

# EDWARD FORD

By

Lem Dobbs

INT. 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 refuses to be hurried. He speaks in a most deliberate manner.

EDWARD FORD  
... Erville Alderson ... Louis Natheaux  
...

LUKE  
(sighs)  
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 didn't look half bad.  
Henry Brandon.

LUKE  
Henry Brandon, now we're cookin'.

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  
Okay.

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, okay. Big help.

EDWARD FORD  
Lloyd Nolan.

LUKE  
Lloyd Nolan.  
(racking his brain)  
Shit.

EDWARD FORD  
Frances Dee.

LUKE  
Ooh! Uh -- uh --  
(snapping fingers)  
"Western Unio-" -- no -- "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  
Pierre Brasseur.

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? -- we'll make sure you get a part in it -- 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 L.A., 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 (CONT'D)

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

CUT.

"EDWARD FORD"

## THE EARLY SIXTIES

EXT. A MOVIE THEATRE - LOS ANGELES - EVENING

The marquee says in flaked black letters: BIG TRIPLE F TURF. 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 money.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

What was once a grand old theatre is now a shit pile. The audience is comprised mostly of sleeping bums, though a few are still 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 Elliot western is being shown. Edward Ford is sitting in a seat. He looks just about the same, his hair is simply a little darker and slightly more plentiful. On the screen an actor makes his entrance. Edward Ford takes a small notebook and ballpoint 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.

A LITTLE LATER

The western ends. Edward Ford watches with interest, nodding to himself unconsciously and almost imperceptibly. A curtain closes over the screen squeakily and jerkily. The theatre gets a tiny bit less dim. 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 sail in his direction. Edward Ford pushes open the door he needs to go through.

INT. DARK CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A man more prone to changing the expression on 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.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Pitch 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 senses the urinals might be. The SOUND of a ZIP is heard, followed by the SOUND of what would logically follow -- for some considerable time -- finally dwindling. Then the zip again. Edward Ford starts to leave. 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.

INT. COZY THEATRE - NIGHT

Back in his seat, Edward Ford looks around nervously before the next picture commences.

CUT.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Toaster components moving along a conveyor belt. 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 looks across the conveyor belt. A woman is working opposite him (MITZI). She is a cross between a badly-preserved child performer of long ago and something you might find in a primeval swamp. Edward Ford smiles at her.

CUT.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

A more respectable theatre this time. Edward Ford and Mitzi appear. Edward Ford starts walking down the aisle as usual but Mitzi stays where she is. Edward Ford goes back to her.

MITZI

I like to sit in the back row.

EDWARD FORD

Oh. Well. Okay.

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

A LITTLE LATER

Edward Ford marks down a name in his notebook as the projector beam streaks above him.

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

CUT.

EXT. 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.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY

Another cheap building.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

An extremely cheap place. 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 others already there. Then he stands back to look at them.

A LITTLE LATER

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 an index 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 of the film. 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.

EXT. A SMALL CHURCH - DAY

Typical Spanish mission style in the heart of old Hollywood. SINGING is heard from within.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The congregation sits down, hymn finished. At the front the MINISTER gestures to Edward Ford, who's 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 (CONT'D)

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 is your certificate, Edward. Welcome  
to our church.

EDWARD FORD

(shakes hands)  
Thank you.

MINISTER

Go in peace.

CUT.

EXT. A 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 mouthing the monologues they've prepared. All the  
faces seem quite typical of the trade. Then Edward Ford's  
face is reached. He: waits patiently, smoking a cigarette.

INT. THEATRE - DAY

An ACTOR speaks from the stage.

ACTOR

-- I've prepared a reading from Gorky's  
"Lower Depths."

EXT. THEATRE - DAY

The line moves slowly as only a few at a time are ushered in.  
Edward Ford waits quietly and not nervously. A GIRL next to  
him murmurs 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 is stopped at the door as the few ahead of him  
are allowed in. The actor behind him gives Edward Ford a  
cursory look.

INT. THEATRE

Edward Ford has made it to the stage.

EDWARD FORD

My name is Edward Ford.

In the darkness of the theatre, two weary men sit watching.

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

Okay -- go ahead.

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

EDWARD FORD

This is the classic speech given 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 ..."

A man alone in the limelight. Milking it for all it is worth.  
The voice he puts on -- not a Lionel Atwill imitation -- is  
his "acting" voice. The expression he now puts on is his  
"acti expression. Both are considerably exaggerated, in the  
manner of B-movie bad-guy conventions circa 1949. This is not  
a parody, however. The performance is delivered with utmost  
seriousness. Edward Ford also has a particular stock-in-  
trade; 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 (CONT'D)

"... 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 is 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

(shaking 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.

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.

CUT.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Edward Ford methodically pushes his cart along, consulting a shopping list and checking coupons in his hand. 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 around the corner of the aisle.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

A file cabinet drawer is pulled open. Edward Ford's fingers run through the cards.

EDWARD FORD

Okay, now, these are the cards on players.

He takes one out, shows it to Mitzi.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

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 and cellotaped onto the card in the top right hand corner.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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

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 the cards. The cards in each different section are of different colors.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)  
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.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

A LITTLE LATER

The last bit of mashed potato is scraped from around the edge of its compartment with a fork. Edward Ford licks the fork clean. Takes a sip from his glass of milk. Looks at Mitzi who's also finished.

EDWARD FORD  
Did you enjoy that?

MITZI

Yeah. It was good.

INT. BEDROOM

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

A LITTLE LATER

As Edward Ford screws Mitzi she YELPS in a most alarming and loud and horrendous way.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The SOUND of Mitzi's mating calls can be heard from the street outside.

INT. BEDROOM

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

CUT.

EXT. 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

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

CUT.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S STREET - DAY

They walk back toward the apartment Building, holding grocery bags. As they reach their house, Edward Ford stops. He's spotted a man (LESTER) who's walking on the other side of the street. There's the nearest thing to a look of awe on Edward Ford's face.

EDWARD FORD

That's 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

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 idiot, 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 a 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.

INT. ANOTHER 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 Hrubá 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.

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, when she was name-above-the-title.

JED

Who got in there first --

LESTER

She was day-work, for chrissake -- who didn't screw her back then. Then she did eight or nine of them Moana or Creamer of the Jungle pictures, whatever the hell they were, and she tightened up like a latigo whang.

JED

Who had to break her in --

LESTER

Every producer on the lot had a --

JED

Who had to break her in for ya!

LESTER

If I had a nickel for every time one of 'em supposedly dropped her pants for you the whole goddamn lot woulda gone 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.

EDWARD FORD AND MITZI FORD

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

CUT.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

An old banger of a car chugs along.

EXT. SIDEWALK

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

JED

Pleasure to meet you, Edward.

EDWARD FORD

Hey, no, gee -- I didn't expect -- I  
mean, you guys are my all-time 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.

JED  
(to Lester)  
I'll talk to you later.

