

# WILDWATER

A ½ hour single camera comedy by Will Amato

At its core, *Wildwater* is a light hearted stoner comedy in the style of *Wet Hot American Summer*. The stakes are high for our hero Wayne, whose controlling father has tee'd up a corporate job in the family carpet cleaning business. Wayne has zero interest in carpets and, like so many before him, escapes to the river looking to find himself.

## LOGLINE

When an eager beaver college grad takes a job as a whitewater guide, he struggles to relinquish the expectations of his father and let the good times roll with a rowdy bunch of hippies, drifters and hillbillies.

## SYNOPSIS

*Wildwater* is an episodic series with a season arc exploring Wayne's troubled relationship with his father Bruce, and the push and pull they feel towards each other. Bruce is a cutthroat business owner used to getting what he wants. Wayne loves an adventure and seeks fresh, life-affirming experiences around every corner. If Bruce is a square, Wayne is a squiggly line. Their opposite philosophies cause constant drama as the harder Bruce tries to lure his son into the family business, the harder Wayne rebels and leans into life on the river.

## A PERSONAL SETTING

*Wildwater* is the cheapest, dirtiest, rowdiest, most notorious outpost on the Nantahala river. It's like Delta Tau Chi from *Animal House*. Parties rage all night, high-quality marijuana is abundant, and law and order are absent. *Wildwater* is the catch-all river job for those too unqualified or too rebellious to work at the more well-respected outposts in the Nantahala Gorge. The bus drivers have suspended licenses, the guides are on parole, and no one trusts the law. The gorgeous nature and a love of the outdoors band this rag-tag bunch of folks together.

The Nantahala Gorge is a tiny river town deep in the North Carolina backwoods. My parents owned a small cabin nearby and during the summer, I would marvel at the river guides sitting on the back of inflatable rafts like badass mountain pirates. After college, I had nowhere else to go and was afraid of getting a corporate job like my father. I cold-called an outpost in the Gorge, lied about my experience, and got a job on the river. The head guide, Pappy, is based on a real character who introduced me to John Prine over a bottle of Wild Turkey and a blunt in his tiny river house.

The bus drivers, Margaret and Perry, are real. They used to smoke cigarettes and laugh at the ridiculous tourists dressed in brand new swimsuits and slathered in thick gooey sunscreen. Pastor Larry, another bus driver, tried every week to convert me to Christ.

Little Bear, who lived on the Cherokee reservation in NC, introduced me to moonshine, ENO hammocks, and moonlight swims with naked river hippies. Many of the happiest and most joyful times of my life took place in the Nantahala Gorge. While the world moves on, the Gorge has remained

largely the same in the 20 years I've been hanging out there. *Wildwater* is jam-packed with hair-raising adventures based on my 10 years working on the river. The ridiculous characters I met over the years taught me to abide and chill the fuck out.

## WHY NOW

In 2022, along highway 74 through the Nantahala Gorge, both pride flags and MAGA signs are abundant. No one agrees, but somehow it works. The Nantahala Gorge attracts freelife hippies from across America. The surrounding hills and hollers host generations of Appalachian hillbillies, outlaws and moonshiners. In a divided America, *Wildwater* reminds us that folks from different walks of life can love each other and become a family.

## THE PILOT

Wayne celebrates the glory of bohemia around a roaring bonfire with dozens of drunk raft guides. Ignoring several phone calls from his father Bruce, he insists on going down the river and learning to guide rafts as soon as possible. Head guide Pappy makes Wayne clean the toilets and introduces him to the colorful cast of raft guides at a team meeting on "The Hill" where the guides live. Little Bear and Ben tease Wayne mercilessly while the manager Bill struggles to maintain order. He forces Little Bear to take Wayne on a training trip down the river.

Wayne is assigned life jacket duty (submerging them in a solution called 'sink the stink',) with Nicole and falls in love at first dunk. He exaggerates to Nicole about his money problems and tells her that he renounced his father's carpet cleaning business to come work on the river. Nicole recognizes the name Bruce Carbone, but can't put her finger on why.

Wayne and Little Bear compete for laughs during a safety speech with the guests. Wayne tells better jokes, but is humiliated when Little Bear yanks him onto his ass during the safety rope demonstration.

Shawn and Annie, the stoner guides, convince Jake, a guide from a rival outpost, to transport an old couch they find on the side of the road to Wildwater with his truck. He drops it directly in the middle of the driveway and blocks the raft buses.

The next morning, Shawn and Annie try unsuccessfully to move the couch up "The Hill" for the annual couch burning party to kick off a new season at Wildwater. Bus drivers Perry and Margaret jeer at them like Stadler and Waldorf from the *Muppets*. They quickly give up and light a joint on the couch in the Wildwater parking lot. Bill the manager is furious.

