

Cinema Verité

It is the early 1990s. Stuart, Carlos, Keesha, and Hanna are a diverse group of early twenty college students. Keesha, as we shall see, is the moody, thoughtful one. Hanna is the type of person who will go to a restaurant, get terrible service, yet feel guilty if she doesn't leave a big tip. Carlos is practicing to be the grumpy uncle that never gets invited to family functions. Stuart just wants to get out of the heat. They stand near the edge of the stage, looking towards the audience, examining posters in front of a movie multi-plex. It is a hot, humid day, and they are all dressed appropriately in T-shirts, shorts, sandals or sneakers. As the action begins they are drifting towards the center of the stage as they view the posters.

Stuart: Why am I here?

Hanna: The same reason we're all here. It's hot out outside and its air conditioned inside.

Keesha: Wonderful reason to see movie.

Carlos: That's what I was saying before.

Hanna: Not melting is the only reason I need right now.

Keesha: Millions for scenery, film, actors, writers, so we have an excuse to get cool.

Carlos: We could save the eight bucks and go to the mall, you know.

Hanna: Without a car.

Carlos: There are malls near the T.

Hanna: I've been to those malls. I always go those malls. It'd be boring.

Carlos: You want to be bored, or cool.

Hanna: I want to cool and entertained.

Carlos: You want everything, don't you.

Hanna: *(Sarcastic)* That's why I go out with you, sweetie.

Keesha: Come on, let's choose one and go in already.

Stuart: Ooooh, Face Off.

Hanna: Mmmm, John Travolta. God, he's gorgeous.

Carlos: Travolta. He's gay, you know.

Hanna: *(To Keesha)* He says that about every good-looking guy in the movies.

Carlos: I do not.

Hanna: You do.

Carlos: Stop it, I do not.

Keesha: She's right, you do.

Carlos: You stay out of this.

Hanna: Hey, leave her alone. You do.

Stuart: How about Batman and Robin?

Keesha: They sound more like Al and Peg Bundy to me.

Stuart: Not them, the movie.

Keesha: Oh. Oh. No, I don't like sequels.

Stuart: It's not a sequel. It's a sequel of a sequel.

Hanna: Actually it's a sequel of a sequel of a sequel.

Keesha: Well, I hate sequels of sequels. *(Brief pause)* Of sequels.

Hanna: You liked Lethal Weapon Two.

Keesha: It had Mel Gibson in it.

Carlos: Gay.

Stuart: And you liked The Empire Strikes Back.

Keesha: Harrison Ford.

Carlos: Gay.

Keesha: *(To Hanna)* Is there any actor he doesn't think is gay.

Hanna: Yea, three. Wallace Shawn, Don Knotts, and the guy who plays the Maytag repairman.

Stuart: (*Fanning himself*) Can we please pick a movie?

Hanna: How about Free Willy?

Stuart: How about it, Carlos. The whale's not gay, is he?

Carlos: Bite me.

Keesha: (*Another pause as they scan the posters*) Didn't this used to be a one-screen theater?

Hanna: Uh huh.

Keesha: What a shame. I'll bet it was really something when it was new and everyone came to see the same movie.

Carlos: (*Looking at the building*) Wow. One screen. How long ago was that?

Hanna: Someone I know who grew up around here said their parents used to come here as late as 1963.

Carlos: What happened then?

Hanna: That's when it was bought out by some chain and cut up into two theaters.

Stuart: Only two. But there's... (*Counts the posters*) eight here now.

Hanna: Well, the company that bought the original theater and broke it into two theaters was bought by a bigger company that made it into four. Then, a few years ago some big conglomerate bought them out and made it into eight.

Carlos: How do they squeeze all these screens into one theater?

Keesha: That's easy. They make the screens the size of a television.

Carlos: Then why do people pay eight bucks to see a movie?

Stuart: Because they're stupid, like us, and waited until the heat wave began to look for an air conditioner.

Keesha: Only there aren't any air conditioners because all the smart people have already bought them.

Hanna: The smart people are out of town at the beach.

Keesha: The smart people have a car so they can get to the beach.

Carlos: The smart people have chauffeurs who drive them to the beach.

Hanna: Then back home to their air conditioned homes.

Keesha: Where they watch movies on TVs with screens bigger than the ones in this theater.

Stuart: I can't stand this. I'm going in.

Carlos: Whattya gonna see?

Stuart: I don't care anymore. I just want to get out of this heat.

Carlos: Well, pick one.

Stuart: *(Frantically looking at the selection)* Uhhh.... Air Force One.

Carlos: Great. Air Force One. I've been wanting to see that.

Hanna: With Harrison Ford. You don't mind seeing a gay man playing a president who fights terrorists, do you Carlos?.

Carlos: It's an action movie. As long as he's kicking their assess, not licking them.

Hanna: All right, I'm game.

Carlos: Great, let's go.

(Stuart, Carlos, and Hanna start to drift stage left. Keesha stands center stage, deep in thought. Hanna returns to her side)

Hanna: You coming?

Keesha: Huh. Oh, uh, I guess. I don't know.

Hanna: What's the matter. Look if it's Carlos...

Keesha: No, it's not him - the big jerk. No, I was just thinking.

Hanna: About what?

Keesha: You know the heat will still be here when we get out.

Hanna: I guess that's true but at least we'll be out of it for a couple of hours.