INT. CAR

Lester drives them away again.

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.

INT. HAROLD BLAKE'S HOUSE (BATHROOM) - NIGHT

HAROLD BLAKE 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 prepare his arm for an injection of heroin.

INT. MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

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 women 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 weight of their mock jewelry and whose wardrobe seems to have come straight from Transylvania. A man fatter than some whales reads the palm of a deranged-looking boy, clutching it in his own sweaty mitt. Some cheap bit players sit around kvetching and boozing. A Satanic diabolist lights up a dubious cigarette. An aged crone does a little dance. An albino laughs. This looks like a wedding reception for Tod Browning and Diane Arbus.

Edward Ford now enters 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 --

Not an unattractive woman, actually.

In a doorway a drunken man has his hand up the dress of an underage black girl.

A LITTLE LATER

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 damn horses.

EDWARD FORD  
Are you making a movie now?

BLAKE  
Well, I'm trying to raise the finance.

EDWARD FORD  
Uh-huh.

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

WOMAN  
Hi, Harry.

BLAKE  
Hey, Johnny.

WOMAN  
Joanie!

Edward Ford's head swivels between the two of them.

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  
All right, is everybody watching this time?

Everybody answers in the affirmative.

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Okay.

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

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
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.

A LITTLE LATER

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

In the doorway the same drunken man now has the transsexual pinned 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 seriously.

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 (CONT'D)

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

EDWARD FORD

Well, I would 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.

EXT. HAROLD BLAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a bizarre kind of shack perched on a hillside in a cramped

section of the eccentric old Los Feliz district. Twinkling

lights in the city below. Edward Ford and Mitzi are 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 going 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 privilege. 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-lively and noisy house.

BLAKE  
Hey, did you show 'em your tits?

THE EDWARD FORDS

As they walk away on the sidewalk.

MITZI  
They were nice people.

EDWARD FORD  
Yes, they were.

CUT.

INT. A MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Mitzi 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.

INT. AN OFFICE - DAY

Edward Ford squints at some script pages as he hams it up against a bare white wall. Two casting people give each other a look.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Edward Ford pushes the shopping cart as Mitzi makes the selections. She stacks up double the amount of TV dinners.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

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

A blonde California surfer-type in a supermarket uniform is collecting shopping carts. As he tries to pry two of them loose his wallet falls out of his pocket. He bends to pick up the wallet -- pushing back inside the Screen Actor's Guild card that slipped out.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAY

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

INT. CHURCH - DAY

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

INT. ANOTHER MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

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

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - EVENING

Edward Ford slides two TV dinners out of their packets and into the oven.

LIVING ROOM

They eat their TV dinners in silence, Edward Ford with a glass of milk, Mitzi with two beer cans. The TV is on.

NEWSCASTER

Actor Lester Adams dead tonight at the age of sixty-two.

INT. LESTER ADAMS' APARTMENT - EVENING

Lester and Jed are sitting on the couch, watching the same newscast. They look at each other.

NEWSCASTER

Lester was a big star in Japan and Mexico.

INT. 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

They've moved the TV in here. Edward Ford and his spouse sit up watching it, as much space between them as the small double bed allows.

On the TV, the same newscaster, humiliated, interviews a grim (probably drunk) Lester Adams.

NEWSCASTER

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

INT. ANOTHER MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

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

While in the back row sits Mitzi.

INT. THEATRE LOBBY - NIGHT

They both stand smoking cigarettes.

EDWARD FORD

How'd you like that one?

MITZI

It was okay.

EDWARD FORD

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

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Mitzi in the back row.

Edward Ford near the front, the light of the movie glowing over him.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - 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.

A LITTLE LATER

The first husband, a real brute, holding a chicken, is 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 past, 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.

INT. 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, but most of them baring something if not everything. A lot seem to be Orientals. None have the kind of face that would get showcased anyplace much better than this.

THE THREE MEN

Heads down as the pages turn.

LESTER (CONT'D)  
This one here had a funny smell. A real funny smell, that one.

JED  
(suddenly 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.

JED  
Yeah, last week it was her sister.

LESTER  
Fucked 'em both.

JED  
They were twins -- he could never tell  
one from the other.

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

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

LESTER  
Listen, what did I want with the mother?  
If they hadn't got that contract over at  
RKO they was gonna do me the Venus  
Flytrap. God knows what that woulda been,  
but I still get a hard-on thinkin' about  
it.

JED  
Last time you got it up the Allies  
entered Paris.

LESTER  
Listen, asshole --

JED  
(to Edward Ford)  
I fucked the mother. And I don't need  
photographs to jog my memory. 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.

LESSER

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.

INT. 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 (CONT'D)

(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.

A LITTLE LATER

Edward Ford now positions himself atop one of the other women, center-stage. He is somewhat embarrassed.

LESTER

(laughing)

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

The woman's face looks up at Edward Ford's understandingly as she reaches down between them, searching for the root of the problem.

WOMAN

(whispers to him)

Just fake it.

Edward Ford sinks down onto her. She moans exaggeratedly. The onlookers applaud and make remarks. Edward Ford tries but this is another part he can't act very well. The woman is much more convincing. Edward Ford smiles over at the watchers.

EDWARD FORD

(as he continues)

Say, Lester -- did I tell ya I got a job in a movie?

CUT TO

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

(Or similar STOCK FOOTAGE). 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.

CUT.

EXT. A MOVIE THEATRE - EVENING

A young couple buy tickets and Edward Ford appears after them, presenting his money and holding up one finger.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Mitzi sits home alone watching TV. Bored, her gaze is attracted by the looming file-card cabinets of her absent husband, stacked in their corner, dominating the room. And her life. She stares at them with a kind of jealousy.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

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

KITCHEN

Standing at the fridge in her nightie, which reveals her figure in the worst possible way, Mitzi 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 slowly tears it in half.

CUT.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

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

BARTENDER

Get out of here. Go on.

The man sits up. A thickset, but rather impressive-looking man, somewhat the worse for drink. His name is AL FOSTER.

AL

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

BARTENDER

Fuck off.

AL

A fellow I was at high school with in Coventry, Delaware. He is a man of innate kindness and decency, 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.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

It's about four o'clock in the morning now. Al Foster shuffles 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 at the top of a very steep hill. Al Foster starts rolling down it. Like a cartoon character, over and over and over and over he rolls. Two leather hustlers watch him go by. This may sound and even look hilarious but it most assuredly isn't. When he's finally stopped, hard, by a lamp post, he's cut and bruised all over and groans as he collapses in the gutter.

CUT.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - MORNING

Hazy. From somewhere down there a telephone RINGS.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - MORNING

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

EDWARD FORD  
(into phone)  
Albert Foster?!

CUT.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Edward Ford waits in the parking lot for a man to come out. Al Foster, much bandaged. Edward Ford studies him as Al approaches. The two of them embrace.

CUT.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Edward Ford and Al 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, then.

