUKE
The Robert Cummings?

EDWARD FORD
Uh-huh.

LUKE
You're sure I know what you're doing.

EDWARD FORD
Oh, yeah.

LUKE
OK.

EDWARD FORD
John Mack Brown.

LUKE
John MacBrown?

EDWARD FORD
You know him, don'tcha?

LUKE
John Mac - you mean Johnny Mack
Brown?

EDWARD FORD
Yeah.

LUKE
Oh, OK. Big help.

EDWARD FORD
Lloyd Nolan.

LUKE
Lloyd Nolan. Shit.

Pause.

EDWARD FORD
Frances Dee.

LUKE
Ooh! Uh - uh -
(snapping fingers)
WESTERN UNIO - uh - UNION PACIFIC!

EDWARD FORD
Nope.

LUKE
No?

EDWARD FORD
(really rubbing it in)
Joel McCrea.

LUKE
Joel McCrea?

EDWARD FORD
Uh-huh.

LUKE
It's not UNION PACIFIC?

EDWARD FORD
(shakes his head)
Give up?

LUKE
Oh! Fuck! Uh ... WELLS FARGO!

EDWARD FORD
You got it.

LUKE
I never saw that.

He looks out the window. Edward Ford drives. Waits.

EDWARD FORD
Your turn.

LUKE
(tries to think of a movie)
Uh ...

EDWARD FORD
Want me to go again?

LUKE
Marcel Dalio.

EDWARD FORD
Hey, c'mon, now, you can't do no
foreign films.

LUKE
(seriously this time)
Uh ... Mike Kellin.

EDWARD FORD
HELL IS FOR HEROES.
(Luke just looks at him)
Did I get it!
(laughs)
Did I get it?

He really cackles. Luke looks out the window again in disgust.

LUKE
(turns to him)
You know what I'm gonna do - this
is going to be the first scene of
the movie. Just this, right here.
Driving along.

EDWARD FORD
(puts on an anguished face and voice)
You're not really gonna write that,
are ya.

LUKE
It's going to be my next opus.

EDWARD FORD
Huh?

LUKE
My next biggie.

EDWARD FORD
Well, if you write a movie about me,
I want a part in it.

LUKE
Of course. I won't sell it unless you
get a part in it. Not that anyone will
want to buy it.

EDWARD FORD
And you gotta change my name.

LUKE

Maybe.

EDWARD FORD

Uh-uh - you gotta change my name.
I'm gettin' real nervous about this,
Luke. I'm gettin' awful nervous.

LUKE

What do you care - you'll get into
the Screen Actor's Guild - that's
a good enough swap, isn't it.

EDWARD FORD

You just change the name.

LUKE

I'll give it careful consideration.

EDWARD FORD

(puts on his tough guy voice)
'Cause if you don't change your friend's
name, your friend will be very uneasy.

LUKE

(laughs)
All this is going in! Everything you
say from now on. In fact, I'm going to
start taping you.

EDWARD FORD

That'll be the day.

LUKE

You can just repeat all the highlights
of your life like you like to do.

EDWARD FORD

I think you should open it on a shot
of LA, y'know - and then you hear a
phone ringing, and you see a completely
dark room - completely dark - and then
you hear a hand fumbling for the telephone -

LUKE

Do you know how many times that's been
done - do you have any idea -

EDWARD FORD

It's better than your opening. If you
have this as the beginning of the movie
then everyone will know it's about me!
They'll see my name in the cast!

LUKE

No, but they won't know who you are, don't you see? - if you're using your real name and they don't know what part you're playing. That's the beauty of it - because it sets up a suspense element right away. All through the movie people are gonna be wondering who the real guy is. Who could be this person?

EDWARD FORD

(mumbles)

I think you'd better write something else.

LUKE

Your time has come, Ford.

EDWARD FORD

You're just gonna put in all the filthy stuff.

Luke laughs uproariously.

EDWARD FORD

Well, you'd just better change the name, that's all - or I'll sue ya. I'll sue ya.

CUT.

"EDWARD FORD"

(THE EARLY SIXTIES ...)

THE COSY THEATRE, LOS ANGELES

EVENING

The marquee says in flaked black letters, BIG TRIPLE F TURE. The sky is still light. Edward Ford waits for the man in front of him to purchase his ticket, then steps forward to put down his own coin.

CUT.

AUDITORIUM

What used to be a grand old theatre is now a shitpile. The audience is comprised mostly of sleeping bums, though a few are awake. Smoke drifts up into the foul air from a number of cigarettes, their lit tips glowing here and there like stars in the dark. On the screen a bad print of a Wild Bill Elliott western is being shown. Edward Ford is sitting in a seat, mouth open. He looks just about the same, his hair simply a little darker and slightly more plentiful. On the screen an actor makes his entrance. Edward Ford takes a small notebook and ball point pen from his shirt pocket and writes the actor's name down. An altercation begins between two bums somewhere at the back. Edward Ford keeps watching the movie. A bottle rolls past him down the aisle.

CUT.

THEATRE LOBBY

A bedraggled old man lurches forward on his way in, but trips and lies where he falls against a wall. In the box office the old woman cashier tries to see around the corner of her booth, making an exasperated noise at the kind of clientele she's forced to put up with here.

AUDITORIUM

The western is over, the Republic eagle appears on the screen. Edward Ford is watching with interest, nodding to himself unconsciously and almost imperceptibly. A curtain closes over the screen squeakily and jerkily. The dimness of the theatre becomes a little less so. Edward Ford leaves his seat to go to the Men's room. The Men's room is located down at the front, so he has to walk all the way down the aisle and across the theatre under the screen to get to it. The other members of the audience make catcalls at him, and one or two cigarette butts bomb over his way. Edward Ford pushes open the door he needs to go through.

CORRIDOR

A man able to command more expression in his face than Edward Ford would probably be demonstrating some form of distaste at this point, but the fact that this corridor has undoubtedly been taken for the Men's room by patrons unwilling or unable to walk its length is a fact Edward Ford is apparently by now hardened against. He goes through another door, this one indeed bearing the legend, MEN'S ROOM.

MEN'S ROOM

Utterly black. The figure of Edward Ford can just barely be made out. His hand gropes for a light switch, but can't find one. He mumbles a little to himself. He starts to shuffle his way over to where he figures the urinals would be. The SOUND of a zip is heard, followed by the SOUND of what would logically follow - for a considerable time - finally dwindling. Then the zip again. Edward Ford starts to go. But now a low drunken grumbling comes forth.

GRUMBLE

... goddamn ... sonuvabitch ... took
a piss on me.

And a shadowy figure looms up and shoves past a startled Edward Ford.

CUT.

BACK IN HIS SEAT

Edward Ford looks around nervously before the next picture commences.

CUT.

A CONVEYOR BELT

DAY

Toaster components moving along it, various hands engaged in the kind of utterly mindless menial work that will culminate in the construction of the final product. Somewhere along the line sits Edward Ford. He has the same simple expression on his face that he wears at all times. He looks across the conveyor belt. A woman is working opposite him. If she can truthfully be called woman. She is a cross between a badly preserved child performer of a long time ago and something you might find in a primeval swamp. Edward Ford smiles at her.

CUT.

MOVIE THEATRE

NIGHT

A more respectable one this time. Edward Ford and the woman who works opposite him appear. Edward Ford starts walking down the aisle as usual, but the woman - her name is MITZI - stays where she is. Edward Ford backtracks a couple of steps.

MITZI
I like to sit in the back row.

EDWARD FORD
Oh. Well. OK.

He follows her as she leads the way to two seats. He's obviously displeased at having to sit this far from the screen.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

Marks down a name in his notebook as the projector beam streaks above him.

MITZI
(turns to see what he's doing)
Whadaya doin'?

CUT.

HOLLYWOOD

NIGHT

The two of them walk. Edward Ford is a good deal taller than Mitzi.

EDWARD FORD
See, I write down the actors' names in my little book there 'cause sometimes they ain't always credited.

MITZI
You wrote down when Richard Egan came on - he was the star of the movie.

EDWARD FORD
Well, I wanna get 'em in order of appearance too.

MITZI
What for? I mean, who cares?

EDWARD FORD
Well, y'know, I keep file cards at home, and I type out cards on all the players, y'know - how many pictures I seen 'em in, and what theatres I saw 'em at.

MITZI
That's a weird hobby.

EDWARD FORD
It keeps me busy.

MITZI

How many movies have you seen?

EDWARD FORD

Oh, gee - I wouldn't wanna guess.
I started my file cards in 1948.
If you figure I been goin' every
Saturday night ...

MITZI

You only go on Saturday night?

EDWARD FORD

That's right.

MITZI

You wanna be an actor too, huh.

EDWARD FORD

That's right.

MITZI

Have you been in anything yet?

EDWARD FORD

Oh, I only been in Hollywood now for
two months - I'm waitin' to hear from
agents I sent my picture to.

EDWARD FORD'S FACE

As they walk the next half block without anything more to say
to each other.

THE PAIR OF THEM *

Arrive at the stoop of her crappy apartment building.

MITZI

Well.

EDWARD FORD

Maybe you'd like to go to the show
with me again.

MITZI

(noncommittal shrug)
I'll see you at work anyhow.

EDWARD FORD

Oh yeah.

MITZI

Where you goin' now?

EDWARD FORD

I'm livin' at the Y. right now -
but next week I'll have my own place.

CUT.

EAST HOLLYWOOD

DAY

Another awful building.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

An extremely cheap affair. A basic old couch, table and chair. Edward Ford appears, carrying a few small filing cabinets over to a corner where he stacks them on some already there. Then he stands back to look at them.

CUT.

A SMALL CHURCH

DAY

Typical Spanish mission style in the heart of Hollywood. Singing heard from within.

INSIDE

The congregation sits down, hymn finished. At the front the Minister gestures to Edward Ford, sitting in the first row, to join him. Edward Ford stands, somewhat sheepishly.

MINISTER

I want you all to meet Edward Ford.
Edward is joining our church today.
He's come to us from a town called
Coventry in the state of Delaware.

The congregation claps. Edward Ford nods hello at them.

MINISTER

Edward has come here to be an actor
in the movies. I'm sure we wish him
all the best.

(hands him a document)

Here's your certificate, Edward.
Welcome to our church.

EDWARD FORD

(shakes hands)

Thank you.

MINISTER

Go in peace.

CUT.

SUPERMARKET

DAY

Edward Ford methodically pushes his cart down one aisle at a time, consulting a small shopping list, stopping from time to time for various items, sometimes checking them against coupons he has in his hand, rifling through them. 1¢ off, 2¢ off, etc. At the refrigerated meats section he selects a packet of cheap hamburger. At the frozen section he stacks up a pile of exactly six tv dinners. He goes right past the fresh fruit and vegetable section without stopping once, disappearing round the corner of the aisle.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S STREET

As he walks back carrying his big bag of groceries, nearing his house, he glances casually at a man walking on the other side of the street. Then he stops in his tracks, staring after the man. There is the nearest thing to a look of awe on his face.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

NIGHT

In a corner, Edward Ford sits at a small roll-top desk, hunched over an ancient typewriter. He taps out letters with one finger as he works on a card. The card is Richard Egan's. The title ESTHER AND THE KING has just been added to his list. Edward Ford removes that card, inserts a new one of a different color, and begins typing the full cast. His small work lamp the only light in the otherwise dark apartment, the figure in the corner continues to peck slowly at the keys.

CUT.

SMALL THEATRE

DAY

At the stage door a paper is posted that says AUDITIONS. Next to it stands a young actor. Next to him stands another. And another. And another ...

The line goes halfway around the block. Some of the expectant faces are silently mouthing the monologues they've prepared. All the faces seem quite typical of the trade. Until Edward Ford's is reached. He waits patiently.

AUDITORIUM

The next up speaks from the stage.

ACTOR

Yes, I'm going to do a reading
from Gorky's THE LOWER DEPTHS.

OUTSIDE

The line moves slowly as only a few at a time are ushered in. Edward Ford waits patiently and not nervously. Another in line mumbles her lines to the sky, then stops stymied, has to look down at her paperback Strindberg. The little sidewalk bakes as the day grows hotter.

EDWARD FORD

Stopped at the door now as the few ahead of him are allowed in. The bearded actor next in line behind Edward Ford gives him a cursory look. They exist in different universes.

CUT.

STAGE

Edward Ford is here.

EDWARD FORD
My name is Edward Ford.

TWO MEN IN THE STALLS

The senior of the two, the DIRECTOR, watches Edward Ford wearily.

DIRECTOR
What are you going to do for us?

EDWARD FORD

When confronted by strange authority speaks in a rather obsequious way.

EDWARD FORD
I'm gonna do a scene from SON OF
FRANKENSTEIN.

Silence.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE
I'm sorry, from what?

EDWARD FORD
From SON OF FRANKENSTEIN, the 1939
motion picture starring Basil Rathbone,
Boris Karloff -

DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Uh - OK - let's see it then.

STAGE

Edward Ford gets himself in character. Which doesn't get him very far.

EDWARD FORD

This is the classic speech by Lionel Atwill.

(begins)

"It is the most vivid recollection of my life. I was but a child at the time. About the age of your own son, Her (sic) Baron. The monster had escaped and was ravaging the countryside: Maiming. Terrorizing. One night he ..."

AUDITORIUM

As he continues, milking it for all it is worth. A man alone in the limelight. The voice he puts on - not a Lionel Atwill imitation - is his "acting" voice - always the same. The expression he puts on is his "acting" expression - always the same. Both are considerably exaggerated, almost a parody of B-movie bad-guy conventions circa 1948, if not for the fact that, like the style of that period, the performance is given with the utmost seriousness. Edward Ford also has a particular stock-in-trade (as if his entire method isn't eccentric enough as is); he is fond of twitching "psychotically," a device of characterization he uses not exactly sparingly, but somehow selectively, his own way perhaps of filling in the pauses while he catches his breath.

EDWARD FORD

"... burst into our house. My father took a gun and fired at him. But the savage brute sent him crashing to a corner. Then - he grabbed me by the arm. ... One doesn't easily forget, Her Baron. An arm torn out by the roots."

At least it's hard to take one's eyes off him.

THE DIRECTOR AND COLLEAGUE

They can't.

EDWARD FORD

His own eyes malevolently wide, teeth gritted, spitting the final words out.

EDWARD FORD

(shakes his head)

"No, I ... my lifelong ambition was to ... have been a soldier. But for this, I, who command seven gendarmes in a little mountain village ... might have been a General."

Pause. And then he is himself again. He waits.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE
We have your number, do we?

EDWARD FORD
Oh, yeah. Yes, you do.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Thank you very much.

Edward Ford peers into the gloom with a nod, and goes, starting to walk the wrong way before turning to walk the other.

THE DIRECTOR AND COLLEAGUE

Still staring at the stage after he's gone, same way they were before, as if in a trance. Finally the director turns to the other man.

DIRECTOR
Where do they get their ideas?

The other man shrugs, shaking his head.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

DAY

Sitting quietly on a bench. PULLING BACK, the bench is revealed to be in a long laundromat. Edward Ford sits and watches his underwear spinning in the dryer.

STREET OUTSIDE

LA traffic floats by.

CUT.

A FILE CABINET

EVENING

The drawer is pulled open. Edward Ford's fingers run through the cards.

EDWARD FORD
OK, now, these are the cards on players.

He takes one out, points to it, for Mitzi's benefit.

EDWARD FORD
See, now, for instance, here's Walter Slezak's card - there's Walter.

Points to a small photo of Walter Slezak cut out from somewhere, not exactly neatly, and cello-taped onto the card in the top right hand corner.

EDWARD FORD

And these are the pictures I seen him in, listed by theatre.

Mitzi looks around the apartment in a bored way as Edward Ford concentrates on the card.

EDWARD FORD

And they're typed in red if he played a bad guy and they got a little star by them if he got killed in it.

MITZI

(looks back at him again)
How d'ya know what the movies are?

EDWARD FORD

Well, I do. But if you want a list of the movies I seen him in you go to the corresponding card in here -

MITZI

This is a really weird hobby.

EDWARD FORD

- and that'll give ya the individual titles.

He opens another drawer, starts going through cards. The cards in each different section are of different colors.

EDWARD FORD

And these here are the theatre cards.
* (takes a clump out)
These are all the movies I seen at the Miracle Theatre in South Carolina when I was in the Army.

Mitzi isn't even listening. She's fingering the cards in the previously-opened drawer.

MITZI

They aren't even in alphabetical order.

Edward Ford turns to see her fiddling - becomes nervous, moves back there himself, finds a card to take out.

EDWARD FORD

No - they're in the order I last used 'em. Like, I ain't seen Minna Gombell in a picture since July 15th, 1950, so her card is near the back. But I know where they all are.

MITZI

Do you have a card on yourself?

EDWARD FORD

Not yet. But that's my dream, y'know
- to play a bad guy that gets killed
in a motion picture - so's I can type
it in red with a little star by it.

CUT.

LIVING ROOM

Edward Ford and Mitzi sit at the table and each peels off
the tin foil of a tv dinner.

CUT.

TV DINNER TRAY

The last bit of mashed potato is scraped from around the edge
of its compartment with a fork.

EDWARD FORD

Lips the fork clean. Takes a sip from his glass of milk.
Looks at Mitzi who's also finished.

EDWARD FORD

Did you like that?

MITZI

Yeah. It was good.

CUT.

BEDROOM

Smaller than the living room which was very small. Edward
Ford and Mitzi get undressed. This is not pleasant to watch.

CUT.

BED

As Edward Ford screws Mitzi she yelps in a most amazing and
loud and quite horrendous way.

THE HOUSE

The sounds of her mating calls can be heard from the street
outside.

BED

Edward Ford clamps a hand over Mitzi's mouth to shut her up,
not otherwise pausing in his exertions.

CUT.

CHURCH

DAY

As Edward Ford, wearing a plain, ill-fitting suit, and Mitzi, wearing a dress as much of an eyesore as she is, come out of the doorway into the light of day, someone unseen in the dark on the other side of the threshold flings a handful of confetti at them.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

EVENING

The couple sit at the table and eat tv dinners for dinner.

CUT.

THEIR STREET

DAY

They walk back toward the apartment house, Edward Ford pushing a supermarket cart. As they reach their house he stops. He's again spotted the man walking on the other side of the street.

EDWARD FORD

That is Lester Adams.

MITZI

Who's Lester Adams?

EDWARD FORD

That's really Lester Adams.

MITZI

Who's Lester Adams?

EDWARD FORD

He's practically my favorite actor, for cryin' out loud! He's on my Big Six!