Keesha: And then what?

Hanna: And then what what?

Keesha: We'll be back in it, looking for something else to do.

Hanna: You could say that about anything we do in the summer.

Keesha: I guess. It just seems like we're doing this because we don't have a choice.

Stuart: *(Has returned center stage, fanning himself)* Is there a problem? I'd like to get inside before I lose any more weight.

Keesha: I just thought life was supposed to be more than this.

Hanna: More than what?

Keesha: Than... this.

Hanna: *(To Keesha)* What are you trying to say?

Keesha: So we get out of the heat for two hours. What do we do for the two hours after that? And the two hours after that?

Carlos: *(Returns center stage)* Was I dreaming, or did we actually agree on a movie a few seconds ago?

Hanna: You're thinking too much.

Stuart: That's impossible.

Hanna: Do you mind. *(To Keesha)* Go on.

Keesha: Never mind. It's silly. Let's go in.

Hanna: *(Guides her away from Carlos and Stuart, who grumble silently in the background)* What is it?

Keesha: This is stupid. We're holding everyone up.

Hanna: It's not silly and it's not stupid. Now something's bothering you. What is it?

Keesha: *(Pause. A sigh)* I couldn't wait for college so I could leave Detroit and come to Boston.

Hanna: I couldn't wait to leave Natick.

Keesha: But standing here in front of this theater, bored and sweating with nothing else to do but watch someone else's dreams come true, I was struck by the most depressing thought.

Hanna: What's that?

Keesha: That there must be hundreds of people who couldn't wait to get out of Boston.

Hanna: I guess everyone can't wait to get away from where they grew up. You know, try new things, meet new people –

Keesha: - But that means that we're all running away to a place someone else has run away from.

Hanna: *(With compassion)* Keesha...

Keesha: What?

Hanna: You were right. This is silly and stupid.

Keesha: Thanks a lot!

Hanna: Look, I'm not saying this is the perfect summer. I'm not even saying it's the perfect day. Carlos sure isn't the perfect boyfriend. *(Pause)* Come to think of it, we haven't had one date that I'd consider anything above acceptable. *(Pause)* Oh God.

Keesha: What?

Hanna: Now I'm depressed.

Stuart: *(To Carlos)* Do I look shorter to you? Because I think the heat is making me shrink.

Carlos: Did you say shrink, or stink? *(Stuart playfully punches Carlos, who punches back)*

Keesha: I'm sorry I said anything.

Hanna: No, I'm sorry for not taking you seriously. *(Looking back at Stuart and Carlos, who have each other in a headlock)* It's not like anyone else is going to listen. *(The boys fall to the floor)* Or understand.

Keesha: No, I had no right to drag you into the dumps with me.

Carlos: *(He and Stuart break apart, and walk to Keesha and Hanna)* Hey, can we go inside before Stuart melts and we lose him in one of the cracks in the sidewalk. *(Almost startled at Hanna and Keesha's forlorn expressions)* What happened to you two?

Keesha: Nothing.

Hanna: We're fine.

Stuart: Glad to hear it. Dr. Kevorkian will see you now.

Carlos: *(To Hanna)* Sweetheart, is there anything wrong?

Hanna: *(Searches his eyes. Finds nothing)* No. Not really.

Carlos: Good, because I really want to get out of this heat.

Stuart: Getting out of the heat. What a great idea. Why didn't I think of it?

Hanna: Come on, let's get Captain Subtle inside.

(All but Keesha start to exit. Hanna turns, stops, and returns to center stage. Carlos looks increasingly annoyed)

Carlos: What are you doing?

Hanna: Look, we'll be there in a minute. Why don't you buy the tickets?

Carlos: Okay. *(He and Stuart exit. Hanna puts her arm around Keesha)*

Hanna: It gets better.

Keesha: You sure?

Hanna: That's what they say. Why someday, we'll look back on this summer when we had crappy boyfriends and no car or no air conditioning and laugh.

Keesha: I don't see anything to laugh about.

Carlos has slinked back onstage, looking anxious. Stuart stands behind him, almost in the wing. Keesha motions to Hanna, who turns to look at Carlos

Hanna: Is anything wrong?

Carlos: Do you have a few bucks I could borrow? *(Pause)* You know, until I can get to a machine? *(Keesha and Hanna burst out laughing)* Hey! I'll pay you back! I will! Honest!

Hanna: That's all right, sweetie. You already have. Come on. Let's go to the movies. Air Force One, Free Willy 5, I don't care.

(As they walk off, stage right)

Carlos: Hey, how about after the movie we get something to eat?

Stuart: Yea, in a nice air conditioned restaurant.

Hanna: Amen. What kind do you want?

Carlos: How about Mexican food?

Hanna: On a hot day you want Mexican.

Carlos: Where do you think Mexico is, the North Pole?

Stuart: What's wrong with a burger?

Carlos: I can cook a burger. If you're going to go out to eat it might as well be something you can't cook yourself. Something different.

Hanna: This from a man who eats Spaghettios for breakfast.

Stuart: How about Thai food?

Carlos: Thai food, now you're talking!

Carlos, Hanna, and Stuart exit stage right. Keesha, who has been bringing up the rear of the line, sands and watches her friends walk off stage. She stops, collects her thoughts, takes a deep breath, and starts her exit

Keesha: Hey! Guys. How about Italian?

(She exits)

CURTAIN