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 measured and dignified 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 Billy 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.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

We're looking at a blow-up of a black-and-white still from a movie. One of the actors in the photo has been silhouetted.

QUIZMASTER

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

CONTESTANT #1 thinks hard. The numbers on her podium indicate that thus far she's won about two hundred dollars.

CONTESTANT #1

Um ... um ... let's see ... um ...

A GONG goes off loudly. She jumps.

QUIZMASTER

(to Contestant #2)

Julius?

CONTESTANT #2 has only won about fifty dollars.

CONTESTANT #2

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

GONG! The Quizmaster sighs. He slowly turns toward the third contestant, knowing what's coming. Edward Ford is the third contestant. 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 the year of release was 1940.

Contestant #1 tries to find a way out of her plastic perch.

CONTESTANT #1

All right, that's it.

It becomes clear now that they haven't been doing this for real. There is no audience. The rehearsal being conducted is simply part of an audition process.

CONTESTANT #1 (CONT'D)

I quit.

She walks around, trying to find the way out. Contestant #2 struggles with his conscience, but finally decides he's out of his league too.

CONTESTANT #2

I'm sorry. Me too.

The Quizmaster frantically tries to placate them.

QUIZMASTER

Hey, now, ah, wait a minute --

But 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 (CONT'D)

You had to grandstand again.

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

QUIZMASTER (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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 Quizmaster once. Then he walks guiltily away.

CUT.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY

TYPING can be heard from inside.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

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 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.

A LITTLE LATER

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

EDWARD FORD

Where have you been?

MITZI

I've been tryin' to set 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 idiot, 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-squat 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 bad things?

MITZI

I don't do nothin'! You go to your stupid shitty movies with those other 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 (CONT'D)

Mitzi.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Edward Ford sleeps alone again, on his stomach.

INT. 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 off with it to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

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

EDWARD FORD

Screams. He runs screaming. 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

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

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

BEN KRANTZ

(to 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, which I thought would be fun -- because 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.

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

BILLY FORD

(to CAMERA)

I'm Billy Ford, Edward Ford's younger brother. I'm livin' out here now, workin' in a photo lab. I was in the '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, hippies, and fags. I think Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan are real swell.

ILSA STECKEL, in her twenties, has come in with comb and hairbrush to unmangle young Luke's sister's long hair before bedtime.

ILSA

(to CAMERA)

Ilsa 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 leans by the window smoking, watching the game.

ART STUDENT

(to CAMERA)

I sleep with their father.

Edward Ford knocks about five balls clear off the table.

AL FOSTER

(to CAMERA)

Since writing an episode for "The F.B.I." -- which is now in re-runs -- 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 sad creature 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 contrite 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.

INT. BEN KRANTZ' CAR - DAY

Ben drives. Young Luke is with him.

BEN

So what did you think of Edward Ford?

Young Luke laughs. So does Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)

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 as they pass by --

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Blonde Lolitas and Baby Dolls clutching their school books,

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAY

A dusty picture of Hawaii that came with the place hangs on the yellowed wall. Old 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. A little notebook is open beside it, a cast list scrawled in Edward Ford's handwriting. A ballpoint pen marks the place.

LIVING ROOM

The small living room contains his few shelves of movie books. 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 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.

## KITCHEN

The appliances look quite old. The file boxes are stacked in a corner. There are more of them than we last saw. Edward Ford opens one of the drawers, rifles through cards, showing them to young Luke.

EDWARD FORD

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

Ben stands in the kitchen doorway, watching Edward Ford showing his son his madness. Ben suspects that this is the beginning of a bizarre friendship.

CUT.

## EXT. BEACH - DAY

Edward Ford and his brother Billy play frisbee with young Luke and his little sister and their nanny Ilsa. Edward Ford has scars on his back from years ago when his ex-wife threw boiling water on him.

## A LITTLE LATER

Edward Ford sits with young Luke. In the background Billy and Ilsa swing little sister between them, playing at the edge of the ocean.

EDWARD FORD

... "How the West Was Won" ... "How to Save a Marriage (and Ruin Your Life)" ... "How to Steal a Million" ...  
 (waits while Luke thinks)  
 "Lord Jim" . . . "Genghis Khan" ... "The Victors" ...

YOUNG LUKE

Eli Wallach!

EDWARD FORD

You got it.

## A LITTLE LATER

Now they're having a picnic lunch. Edward Ford carefully removes the lettuce and tomato from his sandwich and scrapes off the mayonnaise. Young Luke is looking at a movie theatre schedule.

YOUNG LUKE

-- What about this one? "Darby's Rangers" and "Battleground."

EDWARD FORD

Well I can't go to that -- "Darby's Rangers" ain't twenty years old yet.

YOUNG LUKE

What about "Yellow Sky?" You said you hadn't seen "Yellow Sky."

EDWARD FORD

That's on a Friday. Besides, I seen the picture playin' with it.

YOUNG LUKE

You only go on Saturday? No matter what?

EDWARD FORD

That's right. You comin'?

YOUNG MIKE

I don't wanna see a Shirley Temple movie. I wanna see the Shirley Eaton movie.

EDWARD FORD

Oh, you like her, do ya?

YOUNG LUKE

(showing Edward Ford a newspaper)

Well, it's a Fu Manchu movie -- and you're gonna go to some kiddie matinee! Some children's show.

EDWARD FORD

It's a Randolph Scott picture. It's practically a western.

YOUNG LUKE

It's a musical -- with Shirley Temple.

EDWARD FORD

It's got a lot of western players in it. I'll have eleven cards to work on. And maybe there'll be some bonus players.

Young Luke looks disgusted.

CUT.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

Edward Ford stands in line with a lot of children. He looks quite uncomfortable.

EDWARD FORD  
(at the box-office)  
One, please.

CASHIER  
(gives him a look)  
Where's your child?

At the back of the line people with children watch as Edward Ford is refused admittance. He has to turn and walk back down the length of the line with everyone looking at him and pulling their kids out of his reach. He looks extremely humiliated.

CUT.

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben Krantz is dressed for a formal evening. Young Luke is lounging on the couch watching a movie on TV.

BEN  
You wanna go to Billy Wilder's with us?

YOUNG LUKE  
No, I'm going to the movies with Edward Ford. His rules got screwed up so we get to go to new movies. He let me choose from his list of six double bills.

Ben shakes his head.

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

Ben goes toward the front door -- as another pretty young ART STUDENT comes down some stairs, ready to go out. Ben lets Edward Ford in and Edward Ford pretends to almost fall over when the door opens before his fist has knocked on it.

EXT. KRANTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Edward Ford and young Luke walk down the front steps of the house with Ben and his art student.

EDWARD FORD

Did Luke tell ya what happened to me today? Geez, I was never so embarrassed. It was so embarrassing.

DOWN ON THE STREET

They go to their separate cars, Ben with his art student, young Luke with Edward Ford.