CUT.

THEIR APARTMENT

Edward Ford paces about, quite excited.

EDWARD FORD

The actors I seen in the most motion pictures are the Big Six - I seen Lester Adams in a hundred and three movies - he's the heavy in practically all the great Republic westerns! He must live around here!

MITZI

Why don't you talk to him?

EDWARD FORD

Oh, I don't know, y'know.

MITZI

He could give you some acting tips.

EDWARD FORD

When I was a kid I wrote him a fan letter and he sent me an autographed picture.

MITZI

Or are you just gonna be a cabdriver the rest of your fuckin' life.

EDWARD FORD

I can't just go -

MITZI

You wouldn't even be that if I hadn't made you quit that stupid factory.

EDWARD FORD

Yeah, but -

MITZI

It's who you know, you maron, don't you know that.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I'd love to meet the gentleman, y'know -

MITZI

Didn't you say you had to get into the Actor's Union?

EDWARD FORD

The Screen Actor's Guild.

MITZI

That's the first thing you gotta do you said - well this jackass can put you up for membership.

EDWARD FORD

You have to get a part to get your SAG card. Besides, he might not be in the mood-of-frame to -

Mitzi gets up and goes to the phone book, starts flipping through pages.

MITZI

What's this asshole's name?

EDWARD FORD

Hey, now, he wouldn't be in no phone book - he's a well-known actor - he's a big star in Japan and Mexico.

MITZI

What's his name?

CUT.

SLEAZY APARTMENT

DAY

LESTER ADAMS, a man not far from the old actor's alcoholic death home, reclines on his broken-down sofa watching tv. A rotten T-shirt delineates his pot belly. Sitting next to him is JED DOBIE, another veteran of the time when men were men and women were Vera Hruba Ralston. While Lester is rather lean and mean-looking, there is something jovial about Jed Dobie and his big ole white beard and grizzly voice. And he of the two has more soul in his eyes.

JED

Then there was that thing we did over at Monogram that time.

LESTER

That was a piece of crap.

JED

You'd say that, of course.

LESTER

Piece of crap.

JED

What was that little gal's name on that one?

LESTER

Don't remember.

JED

You don't remember, huh.

LESTER

Listen, I fucked her when she was a star and didn't know your face from shit -

JED

Who got in there first -

LESTER

She was daywork, for chrissake - then she made eight or nine of them Kreena or Creamer of the Jungle pictures, and she tightened up like a latigo whang.

JED

Who had to break her in -

LESTER

Every producer on the lot wanted to -

JED

Who had to break her in for ya?

LESTER

If I believed every time you said one of 'em dropped their pants for you the whole lot woulda been bare-assed, and I don't recall nothin' bare-assed at Monogram except the wages.

JED

How about the time you lost your britches when your boot got hung up in the stirrup-iron?

He hoots with laughter.

LESTER

Listen - sixteen fuckin' chapters of VIGILANTES VS. THE SECRET SERVICE and who was dickin' the wife of the studio chief breakfast, lunch, and dinner!

JED

(still laughing)

Who the hell else wanted to?

There's a KNOCK at the door. Lester reluctantly gets up to answer it.

DOOR

Lester opens it.

EDWARD FORD AND MITZI FORD

Stand expectantly, dressed in more of what they think are "nice" clothes. Mitzi is slightly pushing a shuffling Edward Ford forward.

CUT.

OLYMPIC BOULEVARD

EVENING

An old banger of a car chugs along.

SIDEWALK

As the car pulls over and Jed Dobie gets out, then leans back to say goodbye.

JED

Pleasure to meet you, Edward.

EDWARD FORD

Hey, no, gee - I didn't expect
- I mean, you guys are my alltime
heroes. Meetin' two of my Big Six
in one day -

JED

Well, you come visit again, y'hear.

EDWARD FORD

I'd sure like to - thank you.

JED

(to Lester)

I'll talk to you later.

STREET

The car moves out again.

INSIDE

Lester drives.

EDWARD FORD

Geez - Jed Dobie and Lester Adams
in the same day.

MITZI

Doesn't he like parties?

LESTER

He don't mind parties. Just
Harry Blake's he ain't partial to.

CUT.

HAROLD BLAKE

NIGHT

Is a rather dapper man, though slightly pudgy, with a babyish sort of face. He is in the unclean bathroom of his little house, taking off his shirt, revealing a lacy black negligee underneath, the bottom half of it tucked into his trousers. Needle and cotton and other items laid out next to him, he sits down to begin preparing his dartboard-like arm for another injection of heroin.

HOUSE

A party in progress. Rarely has such a collection of genuine human oddities been gathered in one place. Everyone here is strictly grade-Z. They represent the true underbelly of Hollywood society, which doesn't speak well of their position in the world at large. The best looking girls here are some sort of secondary porn actresses, the worst the most horrific type of hangers-on to lost dreams, women whose make-up exceeds the total weight of their

mock jewelry and Transylvania-designed wardrobe. A man fatter than some whales reads the palm of a totally deranged looking boy, clutching it in his own sweaty mitt. Some cheap bit players sit around kvetching and boozing. A diabolist, a true incarnation of lucifer rising, lights up a dubious cigarette. An aged crone does a little dance. An albino laughs. It looks like a wedding reception for Diane Arbus and Tod Browning.

Edward Ford now enters into this melange, holding the hand of his wife. Lester Adams leads the way ahead, already shaking hands with friends.

Elsewhere, Harold Blake comes down a sagging staircase from upstairs, looking rather breezy now, jacket and tie back on over his negligee. He smiles at his guests, inquiring after the good time he hopes they're having. He is certainly capable of exuding charm, however perverse a variety it may be.

Lester Adams introduces the Edward Fords to folks.

LESTER
Harry's wife-Patty -

A rather attractive woman, actually.

In a corridor a drunken man has his hand up the dress of a feebly-resisting black girl.

CUT.

COUCH

Edward Ford sits stiffly with a drink in his hand next to Harold Blake.

BLAKE
Lester tells me you like westerns.

EDWARD FORD
Well - I am an avid B-western fan, but I like most all kinds of motion pictures, especially old ones.

BLAKE
Oh, I've directed two or three westerns - Lester starred in 'em -

EDWARD FORD
I've seen two of them.

BLAKE
- but, you know, I'm concentrating on contemporary subjects now. You waste so much time with those fuckin' horses.

EDWARD FORD
Are you making a movie now?

BLAKE
Well, I'm tryin' to raise the money.

EDWARD FORD
Uh-huh.

A strange-looking woman sits down next to Edward Ford on the arm-rest of the couch.

WOMAN
Hi, Harry.

BLAKE
Hey, Johnny.

WOMAN
Joanie!

Edward Ford's head swivels stupidly between the two.

BLAKE
Hey, show 'em your tits, John.

WOMAN
I just did.

BLAKE
Well, these folks haven't seen 'em yet.

WOMAN
Harry -

BLAKE
Go ahead.

WOMAN
Alright, is everybody watching this time?

Everyone answers in the affirmative.

WOMAN
OK.

She lifts her blouse to show her knockers. People cheer and clap and laugh. The woman is so proud. Someone's hand reaches into view to feel one of them.

WOMAN
Aren't they great? And they feel so natural.

Harry Blake laughs. Mitzi Ford laughs.

EDWARD FORD

Has his quintessential expression on his face, tempered only by slight queasiness.

CUT.

PARTY - LATER

Boozy people dance to scratchy records. Edward Ford's wife dances with someone who looks like a magician.

In the corridor the same drunken man now has the transsexual pinned against the same wall and has his hand up her dress.

Edward Ford stands in a corner talking to actor LAIRD BREEN.

BREEN

It's tough, that's all. I'm not gonna paint you a rosy picture. You can't get in the Guild till you get a job and it's hard to get a job unless you're in the Guild. I've been in the acting game for ten years now and it's hard. It's hard.

Edward Ford nods like something in the back window of a station wagon.

Mitzi Ford is now dancing with the albino. The weird old crone dances past them all by herself.

Lester Adams and Harold Blake laugh boisterously, drinking from a shared bottle.

Edward Ford continues to submit to the expert.

BREEN

But I wish you all the best and when you get that first line you're welcome to give me a call and I'll put you on to some people.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I'd really appreciate that. That would be swell.

He thinks the thing to do is formally offer his hand. Laird Breen accepts it and Edward Ford shakes solemnly.

CUT.

THE BLAKE HOUSE

It's a bizarre kind of a shack perched on a hillside in a cramped section of the eccentric and incipient Los Feliz district. The searchlights from a premiere at Grauman's in the city below seem

FRONT DOOR

Edward Ford and Mitzi on their way out, shaking hands with Patty Blake.

PATTY
... real glad you could come.

MITZI
Thank you for having us.

A far from sober pair appear behind the hostess, Lester Adams and Harold Blake.

BLAKE
You goin' already?

EDWARD FORD
I have to get up early for work.

Lester extends a hand for Edward Ford to shake.

LESTER
Listen - glad to've met ya.

EDWARD FORD
It was my pleasure. I hope I can see you again sometime.

LESTER
You bet. We'll talk about all them old pictures.

EDWARD FORD
We sure will.

They're starting down the front steps now, waving bye-bye.

HAROLD BLAKE

Calls back inside his still awfully lively (?) and noisy house.

BLAKE
Hey, did ya show 'em your tits?

SIDEWALK

As the Edward Fords walk away.

MITZI
They were nice people.

EDWARD FORD
Yes, they were.

CUT.

MOVIE THEATRE

AFTERNOON

Mitzi waits while Edward Ford purchases two tickets.

AUDITORIUM

She goes toward her chosen seat in the back row.

EDWARD FORD

Looks longingly down at the front, then reluctantly follows his wife, making quite a childish face as he goes.

CUT.

SUPERMARKET

Edward Ford pushes the shopping cart as Mitzi Ford makes the selections, more or less of the same type he did when on his own.

FROZEN FOOD SECTION

She stacks up double the amount of tv dinners.

CHECK-OUT COUNTER

Mitzi hands over the SAVE 3¢!! coupons to a vapid monolith of a cashier.

PARKING LOT

While Mitzi waits in it, Edward Ford loads their second-hand car with the groceries.

EXIT

The car drives out by the blonde California surfer type dressed in the supermarket uniform who is collecting abandoned shopping carts. As he tries to pry two of them loose his wallet falls out of his pocket.

WALLET

As the kid bends to pick it up, pushing back inside the Screen Actor's Guild card that slipped out.

CUT.

THE EDWARD FORD BEDROOM

DAY

Edward Ford and his wife engage in sexual intercourse, Edward Ford's hand clamped over his wife's mouth.

CUT.

A BARE ROOM

DAY

Edward Ford displays more than simply a posture problem as he hams it up against a white wall.

TWO ENEMIES OF PROMISE

Give each other a look. They can't believe what they're watching.

CUT.

CHURCH

MORNING

Edward Ford and his spouse sing along with the other hymnsters.

CUT.

A SMALL STAGE

DAY

Edward Ford stands awkwardly and tries to read the speech they've given him, squinting at the paper.

CASTING EXECUTIVE

Can't help laughing, then puts his hand to his quivering lip to try and stifle it.

CUT.

MOVIE THEATRE

NIGHT

Edward Ford and Mitzi Ford, in the back row, watch a movie.

EDWARD FORD

Glances past his wife ... at the ... black man a few seats distant who's staring at Mitzi and jacking off.

THE BACK ROW

As Edward Ford exchanges seats with his wife, placing himself between her and her admirer.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

EVENING

Mitzi slides two tv dinners out of their packets and into the oven.

EDWARD FORD

Comes in the front door, goes into the kitchen, unclips his change-making machine from his belt and puts it on the table. Also his shirt pocket pen holder that says on it YELLOW CAB 5 YEAR DRIVER OF MERIT.

CUT.

LIVING ROOM

They eat their tv dinners in silence, Edward Ford with a glass of milk, Mitzi with two beer cans.

CUT.

TV

EVENING

The NEWSCASTER looks merry.

NEWSCASTER

Actor Lester Adams dead tonight
at the age of fifty-seven.

LESTER AND JED

Sitting on Lester's couch, watching the tv. They look at each other.

NEWSCASTER

Lester was a big star in Japan and
Mexico.

CUT.

MOVIE THEATRE

NIGHT

Quite crowded.

NEAR THE FRONT

Sits Edward Ford, looking up at the screen. He looks down to write in his notebook.

BACK ROW

Sits Mitzi.

LOBBY

They both stand smoking a cigarette.

EDWARD FORD

How'd you like that one?

MITZI

It was OK.

EDWARD FORD

Well, y'know, I don't really like movies that knock our government. But I'm lookin' forward to this next one.

NEAR THE SCREEN

Sits Edward Ford, the light of the movie glowing over him.

BACK ROW

Sits Mitzi.

CUT.

LAUNDROMAT

DAY

Edward Ford, here without Mitzi, puts clothes into the machine. When the next batch his hand clutches turns out to be items of fat female underwear he looks around embarrassed.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S BEDROOM

NIGHT

He and his wife sit up watching tv, as much space between them as the small double bed allows.

TV

The same newscaster, humiliated, interviews a grim (probably soused) Lester Adams.

NEWSCASTER

What can I say? These rumors get started and we report them.

CUT.

LIVING ROOM

DAY

While Edward Ford puts on a clean shirt, Mitzi, looking through the window out at the street, sees her FIRST HUSBAND approaching.

MITZI

My first husband's comin' up the street.

EDWARD FORD

(appears from bedroom)

Oh, not again - it's almost showtime.

CUT.

THE FIRST HUSBAND

A real brute, holding a chicken, blocking the front doorway that Edward Ford wants to get through.

EDWARD FORD

Now, look, I haven't got time for this.
I have to get to the show.

He tries to shove by, but Brute gets him in a half-nelson hold. Edward Ford squeezes his chicken. Brute tears the shirt right off Edward Ford's back. They sidestep around the room. Mitzi watches. Edward Ford, turning blue, reaches up to pinch Brute's eyes. Brute screams. Edward Ford keeps pinching the eyes, then lets go. Brute falls to the floor, shouting in agony. Edward Ford looks at his watch anxiously and quickly goes to fetch another shirt.

MITZI

You just gonna leave him here for
me to deal with!

EDWARD FORD

(buttoning hurriedly)

It's almost showtime - I'm gonna
have to stay over to see the beginning
again. I hate that!

He rushes out. Mitzi rushes out after him.

MITZI

Come back here!

The first husband wriggles around on the floor, hands across his eyes.

CUT.

LESTER ADAMS' BEDROOM

DAY

Lester sits on the edge of the bed, flanked by Edward Ford and Jed Dobie. He's showing them his scrapbook.

LESTER

These are all the women I fucked.

SCRAPBOOK

As he turns from one page to another. A collection of seedy photographs, some clearer or more explicit than others, some of the women and girls dressed, most of them baring something if not everything. A lot seem to be Orientals. None have the kind of faces that would get showcased any place much better than this.

BED

The three men, heads down.

LESTER

This one here had a funny smell.
A real funny smell, that one.

JED

(points)

What's she doin' there?

LESTER

I fucked her.

JED

The hell you did.

LESTER

(to Edward Ford)

She used to like to hold my joint
under the table in the commissary.
Cleaning women used to find more than
food on the floor down there, I tell
ya.

JED

Last week it was her sister.

LESTER

I never said I fucked her sister.

JED

Lester, boy, you're gettin' senile.

LESTER

Listen, asshole -

JED

You never could tell one from the
other. Fuckin' twins.

LESTER

Her sister was the one let me eat
her out in her trailer.

JED

You wanted to fuck the mother, but
she wouldn't -

LESTER

What did I want with their mother?
If they hadn't got that contract
over at RKO they was gonna do me
the Venus Flytrap they said. Twenty
years later I'm still gettin' a hard-
on wonderin' what the hell they had
in mind.

JED

Last time you got it up the Allies
entered Paris.

LESTER

Listen, asshole -

JED

(to Edward Ford)

I fucked the mother. She was what
you call a woman.

OVER THEIR SHOULDERS

As the scrapbook pages turn. Photos in all different sizes
and colors and tones. Most have been taken by Lester. Some
are publicity shots, black-and-white glossies or lobby stills.

LESTER

This one'll be over at my place
tomorrow night.

JED

Guess I won't be then.

LESTER

No, she's better now, Jed, she'll
leave you alone. She don't telephone
people up no more.

JED

Anyhow my wife don't like me goin'
to your parties either.

LESTER

(laughs)

She shows good sense.

JED

(to Edward Ford)

What about yours?

EDWARD FORD
I don't have to tell her where I'm at.

CUT.

LESTER ADAMS' LIVING ROOM

NIGHT

On some blankets in the middle of the floor some guy copulates with an Oriental girl. Lester Adams and Edward Ford and a couple of other lowdown men and women sit around in their boxer shorts and pantyhose watching.

LESTER
C'mon, will ya. Edward has to get up early for work.

The copulating man, an overweight person, breathes loudly.

LESTER
(to Edward Ford)
What time do you get up?

EDWARD FORD
Well, I get up at five-thirty to be at the garage by six-thirty.

LESTER
Whadaya do, you drive downtown -

EDWARD FORD
Yeah, I drive downtown and park, y'know - then I take the cab out ...

The sounds of the copulating man's denouement gather in strength.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

Now positions himself atop one of the other women, centre-stage. He is somewhat embarrassed.

EDWARD FORD
Uh ...

LESTER ADAMS

Laughs.

LESTER
That's it, kid - a leg on either side.

THE WOMAN'S FACE

Looking up at Edward Ford's understandingly as one of her arms reaches down between them, searching for the root of the problem.

WOMAN

(barely a whisper)

Just fake it.

EDWARD FORD

Sinks down onto her. She moans exaggeratedly.

THE ONLOOKERS

Applaud and make remarks.

EDWARD FORD

Tries, but can't even act this part very well. The woman is so much more convincing. Edward Ford smiles over at the watchers.

EDWARD FORD

(as he continues)

Say, Lester.

LESTER

What?

EDWARD FORD

Did I tell ya I got a job in a movie?

CUT.

THE FINAL CROWD SCENE FROM "IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD"

A million people in a city square. All surging. Lots of noise and music. And then a large SUPERIMPOSED You-Are-Here arrow appears, pointing down into the mass of ant dots, the fine point tickling the obscure head of one of them.

DISSOLVE.

BOX-OFFICE WINDOW

EVENING

As a young couple disappears with their tickets, Edward Ford appears after them, presenting his money and holding up one finger.

AT HOME

Mitzi sits watching tv.