Ben and Little Bear slap their paddles in the river and yell BEAVER SHARK to torment Wayne. He falls out of the raft several times to the delight of the tourists. At Wayne's insistence, Little Bear allows him to guide the raft...way before he's ready. Catastrophe strikes when Wayne hits a huge rapid sideways and dump trucks a load of seven girl scouts into the river.

The guides rally and successfully execute a daring rescue. Wayne learns that guiding rafts is much harder than he thought. Embarrassed, he packs up his Jeep and departs for his father's nearby lake house in failure. An empathetic Nicole goes after him and discovers that Wayne comes from a wealthy family and lied about being broke.

Shawn rips the bumper off his small sedan while trying to tow the couch up "The Hill." Bill threatens Shawn and Annie's jobs if they can't find a way to get the couch off the driveway. Perry and Margaret laugh their asses off.

At the lake house, Wayne and Nicole discover Bruce cheating on Wayne's mother with a much younger employee from Carbone's Carpets, who happens to be Nicole's cousin, Caroline. They argue about responsibility and a sense of duty. Disillusioned by his father, Wayne returns to the river for a shot at redemption and Nicole. They help Shawn and Annie get the couch up "The Hill" with Wayne's Jeep and celebrate with a case of PBR at the couch burning party. Wayne decides to defy his father's wishes and do everything he can to fit in with the misfits on the river.

## FUTURE EPISODES

### RIVER RACE

The Wildwater crew competes with rival guides from the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) for dominance during a race down the river. On the same day, Bruce sends his personal assistant, Carl, to Wildwater in a giant Suburban to bring Wayne to Carbone's for an orientation, even though he's not an employee. Wayne flatly refuses and the guides tear Carl a new one for being a lame suit.

The NOC guides sabotage Wildwater by slashing the tires on their antiquated equipment truck. Wayne offers Carl's Suburban to transport the raft, and the guides pile in. Shawn sprains his ankle while offloading the raft, and Carl ends up becoming the sixth guide in a race down the river.

After a harrowing race, Wildwater and the NOC guides brawl near the finish line and allow the girls from White Water Express, an all female rafting company, to slip by with the win. Bruce arrives at the take out and chastises Wayne for losing to a bunch of girls. He rips Carl a new one for wasting time on the river.

### CHURCH CAMP

On Saturday, a Southern Baptist summer camp invades Wildwater. The guides complain to Bill since Christians are notoriously bad tippers. The campers arrive singing hymns and praying for safe passage down the river. Pastor Larry, a bus driver, invites Wayne to his home on Sunday morning for coffee. On Sunday morning, Ben slips magic mushrooms into Wayne's oatmeal.

When Wayne arrives at the address Larry provided, it's a Southern Baptist church. In a hilarious comedy of errors, Wayne converts to Christ and offers testimony in front of the whole congregation, while tripping on shrooms. He donates \$1000 of his father's money to the church and commits to joining the seminary. After learning of Wayne's adventure, Bruce brings a bus load of strippers to "The Hill" since in his view, Wayne overcorrected. The guides and the girls celebrate at a raging bonfire.

### INTERVENTION

Bruce books a corporate rafting retreat at Wildwater with the leadership team from Carbone's Carpets and requests that his son be the guide. He invites former convicts which he refers to as "my associates," to convince Wayne that he's going down the wrong road. The plan backfires as the convicts get friendly with the river guides and end up partying on "The Hill."

## CHARACTERS

### WAYNE

Wayne, 20s, is a curious, anxious, overly-enthusiastic optimist. His father Bruce was absent during his childhood and he will do anything to avoid going down the same road and spending his life working a corporate job for 12 hours a day, even if it means giving up a hot shower. Wayne is a consummate showman and cannot resist the spotlight. He's smitten with the amazingly beautiful naked river hippies fluttering around the Gorge, who get him into trouble. Wayne is an emotional guy who wears his heart on his sleeve, and comes into conflict with southern machismo tough guy culture in the Gorge. He's the sort of guy you'd meet once and say: "That dude is a lot to handle."

Wayne has ADHD and cannot sit still. He's terribly anxious about the future and has trouble giving up his privileged lifestyle. Wayne is single and crushes hard on Nicole. Her relaxed, easy-going attitude towards life is something he craves. Wayne is upbeat and full of energy, and has trouble calming down and just abiding, which is the most popular activity in the Gorge. As the show progresses, he learns to abide and appreciate the beauty of the world around him. Wayne has a temper and hates bullies. In addition to standing up to his father, he battles Ben and Little Bear who always try to put him down. He's up to the task, though runs up against obstacles at every turn as he tries to let go of his parents' expectations and blaze his own trail.

### BRUCE

Bruce, 50s, is an obsessive compulsive entrepreneur who values hard work, financial stability, and clean carpets. He owns a million dollar house on Fontana Lake near the river and owns the successful chain, Carbone's Carpets. Bruce paid for Wayne's expensive private college and expects a return on his investment. He thinks being a river guide is a waste of time and worries about his son's financial future. He can't resist younger women and is a man used to getting what he wants, when he wants it.