EDWARD FORD

-- I mean, I thought they were gonna have me arrested or somethin'. That made me very nervous.

YOUNG LUKE

See, you shouldn't go to single features.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I try to avoid them if at all possible. I do not like single features.  
(as they get in his car)  
Geez, they probably thought I was some kind of pervert.

CUT.

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

Harold Blake is dressed in a suit -- but pinches his shoulder to adjust the strap of what must be a brassiere underneath it.

BLAKE

Yes, this time he's really dead.

He's fondling a cowboy hat. Delivering a eulogy for Lester Adams.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

This is the hat he wore in over three 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 group attending, wearing his baggy suit.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

His ole pard Jed Dobie passed on almost exactly a year -- but I don't mourn for either of them.

Because I know they're having a heckuva time -- riding the purple sage -- over that final sunset.

CUT.

SERIES OF SHOTS - GOING TO THE MOVIES

Sad music from the funeral scene and the tail-end of Blake's eulogy bleeds into this short sequence of Edward Ford going to the movies, mostly with young Luke, sometimes joined by Billy and Ilsa or Ben and finally everyone, Al Foster too.

CUT.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Edward Ford has his already-minimal hair trimmed further by a genuine old Hollywood barber. The door gives a little 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 old magazines. Selects one and sits down with it.

EDWARD FORD

Mr. Jones.

(or whoever the guy 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.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Edward Ford sits in a booth with Ben and Al.

EDWARD FORD

And do you know, it made his day. It made his day.

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

Mongols?

EDWARD FORD

Today the cameraman, y'know, he decides to point the camera at some flower that's out-of-focus.

The CAMERAMAN does.

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 to the WAITRESS being chatted up by a CUSTOMER in another booth. The waitress laughs with the customer 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.

EDWARD FORD

Gets up from the table to walk to the bathroom.

EDWARD FORD (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Guess who I made a card for today.

BEN (V.O.)

Who?

EDWARD FORD (V.O.)  
Pork Chops.

BEN (V.O.)  
Pork Chops?

EDWARD FORD (V.O.)  
I only seen him in one film.

INT. COFFEE SHOP (MEN'S ROOM)

Edward Ford comes in.

BEN (V.O.)  
Why bother then?

EDWARD FORD (V.O.)  
Well, I'll prob'ly never see him again.  
Prob'ly never see him again.

BEN (V.O.)  
So you selected him for the great honor.

As we HEAR Edward Ford begin his reply we SEE Edward Ford looking slightly startled as a cubicle door swings open revealing one black guy going down on another black guy. Edward Ford turns to leave.

EDWARD FORD (V.O.)  
It's just luck, y'know. I'm all caught up  
on this year's pictures --

INT. COFFEE SHOP (AT THE TABLE)

EDWARD FORD  
-- so I just pick out a card, y'know, 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 can't look Ben in the eye.

BEN  
If you had any idea what a fucking misery  
it is to look at you ...  
(flings the wrist back at Al)  
You don't even hear me, do you? Through  
the haze.

AL  
I do, Ben. I am -- I can hear the  
signals.

Quiet pause. Edward Ford breaks the awkward silence.

EDWARD FORD

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

Pause.

BEN

Where are they now?

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The three of them come out into the horrible afternoon sunshine and heat. Al wobbling dangerously.

EDWARD FORD

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

BEN

Send him my best, will you?

EDWARD FORD

I sure will.

BEN

Does he still run the Y., did you say?

EDWARD FORD

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

BEN

We had some good times there.

EDWARD FORD

Yes, we sure di --

Al Foster falls down. Edward Ford looks at Ben, who is too angry for words. But they both stoop to help Al up.

CUT.

INT. 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.

Edward Ford and little sister boo along with the wrestling audience when a hooded brute enters the ring. Young Luke 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 -- "Look, I've found another one."

EDWARD FORD

(defending himself)

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

Well 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 TV. Muffled voices can be HEARD. Then Edward Ford comes back.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

Hey, I wantcha to meet someone.

And behind him comes -- Mitzi -- smiling quite companionably.

A LITTLE 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 to continue watching TV with the kids.

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'.

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

Yeah, that was a good one.

EXT. MODERN BUILDINGS - 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 smile beginning to tremble,  
before the BULB POPS.

EXT. ALLEY - AFTERNOON

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

EDWARD FORD'S FACE

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

The typed resume clipped to the composite is flipped over by  
the hands studying it and --

INT. CASTING OFFICE - DAY

The CASTING AGENT gives it a cursory glance -- then feeds it into a paper shredder. We see that on one side of her desk are paper shavings piled impenetrably to the walls, on the other side mountains of photos and resumes stacked to the ceiling, tilting dangerously.

CUT.

INT. SMALL THEATRE - DAY

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

MAN

(solemnly to WOMAN)

Salvation is 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 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.

A LITTLE LATER

All the actors disband for the day, hugging and kissing each other goodbye in a very saccharine way. A lot of "Praise the Lords" and "God loves yous." 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 downtown on Tuesday. I think it's for a western.

EDWARD FORD

(as they go outside)  
A western?

MAN

(waves goodbye)  
Praise Jesus.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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, you know --

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.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Edward Ford, holding a cowboy hat, is among a group of people. A MAN WITH CLIPBOARD jabs each of them with his finger as if it were a 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 one -  
 -

## A LITTLE LATER

Edward Ford and another JERK, dressed as firemen, are walking away from the others -- who are way in the background now -- away from the small film unit preparing to shoot a scene in the parking lot. The teeny figure of the clipboard man is waving at them to keep going. The other jerk notices the cowboy hat Edward Ford is still clutching.

JERK

What's the hat for?

EDWARD FORD

I was told this was a western.

JERK

Nice hat, anyway.

EDWARD FORD

It belonged to Lester Adams.

JERK

Who?

They check over their shoulders, the clipboard man signaling for the jerk to stop but for Edward Ford to keep walking.

JERK (CONT'D)

I don't think you're even gonna be on  
 camera, buddy.

CUT.

## INT. KRANTZ HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Edward Ford stands, pool 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 shit piles he went to. A triple bill of crap. I wanted to see "M" with Peter Lorre.

BEN'S VOICE

Why didn't you take him to see "M?"  
That's a great movie.

EDWARD FORD

I don't gotta see no foreign films. I changed my rules after I hadda see "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 Alice Faye movie instead of "Viva Zapata" -- I don't believe it.

BEN'S VOICE

Haven't you seen "Viva Zapata?"

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.

(chuckles to himself)

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

INT. ILSA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Ilsa the nanny and Edward Ford's brother Billy do things without their clothes on.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Ben and the art student of the moment have sex too.

EXT. KRANTZ HOUSE (PATIO) - NIGHT

Edward Ford has a cigarette, looking over the wall at the lights of Hollywood.

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

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.

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE (POOL TABLE ROOM) - NIGHT

Another game of pool. 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 right off the table.