MITZI

Bored with it, her gaze is caught by the looming file-card cabinets of her errant husband, stacked in their corner, dominating the room. And her life. She stares at them with a look that approximates that given by Medusa to her victims.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S BEDROOM

NIGHT

He sleeps alone. Mitzi's side of the bed is vacant.

KITCHEN

Standing at the fridge in her nightie, which reveals her repugnant figure to even more ghastly extremes than one would have thought possible, she drinks beer from the can.

LIVING ROOM

She wanders in, can in fist, and sits down with insomniac heaviness. She sips. She stares at those file boxes. Then, with deliberate decision, she sets down the can, walks over, pulls open a drawer at random, takes out a card from the middle somewhere, and tears it up as she leaves the room.

CUT.

HIDEOUS BAR

NIGHT

The Mexican BARTENDER goes by a drunk slouched over the bar and gives him a push.

BARTENDER

Get out of here. Go on.

THE DRUNK

Sits up. A thickset man. His name is AL FOSTER.

FOSTER

I am preparing to call on a friend of mine, sir.

BARTENDER'S VOICE

Fuck off.

FOSTER

A fellow I was at high school with in Coventry, Delaware. He is a man of innate decency and kindness, and I only mention him in the context of your establishment as an example of one who stands in total opposition to you and yours.

THE BARTENDER

Walks past again and gives Foster another push.

CUT.

SUNSET STRIP

It's about four o'clock in the morning now. Al Foster staggers along. He stops at traffic lights, and as he peers up to try and read the street signs his feet step on each other and he falls over. It's not a good place for this to happen as it's the intersection of Sunset and La Cienega. And Al Foster starts rolling down the steep hill.

LA CIENEGA

Like a cartoon character, over and over and over he rolls, and it looks hilarious even though it assuredly isn't.

A CAR

On its way up. The driver sees the figure roll past.

FOSTER

He's almost at Santa Monica by now.

TWO HUSTLERS

Watch him crash by.

SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD

As Al Foster comes tumbling down.

AL FOSTER

He's finally stopped, hard, by a lamp post. Cut and bruised all over, he groans as he collapses in the gutter.

CUT.

LA

MORNING

Hazy. From somewhere down there a telephone RINGS.

EDWARD FORD'S BEDROOM

Edward Ford's hand gropes for the telephone in the completely dark room. Completely dark.

EDWARD FORD
(into it)
Albert Foster?

CUT.

POLICE STATION

MORNING

The DESK SERGEANT waits for Edward Ford to finish signing some release forms. Edward Ford does.

SERGEANT
OK - through there.

He points the way for Edward Ford to proceed.

HALLWAY

Past every kind of degenerate and criminal that early-morning Hollywood can offer, Edward Ford walks.

ANOTHER ROOM

Al Foster, bandaged a lot, is led out a door by another policeman.

EDWARD FORD

Studies him.

AL FOSTER

Approaches.

THE TWO OF THEM

Embrace.

CUT.

COFFEE SHOP - HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

MORNING

Edward Ford and Al sit in a booth. Every third person that walks by outside the window is out of their fucking mind.

EDWARD FORD

You actually have a job out here, huh.

AL

Yes - an acquaintance of mine in New York put me onto the Quinn Martin people, and I've been assigned to write an episode of "The F.B.I."

He speaks in extremely measured tones.

EDWARD FORD

Well, that's great. That's swell.

AL

I intend to take this town by storm.

EDWARD FORD

Uh-huh.

AL

And as my fortunes increase, I intend to see yours grow in harmony.

EDWARD FORD

Well -

AL

It will come to pass. It will come to pass.

EDWARD FORD

Well - all I need is a part, y'know, so's I can get that damn SAG card.

AL

Do you know who I saw in San Francisco?

EDWARD FORD

No.

AL

Ben Krantz.

EDWARD FORD

You're kidding.

AL

The famous painter is teaching the coeds at Berkeley a stroke or two.

EDWARD FORD

No shit. Is he comin' out here?

AL

He expressed a desire to visit this sunny metropolis, and I expect him to appear shortly.

EDWARD FORD

Gee, that would be swell. The Three Mesquiteers together again. And y'know my brother's comin' out here too.

AL

Little Joey Ford.

EDWARD FORD

Yeah - he's comin' out here to join the Army.

AL

My word. That's hardly credible.

EDWARD FORD

He figures he'll be drafted anyways, so he's drivin' cross country with his buddy and they're signin' up together.

AL

(lifts his glass)

Then we must toast good fortune to others than ourselves.

They do.

CUT.

A BLACK-AND-WHITE STILL FROM A MOVIE DAY

One of the actors has been silhouetted.

QUIZMASTER'S VOICE

Now what we want to know is ... what is the film, who is the actor who's been blacked out, and can you name the man with the sword?

FIRST CONTESTANT

The digital numbers on her podium indicate that thus far she's won about two hundred dollars. She thinks seriously.

FIRST CONTESTANT

Uh ... uh ... let's see ... uh ...

A bell GONGS extremely loudly. She jumps.

SECOND CONTESTANT

This fellow has only won about fifty dollars.

QUIZMASTER'S VOICE

Julius.

SECOND CONTESTANT

Now, I know it's Errol Flynn, but I -

GONG.

EDWARD FORD

Has won about eighty thousand dollars.

EDWARD FORD

The picture is THE MARK OF ZORRO, and that's Tyrone Power. The man with the sword is Basil Rathbone. The other guy is J. Edward Bromberg and the guy next to him is Chris Pin Martin. It was a Twentieth Century Fox picture and it was made in 1940.

FIRST CONTESTANT

Tries to find a way out of her plastic perch.

FIRST CONTESTANT

Alright, that's it.

TELEVISION STUDIO

They're not doing it for real. There is no audience. The rehearsal being conducted is simply part of the audition process.

FIRST CONTESTANT

I quit.

She walks around, trying to find the way out.

SECOND CONTESTANT

Struggles with his conscience, but finally decides he's out of his league too.

SECOND CONTESTANT

I'm sorry. Me too.

QUIZMASTER

Rushes frantically from his roost to console and placate them.

QUIZMASTER

Hey - now - ah - wait a minute there -

They're gone. The quizmaster stands still a moment.

EDWARD FORD

Watches him, anticipating damnation. The quizmaster slowly turns and walks over to him. Edward Ford lowers his head and looks shamefaced. He twiddles his fingers. The quizmaster looks at him for a long time.

QUIZMASTER

You had to grandstand again.

He looks about to rap Edward Ford's knuckles with a ruler.

QUIZMASTER

You see, this is why we have these audition run-throughs - so we can discover in advance what might go amiss at an actual taping.

Pause.

QUIZMASTER

Is there anything you'd like to say?

The condemned man in the dock looks up partially.

EDWARD FORD

I'm sorry.

QUIZMASTER

I should hope so.

EDWARD FORD

I guess you won't be able to use me then.

QUIZMASTER

No, I don't think so.

Edward Ford steps down from his little platform. He looks at the quizmaster once. Then he paces away, the quizmaster watching him go.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT HOUSE

DAY

Typing can be heard from one of the apartments.

THE APARTMENT

Edward Ford taps methodically with two fingers. He stops to run one of them down a cast list in one of his movie books that is open for reference beside the typewriter. Then he leaves his desk to go to his file cabinets. He flips through cards in a drawer, refers to one, then puts it back. He walks back over to the desk. And then he realizes that something is wrong. He goes back to the same drawer, finds the same place, flips through the cards in that general area, and starts to look confused. Very confused.

CUT.

FRONT DOOR

Mitzi Ford comes home. She walks around the corner into the living room, sees her husband sitting there silently.

EDWARD FORD

Where have you been?

MITZI

I've been tryin' to start up my goddamn model agency, where d'you think I've been.

And she realizes he knows. She looks over at the file cabinets. Most of the drawers are open, cards up-ended here and there, marking spots where other cards are missing.

EDWARD FORD

What did you do with my file cards?

MITZI

Nothin'.

She starts taking her coat off, etc.

EDWARD FORD

There are at least fifteen cards missing. I haven't gone through all of them yet.

MITZI

Whadaya mean fifteen - how would you know if fifteen fucking file cards were missing?

EDWARD FORD

I know where they all are.

MITZI

You moron, they're not even in alphabetical order.

EDWARD FORD

Why do you do these things?

He looks really hurt.

MITZI

Asshole.

EDWARD FORD

That's not nice.

MITZI

You think I do nutty things? Who drives clear to Las Vegas to go to a movie that no one in their right mind would pay diddly-shit to see in the first place!

EDWARD FORD

I only drove to Las Vegas once. And we wouldn'ta been home at dawn if you hadn't had to stop and take a leak at every gas station we passed on the way home.

MITZI

Go to hell.

He follows her into the kitchen.

EDWARD FORD

What did you do with them?

MITZI

I didn't do anything with them, jerk. I don't wanna go near 'em!

EDWARD FORD

Why do you do these things?

MITZI

I don't do nothin'! You go to your stupid shitty movies with those drunken losers and I stay here and do nothing!

EDWARD FORD

You sold my comic books. My Golden Age comic books. For twenty dollars.

MITZI

I'M TRYING TO START A BUSINESS, YOU FUCKING MORON!

EDWARD FORD

I started those file cards when I was thirteen years old.

MITZI

And you haven't had a birthday since.

EDWARD FORD

How'm I gonna get caught up ever?

MITZI

Just leave me the fuck alone.

She shoves past him.

EDWARD FORD

Mitzi.

He goes after her.

EDWARD FORD

Mitzi.

CUT.

BEDROOM

NIGHT

Edward Ford sleeps alone again, on his stomach.

KITCHEN

Mitzi fills up a saucepan with water, then puts it on a flame on the cooker. Then she sits down to wait, staring at it.

SAUCEPAN

The water boils.

MITZI

Turns off the flame, takes the pan of steaming water, walks with it to the bedroom.

BEDROOM

She goes over to the bed and pours it all over Edward Ford's back.

EDWARD FORD

Screams. He screams running. He runs straight through the front door of the apartment without even opening it, the force of his rush knocking it right over. Slapstick.

FADE OUT.

(THE EARLY SEVENTIES ...)

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD AND HIGHLAND AVENUE

DAY

Three black women, prostitutes by the look of them, stand on a corner waving at an approaching taxi. The taxi pulls up alongside them. They all get in.

INSIDE CAB

The driver turns to them.

EDWARD FORD

Well, ladies, what can I do you for?

And his face sinks.

THE LADIES

Aren't.

THE FRONT SEAT

The one next to Edward Ford grabs his crotch playfully.

TRANSSEXUAL

Ooch, you got a big one!

His/her companions laugh and join in. Edward Ford tries to extricate himself from this situation, his belt already undone by nimble fingers.

EDWARD FORD

Now - now -

TRANSSEXUAL

C'mon, baby - we're all working.

EDWARD FORD

(trying to slap the hands away)
- you don't do that - ya don't do that!

HIGHLAND AVENUE

People on the sidewalk stroll by the parked cab. Cars in the street drift by it.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

That's not done in this cab - now -
there'll be none of tha -

CUT.

KRANTZ HOUSE

NIGHT

Edward Ford and Al Foster and a bunch of other people play pool. The house is located above the Sunset Strip. Through the window there's a marvellous view of the Hollywood lights and the red and white streaks of traffic on La Cienega. When it's not their turn to shoot the players introduce or reintroduce themselves, the game continuing while they do.

BEN KRANTZ

(to the CAMERA)

I'm Ben Krantz, this is the house I'm renting for a year. I'm a painter, an expatriate American, I've been living in England for twenty years, but this year I'm taking a break and doing a bit of teaching. It's not something I have to do, it's just that I think the sexiest letters in the English language are U.C.L.A. Al and Edward Ford and I were best friends in high school, but we didn't get much sun and snatch back then. Those are my kids.

Two children have just entered, YOUNG LUKE, about twelve years old, and his beautiful SISTER, about eight or so.

YOUNG LUKE

(to CAMERA)

I'm Luke - you saw me at the beginning, only I was older.

SISTER

(not to CAMERA because she's shy)

I'm his sister.

JOEY FORD, almost thirty, takes his shot, then chalks his cue.

JOEY FORD

(to the CAMERA)

I'm Joey Ford, Edward Ford's younger brother. I'm livin' out here now, workin' in a photo lab. I was in Nam for a few years - came out a sergeant - and I thought it was a good experience. I saw some buddies blown away and wasted my share of gooks, but I felt we were doin' the right thing bein' over there. I can't stand draft dodgers and protesters, bl -

(pauses to watch Al shoot)

blacks, communists, Jane Fonda, hippies, and fags. I think Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan are real swell.

ILSE STECKEL, in her twenties, a plain sort of girl, has come in with comb and hairbrush to unmangle young Luke's sister's long hair before bedtime.

ILSE

(to CAMERA)

Ilse Steckel it's me. Am au pair
for Krantz children. Being so since
children mother die ago several years.
Coming from Switzerland am in America
to be much excited.

A pretty young ART STUDENT with a lot of brilliant teeth leans
by the window smoking, watching the game.

ART STUDENT

(to CAMERA)

I sleep with their father.

Edward Ford knocks about five balls right off the table.

AL FOSTER

(to CAMERA)

Since I wrote an episode of "The F.B.I."
interest has been shown in my scripts
and I've been attending a number of
meetings. I confidently expect
something to turn up.

Also here is a sow of some description with sunken black eyes
who looks like she crawls from a tomb every night when the moon
comes out. A broken wreck of womanhood. CARLA.

CARLA

(to CAMERA)

I'm Carla, Al's girlfriend.

(pause)

I'm a dancer.

Edward Ford looks demure as he gathers his balls.

EDWARD FORD

(to CAMERA)

I'm still tryin' to get my damn SAG
card, y'know, so's I can start my
career. All it would take would be
one speaking line in a motion picture
or a television show or a commercial ...
I guess my ex-wife was right when she
said, "You will never make it. There
are too many like you."

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

MORNING

Dressed as a cowboy, standing by some railroad tracks, big
boulders as a backdrop. He's frozen in what he thinks is a
"tough" stance, an expression on his face to match. He holds
a rifle "ready for action" in his hands. After a moment all is
explained when a flashbulb pops. Edward Ford relaxes.

EDWARD FORD
Did ya get it?

JOEY FORD

Fiddles with his camera on a tripod.

JOEY
Yeah, that was a good one.

CENTURY CITY

DAY

Standing in some sort of patio, skyscrapers framed behind him, Edward Ford, smiling, tries to look like a "business executive," dressed in a ludicrously baggy old suit. He stays like this for some time, the idiotic smile beginning to tremble, before the bulb pops.

ALLEYWAY

AFTERNOON

Lurking next to garbage cans, dressed in a dirty jacket, wearing a cap, Edward Ford tries to look like a gangster. The flash lights up.

EDWARD FORD'S FACE

Just a simple portrait now against a black background. Very simple. It recedes, becoming one quarter of the final four-picture composite.

The typed resume clipped to the composite is flipped back to the front by the hands studying both. A plaque visible somewhere says "CASTING DEPT."

CASTING AGENT

She gives the list a cursory glance, then dexterously files this submission into a manila envelope, quickly printing "Ford, Edward" at the top. She hands this to a waiting secretary.

THE SECRETARY

Walks into the next room with it. There are seventy-eight thousand huge filing cabinets in here. It takes her about an hour to walk down to the F section. The Fo-Fr drawer is pulled efficiently open, she flips expertly through the twenty-five billion manila envelopes inside, sticks Edward Ford's in its proper place, pushes the drawer shut, and walks away.

CUT.

FUNERAL

DAY

Harold Blake delivers the eulogy.

BLAKE

Yes, this time he's really dead.
 (fondles a cowboy hat)
 This is the hat he wore in over
 two hundred westerns. And just
 two days before he died he gave it
 to a young friend named Edward Ford
 - passing the banner, as it were.

Edward Ford is among the small crowd, wearing his oversized suit.

BLAKE

His ole pard Jed Dobie passed on
 almost exactly a year ago - and I
 don't mourn for either of 'em.
 Because I know they're havin' a
 helluva time ... riding the purple
 sage ... over that final sunset ...

He pinches his shoulder to adjust the strap of what must be a
 brassiere under his suit.

CUT.

SUNSET BOULEVARD

DAY

Ben Krantz's car drives along. Young Luke is with him.

BEN

So what did you think of Edward
 Ford?

Young Luke laughs. So does Ben.

BEN

I bet he was stunned by how much
 you know about movies.

YOUNG LUKE

Was he the same when you went to
 school with him?

BEN

Edward Ford has always been the
 same. Always.

He looks out the window at something.

HOLLYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Lolitas and Baby Dolls abound.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT BUILDING

DAY

A grimy, chipped stucco place. Around a typically depressing little Hollywood courtyard. Four or five units contained here.

EDWARD FORD'S BEDROOM

Tiny, the large old bed taking up most of the space. A dusty picture of Hawaii that came with the place hangs on the yellowed wall. Ugly pairs of shoes are in a row on the shabby carpet. On the dresser a movie book lies open to a particular page. Next to it is a neat stack of three or four file cards, the small notebook open to the last cast list entry, scrawled in Edward Ford's childish hand, the pen that wrote it holding the notebook open there.

EDWARD FORD'S LIVING ROOM

Very small. His few shelves of movie books are here. His ancient typewriter sits covered on his roll-top desk, the top up. On the mantelpiece above is his map book of Los Angeles and its environs, open to the page showing the area he last visited for a movie. On one side of the map book is the last theatre ticket stub, on the other side, symmetrically squared, is the newspaper with the last visit's listing checked neatly in pencil. Shadows wriggle on the desk, cast through the window past dangling leaves on branches outside.

EDWARD FORD'S KITCHEN

The appliances are quite aged. The file boxes are stacked in a corner. There are more of them. Edward Ford opens one of the drawers, starts rifling through cards, showing them to young Luke.

EDWARD FORD

Now these here are all the cards on various players ...

BEN

Stands leaning in the kitchen doorway, watching Edward Ford show his son his madness. Ben suspects that this is the beginning of a bizarre friendship, and that it will be a heckuva year.

DISSOLVE.

THE YEAR IN PICTURES

At DISNEYLAND, a ghost joins Edward Ford and young Luke in their buggy as they travel through the Haunted Mansion.

Walking through Tomorrowland: Edward Ford and young Luke and his sister and Ilse and Joey Ford. Immense men and women in Bermuda shorts and orange sunglasses that point up at the edges seem to be everywhere.

On the Matterhorn Mountain ride a couple of cars containing Edward Ford and his party zoom on down.