Bruce grew up in a broken home and built his carpet empire from the ground up. He had no positive examples of what it means to be a good dad, and takes his advice from pop culture and cliches. He loves Italian gangster movies and waxes poetic about the importance of family and how blood is thicker than water. Bruce fought his way through grade school and learned to be a tough guy to survive. He has no idea how to relate to his son Wayne, who is sensitive and emotional. Bruce does not believe failure is an option and he's willing to go to extreme lengths to get his son on the right track, working at Carbones.

### NICOLE

Nicole, 20s, is an enlightened small town girl who loves the mountains with every fiber of her being. She's a calm, collected, woodland fairy queen with a heart of gold who never fell for the trap of materialism or got addicted to technology. She looks out for creatures large and small, and loves hippies and rednecks alike. Nicole looks for love in all the wrong places and thinks she can tame the wild beasts at the river she ends up dating. She finds Wayne charming, though they are complete opposites. Wayne is an extrovert, Nicole is an introvert. Wayne loves big crowds. Nicole is happier with a book. Her boyfriend Ben is the latest stray she's working unsuccessfully to tame. Nicole does not dream of living anywhere else. The Gorge is her perfect home.

Nicole comes from generations of Appalachian mountain folks. She embodies small town culture, and the chill hippy vibes in the Gorge. She's a rare exception who lives in both worlds. She's the queen of the gypsies and loves everyone equally. Nicole is full of compassion, and content to let things roll. She does not harbor the illusion that we control our destiny, like Wayne, which drives him crazy.

## PAPPY

Pappy, 50s, is a good ole boy with a great sense of humor and a thick Tennessee accent. He worked for 20 years as a machinist, then left it all to come work on the river. He's the resident sage at Wildwater and the guy you come to for advice. He's seen it all. Pappy makes his own hot sauce from peppers he grows in the garden, and loves moonshine. He spends summers working on the river, and goes down to Key West during the winter time where he parks in the public lot and sleeps in his Toyota 4 Runner. Pappy is a trip leader and head guide on the river. He and Bill try to maintain order and keep the outpost doors open amidst unreliable staff, rival outposts, and mayhem on the river.

## BEN

Ben, late 20s, is an ex-marine, who came to the river after being dishonorably discharged for picking a fight with a translator. He loves to lift heavy things and blow shit up. He's always on the hunt for more extreme outdoor adventures. Ben loves fried chicken, fishing, and getting blackout drunk on the hill. He's obsessed with winning and thinks Wayne is a total loser.

Ben is the first guy to get in your face during a fight, and taunts guides from rival outposts on the river. He's a blowhard irritating human that you'd never want to cross. As a child, he was physically abused by his drunk father and blames the world. Ben elicits empathy from Nicole who tries to save him. Ben is sexually supercharged and hits on any attractive female who crosses his path.

## SHAWN AND ANNIE

Shawn, 20s, is the worst guide on the river. If Shaggy from Scooby Doo was a real person. He has a crush on his best friend Annie from college, but is afraid to admit it. Shawn is the go-to guy for quality weed in the Gorge.

Annie, 20s thinks Shawn is a complete idiot, but he makes her laugh. She's a major stoner, but the brains of the operation. They are compassionate humans and try to help Wayne assimilate to life in the Gorge.

## LITTLE BEAR

Little Bear, 20s, is a Cherokee descendent who lives his life with a smirk. He's an expert river guide and takes his craft seriously. He does not approve of Wayne's laissez-faire attitude and resents his showmanship. He teaches Wayne to appreciate nature and flow with the river, instead of against it.

Little Bear grew up on the nearby Cherokee reservation and gets checks from the casino every month. On the 1st, he's rich as a king, and by the end of the month, he can barely buy food. The ladies love Little Bear, and he entertains a revolving door of amazingly beautiful tourists in his bunk.

## SEASON ARC

Wayne is constantly torn between hippy dippy life on the river, and the comfort of a hot shower at his dad's lake house. He battles his father's increasingly creative attempts to lure him back to Carbone's, while trying to assimilate to a world of broke-ass river folk. He's anxious after school and determined to become his own man, on his own terms. Throughout the season, his need for fancy food and material possessions will be tested over and over as he develops opinions and tastes that are all his own, away from the influence of his father.

He develops a major crush on Nicole and attempts to steal her heart. One drunken night during the finale, they share a kiss. Wayne discovers weed, beat poetry, the great outdoors, and how to chill out.

He battles Ben for dominance and tip money on the river as his skills improve. The Wildwater guides compete with the more upscale Nantahala Outdoor Center outpost for business. The managers from the Wildwater try new gimmicks to attract customers and survive another season on the Nantahala river. The push and pull between a glorious life on the river, and the normal expectations of a college educated American male drive the drama as Wayne struggles to discover his true self.