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE (LIVING-ROOM) - NIGHT

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

BILLY

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

BEN

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

BILLY

And he'll be stayin' in this house after you leave?

BEN

Yeah, he's taking over from me as guest professor. He's come over for the same reason.

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE (POOL TABLE ROOM) - NIGHT

One last game. Everyone present again.

EDWARD FORD

Well, I did not like the second feature, "Richard the Third." It was boring. And I do not 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 ...

He's serious, trying to tell his story. But the others laugh. And Edward Ford nods along good humoredly with them. All these people.

CUT.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

BRADFORD, the artist, and his young male FRIEND stand with their luggage waiting for their ride. Bradford is wearing a white linen suit. A car pulls up. It's Edward Ford's car and Billy Ford stares out at them.

CUT.

INT. AL FOSTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

A hand reaching, stretching, quavering. It's Carla's hand, Al's girlfriend. Al Foster is screaming in drunken madness and strangling her to death. Her fingers are trying to get to the telephone.

INT. HALLWAY

of this nasty rooming hotel. Another foul TENANT walks past Al's door, ignoring the crazed shrieking, and disappears into his own awful room.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT

Quiet. Then the PHONE RINGS. But no one's home.

## INT. AL FOSTER'S APARTMENT

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

CUT.

## INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR - DAY

Billy Ford, driving, goes past Hollywood High School. Bradford the artist looks out at the pretty tanned California boys milling around there. Billy Ford looks quite nervous, edging his thigh as far away from Bradford's as he can.

CUT.

## INT. 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.

## INT. AL FOSTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

## BATHROOM

Al Foster soaks in the rusty bathtub. Edward Ford places a chair next to it to sit on.

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 now and ... regroup my resources.

He might cry.

CUT.

INT. KRANTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Edward Ford has brought over McDonald's food for the kids.

EDWARD FORD

Guess you'll be missin' this stuff back in England. They don't have burgers like this over there, huh?

Through the window we can see Ben out on the patio, pacing back and forth irritably while another ART STUDENT cries.

CUT.

EXT. KRANTZ DRIVEWAY - DAY

The Krantz family bid goodbye to Edward Ford, his brother, and Ilsa with a lot of hugs.

BEN

Thanks for everything, Ilsa.  
(shakes hands with Billy)  
Congratulations, Billy.

EDWARD FORD

(to young Luke)  
You have a nice time back in London now. I'll write you all the movies I see.

YOUNG LUKE

Me too.

His little 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 Hollywood hill.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

EDWARD FORD

All right, I done real good. It's all set -- I'm takin' you over to a cab driver friend of mine's. He's a nice man, he's been a widow (sic) for two years and he's real lonely. He'll be 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 (CONT'D)

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

Pause.

CARLA

I jacked you off once, didn't I?

CUT.

EXT. AIRPORT - EVENING

Billy and Ilsa Ford hug Edward Ford goodbye before pushing their cartful of luggage away. Edward Ford stands there until he can't see them anymore.

CUT.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S BUILDING - 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 photographic 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 obscenities. 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 steps now. In another of the apartments down here a would-be rock band practices. Carla follows Edward Ford.

CARLA

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

CUT.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S BUILDING - MORNING

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

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - MORNING

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 shithead.

INT. HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Harry Blake has come way down in the world. Not that he was ever that up. 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.  
(shrugs)  
Porno pays.

EDWARD FORD

I'd like to read one sometime.

BLAKE

(turns to his wife)  
Honey, do we have any more copies of  
"Bestial Virgins?"

But she's gone off somewhere. Blake turns back to Edward Ford.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Best sellers, I write. Word gets around, you'd be surprised. You can't find a copy of "Mother's Horny Sons" in a adult bookstore in Southern California.  
(pause)  
I specialize in incest.

EDWARD FORD

Uh-huh.

BLAKE

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

PATTY

(coming back)  
There are other things in life than movies.

BLAKE

What are they?  
(as a raving QUEEN comes in)  
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. Harry bangs her head against the wall.

BLAKE  
Shut up.

PATTY  
(as she bounces back)  
You shithead.

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 nods.

EDWARD FORD  
Yeah. They're all gone now.

CUT.

TAXI MONTAGE

We're SEEING Los Angeles through Edward Ford's eyes as his cab drives through time, one moment along Pacific Coast Highway, sunset light glistening on the ocean beyond, the next moment past grungy houses in Whittier. We drive 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 - DAY

Driving. Looks in the rear-view mirror.

INTO THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

A freakish-looking Hollywood denizen sits in the back.

EDWARD FORD

Driving. Checks the mirror again.

BACK SEAT

Now a beautiful model is the passenger. Profiling. Like a swan. Out the window she's facing, three or four varieties of Southern California gas stations are passed. And when our view returns to the back seat, the swan has turned into a tattooed killer.

STRAIGHT ON

PAST Edward Ford, his expression unchanging, to see another fare in the back seat -- a movie producer.

EDWARD FORD

In profile himself now, the view out the side window varying as before, L.A. 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 by.

EDWARD FORD

Hiya Joe! (or whatever the actor's name 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 a passenger out -- an old lady with discolored hair and a bunch of walking contraptions the American medical profession has foisted on her in exchange for her life 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 drives -- 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 back to the hand a quarter change. The hand gives Edward Ford a nickel tip. The passenger, who we don't see, 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.

MOVIE STUDIO

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

SIDEWALK - DAY

Three black PROSTITUTES wave down the approaching cab. They all get in.

INT. CAB

Edward Ford turns to them.

EDWARD FORD

What can I do for you ladies?

His face sinks. The ladies -- aren't. One has sat in the front next to Edward Ford and grabs his crotch playfully.

TRANSSEXUAL

Oooh, you got a big one!

"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!

EXT. SIDEWALK

People stroll by the parked cab.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

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

EDWARD FORD'S BARE BACK - DAY

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

VOICE

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

Edward Ford carries on just humping, his head moving back up and to one side, now revealing the face of his bed 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

Okay. 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

All right. You got your tip there.

EDWARD FORD

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

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

Okay.

EDWARD FORD

Take care now.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

I will.

EDWARD FORD

Bye now.

65, CRIPPLED, AND BLACK

All right. Thank you.

Edward Ford shuffles out.

EXT. STREET

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

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

... 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, coming toward his 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 chic types emerge, comes Edward Ford in his 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.

#### MOTEL

He picks up some New Wave types.

#### THROUGH THE GATES OF BEL-AIR

Goes Edward Ford's cab.

#### TWO WHORES IN VAN NUYS

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

#### THE CAB

Driving to downtown L.A., passing a number of fast-food landmarks and ethnic shops.

#### DOWNTOWN L.A.

Writing up the fare on his trip sheet as the man from Santa Monica walks away, Edward Ford notices 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.

#### THE CAB

Going back to Santa Monica, past the same landmarks.