In the ENCORE THEATRE Humphrey Bogart escapes from Devil's Island in PASSAGE TO MARSEILLES. In the audience Edward Ford jots down an actor's name in his notebook. And young Luke and his sister are enthralled in the movie.

In the lobby while young Luke studies the program, Edward Ford attempts to guide his sister through the process of filling a cup from the punch machine without letting the tap continue to flow all over the carpet.

At GRIFFITH PARK OBSERVATORY Ilse Steckel and Joey Ford sit on a bench and talk intimately to each other.

Further away, Edward Ford stands at the rail and shows the view of LA to the Krantz children, the smog hanging over the city like a blanket.

At the KRANTZ HOUSE Edward Ford and his brother and Ilse and the Krantz children sit around watching tv. Ilse admonishes the children to make them eat their lettuce. Ben appears with another ripe art student in tow, both dressed for a formal evening. They wave goodbye to the tv watchers on their way out.

At the BEACH the same group of tv watchers fling a frisbee among themselves. Edward Ford has scars on his back.

In the DESERT young Luke and his sister jump from rock to rock. Ilse and Joey steal a kiss. And Edward Ford stands alone, looking up at the immense sky, the beautiful landscape surrounding and belittling him.

HIGHER UP, Joey and Ilse and young Luke's sister have found some snow to throw at each other. But Edward Ford and young Luke aren't participating, they're leaning on the car.

EDWARD FORD

... HOW THE WEST WAS WON ... HOW TO
SAVE A MARRIAGE (AND RUIN YOUR LIFE)

... HOW TO STEAL A MILLION ...

(Luke is thinking)

LORD JIM ... GENGHIS KHAN ... THE
VICTORS ...

LUKE

Eli Wallach.

EDWARD FORD

You got it.

In a U.C.L.A. ART CLASS Edward Ford has come to pick up young Luke. The class model comes out and removes her robe. As they walk out together Edward Ford and young Luke gape at the same thing.

ORIENTAL MASSAGE says the flashing sign on the otherwise blacked-out seedy window. Edward Ford goes in, past a girl who is not Oriental in the least.

TRAVEL TOWN one day. Edward Ford, the Krantz kids, and Ilse and Joey look around.

Having a PICNIC afterwards, Edward Ford takes out his false teeth to shock the Krantz children.

At the KRANTZ HOUSE one evening young Luke lies on the couch reading. His father appears from somewhere.

BEN

Now, are you coming to Billy Wilder's with us?

YOUNG LUKE

No, I'm going to the movies with, uh, "Lenny."

Edward Ford can be seen through the window coming up the front steps.

BEN

Here he comes now, your forty-three year old buddy.

He shakes his head at this mishuga relationship, and goes to let Edward Ford in. Edward Ford pretends to almost fall over when the door opens before his fist has knocked on it.

BEN

Hi, Edward.

At McDONALD'S, as the girl behind the counter projects her totally empty smile at Edward Ford, Edward Ford looks down at young Luke to ask him what he wants.

A^N EXOTIC FISH swims around what looks like the bottom of the ocean, until he comes to clear glass and stares out at Edward Ford staring in, flanked by the Krantz children.

At another tank Ilse and Joey are more interested in looking at each other than at the sea life MARINELAND has to offer.

Edward Ford and the Krantz children start walking around the huge centre tank. Young Luke's sister takes Edward Ford's hand.

In a DINER they all sit. Edward Ford carefully picks the lettuce and tomato out of his sandwich and discards them, then starts scraping off the sauce.

Later he gets up to go the Men's room. In the MEN'S ROOM, as he comes in, he sees one black guy going down on another black guy. Edward Ford walks back out immediately.

In a MOVIE THEATRE Edward Ford watches a movie. Next to him is Ben, then young Luke, his sister, Ilse, Joey, Al Foster, and Carla.

CUT.

HOLLYWOOD FREE THEATRE

DAY

Bad actors rehearse, blocking it out, reading from typescripts.

MAN

(solemnly to WOMAN)

Salvation is only in God's son -
in Christ and Christ alone. Commune
with the Lord, and the Kingdom of
Heaven will be your destiny. "It is
done as you believe."

The woman starts to cry, not very well at all. Enter Edward Ford, dressed in a sheet with a hood, holding what looks like a Bible. He is portraying Temptation, and he's decided this calls for his very best bad-guy voice. He opens the book to show the woman.

EDWARD FORD

... Drugs ... Would you like some
more?

He smiles at the poor wretch with what he takes to be Satanic glee. The woman looks between him and the other serious man, with what she takes to be anguish.

CUT.

LATER

All the actors disband for the day, hugging and kissing each other goodbye in disgustingly saccharine fashion. A lot of "Praise the Lords" and "God loves you" being spouted. Edward Ford is leaving the theatre with the man who was on stage with him.

MAN

What you oughta do is join AFTRA.
That's what I'm doing.

EDWARD FORD

But that's, uh, restricted, isn't it?
AFTRA people ain't allowed more'n five
lines or somethin'. It's an extras
union.

MAN

It's a way, man. It's easier to get
from one union to another than from
no union at all.

EDWARD FORD

I'm tryin' to stay away from extra
work.

MAN

It's like this - I could be happy doing Christian theatre the rest of my life on earth - rejoicin' in the good Lord's work - but I have to eat, and there's a cattle call at the Colliseum on Tuesday. For a western, I think it is.

They're out the stage door now.

EDWARD FORD

A western?

MAN

(waves goodbye)

Praise Jesus.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

EVENING

A somewhat awful-looking mulatto WHORE undresses.

WHORE

... 'cause I got this stunt I'm gonna sell to tv where I'm wearing this asbestos suit and I set myself on fire and parachute off a skyscraper in Century City and each floor on the way down explodes just a second after I fall past, so timing is really the key thing ...

She peels off her panties, then walks over to the movie book shelves on top of which is a candle and a box of matches. Edward Ford sits in his armchair watching, mouth slightly open. The curtains are drawn. The whore lights the candle, then taking hold of it bends down out of view.

CUT.

LONG HALLWAY

DAY

Edward Ford is one of a group of men clumped together. A man with a clipboard jabs each one of them in turn with his finger, as if it were an electric cattle prod.

CLIPBOARD

You're a one, you're a one, you're a three, you're a one, you're a two, you're a two, you're a one, you're a two, you're a one, you're a nine,
(that was Edward Ford)
you're a one, you're a one, you're a two -

CUT.

STADIUM

DAY

A boxing scene is being filmed at ringside. In the first sections of seats sit ones. Behind them, further back, sit twos. Then threes, fours, etc. Way, way back in the packed bleachers, so far up that the filmmakers and actors in the ring seem like toy soldiers, sit the real dregs, Edward Ford just one of them. The ZERO sitting next to him looks at the hat he's holding.

ZERO

What's the hat for?

EDWARD FORD

I was told this was a western.

ZERO

Nice hat anyway.

EDWARD FORD

It belonged to Lester Adams.

ZERO

Who?

The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR far down below aims his megaphone at the crowd.

A.D.

Alright, let's hear it!

THE CROWD

Edward Ford lost in its mass as it starts screaming.

CUT.

IN A LITTLE BARBERSHOP ON MELROSE

DAY

Edward Ford gets his already minimal hair trimmed further by a genuine old Hollywood barber, a man impressed by nothing in this life, to whom the term "hairdressing" is an alien concept. The door gives a tinkle as a veteran character actor comes in. Edward Ford immediately recognizes him. The character actor takes off his jacket to hang on a peg. Edward Ford watches him. The character actor browses through the old copies of Time magazine. He selects one and sits down with it.

EDWARD FORD

Mr. Jones,

(or whatever the jughead's name is)

I've seen you in fifty-six motion pictures.

The old actor looks up, completely nonplussed at first, then astounded that someone in this day and age should recognize him. Then he beams. Just beams.

CUT.

BARNEY'S BEANERY

EVENING

Traffic quiet. A sign on the door says, "No faggots allowed."

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE
And do you know, it made his day.

BOOTH INSIDE

Edward Ford and Al and Ben.

EDWARD FORD
It made his day.

Apparently it made Edward Ford's too. Ben smiles.

BEN
Sure. A guy like that. How often could it happen?

EDWARD FORD
He couldn't get over it!

AL
An aged thespian.

He drinks, on his way to getting drunk. Ben and Edward Ford are aware of this, but are trying to ignore it for now, hoping it won't go all the way.

BEN
He must really wonder where it all went.

EDWARD FORD
Yeah, y'know, I wished they still had contract players, like in the days when the studios were makin' hundreds of pictures a year ...

AL
Everyone knew their place.

EDWARD FORD
And they knew what folks wanted to see then, y'know - the old movie mongols.

BEN
Movie mongols?

EDWARD FORD
Today the cameraman decides to point the camera at some flower that's out-of-focus -

BEN

Edward, a mongol is a guy that rode posse with Attila the Hun.

EDWARD FORD

I thought it was a scruffy dog.

He continues eating his hamburger. And Ben looks past him at the pretty waitress being chatted up by a customer in another booth. The waitress laughs with him, but unfortunately for both of them he doesn't really look like he has a go project in the works. The waitress has the kind of face a lot of people back home probably told her was special.

LATER

Al Foster is considerably further down his road.

EDWARD FORD

Guess who I made a card for today.

BEN

Can't.

EDWARD FORD

Pork Chops.

BEN

Pork Chops.

EDWARD FORD

I only seen him in one film.

BEN

Why bother then?

EDWARD FORD

(as Al drinks)

Well, I'll prob'ly never see him again. Prob'ly never see him again.

BEN

So you selected him for the great honor.

EDWARD FORD

It's just luck, y'know. I'm all caught up on this year's pictures so I just pick out a card and roll the dice and it came out on Pork -

Al knocks over his bottle by accident - other diners turn to look - Ben grabs Al's wrist while it's on its way to recovering the bottle. Al tries not to look Ben in the eyes, while Ben does nothing but.

BEN

If you had any idea what a fucking misery it is to look at you ...

(flings the wrist back at its owner)

You don't even hear me, do you. Through the haze.

AL

I do, Ben.

(he doesn't)

I am - I can hear the signals.

Quiet pause.

EDWARD FORD

(breaks the awkward silence)

The last two names, y'know, were Pork Chops and Kidney Stew. And the number came up on Pork Chops.

AL

Let me ask you something, Edward.

(Edward Ford glances at Ben)

Let me ask you ... of what, uh, ethnic origin do you suppose those worthies hail from?

Ben has to chuckle, even though he keeps it short. Edward Ford smiles a bit. Al chuckles too, pleased that he knew what to say to lighten things up a bit. But it's a momentary respite. A moment later everyone's staring into their glasses again.

EDWARD FORD

Anyhow, that movie was a darn sight better than the second feature, RICHARD the THIRD.

BEN

You didn't like that, huh.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I don't like remakes. It was just a boring remake of a Karloff picture called TOWER OF LONDON. There was this deformed king and these two little princes ...

Ben nods, humoring him, but his eyes keep darting at Al.

CUT.

OUTSIDE

NIGHT

The three of them about to part company, Al really out of it now, wobbling dangerously.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I better get back, I gotta call my dad and wish him Happy Birthday.

BEN

Send him my best too, will you.

EDWARD FORD

(Al Foster teeters)

I sure will.

BEN

Does he still run the Y?

EDWARD FORD

Oh, no, he's retired now. He spends most of his time looking after Mom. She can't really move anymore, or know where anything is.

BEN

We had some fine times there.

EDWARD FORD

Yes, we sure di -

Al Foster falls down. Edward Ford looks at Ben, who is really too angry for words, then starts to bend to help Al. Ben watches sadly.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

NIGHT

Edward Ford and the Krantz children sit on the sofa watching wrestling on tv. Edward Ford and young Luke's sister are still eating the tv dinners on their laps, but young Luke has finished his and is leafing through a massive movie book. A hooded monster of a man enters the ring on tv. Edward Ford and young Luke's sister join in the boos and ominous intakes of breath that greet his arrival. Young Luke meanwhile finds a gaping squared hole on a page of the book where some cowboy's face has been cut out. He puts his finger through it to show his sister, something he's clearly done a number of times on other pages so far this evening, as Edward Ford's continuing defense testifies.

EDWARD FORD

Listen, if I need a picture for my file cards, I wanna find the best one, don't I?

YOUNG LUKE

But you said this book cost ninety dollars. It's a limited edition. And you've mutilated it.

EDWARD FORD

I don't care what they look like.
They're just for me.

Young Luke and his sister give each other a look. There's a KNOCK at the door. Edward Ford goes to answer it, leaving the kids watching television. Muffled voices can be heard. Then after a little bit Edward Ford returns.

EDWARD FORD

Hey, I wantcha to meet someone.

And behind him comes Mitzi, smiling quite companionably.

LATER

Young Luke, standing, is taller than Mitzi who's just leaving. Young Luke's sister stares at this wreck, wondering what it is.

MITZI

Well, I'll let you get back to
what all you're doing.

EDWARD FORD

Oh, we're just gonna watch the news,
y'know, catch up on what's goin' on
in the world.

MITZI

Nice to meet you.

The kids nod. Edward Ford shows her out, then returns alone again to continue watching tv.

YOUNG LUKE

That was a short visit.

EDWARD FORD

Oh, she just wanted this month's
alimony in person, 'stead of waitin'
for the mail.

Pause.

YOUNG LUKE

You pay her alimony?

EDWARD FORD

Well, she ain't got nothin'.

Young Luke and his sister look at each other again.

CUT.

OFFICE

DAY

Edward Ford sits in front of a desk behind which is a CASTING AGENT.

Edward Ford, the somnambulist, is attempting to read cold from a playscript handed to him.

EDWARD FORD

"... I know perfectly well that all this about her being a liar and a bully and a ..."

CASTING AGENT

Coquette.

EDWARD FORD

"Cockette ... and so forth is a trumped-up moral in ... in-dict-ment ... which might be brought against anybody. We all lie; we all bully as much as we dare; we all bid for admiration without the least attention (sic) of earning it; we all get as much rent as we can out of our powers of fars - fascination."

CASTING AGENT

OK - uh - I have your phone number, now, don't I?

CUT.

GARAGE

DAY

Edward Ford stands by his car, a small American model of some kind, bought new by him. A mechanic writes up the service sheet. The acoustics in this place heighten the oppressive noise from other mechanics working on other cars, engines turning over. Though it all somehow seems directed at him, Edward Ford seems mindless to it all. He just stands, waiting for the man to complete his write-up. The man is then called to the phone by another mechanic holding it up for him.

MECHANIC

Greg! - it's your agent!

The other guy drops everything to take the call, leaving Edward Ford in the lurch. Absolutely and positively in the lurch.

WIPE.

HOLLYWOOD BEAN STREETS

NIGHT

Edward Ford walks them, his before bedtime constitutional, wearing his Union Local jacket. Tonight he doesn't look particularly happy with his lot. That is, for him, he looks particularly down. Two whores see him coming.

WHORE

It's the teamster! Hi, teamster!

Edward Ford snarls, putting on his voice.

EDWARD FORD
I ain't innerested (sic).

The two whores makes faces at the bad guy manqué as he walks on.
There's a full moon.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

DAY

Standing, cue in hand. American gothic. Balls can be heard
being racked up.

EDWARD FORD
But all the bad guys, y'know, they
had good characterizistics (sic) -
one had a hearing aid, another had a
scar, another coughed all the time.

AL'S VOICE
The work of an exceptionally
imaginative scribe.

BEN'S VOICE
(after the break sounds)
Did my son accompany you?

EDWARD FORD
No.
(looks where young Luke must be)
He said my choice was scum.

YOUNG LUKE'S VOICE
Three shitpiles he went to. A triple
garbage bill. I wanted to see "M"
with Peter Lorre.

BEN'S VOICE
Why didn't you take him to see "M?"
That was a great movie.

EDWARD FORD
I don't gotta see no foreign films. I
changed my rules after I got tricked
into seeing BLOOD OF A POET. That was
the worst picture I ever saw.

YOUNG LUKE'S VOICE
And next week he's going to a fucking
Deanna Durbin movie instead of VIVA
ZAPATA, I don't believe it.

BEN'S VOICE
You haven't seen that either?

EDWARD FORD

Well, I get to things eventually.

BEN'S VOICE

Don't you have any interest in studying the greatest actor in the world?

EDWARD FORD

I seen Marlon Brando pictures before. I don't think he's so great. I think Lester and Jed were better actors.

BEN'S VOICE

You know, tennis players perfect their game by playing the best possible opponents.

Edward Ford doesn't even hear things like that. He chuckles to himself.

EDWARD FORD

I had a fare up to his house one time. Some Oriental girl. He had these vicious dogs bit me on the ass!

CUT.

KITCHEN

AFTERNOON

Al Foster, drunk, sits at the kitchen table. On the other side of it, young Luke and his sister listen to him.

FOSTER

They're truly screwing me. It's a pirate's game. Hollywood is a damn pirate's game. My hair is falling out. My teeth are falling out. When we were seventeen years old your dad and I shipped out in the Merchant Marine. We lost our cherries in Cuba for four dollars.

CUT.

POOL ROOM

EARLY EVENING

Another game of pool is in progress. Same players and viewers as the first time, except the nineteen year old art student is different this time. It's Edward Ford's turn to shoot.

EDWARD FORD

I had Norman Fell's mother-in-law in the cab today.

And he knocks about seven balls off the table.

CUT.

ILSE'S ROOM

EVENING

She and Joey Ford get up to some heavy breathing without anything on.

CUT.

LIVING ROOM

EVENING

Now they're all watching the Academy Awards. Ben and Joey have an aside.

JOEY

Sure, Ben, as long as it's a morning flight I can pick him up no trouble.

BEN

I'd really appreciate it, Joey, he's my closest friend in London. Just charge me whatever Edward would for an airport trip.

JOEY

He's just visiting LA for the first time, huh.

BEN

No, he's taking over as guest professor - he comes here for the same reason I do. Same reason, different gender.

Joey Ford doesn't really understand what that means.

CUT.

POOL ROOM

NIGHT

Another game. Everyone present again.

EDWARD FORD

Well, she wanted to go to a destination, so I took her.

BEN

Norman Fell's mother-in-law?

EDWARD FORD

No - the girly with the seal and beach ball and the black guy with one eye.

He's serious, trying to tell his story. But everyone in the room laughs. All these people. And Edward Ford has to nod along goodhumoredly.

CUT.