SANTA MONICA

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

ANOTHER TRIP

Edward Ford notices another item left on the back seat.

EDWARD FORD

Hey, Mister! -- You forgot your Screen Actor's Guild membership card.

Some absolute zero comes back to retrieve it from Edward Ford's outstretched hand.

EDWARD FORD

Remaining on the right side of the SCREEN, just driving, working the steering wheel, as the STATIC babble of his RADIO crackles out its code words and street names, and the passengers constantly change in the back seat behind him.

Some Hollywood scuzz woman, making retching noises.

Replaced by Scandinavian tourists with knapsacks.

Replaced by a young actress, studying her audition lines out loud.

Replaced by an Arab.

Replaced by a South American maid.

Replaced by an ordinary man.

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 a snaffling hippie.

Replaced by Ernest Borgnine.

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 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

Looks at an unseen passenger.

EDWARD FORD

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

THE CAB - DAY

Driving down Western Ave.

GIRL'S VOICE

See, it could be a real party 'cause our rent's comin' up 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.

AN UGLY, FAT WHITE WOMAN - DAY

Standing on a sidewalk next to a trash container, as if to clearly establish 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAB

Edward Ford looks at her.

FAT WOMAN

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

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

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.

EXT. SOUTH NORMANDIE - DAY

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.

DOWNTOWN - DAY

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

EDWARD FORD DRIVING

Continuing his tour.

EDWARD FORD

That's where Sal Mineo was murdered.

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

The cab lets off some tourists going to the Chinese theater.

EDWARD FORD

Driving, nods ahead.

EDWARD FORD

Cecil B. DeMille is buried in there.

STOPPED AT TRAFFIC LIGHTS SOMEWHERE - AFTERNOON

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

EDWARD FORD  
(mumble)  
There's one of life's losers.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAB - NIGHT

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

Edward Ford's face remains quite still as the muzzle of a gun is pressed against his head.

ROBBER'S VOICE  
You know what I want.

EDWARD FORD  
Uh ... You sure you wanna do this?

Reveal the ROBBER sitting there in the back. He has a real mean expression.

ROBBER  
Absolutely sure, asshole. Hand over the dough!

Edward Ford fumbles for money to give the robber. The robber snatches it.

EDWARD FORD  
Are you satisfied now?

ROBBER  
Shut up, mug! Or so help me I'll pump you full of lead.

EDWARD FORD  
You'll never get away with this.

ROBBER  
(brandishing his weapon)  
I thought I told you to shut up!

He twitches crazily once or twice as he stuffs the money into his jacket pocket. Then he backs out of the cab carefully, still pointing the gun at Edward Ford.

EDWARD FORD  
Don't be a fool, man.

ROBBER  
I know what I'm doin'.

EXT. STREET

The robber emerges from the cab. Suddenly a police car turns the corner! The robber starts to run. The police car chases him, lights flashing, SIREN BLARING.

The robber runs down a side street, runs on. The police car skids around the corner after him. The robber turns down an alley, stops almost immediately -- it's a dead end. The police car blocks the entrance to the alley behind him. The robber takes cover behind some garbage cans and 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 open their car doors for cover as they RETURN FIRE.

COP  
(shouts to robber)  
Drop the gun and come out with your hands  
up!

The robber keeps FIRING at them. Completely mad look on his face.

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

The cops fire back. One of them takes careful aim.

THE ROBBER

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

FADE OUT.

## THE EARLY EIGHTIES

INT. A HOLLYWOOD PARTY - DAY

A smallish gathering in Malibu or Brentwood or somewhere. The people here are a far cry from the people we're used to seeing in Edward Ford land. Luke, early twenties, sits talking to BEVERLY HILLS WIFE.

WIFE

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

LUKE

Because he's a nutcase. 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 -- he's a "waiver." 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.

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.

Art Linson walks by.

A LITTLE LATER

William Sackheim walks by.

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 -- it's not exactly an expertise. It's not like he knows movies, just cast lists, y'know -- it's a form of madness.

WIFE

Does he like girls?

LUKE

Well, I don't know that "girls" have ever been introduced into his life. I mean, uh, certain types of demented she-goat --

WIFE

(laughs)

When can we meet this person?

LUKE

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

WIFE

And you see a lot of this fellow?

LUKE

Oh sure -- he's my best friend here.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

Same dump he was in last decade. 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.

INT. LUKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A neat, modern "studio" apartment. Luke is on the phone, watching TV at the same time.

LUKE

Look, why don't you just let me choose something decent to go 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

It lets out early -- we could go to a sex shop after. Hey, and all the whores'll be out tonight -- and, listen, I found a whole new area where they hang out.

CUT.

INT. 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.

INT. 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.

He says it quite plainly.

CUT.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR - NIGHT

As they drive around looking at street 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 shrugs)

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 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. 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 have pulled up in a car on Edward Ford's side.

BLONDE WHORE

You guys looking for a date?

EDWARD FORD

(turns to Luke)

Do you have two hundred dollars cash?

AROUND ANOTHER BLOCK

They're still cruising aimlessly.

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 -

-

Their heads both turn as they think they spot another sleazebag on the sidewalk.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

-- 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'.

CUT.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

Edward Ford's car pulls up and Luke jumps out to buy the new movie magazines. When he comes back Edward Ford starts driving away again. Luke flips through "Film Comment."

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?

EDWARD FORD

Yeah -- I wonder if they talked to her.

LUKE

And he's dead, is he?

EDWARD FORD

Yeah -- Harry died a couple years ago.

LUKE

I'd like to see what he married.

CUT.

INT. PATTY BLAKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Luke is looking at what Harold Blake married. She's sitting across the room chatting with Edward Ford, but for Luke it's like they're just back-projection or something, their conversation muted. Patty Blake is a destroyed old hag, crutches leaning near her. She looks twenty years older than her actual age, whatever it is by now, and she squints and strains to hear what Edward Ford is saying to her. Her room is the bottom of the barrel. The floor is covered with old magazines and yellowed newspapers and other bits of miscellaneous garbage. And dog shit. The motheaten creature responsible for this prowls listlessly around. A black-and-white fuzzy TV broadcasts midday soap opera. Luke watches the dust swimming in the sunlight rays that somehow manage to filter through the slime on the window next to him. The dirt-caked fly screen is torn in places and partly hangs out of its frame.

A LITTLE LATER

Patty Blake, supporting herself on her crutches, shows her visitors out. Edward Ford steps back after kissing her goodbye. She looks at Luke.

PATTY

(indicating Edward Ford)

This is a good guy.

LUKE

Yeah.

INT. HALLWAY

Edward Ford and Luke walk away, over the shabby carpeting in the bleak brown light. They go down some warped and creaking stairs.

CUT.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Luke has a hamburger, Edward Ford a sandwich. In another booth sits a black man with a white girl who has a big bandage across half her head.

At the counter sits a strange-looking short man with a thin greased moustache wearing funny trousers and a loud cowboy shirt. About to enter is a big-boned, crazed young woman who won't be able to stop chattering weirdly to the waitress. The waitress is an older woman, once probably rather pretty, trying to hold onto her dignity. Luke, who's still thinking of Patty Blake and the foul smell of her building, watches the nut for a while.

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 wanna meet a nice girl. If I had a nice girl I wouldn't go round lookin' 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 CAMERA and gestures at Edward Ford as if requesting corroboration for the man's eccentricity.

CUT.

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE - DAY

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

Have you had any ... acting training?

EDWARD FORD

Oh, yeah. I took a class in college.

AGENT

College? Which college?

EDWARD FORD

Fritz Jackson College in Delaware.

AGENT

(consults a resume)

Ah, I have your correct number here,  
right?

CUT.

EXT. LUKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

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

CUT.

EXT. LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM - DAY

Luke and Edward Ford in line at the box-office. A Beverly  
Hills yenta by a "Russian Avant-Garde" poster thrusts a  
leaflet at them.

EDWARD FORD

"Free Soviet Jewelry (sic)"

(gives it to Luke)

I don't want no free Soviet jewelry.

INT. MUSEUM

They stroll through the permanent collection. Edward Ford is intently studying a museum movie programme in his hand.

EDWARD FORD

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

LUKE

Really? What's the matter, they couldn't arrange a Deanna Durbin festival? Too soon to do Vincente Minnelli again?

(disgusted)

Remember when we used to go to complete William Wellman retrospectives?

Everything ever directed by Henry King

...

EDWARD FORD

Well I haven't seen a lot of these.

Luke stops at an interesting painting.

LUKE

What do you think of this picture?

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 (CONT'D)

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.

EXT. A SMALL COLLEGE OR HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING - NIGHT

Luke's car goes in.

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 puttin' 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 that five prisoners escaped yesterday?

EDWARD FORD

They did? They musta heard we was comin'.

INT. LUKE'S CAR

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 grayer than it used to be. He grins at Edward Ford. Edward Ford's expression is completely nonplussed.

EDWARD FORD

(to Luke)

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

Luke laughs. Ben too.

CUT.

INT. LARGE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

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. Behind them at the entrance two black students at a table sell to incoming people. About half the folding chairs are filled. Everyone else here is black. Waiting for the show to start.

BEN

... He must have gotten something from the sale of his parents' house, don't you think?

Unless they accumulated a lot of medical bills at the end maybe. Or unless his brother got it.

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. Working as an extra here and there ...

BEN

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

LUKE

I don't know, I think he's -- content. I mean, he has other associations -- people from his church -- plays cards with people.

BEN

Yes. Ordinary American types.

LUKE

Right. Morons.

BEN

It's amazing he's found a little niche in these negro things. Like a kind of repertory situation.

LUKE

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

BEN

What do you think they think of Edward Ford?

(trying to make Luke laugh)

"Heah comes that honky nutcase again."

Luke tries not to laugh, aware of being surrounded by black people. Ben gets serious, sighs.

BEN (CONT'D)

See, I don't think he knows. He doesn't know. About the road getting narrower ... as you go.

LUKE

No.

BEN

Let's bring him up to Bradford's for a swim. We'll get to watch his reactions. It'll be like some anthropological study.

EDWARD FORD

In front of the classroom 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 a "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.

EXT. BRADFORD'S HOUSE - DAY

Three naked young men dive into the brilliant blue of a swimming pool one after the other. The swimming pool is in the midst of a lush Hollywood Hills setting. The house is private, green all around.

PORCH ABOVE POOL

Edward Ford looks panicky. Sitting with Ben and Luke.

EDWARD FORD

Listen, I think it's real 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.

INT. BRADFORD'S HOUSE - DAY

Luke is lounging in a chair watching a Monte Hellman movie on the Z-channel, idly flipping through the Sunday Calendar. Ben and Edward Ford are still outside on the porch talking. Ben's WIFE moves INTO VIEW, looks for something in a flight bag, disappears again. Bradford is across the rambling floor of the house, dressed in cricketing cap and blazer, talking on the phone.

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.

EXT. PORCH

He's come out to show Edward Ford something in the paper.

LUKE

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

Edward Ford lunges to snatch the paper in excitement, FREEZING in that position.

CUT.

EXT. THE NUART THEATRE - DAY

A long line stretches right round the block. Edward Ford's car moves past.

LUKE

I told you there's 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.

EXT. THE LINE

Luke is a little embarrassed to be standing in line here with Edward Ford. Everyone else is from the world of the hip. Trendy young couples, college students talking film ... Nearer the entrance are people dressed as characters from the most famous Harold Blake production, "Invaders From Planet Ten." T-shirts and buttons are being sold. A TV news magazine crew is on hand, interviewing people as they go in. And Laird Breen, a guest speaker at the festival, is here too.

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

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

LUKE  
 No. No, I don't have to.

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

CUT.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE

Absolutely packed. The crowd is loud and boisterous. 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 (CONT'D)  
 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 finds a seat way at the back by the wall, getting past people to slouch into it.

UP FRONT

Two bearded types wearing glasses and "Invaders" T-shirts take the microphone.

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.

1ST BEARD (CONT'D)

For those of you unfamiliar with Mr. Blake's unique oeuvre, suffice it to say you're in for a very special film experience today. 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.

2ND BEARD

We're starting off the programme with Blake's own "82@" -- the frankly autobiographical "The She-Male" -- 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 world they find so hilarious.

2ND BEARD (CONT'D)

... a crowning achievement of art povera, 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) INT. HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Harold Blake, 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 nonsequitur -- 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."

We HEAR the audience HOWL with laughter -- as Harold Blake watches a few flies buzzing around him.

(PRESENT) INT. MOVIE 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, a 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, we come to Edward Ford, who's simply trying 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) INT. HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT

Patty Blake, also tanked up, enters carrying a couple of plates of baked beans. She sets them down on the table and starts to take a cracker out of an old box already there. She is at this time not quite as eerie-looking 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 scene*.

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, has 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) INT. MOVIE THEATRE

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

"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 LUKE  
Hubcaps. They're hubcaps.

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

"CORPORAL" AND AUDIENCE  
The SuperAtom Missile is ready, Sir.

"GENERAL" AND AUDIENCE  
Thank you for telling me, Sergeant.

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

(FLASHBACK) INT. HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT

Harry's in his tiny kitchen now, rummaging through the garbage. 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 at all well)  
You shithead.

He shoves past her, she hits him feebly.

EXT. HAROLD BLAKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

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, shrieking. Harry knocks on the door of a 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.

Laird is 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 try to talk to a still raving-drunk Patty Blake.

The present-day audience is HEARD CLAPPING.

(PRESENT) INT. MOVIE 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) EXT. 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 Crocodile" 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.