LA AIRPORT

DAY

BRADFORD, the artist, stands on the concourse, waiting for his ride. The elegant white suit he's wearing would be equally at home on the body of a charge d'affaires in a legation in Calcutta in 1910. With him is his pouting consort named KEITH. Their heads follow a car as it pulls up. It's Edward Ford's car, and Joey Ford, the driver of it, looks out at these two with something less than gung-ho.

CUT.

A HAND

DAY

Reaching, stretching, quavering, belonging to Carla, Al Foster's girlfriend. Al Foster is screaming in drunken madness and strangling her to death. Her fingers are trying to touch the telephone.

HALLWAY

Of this nasty rooming hotel. Another foul tenant walks past Al's door, completely ignoring the crazed shrieking, and disappears into his own lovely chamber.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

Quiet for a time. Then the phone rings. But no one's home.

FOSTER'S ROOM

Carla cowers in a corner, holding the telephone receiver like a club. Across the floor, Al starts moving, starts groggily to come to. Carla shakes, moans to herself, transfixed to the spot. But she forces herself to crawl back over and clout him across the skull again with the telephone. Then she goes back on her hands and knees to her corner and keeps whining.

CUT.

SUNSET BOULEVARD

DAY

Coming from the direction of Gardner Street School, Edward Ford's car, driven by his brother, goes by Hollywood High. Bradford looks out at the pretty tanned boys milling outside. Bradford knows he's arrived.

Joey Ford looks quite nervous, edging his thigh as far away from Bradford's as he can.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

EVENING

Edward Ford comes home from work, unclipping his change-making machine from his belt. He walks straight for the ringing phone.

CUT.

AL FOSTER'S PLACE

NIGHT

Edward Ford walks away from Carla, and picks up a few more broken objects off the floor. Carla sits stonily at a table, wearing a soft neck brace. Edward Ford goes into the bathroom.

BATHROOM

Al Foster soaks in the dirty bathtub. Edward Ford goes to sit on the chair next to it.

AL

(stares glassily)

I'll be going back ... to Coventry in a few days. Will you let Carla stay with you until she finds another location?

EDWARD FORD

Sure, Al.

AL

Just a week or so, I imagine. She's a fine lady. I can thank her for not being in the care of the local constabulary.

EDWARD FORD

She said she didn't know their number.

Pause.

AL

My downhill decline began the moment I set foot in Hollywood. I tripped, you know.

EDWARD FORD

Uh-huh.

AL

... I just have to go home ... and ... regroup my resources.

He might cry.

CUT.

KRANTZ DRIVEWAY

DAY

The Krantz family says goodbye to Edward Ford, his brother, and Ilse with a lot of hugs and hand-clasping.

BEN

(hugs Ilse)

Thanks for everything, Ilse.

(shakes Joey's hand)

Congratulations.

EDWARD FORD

(to young Luke)

You have a nice time back in London now. I'll write ya all the movies I see.

YOUNG LUKE

Me too.

His sister weeps.

THE KRANTZ CAR

Drives away, the people left behind waving after it, the kids waving back from the back window. Soon it's gone, down the hill.

DISSOLVE.

CARLA

DAY

Still sitting stonily, but without the neck brace now, and on Edward Ford's sofa. She watches him. He hangs up the phone and walks back to her.

EDWARD FORD

Alright, I done real good. It's all set - I'm takin' you over to a cabdriver friend of mine's. He's a nice man, he's been a widow for two years and he's real lonely. He'll be real pleased to have a woman around.

Woman? She stares at him, making sulking into an art form. He is not to be dissuaded however. He goes and puts his face very close to hers, staring back at her.

EDWARD FORD

Seven months you been with me.
Seven months. Without doing one dish.

Pause.

CARLA

I jacked you off once, didn't I.

CUT.

JOEY AND ILSE FORD

EVENING

Hug Edward Ford goodbye at the airport before going off into their terminal with a cart stacked full with luggage. Edward Ford stands still until they can't be seen anymore.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S COURTYARD

EVENING

He walks back in toward his place. Carla comes out of the shadows where she's been waiting, holding her suitcase.

CARLA

Where've you been?

EDWARD FORD

(not thrilled to see her)

The airport. My brother and his wife moved to Virginia today.

CARLA

Why?

EDWARD FORD

He took a government job -

CARLA

I have to come back.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I don't have to let you.

CARLA

That guy bought me a cemetery plot.

EDWARD FORD

Why'd he do that?

CARLA

So I'd be taken care of, he said.
Taken care of!

EDWARD FORD

He's thoughtful, that's all.
Just thoughtful.

CARLA

He's whacko!

EDWARD FORD

(walks on, shaking his head)
!No way.

CARLA

(follows him)
He tried to stop me coming back to you
he told me what you said about me.

EDWARD FORD

What was that?

CARLA

You said I was crazy. You said to him, "She's crazy. I sucked her titty, but then she made me nervous so I quit."

EDWARD FORD

You didn't even do that much for the poor guy. I was on the phone with him, he was calling me obsceneties. All this time, and he redecorated his whole house to suit your taste - his whole fuckin' house! - and you made him pay you seventy-five dollars just to let him feel your minge.

CARLA

He told you that!

EDWARD FORD

And he had to cover all the tv sets and radios and stuff 'cause you said the jews would come out and get you.

CARLA

Fuck you, pal. Just fuck you!

EDWARD FORD

No - hey - I don't even want that favor from you.

He's going up his^s steps now. In an apartment unit down here a would-be rock group practices. Carla follows Edward Ford.

CARLA

Just one more night - I got nowhere to go! I'll leave first thing in the morning!

CUT.

DAWN

MORNING

Breaking over the city.

EDWARD FORD'S DOOR

Opens. Carla's suitcase comes out first, then Carla, with a helping hand. The door shuts again.

INSIDE

Edward Ford yanks the sheet off his tv set.

CUT.

BLACKNESS

HAROLD BLAKE'S VOICE

Shut up.

A THUD is heard.

PATTY BLAKE'S VOICE

You fuckhead.

HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT

DAY

Harry Blake has come way down in the world, not that he was ever up. This place reeks. His wife sits next to him. Both are soused and look awful. Patty is wearing a man's suit. Her looks are all but gone. Her husband is wearing a dress, but hasn't shaved in a day or two.

BLAKE

But it pays.

(shrug)

Porno pays.

EDWARD FORD

I'd like to read one sometime.

BLAKE

* (turns to wife)

Honey, do we have any more copies of BESTIAL VIRGINS?

She's somewhere else. Blake turns back to Edward Ford.

BLAKE

Bestsellers, I write. Word gets around, you'd be surprised. You can't find a copy of MOTHER'S HORNY SONS in an adult bookstore in Southern California.

(pause)

I specialize in incest.

EDWARD FORD

Uh-huh.

BLAKE

(head down)

If I could just get one more picture off the ground. Just one more.

PATTY

There are other things in life than movies.

BLAKE

What are they?

(as a raving QUEEN comes into view)

Huh, Ed?

QUEEN

Hi, people!

BLAKE

Ed, meet my lawyer.

QUEEN

Well, hello.

He bends over and plants a kiss on Edward Ford's lips. Edward Ford instinctively jumps to his feet and spits to cleanse his mouth. He shakes a finger at the queen.

EDWARD FORD

Now listen - I'm not gonna hit you this time - but don't ever do that again. I like girls!

The queen holds up his palms in a gesture of pacification. Patty Blake starts to laugh, but Harry bangs her head against the wall.

BLAKE

Shut up.

PATTY

(as she bounces back)

You fuckhead.

Edward Ford takes his seat again.

BLAKE

You have to forgive my friends these days. They don't make 'em like Lester and Jed anymore.

EDWARD FORD

No, they don't.

BLAKE

They're all gone now.

Edward Ford thinks to himself.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Yeah. They're all gone now.

DISSOLVE.

A TAXI

Stays in the centre of the SCREEN, wheels turning, as it drives though time, one moment along Pacific Coast Highway, sunset light glistening on the ocean beyond, the next moment past grungy houses in Whittier. It drives along Santa Monica Boulevard in Beverly Hills in the rain, along the same street in Hollywood at night. Smog hangs over the San Fernando Valley one day, but the cab turns another corner of Mulholland Drive to find night on the other side, a million lights now twinkling over the edge below. Downtown LA is drab, Venice is seedy beyond belief. On the freeway north to Burbank or south to Anaheim, down Topanga or up Fairfax from the Farmer's Market, in the sunny green of Brentwood or the grey morning of Culver City, the wheels turn.

EDWARD FORD

Driving. He looks in the rear view mirror.

INTO THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

A punk with an orange streak in his green hair sits in the back.

EDWARD FORD

Driving. Looks in the mirror again.

BACK SEAT

Now a beautiful model is the passenger. Profiling. Like a swan. Three or four varieties of Southern California gas station are seen passing by outside the window she's facing. And when the back seat of the cab is returned to, the swan has turned into an Orthodox Jew.

STRAIGHT ON

Past Edward Ford, his expression unchanging, to the fare in the back seat, a typical Los Angeles unorthodox Jew, fifty years old, denim outfit, Manton lotion, sunglasses, open neck shirt, gold chain ...

EDWARD FORD

In profile himself now, the view outside the side window beyond varying as before, LA scenes passing by. Moving around Edward Ford's face as it concentrates on the day to day business of driving, his other profile is reached. And the view outside the other side window is still now. The cab is parked, Edward Ford eating a peanut butter sandwich. He happens to glance out this side window and spots a character actor he's seen in eighty-two motion pictures walking along.

EDWARD FORD

Hiya, Joel

(or whatever his name really is)

The character actor looks around to find who called him, sees Edward Ford, goes up and sticks his head right in the window.

CHARACTER ACTOR
How's business, cabbie?

GARAGE

MORNING

The cab comes out into the light.

BACK SEAT

DAY

The passengers are two young Hollywood smart-alecs going over a script.

PARKED CAB

AFTERNOON

Edward Ford on the sidewalk opens the passenger door to help another passenger with discolored hair out - this time it's an emblematic California old lady - with a bunch of walking contraptions the American medical profession has lumbered her with in exchange for life's savings. Her dress rides up as she struggles, giving Edward Ford a disagreeable sight.

GARAGE

EVENING

The cab goes back into the dark.

A BLACK MAN

In the back seat as the cab moves on - the view of him then revealed to be in the rear view mirror, Edward Ford watching him.

OVER EDWARD FORD'S SHOULDER

The black man lights up a cigarette - only now it's a different black man.

EDWARD FORD

Flips up the meter to the nine o'clock position as a black hand reaches over with a five-dollar bill. Edward Ford gives the hand a quarter change. The hand gives Edward Ford a nickel tip. The passenger, not seen anymore, gets out. With a disgruntled look Edward Ford watches him walk away.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

As Edward Ford's cab approaches and stops for crossers a fourth black man runs out the back door and off down the street. Edward Ford looks around in a distressed way for a while, but there's nothing he can do about it and the driver behind him honks.

CAHUENGA BOULEVARD

DAY

Someone on the sidewalk hails Edward Ford's cab, but a cab coming the other way pulls a fast U-turn and guzzles the order from him.

PARAMOUNT STUDIOS

The cab goes in.

LOT

Edward Ford stands smoking a cigarette by his cab, waiting for his passenger, an actress in the distance outside a soundstage, laughing with a director. Edward Ford watches a couple of actors in costume go by.

PARAMOUNT STUDIOS

The cab comes out.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S BARE BACK

DAY

Humping away. A bed creaking. He stops humping for a moment while his head moves down a bit.

VOICE

Don't chew on my nipples or I'll have an epileptic fit.

He carries on just humping, his head moving back up and to one side, now revealing the face of his partner. The voice was a clue to something strange, the statement the voice made a further endorsement of the bizarre, but neither was sufficient preparation for the sight of a sixty-five year old wizened black woman.

EDWARD FORD

Standing next to the bed, finishing buttoning his shirt.

EDWARD FORD

Do you want me to put you back in your wheelchair now?

THE SIXTY-FIVE YEAR OLD WIZENED BLACK WOMAN'S APARTMENT

The wheelchair is indeed revealed near the bed in the dim room.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

Oh, no. No, thank you. I'd better stay here now.

EDWARD FORD

OK. You're -

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK
I haven't had sex in so long, you know.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I'm - pleased to oblige.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

I haven't had any in so long.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I'd better be gettin' back on
the road now.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

Alright. You got your tip there.

EDWARD FORD

Oh, yeah. Yes, I do. Thank you.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

OK.

EDWARD FORD

Take care now.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

I will.

EDWARD FORD

Bye now.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

Alright. Thank you.

Edward Ford shuffles out.

THE SIXTY-FIVE YEAR OLD WIZENED BLACK WOMAN'S STREET

Edward Ford walks to where his cab is parked and gets into it.

CUT.

THROUGH A TUNNEL OF TALL PALMS

AFTERNOON

The cab drives up Beverly Hills toward Sunset, past the little
Disney cottage, and Buddy Hackett's house with the elephant
outside, and all the other excruciating styles and designs.

A KOREAN FAMILY

Coming out of their drab house, like a tank heading for Edward
Ford's cab. Edward Ford wondering how they're all going to fit.

RODEO DRIVE

From out of the most expensive of shops, after one or two excessively chic types emerge, comes Edward Ford in typical attire carrying a Saint Laurent rive gauche bag. Followed by a rich lady, pointing at the next shop on her list. Edward Ford, kindly as always, nods simply and goes with her.

TRANCAS

Four nubile things in bikinis run over to the cab that's stopped for them and get in.

EDWARD FORD

Driving, half the time glancing up at the mirror as the teenage quartet, thighs squashed together, giggle behind him. Through the window, west of Malibu pier, surfers dot the blue sea, waiting for the big one.

A MANSION IN PACIFIC PALISADES

Edward Ford waits by the front door, checking the address against the piece of paper in his hand.

A HOUSE IN WATTS

Edward Ford waits by the front door, checking the address against the piece of paper in his hand.

TROPICANA HOTEL

He picks up some Andy Warhol superstars from a bungalow.

THROUGH THE GATES OF BEL-AIR

Goes Edward Ford's cab.

TWO WHORES ON LAS PALMAS

Bend over expectantly to look in at the driver of the cab as it cruises slowly past.

SANTA MONICA

A man follows Edward Ford down his house pathway to the cab, petting a dog on his lawn. Edward Ford, the man, and the dog get into the cab.

THE CAB

Driving to Downtown LA, passing a number of fast-food landmarks.

DOWNTOWN LA

Writing up the fare on his trip sheet as the man from Santa Monica walks away, Edward Ford realizes that the dog is still in the back seat.

EDWARD FORD

Hey, mister! - you forgot your dog.

The man looks confused.

MAN

I thought it was your dog.

Edward Ford just stares.

THE CAB

Going back to Santa Monica, past the same gems of West Coast architecture.

SANTA MONICA

Edward Ford shoves the dumb mutt back out onto the lawn he came from.

EDWARD FORD

Remaining on the right of the screen, just driving, working the steering wheel, as the static babble of his radio crackles out its colored code words and street names, and the passengers constantly change behind him.

A young actress, studying her audition lines out loud.

Replaced by Scandinavian tourists with knapsacks.

Replaced by another Hollywood scuzz woman, making retching noises.

Replaced by an Arab.

Replaced by an ordinary woman.

Replaced by an ordinary man.

Replaced by a rock musician and his eight million dollars worth of equipment.

Replaced by a couple smooching.

Replaced by some kind of nut.

Replaced by a businessman leaning forward to gab with Edward Ford.

Replaced by a prostitute and her pimp.

Replaced by three children.

Replaced by an irate woman yelling at Edward Ford.

Replaced by archivist Forrest J. Ackerman.

Replaced by a sniffing hippie.

Replaced by Lee Marvin.

Replaced by a street hustler and his client.

Replaced by a fat Mexican gentleman wearing a bowler hat who is actually hopping up and down in his seat. At this Edward Ford glances nervously up at his mirror.

THE MEXICAN GENTLEMAN

Jumping up and down in the back seat, speaking very quickly in Spanish.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

I'm sorry, sir - I only speak English.

The man keeps chattering, now pointing out the window a lot too.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

We'll be at your destination real soon - I'm goin' as fast as I can.

The Mexican gentleman is going crazy now. Completely red in the face. Finally he takes off his bowler hat, holds it before him at seat level, and unzips his trousers.

EDWARD FORD

Looks in the rear view mirror.

EDWARD FORD

Hey - now - uh - hey -

BACK SEAT

NIGHT

A not very attractive white girl leans forward.

GIRL

You wanna date?

EDWARD FORD

Uh - not today - I don't really have no money.

A COWBOY

DAY

In the back seat.

COWBOY

You wanna date?

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

I think I better let you off right here.

COWBOY

Hey, you can piss on me or whatever.
No problem.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

I think I better let you off right here.

A BLACK GIRL

NIGHT

Looks at him beseechingly.

BLACK GIRL

All I need is ten dollars.

DETERIORATED MIDDLE-AGED WHITE WOMAN

DAY

Finally turns toward the driver.

WOMAN

We could fuck if you like.

EDWARD FORD

NIGHT

Turns toward the passenger. Another girl sitting next to him,
also somewhat rotten-looking.

EDWARD FORD

You know, I'm kinda short right now.

DOWNTOWN

DAY

Parked in a dark place, Edward Ford gets stroked by a black
chick.

EDWARD FORD

NIGHT

Looks at an unseen passenger.

EDWARD FORD

All I can give ya is three dollars
- is that enough?

THE CAB

DAY

Driving down Western Avenue.

GIRL'S VOICE

See, it could be a real party 'cause our rent's coming up on Monday and we're gonna get evicted this time if we don't have it - my roommates are much better looking than me.

FRONT SEAT

NIGHT

A customer, face turned away, pulls shut the passenger door, then turns. It's a transvestite with slightly later than five o'clock shadow.

TRANSVESTITE

You wanna date?

AN UGLY, FAT WHITE WOMAN

DAY

Standing on a sidewalk next to a trash container, as if to more clearly delineate her place in society. She has her hand up in a cab-summoning way, fingers wriggling. She gets into Edward Ford's cab when it stops for her.

INSIDE

Edward Ford looks at her.

WOMAN

I just got to get to South Normandie.
I just got to.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

As Edward Ford unbuttons his own shirt while watching the woman start to roll her T-shirt up off herself, it becomes more apparent that she's not just fat - she's quite pregnant.

SOUTH NORMANDIE

The woman gets out of the cab.

EDWARD FORD

DAY

Points out a building to his passenger as he drives past.

EDWARD FORD

That's where they found Albert Dekker with a noose around his cock.