Laird Breen, alone on the pot-holed sidewalk, watches the stretcher go into the ambulance 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR - NIGHT

Driving home from the theatre. Edward Ford is quite incensed.

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.

EXT. STREET

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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR

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 inaccurate -- your stuff is ten times funnier.

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 Bela Lugosi as Ilsa 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 is laughing)

And y'now 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 these fucks who're makin' fun of him are doin'.

EXT. STREET

Edward Ford's car heading back to Hollywood Babylon.

CUT.

EXT. A SMALL HOUSE IN PACOIMA - DAY

Edward Ford is standing on the porch shaking hands goodbye with someone.

EDWARD FORD

... I figured, y'know, since 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. Two very, very fat people.

CUT.

INT. LUKE'S CAR - NIGHT

Luke is driving this time, 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. Not a thing.  
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.

EXT. AROUND A STREET CORNER - AFTERNOON

The hookers in this section of Hollywood aren't so great-  
looking. There's a bunch of them up ahead.

EDWARD FORD

(driving)

Oooh. Oooh.

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

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

You rolled your window up.

LUKE

Yup.

EDWARD FORD

Boy, you're chicken.

LUKE

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

EDWARD FORD

(as the car goes past)

They're businesswomen, that's all.  
Businesswomen.

EXT. EAST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Down here they're really raw. Almost all of them black. Some  
awfully fat and ugly ones. Some of the fattest seem hellbent  
on making that a selling point, nothing disguising their  
thighs beyond the rim of their mini skirts.

And they're beseeching the drivers cruising by, trying to catch their eye, calling Hi. A beat-up car filled to the brim with Mexicans honks at the hookers as it drifts past. Men hanging around outside a wretched burger joint look evil. And through all this Luke is again driving his car, with 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR - DAY

Edward Ford drives. They pass Hollywood High School, Luke looking out at the students who hang around there now -- only blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

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.

INT. LUKE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A cassette recorder is turned on.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Another time, I was sitting on the crapper in Grand Central Station ...

WIDER VIEW

Edward Ford is speaking to a small tape recorder on the coffee table between himself and Luke. Edward Ford is putting on his "acting" voice.

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 off around a corner. We hear a WATER TAP. Edward Ford continues speaking -- methodically -- as always when he starts something.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

(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 with extreme bad-guy voice)

But the little bastard had it comin' to 'im.

EXT. LUKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The odd voice from the lit top floor apartment talks on.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

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 can't help laughing now)

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?

A LITTLE LATER

Edward Ford continues going over the big incidents in his life. The walls of Luke's apartment are covered with movie posters: "The Sand Pebbles," "Django Kill," "Get Carter," "Ulzana's Raid," ... a Michael Powell at Dartmouth College poster, a couple of Luke's father's exhibition posters ... a Kafka exhibition poster ...

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.

Edward Ford smokes a cigarette while he talks into the tape recorder. Luke listens numbly.

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 in Los Angeles. I went to the closing night show. And I was sad.

EXT. LUKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

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?

INT. LUKE'S APARTMENT

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?

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.

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 TV.

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?

Back in his APARTMENT he studies the movie section of the newspaper, making little pencil check marks against possible choices.

EDWARD FORD

Nah -- he wasn't really a bad guy -- just a loudmouth.

From the FREEWAY OFF RAMP he can see the white golfball-like domes of the cinema complex he's visiting one 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 the hooker 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 cinema of the Twenties, he terrorizes rebellious black youth into submission.

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 a frail wrinkled hand at Edward Ford as she totters away.

OLD LADY

Watch for me on "Fantasy Island."

INT. LUKE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Luke sits at his desk making notes as the recorder plays next to him.

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.

LUKE'S VOICE

Who are the Big Six?

We SEE them. Their black-and-white publicity photos FILL THE SCREEN one after the other.

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Well, Lester and Jed, of course. Edmund Cobb. Tom London. James Flavin -- he's the only non-western actor on the Big Six. And Fred Graham. Emmett Vogan is pretty high up.

Eddie Parker is gettin' up there. I seen him in ninety-eight films.

RESUME SCENE

Luke rolls a sheet of paper into his typewriter.

LUKE'S VOICE

Would you make my character a bad guy for writing a script about you?

EDWARD FORD'S VOICE

Probably.

CUT.

INT. XEROX SHOP - DAY

Luke waits at the counter. 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. He notices on his other side some talentless-looking fool being given copies of his pathetic screenplay. Then one of the CHINAMEN behind the counter brings Luke his copies. Luke flips through one to check it out. He looks at the last page.

THE LAST PAGE OF THE SCRIPT

It reads:           PETE'S VOICE  
I'm gonna make a million.  
CUT.

THE END

CUT.

INT. 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 -- an ACTOR and a DIRECTOR.

EDWARD FORD

Hello there -- come on in.

Luke does the honors, everyone shaking hands, etc.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

Pleased to meet you.

The actor and director 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 (CONT'D)

(to actor)

Luke told me on the phone you wanted to see your card.

KITCHEN

Edward Ford hands the actor the master card on him.

EDWARD FORD (CONT'D)

I've seen you in eleven motion pictures.

ACTOR

Well, that covers the hot ones, you know what I mean?

DIRECTOR

(looking 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.

ACTOR

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.

DIRECTOR

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.

ACTOR

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. Okay, 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 watching Edward Ford showing his file cards to the actor and director.

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 ...

MOVE AWAY from Luke ... and now we're --

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

-- and we pass by the director who's quietly watching too -- and into a set of Edward Ford's kitchen -- where another actor is dressed as Luke and the actor we just saw is dressed as Edward Ford, showing his file cards to another actor and director playing themselves in the movie within a movie.

ACTOR

(acting like Edward Ford)  
... Then I turn over my ticket stub from last week and say the last number is three, then I would have to go to the third theatre on my list ...

DISSOLVE.

EXT. SCREEN ACTOR'S GUILD - DAY

Edward Ford comes out of the Guild offices, looking over the application forms he's been given.

DISSOLVE.

EXT. EDWARD FORD'S COURTYARD - DAY

The mailman walks away after stuffing Edward Ford's little mailbox.

Edward Ford immediately comes down from his apartment, looks inside, rips open an envelope. It's his SAG card. He sits down on his steps to stare at it.

CUT.

EXT. AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

The sun slowly diving into the haze.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR

He drives along the concourse, searching the sidewalk, waiting people standing with their luggage. Then, up ahead, the figure he's looking for -- a man with an old suitcase. But Edward Ford isn't quite sure. He slows down as he approaches. And the closer look makes him certain.

AL FOSTER

A 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.

INT. EDWARD FORD'S CAR

Al Foster fills up the passenger seat.

AL

I want to reassure you that I'll be a burden on your dear soul no more than a month.

EDWARD FORD

Now, that's okay -- 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. A cool million.

EXT. HAZY BOULEVARD

The car driving away as the sun sets.

AL'S VOICE

I'm gonna make a million.

CUT.

THE END