WHORES

NIGHT

A whole line of classy-looking ones along the Strip, opposite the Chateau Marmont, wearing slit-skirt dresses, expensive leg-warmers, high boots, hot pants, etc.

EDWARD FORD'S CAB

Goes by, Edward Ford eyeing the length of the line. So much so that he almost rear-ends the car in front of him, jamming on his brakes suddenly. The movie and music billboards around him and above him are monstrous.

EDWARD FORD

DAY

Continuing his tour.

EDWARD FORD

That's where Sal Mineo was murdered.

WESTWOOD

EVENING

The cab lets off some execs going to an important PREVIEW! as it says outside the theatre.

EDWARD FORD

DAY

Nods ahead.

EDWARD FORD

Cecil B. DeMille is buried in there.

STOPPED AT TRAFFIC LIGHTS DOWNTOWN

AFTERNOON

Edward Ford waits for a leper to stagger past the windscreen.

EDWARD FORD

(mumble)

There's one of life's losers.

CUT.

THE METER

NIGHT

Edward Ford's hand puts the arm down as a new customer is heard getting in the back. Then the sound of a second CLICK. A far more ominous one.

EDWARD FORD'S FACE

Quite still. The muzzle of a gun pressed against his forehead.

ROBBER'S VOICE
You know what I want.

EDWARD FORD
Uh ... You sure you want to do this?

THE ROBBER
Has a real mean expression.

ROBBER
Absolutely sure, asshole.

A POLICE CAR
Prowling not far away.

THE CAB
The robber takes the money Edward Ford has given him.

EDWARD FORD
Are you satisfied now?

ROBBER
Shut up, mug.

EDWARD FORD
You'll never get away with this.

ROBBER
(brandishes his weapon)
I thought I told you to shut up.

And he twitches crazily once or twice as he stuffs the money into his jacket pocket.

THE POLICE CAR
Nearer.

THE CAB
The robber backs out carefully, still pointing the gun at Edward Ford.

EDWARD FORD
Don't be a fool, man.

ROBBER
I know what I'm doin'.

The robber starts to walk away.

EDWARD FORD

Spots the police car coming down the block. With one hand he starts honking his horn wildly and turns on his blinker lights with the other.

THE POLICE CAR

Through the windshield one cop is seen urging on his partner the driver, pointing ahead.

THE ROBBER

Sees them coming, starts running.

THE POLICE CAR

Lights flashing, siren blaring, giving chase.

THE ROBBER

Turns down a sidestreet, runs on.

THE POLICE CAR

Skids around the corner.

THE ROBBER

Turns down an alley, stops almost immediately - it's a dead end.

THE POLICE CAR

Blocks the entranceway behind him.

THE ROBBER

Fires his gun insanely at them, not even aiming, just flinging the bullets out of the barrel like they do in old gangster movies and westerns.

THE COPS

Opening their car doors for cover as they start returning fire.

COP

(shouts to robber)

Drop the gun and come out with
your hands up!

THE ROBBER

Completely mad look on his face. Firing away.

ROBBER
(screams)
Whatsamattah, coppahs? - yella?!

THE COPS

Fire back. But they ain.

THE ROBBER

Hit. He wheels at the force of it, and staggers around theatrically for a while, the MUSIC swelling up, before finally collapsing in a puddle. Dead. It begins to snow.

FADE OUT.

(THE EARLY EIGHTIES ...)

A HOLLYWOOD PARTY

NIGHT

A smallish gathering in a Beverly Hills house. Conventional noises can be heard: "I can't Wednesday, I have Talmud class" ... "It opened big" ... "best slip on the Marina" ... "I'm spending all day tomorrow with Laddie" ... and, with the utmost sincerity, "That's the kind of project I want to be associated with." Familiar faces, a lot of them, these people are a far cry from Edward Ford's haunts. Luke, early twenties, sits talking to the WIFE of Joel Gray or someone.

WIFE

But why doesn't he take acting classes or something?

LUKE

Because he's a banana. He didn't even come here to become an actor, he came to be a bad guy in B-westerns. You understand what B-westerns were? - it doesn't mean a poor Gary Cooper movie.

WIFE

Sure - Gene Autry -

LUKE

Yeah, like that - appalling things - it was an entire subculture - and for him it's like the planet Krypton blowing up, 'cause they just barely made the last three while he was still on the bus.

WIFE

So he's just been an extra all these years?

LUKE

He's never managed to be an extra - just "waiver" jobs a few times. When a film has its quota of extras they hire people who waive all rights to minimum day wages and recognition as a human being.

WIFE

"Waiver" - I've never heard that term.

A woman is overheard saying, "He's my child" in reference to her poodle. Mort Engelberg gets another drink. Sydney Pollack tells a joke. Elmer Bernstein walks by.

LUKE

In a biblical movie the people you see huddled around on the grass listening attentively to Christ, those are the extras. The tiny dots on that hilltop fifteen miles to the north - waivers.

LATER

LUKE

He actually befriended a couple of the old cowboy character actors he'd always literally looked up to - and they were like old bums by the time he showed up.

WIFE

You'd think he could've found some way at least of utilizing all his movie knowledge -

LUKE

No - it's not even - I wouldn't want to even honor it by calling it an expertise. He knows nothing about movies - just cast lists. I - it would take a Great American Novel to do justice to his madness.

Joel or whoever has come over to sit on the edge of his wife's chair, arm around her.

WIFE

Does he like girls?

LUKE

Well, I don't think "girls" have ever really been, uh, introduced into his life. Certain types of demented she-goat - I mean, if you presented him with the back end of an alsation he might -

WIFE

(laughs)

When can we meet this person?

LUKE

Well, next time my father visits he's thinking of putting all his LA friends in one room together to see what happens. The naked and the dead.

Pause.

WIFE

And you see a lot of this fellow.

LUKE

Sure - he's my best friend here.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

DUSK

Same dump he was in last decade. Dustier and gloomier than ever. Edward Ford is speaking on the telephone. Edward Ford has hardly changed.

EDWARD FORD

C'mon now, we oughta leave right now if you wanna get there in time.

LUKE'S APARTMENT

This "studio" space is an exceptionally neat, modern, and pleasant counterpoint to Edward Ford's domicile. Luke is on the phone, looking at the television at the same time.

LUKE

- I'm watching Sheree North in a black lingerie outfit, do you mind! God, why can't I have that -

(Their conversation is now INTERCUT)

EDWARD FORD

Listen, it lets out early - we can go to a sex shop after.

LUKE

Why don't you just let me choose something decent to see.

EDWARD FORD

Hell, I haven't seen Robert Preston in a movie since -

LUKE

I know - since April 14, 1942 at the Festering Maggot Theatre in Vermin, South Dakota -

EDWARD FORD

Hey, and all the whores'll be out tonight - and, listen, I found a whole new area where they hang out.

CUT.

MOVIE THEATRE

NIGHT

Suddenly Edward Ford cranes his head forward and points at a whole crowd of faces on the screen.

EDWARD FORD
That's James Flavin!

As he whips out his notebook to record this remarkable discovery Luke rolls his eyes, then darts them left and right, slightly embarrassed.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S CAR

NIGHT

It's a Datsun or something, bought new by him, but a few years old now. Edward Ford nods ahead to the left.

EDWARD FORD
I once saw two gals get into a
knife fight outside that bar -
and I fucked one of 'em.

Plain, he said it.

CUT.

SEX SHOP

NIGHT

Luke walks around, joins Edward Ford, looks over his shoulder to see what magazine he's looking at.

LUKE
(points something out)
Those are men.

EDWARD FORD
(drops it like a hot potato)
Oh, gee.

He can hardly get it back in the rack he's so disgusted. He goes to look at dirty comic books instead.

THE GUY AT THE CASH REGISTER

As Edward Ford and Luke leave, goes back to filling out his Screen Actor's Guild dues declaration, while underneath through the clear glass panel he's using as a desk sexual devices of all sorts are on display.

OUTSIDE

As they walk away Edward Ford tries to conceal the large bag that says "Le Sex Shoppe" on it.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S CAR

NIGHT

As they drive around looking at the whores.

EDWARD FORD

You know how many there are in the Screen Actor's Guild? ... Sixty thousand.

(Luke laughs)

You know what that means? That means there's sixty thousand people I'm inferior to. How do they do it!

(Luke has no answer for him)

How do they do it! All these young fucks come up, y'know. I see 'em all the time on tv - new fucks I never heard of - and they get their SAG cards. And it's frustrating. Most of 'em got no talent and I do! It's just frustrating. I mean, look at your dad - he's practically a millionaire -

LUKE

He wishes.

EDWARD FORD

But he's a success in his chosen field. His chosen field. And look at the rest of us - I'm nothin' but a fuckin' waiver - the scum of the earth - they don't even let waivers eat until all the extras have cleaned out the canteen - you ain't sold nothin' yet - Foster's a fuckin' drunk, sweepin' the streets back in 'Cov -

Two whores in a car bearing Nevada plates have pulled up on Edward Ford's side.

BLONDE WHORE

Are you guys looking for a date?

EDWARD FORD

(turns to Luke)

Do you have two hundred dollars cash?

CUT.

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

DAY

Edward Ford and Luke walk the stars.

EDWARD FORD

I mean, Lester and Jed, now, they're dead, but they'll always be remembered through their films. They're up there, and they're in my movie books, y'know. I've been in Hollywood for nearly twenty -

He almost leaps into the arms of a stranger when a skateboarder zooms out of nowhere and right between Edward Ford and Luke.

EDWARD FORD

- nearly twenty-three years. Twenty-three. And I can't even get to first base. I'm stuck in black theatre. I'm grateful to 'em, y'know, 'cause even though there's no pay involved they let me be bad and do bad things - but when we take that last curtain call, that's it. It don't live on or nothin'.

They go into Larry Edmunds bookshop.

LARRY EDMUND'S

Luke holds open "The Films of Myrna Loy" while Edward Ford quickly jots down names from a cast list into his notebook. Luke looks around, again embarrassed if anyone sees.

THE BOULEVARD

They come out again, stopping abruptly as the same skateboarder whizzes by, going in the opposite direction this time. They walk back toward where Luke's car is parked, turning on Las Palmas, the huge newsstand opposite them. Luke flips through the new "Film Comment" he bought at Edmund's.

LUKE

Jesus, there's an article here about that idiot director you knew - the one who collected weirdos.

EDWARD FORD

Harry Blake? - you're kidding.

LUKE

Someone's discovered those wretched movies of his. They say ... he's a genuine American primitive.

EDWARD FORD

A primitive? Gee, Patty won't like that.

LUKE

Who's that, the wife?

TINY NAYLOR'S

DAY

Luke has a hamburger, Edward Ford a sandwich. They're both just eating. Their visit to Patty inspired Luke with melancholy. In another booth sits a black man, quite possibly a pimp, with a white girl who has a big bandage across half her skull. At the counter sits a strange-looking, very short man with a thin greased moustache wearing funny trousers and a loud cowboy shirt. About to enter is an awfully big-boned and crazed young woman who won't be able to stop chattering weirdly to the waitress, a respectable-looking older woman, once probably rather pretty, who dutifully goes about her job. Luke watches the nut for a bit.

LUKE

Would you go to bed with that for your SAG card?

EDWARD FORD

Uh - negative. No, I would not.

LUKE

You used to do things like that.

EDWARD FORD

Well, those were in my younger days. I just want to meet a nice girl. If I had a nice girl I wouldn't go round lockin' at whores no more. Just a nice girl and some bad guy parts, that's all I want.

LUKE

You wouldn't appear in a hardcore homosexual fist movie for your SAG card.

EDWARD FORD

That is correct. I would not. No way.

LUKE

How about for a million dollars?

EDWARD FORD

No.

LUKE

Who would you rather sleep with, Maria Ouspenskaya or Beulha Bondi?

EDWARD FORD

You're filthy. You really are.

Luke glances at the CAMERA and gestures toward Edward Ford as if requesting corroboration for the man's eccentricity.

CUT.

AGENT'S OFFICE

DAY

Edward Ford being interviewed.

AGENT

You've been a professional actor
for twenty-five years?

EDWARD FORD

(nods proudly)

I was in a play once with Dorothy
Gish, so I guess that dates me.
Summer stock.

AGENT

And you've never had an agent before?

EDWARD FORD

No. Not really.

AGENT

(a little dubious by now)

Have you had ... acting training?

EDWARD FORD

Oh, yeah. I took a class in college.

AGENT

(can't conceal his surprise)

College? Which college?

EDWARD FORD

Fritz Jackson College in Delaware.

AGENT

(consults a paper)

Ah, I have your correct number here,
don't I.

CUT.

LUKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING

DAY

He waits outside, getting into Edward Ford's car when it comes by.

CUT.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM

DAY

Edward Ford and Luke start in past the signs advertising the
Russian Avant-Garde show currently on, as forty-eight Beverly
Hills yentas with placards try to thrust leaflets at them.
Edward Ford takes one.

EDWARD FORD

Looks stupidly at it as they go up the steps.

EDWARD FORD
 "Free Soviet Jewelry (sic)"
 (gives it to Luke)
 I don't want no free Soviet jewelry.

CUT.

INSIDE MUSEUM

Luke and Edward Ford walk slowly, Luke looking at the paintings, Edward Ford reading the movie programme in his hand.

EDWARD FORD
 Say, they're gonna have a George
 Cukor season.

LUKE
 That's thrilling.

EDWARD FORD
 I haven't seen a lot of these.

A couple passes by, both wearing Sony walkman headsets.

LUKE
 (stops)
 What's your opinion of this picture?

A masterpiece of some kind. Edward Ford looks up at it. He has no opinion at all.

EDWARD FORD
 (sarcasm)
 It's swell, Luke. It's real swell.

Luke laughs, moves on.

EDWARD FORD
 Where's your dad's picture?

LUKE
 We'll find it.

EDWARD FORD
 What's it gonna be - some Coke bottle?

Luke laughs again as they go around a corner. Outta sight.

CUT.

LUKE'S CAR

EVENING

Enters West Los Angeles College.

EDWARD FORD

Well, Foster called from Coventry. He still wants to try and get back out here, y'know. He's tryin' to scrape up the dough. I hope he makes it out while I'm still doin' these plays.

LUKE

When're you putting it on at Chino?

EDWARD FORD

That's next Sunday. And the women's prison the week after. My car better be workin' again by then.

LUKE

Did you read five prisoners escaped yesterday.

EDWARD FORD

They did? They musta heard we was comin'.

MAIN BUILDING

Luke finds a parking space. As he shuts the lights Edward Ford starts to get out, but then turns to look behind him, hearing noise. Luke's father has just sat up in the back seat, throwing off the coat that was hiding him in the dark back there. His hair is greyer than it used to be. He grins at Edward Ford; Edward Ford's expression is completely inane.

EDWARD FORD

" (to Luke)

There's a man with a beard in your car.

Luke laughs. Ben too.

CUT.

LARGE CLASSROOM

There is no stage. Just a lot of folding chairs set up in rows facing the front. Luke and his father sit toward the back where they're alone. Behind them at the entrance two black students at a table sell tickets to incoming people. About half of the folding chairs are filled. Everyone else here is black. Waiting for the show to start.

BEN

... because unless they accumulated a lot of medical bills at the end he must have gotten something from the sale of his parents' house. Unless he let his brother take it all.

LUKE

Well, the cab company went bust more than a year ago, but he goes down every Wednesday and still gets forty dollars strike benefit - so something keeps him afloat.

BEN

It's strange to think of Edward Ford as a man of leisure now. I'm sure it'll make him even more bizarre. In some vegetating way.

LUKE

I don't know, I think he's probably very much in the American grain. I mean, he has other associations - he has dinner with people - people from his church ...

BEN

Yes. You're right. Ordinary American types.

LUKE

Sure. Morons.

BEN

It's amazing he's found a niche in these negroid playlets. Like a kind of repertory situation.

LUKE

(nods)

He has fun. Plays parts like "white cop."

BEN

What do you think they think of Edward Ford?

(Luke starts laughing)

Heah comes that honky ass-hole again.

LUKE

At least blacks know they're black.

BEN

Bring him up to Bradford's for a swim and we'll watch his reactions. It'll be like studying a baboon scratching its genitals in the zoo.

LUKE

(still laughing)

Well - he's always asking to be connected with the beau monde. Every time I mention someone he says, "Will ya invite 'im ta my play?" He seriously entertains the notion that one of the Chosen People is gonna take his Mercedes for a run down to Little Zimbabwe one evening to see his latest shitpile.

BEN

It can't be less entertaining than some Brecht and Beckett I've sat through.

LUKE

Sure - you've heard of the Kitchen Sink school of theatre - now you'll see the Toilet Bowl.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

In front of the blackboard, playing "Mother" in A HATFUL OF RAIN. The rest of the cast is black. Edward Ford is dangling a packet of dope in front of the strung-out junkie.

EDWARD FORD

One lousy spoon of morphine and I put my life on the block every time I put it in my pocket. How many times did I bring it to you? Huh? They'll give me ten years for carrying that!

THE AUDIENCE

Cheers absolutely maniacally. And the prison guards at the walls look very nervous.

CUT.

THREE NAKED YOUNG MEN

DAY

Dive into the brilliant blue of a swimming pool one after the other. The swimming pool is in the midst of a paradisaical Hollywood Hills setting, the house completely private, with green all around.

PORCH ABOVE POOL

Ben leans on it with Edward Ford. Edward Ford's face is about as panicky as it can get.

EDWARD FORD

Listen, I think it's swell when you visit, Ben. Real swell. I'm sorry you don't stay longer so's you can come see me act more - but, geez, I wish you knew some normal people.

BEN

You're not going for a swim, then.

EDWARD FORD

Uh, no. No, I think I will pass on that.

BEN

What if this was a scene in a movie and they'd give you a SAG card if you went swimming with a bunch of naked boys?

EDWARD FORD

I'd ... I would have to give it careful consideration.

BEN

Real careful, huh.

EDWARD FORD

Pretty damn careful.

INSIDE

Luke lounges in a chair watching a Monte Hellman film on the Z-channel, casually flipping through a newspaper too. A handsome woman slinks into view in the background, looks for something in her flight bag, disappears again, moving like someone getting out of LA in the next day or so. Across the rambling floor of the house, Bradford stands talking on a wall phone, dressed like Billy Bunter on the day of an important cricket match.

BRADFORD

... Christopher and Don will meet us at Ma and Pa Maison ...

When Luke's chair is returned to, he's no longer in it, but it's still rocking back and forth.

PORCH

Luke comes out to show Edward Ford the newspaper.

LUKE

How'd you like to go to a Harry
Blake film festival next week?

Edward Ford lunges to snatch the paper in excitement and he
FREEZES in that position.

CUT.

THE NUART THEATRE

EVENING

A very long line stretches around the block. Edward Ford's car
moves past.

LUKE

I told you there'd be a million
people. Shit.

EDWARD FORD

(doesn't understand this)

Geez, you were right.

(getting nervous about parking now)

Holy smoke. I thought there'd be
nobody here.

THE LINE

Moving slowly - and Edward Ford and Luke are now found near the
end of it.

Luke notices the types who've come to this extravaganza of camp.
Trendy couples, college students talking film ... He's embarrassed
to be here with the likes of Edward Ford.

In the box office a succession of five-dollar bills are plopped
down in exchange for tickets.

Nearer the entrance there are people dressed as characters from
the most famous Harold Blake production, INVADERS FROM PLANET TEN.
Others sell T-shirts and buttons depicting same. A tv news
magazine crew is on hand also, interviewing people as they go in.
And Laird Breen is standing on the sidewalk in front too, a
guest speaker of the evening. Edward Ford spots him.

EDWARD FORD

There's Laird Breen. I know Laird.
You wanna meet him?

He's speaking just a touch too loudly. Luke contrasts this with
his lowered tone.

LUKE

No, I don't have to.

One of the hip couples glance over at Edward Ford and Luke.

CUT.

AUDITORIUM

Absolutely packed. Loud, boisterous chatter. Edward Ford and Luke have just come in, wondering where they're going to sit.

EDWARD FORD

Oh, gee.

They start walking down the aisle, looking for seats. Edward Ford sees one in the third row on the side aisle.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I guess I better take that one.

LUKE

Yeah, I'll go back to the, uh, back.

He does that, somewhat relieved that it worked out this way. He sees a seat at the back next to the wall on the side aisle, gestures to it, the people sitting next to it confirming its free status. Luke gets past them to plant himself in it.

STAGE

Two bearded types wearing glasses and INVADERS T-shirts take the microphones.

1st BEARD

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Harold Blake movie marathon!

The audience yells, cheers, jeers, laughs, as they will continue to do with near religious hysteria throughout the evening.

1st BEARD

For those of you unfamiliar with Mr. Blake's unique oeuvre, suffice it to say you're in for a very special film experience tonight. For those of you already used to staying up until two o'clock in the morning to catch these on your local zombie station, what can I say? - great cocaine demands an encore, right!

The audience goes out of their heads.

Edward Ford sits through this nonsense impatiently. He tries to look disapproving as they make a mockery of his late friend. The emcees pat the air to quiet the crowd.

2nd BEARD

We're starting off the evening with Blake's own 8½ - the frankly autobiographical THE SHE-WALKER - made in 1956 when Blake was at the height of his creative powers ...

Luke is likewise not participating in the audience participation, considering this crowd every bit as creepy as the Harry Blake/Edward Ford crowd they find so hilarious. The audience is still laughing after almost every sentence spoken by the emcees.

2nd BEARD

... a crowning achievement of art powers, a film, like Abel Gance's NAPOLEON, in which one man's personal auteurist vision at once refines and revolutionizes the whole concept of cinema ...

(FLASHBACK) HAROLD BLAKE

DAY

Sitting in a tatty chair in his decrepit apartment at the end of his life, wearing just a dirty pair of trousers and a brassiere, smoking a cigarette, unshaven, a bottle next to him on a side table. The SOUND of the movie marathon continues.

1st BEARD'S VOICE

Notice, if you will, in the dialogue scenes of this film the startling use of non-sequitur - as well as the sense of heightened reality created by the constant repetition of Blake's favorite word "such" - as in the memorable line, "Such do the sands of time tell us what we have to know of the unknown."

(audience howls)

Harold Blake watches a few flies buzzing around him. They look animated. More animated, at least, than him.

(PRESENT) THE THEATRE

Darkened now, the first film showing. The audience are all swaying and clapping in unison to the rhythm of the film's music soundtrack, an excessively ludicrous scene obviously in progress.

Moving along a row of people, all together now, the tempo of the music leading everyone to yell, "Yeah!" every few chords, the end is reached - where Edward Ford tries simply to watch the film.

Luke is seriously trying to watch it too, but in disbelief, a great grin on his face as he joins in the communal mirth in spirit if not action.

(FLASHBACK) HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT

Patty Blake, also tanked up, enters carrying a couple of plates of baked beans. She sets them down on the main table and starts to take a cracker out of an old box already there. She is at this time not quite as serie-losing as she will become, but still well on the way to her ultimate destiny of degradation.

1st BEARD'S VOICE

Then in 1958 Blake produced his masterpiece - INVADERS FROM PLANET TEN!
(audience screams)

A true marriage of idiosyncratic casting and plotting and genuine directorial ineptitude - the film that most clearly stands today as the highest perfection of Blake's mise en scène.

Blake has joined his wife at the table, brought his bottle with him. They start in on the baked beans.

2nd BEARD'S VOICE

Pay particular attention to the now famous menagerie scene in which there are more mistakes than in any other single sequence in the history of cinema. No series of images in Blake's canon answers more cogently to the total incoherency of his visual style.

Patty reaches for the bottle, but Harry pulls it back and yells at her. She tries to grab it again, but he keeps it at arm's length.

1st BEARD'S VOICE

For instance, you'll see the chemist pick up a phone and start talking - without any preceding ringing or dialing. And when he gets attacked by the giant python, notice how he has to wrap it around himself because Blake couldn't afford an actual working model ...

Patty finally in fury flings her plate of baked beans at her husband. As they drip down his chest and over his bra he comes after her. She gets surprisingly quickly to her feet too, keeping the table in the middle as he tries to get hold of her, chasing her around it, his fingers snatching at the air between them. As an extension, he picks up his bottle and starts swinging it at her as he chases, whatever drink is left in it spilling as he does - but Patty's still moving around the table, stumbling from time to time, but still faster than him. Finally it occurs to Harry Blake to knock the damn table aside. He corners his wife, swings the bottle at her again, and this time it catches her chin, knocking her to the floor.

(PRESENT) INVADERS FROM PLANET TEN

In black-and-white, "flying saucers" swoop down from the skies on strings. Then, in a cut that doesn't match up at all, a citizen played by Laird Breen points at the sky, though he is clearly in a cheap studio insert.

CITIZEN

The Saucermen are coming!

Cut back to the flying saucers, an exact duplicate of the previous shot of them.

Luke watches this travesty, never in his life seen production values so shoddy.

THE GIRL NEXT TO HIM

Hubcaps. They're hubcaps.

As a Corporal approaches a General on the screen, the audience tenses to speak the dialogue absolutely in sync. with the actors.

CORPORAL + AUDIENCE

The SuperAtom missile is ready, sir.

GENERAL + AUDIENCE

Thank you for telling me, Sergeant.

Edward Ford is straining to hear the actors, not the people around him.

(FLASHBACK) HAROLD BLAKE

In his tiny kitchen now, rummaging through the garbage. The SOUND is with him now. He tips the garbage out onto the floor, some cockroaches scurrying away. He finds an old bottle. Puts it to his lips, but whatever might have been left in it has evaporated by now.

In the other room Patty Blake staggers to her feet, her chin starting to swell up.

In the kitchen at the tap, Harry Blake puts some water in the old bottle, swirls it around a bit, then drinks it. Patty comes in.

PATTY

(doesn't sound good)

You fuckhead.

He shoves past her, she hits him feebly.

OUTSIDE

Harry Blake comes out of his apartment, and the SOUND that follows him now is a continuation of the climax of INVADERS FROM PLANET TEN,

a mass of explosions, whizzing saucer effects, snatches of burlesque dialogue, crashing cars, sirens, screaming. Harry knocks on the door of the neighboring apartment. It opens a touch, but when its ratty resident sees Harry Blake standing there in his bra pleadingly displaying his empty bottle the door, with difficulty, is shut.

Harry starts down the steps into the awful little courtyard of this filthy apartment dwelling. He starts to walk through it, but halfway across suddenly clutches his stomach, then, wrapping both arms tightly around himself, he keels over into the leaves on the ground. Blood starts coming out of him from everywhere.

LAIRD BREEN

1st BEARD'S VOICE

Laird Breen was a charter member of the Harold Blake stock company.

As he's revealed in the same courtyard giving positive identification to a police officer before Harry's body on a stretcher is covered up by ambulance men, two other policemen in the background trying to talk to a far from bereaved Patty Blake. The present-day audience is heard clapping.

(PRESENT) THE THEATRE

Laird Breen talks to the audience.

BREEN

Well, we all knew they were kinda cheapies - but Harry had this kinda knack for gettin' everybody together and gettin' these damn films made. And he was proud of what he did - proud of just getting the effect - no matter how crappy it looked -

(FLASHBACK) HAROLD BLAKE'S COURTYARD

The ambulance men carry the stretcher to their waiting vehicle. Patty Blake is still screaming foully at the cops. They keep their heads up to protect against sudden movements on her part. Neighbors watch from a safe distance.

1st BEARD'S VOICE

Believe me, you're not hallucinating - when you see the BRIDE OF THE GORILLA trip over the cardboard tombstone and it falls over, Blake cuts to a reverse angle and suddenly it's daylight! This is because he was going to take the film to the lab to have the sky darkened in day-for-night scenes, but then forgot!

Patty Blake falls over backwards.

THE AMBULANCE

Laird Breen, alone on the pot-holed sidewalk, watches the stretcher go in and the doors close after it.

2nd BEARD'S VOICE

And when the police car arrives - which is just an ordinary car with a lamp stuck on its hood - and it turns a corner? - when it comes round the other side - completely different car!

As the ambulance carries away the dead Harold Blake, the SOUND of the laughter of the present-day crowd grows and grows.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S CAR

NIGHT

Driving home from the Muart.

INSIDE

Edward Ford drives, incensed, for him.

EDWARD FORD

Those guys really make me mad, y'know. They really make me mad.

LUKE

I'm telling you - you should go introduce yourself - they'd go outta their heads.

EDWARD FORD

I don't want no part of those jerks.

LUKE

Edward, you could make money on this - this could be your big shot.

EDWARD FORD

Y'know, isn't that the way it always is - a guy has to die before he's appreciated. There the poor guy is - and he always wanted just a little recognition for his talents - and now these fucks are makin' money off'n him.

He stops at traffic lights.

OUTSIDE

In the centre divider on Santa Monica near La Cienega, a bearded tattered mad person shadow boxes vehemently, cursing and spitting into the night air.

LUKE'S VOICE

You should be up there like Laird Breen telling the way it really was. You'd become a cult. They'd have you down at U.S.C. twice a week.

I'NSIDE

Edward Ford moves off again.

EDWARD FORD

I mean, they been on all the tv talk shows - all of 'em - and they don't even know what they're talkin' about!

LUKE

They'd love to hear that! They don't wanna be innacurate - your stuff is ten times fumier.

EDWARD FORD

Like they keep sayin' that Bela Lugosi died durin' the makin' of the picture - he died two years before Harry started it!

LUKE

Tell them that!

EDWARD FORD

Poor old Bela, y'know, he needed some fast dough for his opium habit, so he let Harry shoot some footage on him - then Harry didn't use it for two years.

LUKE

That double he found was really something. Looked about as much like Lugosi as Ilse Ford.

EDWARD FORD

And that's another thing - they said the double was his wife's ophthalmologist - it was her gynecologist - I knew him - I met him once over at Harry's.

(Luke laughs loudly)

And y'know they said Harry had a little cameo in THE SHE-MALE?

LUKE

Yeah - when he really -

EDWARD FORD

He was the star of the picture, for cryin' out loud! He was the hero of the damn picture!

LUKE

You mean the heroine.

EDWARD FORD

Whatever - but that was Harry. And on the cast list, y'know, he used a pseudename (sic).

LUKE

I'm never going to see a Harold Blake movie again as long as I live, what do you think of that?

EDWARD FORD

At least he got all them pictures made, y'know. Like Laird said - at least he went out and got 'em made - which is more than those fucks who're makin' fun of him are doin'.

SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD

The car heads away. Back to Hollywood Babylon.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD

DAY

Standing on the porch of someone's small house in Pacoima, shaking hands goodbye.

EDWARD FORD

... I figured, y'know, as I was drivin' by anyhow. It was real swell seein' ya again. You too.

He shakes hands with someone else.

MITZI

Smiles at her ex-husband. Her current husband is next to her in the doorway. They're left there as they watch their visitor retreating down the path past the lawn sprinklers, and they're seen in totality. Balloons. Two very, very fat people.

CUT.

DESERT HIGHWAY

DAY

A small camera unit films an approaching police motorcycle as it pulls over a limousine.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Cut!

CUT.

ANGLE ON LIMOUSINE

The back of the traffic cop in view.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Action!

The traffic cop moves forward to lean to the window of the limousine driver. The traffic cop is Edward Ford.

EDWARD FORD

Say, buddy, whadaya think you're -
Ooh - Sorry, Commissioner.

And a young girl's head pops up from between the legs of the "Commissioner."

NEW ANGLE

Now seen on a cinema screen, as the "Commissioner" looks up at the traffic cop, the naked girl trying to re-establish herself on the seat next to him, wiping her mouth.

COMMISSIONER

As you can see, Officer, I'm off
duty right now ...

AUDIENCE

In this Pussycat Theatre. The usual crowd. A few have their hands in their pockets.

COMMISSIONER'S VOICE

... perhaps I could make a contribution
to the Police Benevolent Fund.

EDWARD FORD'S POINT-OF-VIEW

Outside the theatre, approaching it, looking at the posters outside, stopping.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Hey - that's the one I'm in!
WILDEST DREAMS. Gee whiz.

LUKE'S VOICE

What're you talking about - you had a part in a porno film?

He comes fully into view as Edward Ford's POV turns to include him.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

It wasn't a dirty part, y'know - I just had one line in the damn thing - I told ya about it last year.

LUKE

Well, let's go see it!

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Aw, now, I can't do that -

In the background behind Luke as traffic lights change, five delicious California girls in leotards cross over on the way to their Movement Expression class.

LUKE

You had a speaking role?

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

I can't go see it -

LUKE

Fuck the rules - just cheat - you've cheated before -

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

I wouldn't have no file cards to work on - not a single on -

LUKE

An actual speaking part?

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

They prob'ly cut my whole scene out, y'know - prob'ly cut the whole line out - I was just a day player.

(turning to watch Luke as Luke moves to look at the posters)

The whole thing was non-union - I didn't even get my damn SAG card from it. I'll never get that damn SAG card.

LUKE

Of course you won't if you keep acting like a dildo - now let's go see this shitpile.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

That would be cheating too much - it's
a Warner Brothers year - I can't -

LUKE

Edward -

Edward Ford's POV starts walking away, leaving Luke.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

No - I ain't gonna - I don't want
nothin' to do with them films. I
wanna be in real films.

CUT.

SUNSET BOULEVARD

NIGHT

Luke is driving his own car, Edward Ford in the passenger seat.

LUKE

Why am I doing this again?

EDWARD FORD

'Cause there's nothin' on tv.
I tell ya, I dread Monday nights.
I dread 'em. There ain't nothin'
to watch. You can't even milk
nothin'. 'Nothin' at all.

LUKE

This is so perverse.

EDWARD FORD

I know it is! Listen, if I had a
nice girl I wouldn't go out lookin'
at whores no more.

LUKE

They must know us by now.

The hookers on the motel corners past the Oriental Theatre
aren't so great looking, mostly black, resorting to cruder
forms of dress appeal than their higher-priced sisters up
the road. Two are getting busted by cops.

CUT.

COMING AROUND A CORNER

AFTERNOON

For a closer look at a particular bunch of them. Even more of
them revealed around the bend.

EDWARD FORD

Ooh. Ooh.

He slows down. Luke rolls up his window because the ladies are on his side.

EDWARD FORD
You rolled your window up.

LUKE
You betcha.

EDWARD FORD
Boy, you're chicken.

LUKE
They're killers! And you take them home with you.

EDWARD FORD
(as the car recedes)
They're businesswomen, that's all.
Businesswomen.

CUT.

SUNSET, PAST WESTERN

NIGHT

They're really raw down here. Lots of them. Almost all black. Some awfully ugly and fat ones. Some of the fattest seem hell-bent on making that a selling point, nothing disguising their thighs beyond the edges of the bikini bottoms. And they're beseeching the drivers cruising by, trying to catch their eye, calling Hi. An extraordinarily beat-up car filled to the brim with Mexicans honks at the successive groupings of hookers as it drifts past. Men hanging around outside a wretched burger joint look decidedly evil. And through this cauldron Luke is again driving his car, Edward Ford next to him.

EDWARD FORD
I told ya, when there's a lot of 'em out they get bold. 'Cause they're hungry. They're real hungry.

CUT.

CAR

DAY

Edward Ford drives.

LUKE
(turns to Edward Ford)
You know what I'm gonna do - this is going to be the first scene of the movie. Just this, right here. Driving along.

EDWARD FORD
 (puts on an anguished face and voice)
 You're not really gonna write that,
 are ya.

CUT.

A CASSETTE

EVENING

Reels turning.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE
 Another time, I was sitting on the
 crapper in Grand Central Station ...

LUKE'S APARTMENT

Edward Ford speaks to the small tape recorder on the coffee table between himself and Luke. Edward Ford is putting on his acting voice, but he's such a bad actor he can't keep it up well enough and ends up mostly sounding like himself anyway.

EDWARD FORD
 The crapper cost a quarter to get
 in. And with a quarter you should
 be entitled to complete privacy when
 you take a crap.

Luke shakes his head, not entirely satisfied with the progress of this interview. He lazily goes around a corner. A water tap is heard. Edward Ford continues speaking methodically, as he always does when he starts something.

EDWARD FORD
 (burps)
 So I was sitting there - crapping -
 when a homo-sexual - sitting in the
 next booth - had the awdowcity (sic)
 to poke his head underneath to look
 at my balls.

Luke has reappeared with a glass of water, but hearing the last has to rush away again to avoid spewing it over the carpet with laughter.

EDWARD FORD
 My reaction was spontaneous (sic).
 I spit and kicked him in the head at
 the same time. And when I left, I
 could heard - hear him in the next
 cubicle, crying and whimpering.
 (leans close to mike for bad-guy voice)
 But the little bastard had it comin'
 to 'im.

CUT.

APARTMENT BUILDING

As night mist comes in, the odd voice from the lit top floor apartment talks on.

LUKE'S APARTMENT

Luke, used to it now, just sits tiredly, shaking his head disgustedly as he watches and listens.

EDWARD FORD

Another time (cough), we were drivin'
in Joshua Tree National Monument -
out in the desert there -

LUKE

- Talk in your real voice -

EDWARD FORD

(doesn't)

- and, uh, my author friend I went
to high school with -

LUKE

- I won't play this for anyone,
it's just notes - come on -

EDWARD FORD

- he shit in his pants, and he just
took his underwear and threw it off
behind a boulder somewhere -
(Luke's howl pierces the night)
And the smell was so raunchous
I got out of the car. I just could
not stay in that car.

He takes a sip from his glass of orange juice.

LUKE

Has anyone ever told you what a
fertile mind you have.

LATER

The posters on the wall include: THE PROFESSIONALS, THE YAKUZA, JUNIOR BONNER, GET CARTER, THE DRIVER, THE LONG VOYAGE HOME, THE SAND PEBBLES, an Henri Langlois Musée Du Cinéma "Fantomas" poster, a Michael Powell at Dartmouth College poster, a couple of Luke's father's exhibition posters ...

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

(imitating a skid row bum)

"Goddamn ... sonuvabitch ... took a
piss on me." And I could feel a dark
shape grope past me and shuffle out
of the can.

The circle of the apartment is completed, finding Edward Ford still talking into the tape recorder and Luke listening numbly. Edward Ford smokes a cigarette.

EDWARD FORD

See, I figured over in the corner, that's where the pisser would be, y'know - the Urinals.

(says "your-eye-nals")

'Cause it was pitch black - pitch black - and I was in a hurry to take a great piss. So I just took out my thing, y'know - and also I didn't want to miss, uh, the second feature.

LUKE

That was your favorite theatre, The Cosy.

EDWARD FORD

(leans forward to mike)

Yes - like the little fella here says - The Cosy was my favorite theatre. In my early days of Los Angeles. I went to the closing night show. And I was sad.

OUTSIDE

Down below in the alley at the large garbage containers a gone-to-seed hippie searches for items of interest.

LUKE'S VOICE

You remember what was playing?

EDWARD FORD

Speaks stiffly.

EDWARD FORD

Yes, I do. THE KILLERS was the first picture, with Edmond O'Brien and Burt Lancaster and one of my alltime favorite actors, Noel Cravat, played "Lou Tingle." And the second picture was WEST OF PINTO BASIN with Max "Alibi" Terhune, Ray "Crash" Corrigan, John "Dusty" King, and Tristram Coffin - and Bud Osborne had a good part. Damn good part.

SPLIT SCREEN

Edward Ford remains on the left, continuing to talk, Luke feeding him questions, while on the right he goes about his life as usual.

LUKE'S VOICE
Isn't he on your Big Six?

As Edward Ford sits in the very same LAUNDROMAT he's been frequenting all these years, watching his underwear going round and round.

EDWARD FORD
Uh, no, not he. Tristram Coffin used to be, but he got bumped by Robert J. Wilke.

He DRIVES home from a morning movie convention at the Beverly Hilton. Joggers outside the window. Fat bald guys in track suits, younger generation in shorts.

LUKE'S VOICE
Now, he's actually been in some good movies.

In his little dusty APARTMENT working on file cards.

EDWARD FORD
Sure he has.

Later he sits alone watching television.

LUKE'S VOICE
Was he one of the guys waiting for the train in HIGH NOON?

Exactly six tv dinners are removed from the SUPERMARKET frozen food section by Edward Ford.

EDWARD FORD
You're darn tootin'.

LUKE'S VOICE
Of course, his moment of glory came when James Coburn stuck a knife in him.

And he pushes his cart along the entire Fresh Produce aisle without pausing once.

EDWARD FORD
(starting to slip into his real voice)
Yeah. THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN.

LUKE'S VOICE
Did you type him in red for that?

At HOME again he studies the entertainment pages of the newspaper, making little pencil check marks against possible choices.

EDWARD FORD
Mah - he wasn't really a bad guy - just a loudmouth.

From the FREEWAY OFFRAMP he can see the white golfball-like domes of the cinema complex he's visiting this early evening.

LUKE'S VOICE

You ought to have a point system to determine badness. I mean, you put Paul Newman and Robert Redford in THE STING in the same category as Brian Donlevy in BEAU GESTE or Widmark in KISS OF DEATH.

On WILCOX AVENUE one day he picks up a slovenly young hooker hitchhiker.

EDWARD FORD

A bad guy is a bad guy.

Back in his APARTMENT as she leaves, he gargles with mouthwash.

LUKE'S VOICE

Yeah, but by your reasoning Captain Bligh is the good guy and Clark Gable is the bad guy 'cause he's a mutineer. You'd make Fredric March the bad guy for stealing a loaf of bread -

An impoverished black theatre group in a WORKSHOP venue put on their revisionist production of WEST SIDE STORY. The only white member of the cast, in a cop's uniform, grimaces maniacally as, with excessively overwrought gestures rivalling those found in expressionist and revolutionary films of the twenties and thirties, he terrorizes rebellious black youth into subjugation.

EDWARD FORD

No, now that's different.

LUKE'S VOICE

How is it diff -

In CHURCH Edward Ford sings along.

EDWARD FORD

Newman and Redford were on the wrong side of the law - they were scoundrels.

OUTSIDE the Church Edward Ford socializes. An absurd-looking ninety-nine year old Hollywood old lady with elaborately dyed hair, countless cosmetic operations, and possibly a hunchback to boot, waves fraily at Edward Ford as she totters away.

OLD LADY

Watch for me on FANTASY ISLAND.

CUT.

LUKE'S APARTMENT

DAY

Luke sits at his desk making notes as the recorder plays next to him. A Colt .45 automatic lies on the desk near the typewriter.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

That's one reason I like old movies, y'know - it was always real clear. They had great casts and who you're supposed to root for was always real clear. Everything's gotta be all arty today. These fuckin' liberals, y'know.

LUKE'S VOICE

Now you're talking in your brother's voice.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Like tv used to be good when the bad guys used to get dusted at the end - now these fuckin' liberals, y'know, they gotta clean the violence off tv.

Sunlight as if out of a Hopper painting streams perfect geometric patterns onto the shaggy green carpeting of the floor.

LUKE'S VOICE

Would you make my character a bad guy for writing this script about you?

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Probably.

Luke turns off the tape recorder and turns on the typewriter.

CUT.

MOVIEGOER'S MONTAGE

ALL SEATS 49¢!! boasted the marquee one evening, and underneath it Edward Ford purchased his ticket. Inside he sat very close to the screen, straining forward toward it, cupping a hand over one of his ears. More noise was coming from the audience than from the film. The theatre was entirely packed, and almost one hundred percent ethnic. And even though every seat appeared to be taken there were still an ungodly number of patrons rushing up and down the aisles. Practically no one seemed actually to be watching the movie, preferring instead to squirt water pistols at each other or try to get their hands on their date's pubes. Some dinosaur edging along the row behind Edward Ford spilled popcorn down the back of his collar. Edward Ford performed a neck twitch of spectacular dimension. "Ey, Mario!" shouted one of les enfants du paradis as he flung a bag of corn chips halfway across the theatre. The Nobel laureate he named jumped up to catch it. Edward Ford tried turning his other ear to the screen.

At this point an entire Hispanic family entered. They clumped along the aisle looking for seats, discussing the matter at great length in the mother tongue and as if the concept of whispering had never been included as part of God's gift. Meanwhile on the screen Charles Bronson attempted an expression. "Shit," he said. (And underneath a subtitle declared, "Cono!") The next ten minutes of soundtrack were totally expunged by the orgiastic response this scintillating quip brought forth in the proles. You'd think it was a witticism on par with the very best of Noel Coward or George S. Kaufman. It was fiesta time in Cuernavaca nonetheless and Edward Ford was still fighting a losing battle. He peered anxiously up at the screen, only averting his gaze from it when the black girl next to him, as the result of being playfully shoved by her friend, knocked her cup of root beer all over Edward Ford's crotch.

Elsewhere, on another night, Sonja Henie skated around lyrically. Slowly the silver screen she was framed in was seen in its surroundings, an awfully chintzy, tiny theatre whose decor (and piano to one side) tried excruciatingly to recapture the spirit of the grand picture palaces of yesteryear. Mostly older people were in the audience, as well as a few retarded middle-class newlyweds. And Edward Ford.

Then there was another monstrous shopping mall, out in Orange County or some other ghastly place. A gargantuan complex. Edward Ford could be seen leaving his car in parking section Q-46 and walking in the direction the signs indicated toward Cine-modules 1 thru 10. An escalator took him down into the belly of the beast, past horrific fake-rock fountains and foul little boutiques of one sort or another. In the theatre lobby of this brave new world, clutching his ticket as if it were the gate pass out of the Gulag, Edward Ford wandered around the candy counter trying to find the entrance to the module of his choice. Screaming brats ran all about the place, most of them falling flat on their face at least once. Edward Ford dodged them as he came around the corner into the correct shoebox and saw that it was indeed the smallest he'd ever been in. There was only one aisle that contained by the look of it no more than forty seats. An unspeakably mammoth housewife carrying a gigantic barrel of popcorn squeezed past Edward Ford while he stood there looking for a spare space. When he found one, with his chin almost touching the screen, Edward Ford looked up at the millions of colored dots that made up the evening's movie.

A row of black faces that might have been death row for all the compassion they seemed to exude peeped out of the gloom in yet another Saturday movie house. This theatre was not very crowded. On the screen Pam Grier took off all her clothes. Another row of seats was equally in the dark, so to speak. Pam Grier paraded. In another row some more blacks smoked their cigarettes real slow. While near the front, Edward Ford, a lone beacon in the wilderness, looked just slightly edgy.

In the foyer of a trendy revival theatre between features, Edward Ford stood alone smoking a cheap cigarette of his own as the hip buffs discussed aesthetics around him. And above him. "Take One" and "American Film" and "Cahiers Du Cinema" and "Focus on Film" and other like publications were on sale on a rack nearby. Walls were decorated with posters of execrable Howard Hawks films and announcements of impending Homage á Jack Arnold festivals. Back in his seat, Edward Ford cringed as he was forced to sit through an Academy Award winning Czech film school cartoon.

And finally, full circle, Edward Ford once again walked the streets of Skid Row. Bums and derelicts and mean downtown types were in abundance. Some were not on their feet, having already located a convenient wall or gutter to weather the night alongside. An Eskimo woman sat on a bus bench drinking through a straw something in a paper bag. A rat scampered down the aisle of the evening's theatre. The aisle of this theatre, like the whole floor, was bare, bumpy, filthy, littered dirt. This theatre was an unbelievable scumpit. It was charitably called The Optic, a misnomer if ever there was one, and it made The Cosy look like the Taj Mahal. Edward Ford noticed the rat out of the corner of his eye as it went by his row of seats and turned to look that way. Edward Ford's row of seats was, like other rows in this delightful pleasure dome, incomplete. His row, at least, was consecutive, no gaps between seats where some were missing or had completely collapsed. In his case the row simply stopped halfway across the floor. So Edward Ford was sitting in the middle of the theatre in the last seat before emptiness. He returned his gaze to the screen, where he hadn't missed much. Even though Angie Dickinson was about to show it all, in The Optic one didn't see it. It was as if the film was being projected through badly clogged gauze. They were no doubt using the same equipment from opening night about forty or fifty years ago. There was no curtain and the screen was blotched, torn, and crooked. Circling Edward Ford, the rest of the theatre was gradually seen. A spooky revelation. Shadow-lurkers huddled in soiled corners, light from a few pigeon holes in the roof occasionally illuminating ravaged faces. The Optic could boast of the quietest audience in filmdom. Although admittedly there were rather more belches, snores, farts, and indeterminate groans than the average theatre produces, its besotted assembly seemed otherwise quite subdued. One recent arrival could be discovered on his uncertain way down to the front, arms stretched out in front of him as antennae. The first seat he selected to sit down in already embraced a fellow in slumber. The sleeper awoke. "Get the fuck offa me!" said he incoherently. The intruder staggered onwards, arriving at the blank area near Edward Ford where he started patting the air trying to find a seat. Edward Ford stopped writing an actor's name into his notebook to watch the man coming closer and closer. Finally the man, a stumblebum to be sure, sat down where there wasn't a seat and landed painfully in the dirt. Edward Ford turned to the front again. A pair of baggy bloodshot eyes two or three rows yonder, facing the wrong direction, were now staring back at him over the edge of a seat. Edward Ford tried to ignore them, as well as the prostrate inebriate to his right, and succeeded when his gaze was again caught by movement in the aisle to the left. It was a cat this time - going the way the rat went.

CUT.

LUKE'S APARTMENT

DAY

Luke types the last words onto the last page of his screenplay as his tape recorder plays Jerry Goldsmith and Alex North war movie themes.

THE PAGE

The elite typeface pecks out in capital letters: PETE (VO)
 Then under that: I'm gonna make a million.
 Then under that to the right, dropping a couple spaces, the word CUT.
 Then finally, lower ... THE END.

CUT.

XEROX JOINT

DAY

As Luke waits, holding the paper bag containing his typescript, he notices some woman waiting nearby clutching her own screenplay. Luke almost smiles to himself, one look at her enough to confirm her loser status. The Chinaman behind the counter comes to him.

LUKE

I'd like five copies of this, please.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

DAY

Edward Ford leaves his typewriter to answer the knock at the door. He opens it to let in Luke and the two people Luke has brought with him - a movie STAR and a PRODUCER.

EDWARD FORD

Hello there - come in.

Luke does the honors, everyone shaking hands, saying hello, etc.

EDWARD FORD

Pleased to meet you.

The star and the producer start looking around. There are framed photos on the wall of Lester and Jed in cowboy attire, in stills from their films. The library of movie books has grown to three or four shelves.

EDWARD FORD

(to star)

Luke told me on the phone you
 wanted to see your card.

KITCHEN

Edward Ford hands the star the master card on himself.

EDWARD FORD

I've seen you in eleven motion pictures.

STAR

Well, that covers the hot ones, you
 know what I mean?

PRODUCER

(locking over his shoulder)

What's this last one - Flicker Theatre,
October 4, 1975, Redondo Beach.

EDWARD FORD

Oh, that was BORDERTOWN. And the
second feature was ASSASSIN OF KUNG-FU.
There was already a Bette Davis picture
called BORDERTOWN, so on the card, y'know,
I gotta type an explanation (sic) mark to
make it different.

STAR

Far out.

EDWARD FORD

Yeah, that was a Paramount year, and that
was the onlyest (sic) Paramount picture
playin' that week that I hadn't seen.
The onlyest one.

PRODUCER

What's a Paramount year?

EDWARD FORD

Well, every year, the first picture I see,
the studio that made it, y'know, that
becomes the Studio of the Year and I gotta
go see their pictures less'n I can't find
nothin' else.

STAR

What would take priority?

EDWARD FORD

Well, first off would be if there was a
Republic picture playin' I hadn't seen,
'cause that's my favorite studio. I would
go to see it. OK, then you'd have Actor
of the Year, Studio - oh, and if there were
any movies that were twenty years old or
older I hadn't seen - oh, and my Big Six,
if one of them was in somethin' ...

LUKE

Standing just outside the kitchen doorway, watching Edward Ford as he
talks to the star and the producer.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Then if I couldn't find nothin' that met
all those priorities, y'know, then I'd
have to make a list of new pictures playin'
that I wanted to see, so long as I had file
cards in 'em. Then I turn over my ticket
stub from last week and say the last number
was a three, then I would have to go to the
third theatre on my list ...

DISSOLVE.

HOLLYWOOD

MORNING

A fine, clear, blue-sky day.

EDWARD FORD'S BEDROOM

Edward Ford lies in his bed, hands behind his head, can't sleep anymore. He looks apprehensively at his clock, seeing if he can get up yet.

STREET

Edward Ford gets into his car.

SUNSET BOULEVARD

He drives toward the offices of the Screen Actor's Guild. Past Hollywood High School, the student body hanging around outside nothing but fat Mexicans and blacks and Orientals now.

SCREEN ACTOR'S GUILD

Edward Ford walks up the steps, goes inside.

RECEPTION

A SECRETARY types up Edward Ford's application. Edward Ford looks on, understandably smug. He leans on the desk, watching the form as it makes its passage through the typewriter - in slow motion - flowering up as it receives its data on him. The secretary taps out a couple of last details, rolls out the paper, starts stapling other documents to it - his deal memo, his initiation check. And Edward Ford smiles.

SECRETARY

OK, Mr. Ford, that's it. This'll go up before the Board next week - you should receive your card soon after.

DISSOLVE.

CAR

DAY

Luke turns to look at the driver.

LUKE

Oh, Jesus, it's some B-western.

The driver is ... the movie star who visited Edward Ford.

STAR

No - no. He did play a sheriff though.

He's acting like Edward Ford.

LUKE

(turns away, disgusted)

Tom Tyler.

STAR

Rex Lease. You know who he is, don'tcha?

Pulling back, as Luke mumbles, they are revealed in a mock-up car in front of a back-projection screen. In front of them are cameras and lights.

STAR

... Charles Middleton ... Joe Sawyer ...
Russell Simpson ... Ward Bond ...

CUT.

AIRPORT

AFTERNOON

As the sun slowly dives.

EDWARD FORD

Drives down the concourse, searching the sidewalk, the waiting people standing with their luggage all over. Then, up ahead, he thinks he spots Al Foster. But he's not sure. He slows down as he approaches. And the closer look convinces.

AL FOSTER

A ravaged, bloated, bulbous-nosed figure now, wearing very thick glasses, lost most of his hair. The car pulls up in front of him and Edward Ford comes out of it. He walks around it to Al. They stand looking at each other, then shake hands firmly.

CUT.

EDWARD FORD'S CAR

Al Foster fills up the passenger seat.

AL

I want to reassure you that I'll be a burden upon your dear soul no more than a month.

EDWARD FORD

Now, that's OK - you can have the couch, y'know, till you can get on your feet again.

AL

I hope you are aware, good friend, that you are in my books.

EDWARD FORD

In your books?

AL

In my books your name is entered, Edward Ford - as the best damn fellow that ever came down the pike.

EDWARD FORD

Well - we're old pals. Old high school buddies.

AL

Old is correct. I'm an old man.
An old man in the industry.

EDWARD FORD

You can stay on the couch just as long as you want.

Pause.

AL

I have several new properties.

EDWARD FORD

Uh-huh.

AL

And I'm gonna make a million this time.
Cool million.

AIRPORT

The car drives away as the sun sets.

AL'S VOICE

I'm gonna make a million.

CUT.

THE END