

Wilma Pruitt
from *Rising Water*

(Lights up in the Daniels living room – Jordon is sitting on the sofa thumbing through a magazine. Presently – enter Stuart, he watches for a beat then walks over to talk to Jordon.)

Stuart

How you holding up son?

Jordon

Barely. (He puts the magazine on the coffee table.)

Stuart

(Moves to sit next to Jordon) You know this is the first time we've been alone since – well just since – (can't bring himself to say the words) let's talk before your mother gets back.

Jordon

What don't you want mom to hear?

Stuart

Nothing. I just thought we'd talk a bit – you know – father to son.

Jordon

Dad – I didn't leave home planning to do that – I didn't even know Kareem – we don't go to the same school or even have any of the same friends.

Stuart

(Considers what his son has said.) Jordon – I want you to tell me everything – EVERYTHING– about that day. And I want you to tell me the truth.

Jordon

Well, it was me, Martin, Reece and Miller, the usual guys. We were riding around like always – talking to girls out the windows of the car, we got some food – we went to the park – played ball – hung out for a while – then we were riding around again. Laughing, talking – like always. Then this guy came out of an apartment building – he threw something into a trash can – we didn't care at first, then Martin said he bet the guy threw out something he was trying to get rid of –

Stuart

Jordon! Tell me the truth – now! All that – stuff– you just said sounds like a lie. Don't lie to me. I'm only as stupid as you think I am. The rest of this smack ain't flying.

Jordon

(Thoughtful for a beat) We bought the gun.

Stuart

From whom?

Jordon

Does it matter now?

Stuart

Don't test me boy! It matters more than ever now.

Jordon

You can buy anything you want dad, all you need is the money.

Stuart

FROM WHOM!?

Jordon

We had been riding around – another time– another day. Martin said he knew where we could buy some sess.

Stuart

Sess? What's sess?

Jordon

You know – weed.

Stuart

Weed? You smoke weed too?

Jordon

Sometimes – but that's not why what happened – happened. I wasn't high or drunk.

Stuart

(Under his breath) Maybe you should have been. (Sighs heavily in disgust – but settles in to listen)

Jordon

Dad – I don't like the details either – okay? I wish we were talking about anything else but this. And I don't like you finding out about my behavior – about what I do when I'm not home.

Stuart

I wish I had found out about what you were doing sooner, maybe we wouldn't be having this conversation. Go on – finish it. Tell it all – but you better tell me the truth. You hear me?

Jordon

I hear you dad. Anyway – we bought the weed – I went inside with Martin – I'd never seen a real drug dealer's place before and I wanted to see if it was like the ones I'd seen on t.v. Dad – it wasn't like the ones on t.v. They had armed guards – sentinels – some serious guns – and they do inventory and count out the money – I never seen so much money up close before. They kept it in rolls in Ziploc bags or something – anyway– we got the stuff and when we were leaving this guy – I don't know any names – I swear I don't– and I tried not to see any faces – anyway the guy asked us if we wanted to buy a gun.

Stuart
So you bought a gun?!! (He stands.)

Jordon
Yeah. We did.

Stuart
Why? What for?

Jordon
(He stands and walks away from his father) I don't know—

Stuart
(Walks angrily toward his son) Boy! Don't you say "I don't know" to me anymore.

Jordon
I DON'T know dad. There was no reason. We just did—it seemed like a cool thing to have at the time. You know—we'd have a gun.

Stuart
Where'd you keep it? The gun?

Jordon
We took turns—here—Martin's house—the other guys—Miller and Taylor.

Stuart
Jordon—boy why? What for? A gun? (Trying to see this.)

Jordon
It cost a hundred dollars—it was a gun—people would know we were packing—we'd have street credit.

Stuart
What did you and Martin need with street credit at Pretlowe Academy? What did you plan to do with a gun? Why didn't you just let the weed be enough?

Jordon
You don't understand dad—

Stuart
No—I don't understand why you needed a gun to have street credit. I don't know why you need street credit. I didn't know you wanted street credit. I thought you wanted to go to Moorehouse. (sighs) Just tell the rest about that evening. This is becoming more of a nightmare than I thought it was. (He paces in disgust)

Jordon
We were riding around—then we decided to start shooting the gun—

Stuart

Jordon! (stands still)

Jordon

We weren't trying to shoot anyone dad – we were just shooting. Martin went first – we shot at some abandoned buildings – (pauses a beat) Then it was my turn to shoot – we drove into another area – in case somebody had called the police – we went down a street that had alleyways between the buildings with these big dumpsters – we drove into one and I opened fire – then that kid Kareem appeared out of nowhere – from behind one of the buildings at the same time – and I shot him – and we drove away.

Stuart

Why were you shooting?

Jordon

To shoot the gun – just to shoot. To practice.

Stuart

Did you know Kareem?

Jordon

No. I told you I didn't know him – honest I didn't know him.

Stuart

Now a young man is dead because you just wanted to shoot?

Jordon

I feel bad dad – really bad – all inside I feel so empty – like something is gone –

Stuart

Jordon – you hide weapons and drugs in our house, you hang out with a boy who knows drug dealers. Do his folks know?

Jordon

I don't know.

Stuart

Of course you don't know. And I'm sure they are just as in the dark as I am. I think I'm raising my son to have some sense and to do the right thing. I think I'm raising my son to take advantage of the opportunities this country has to offer. I've been planning to pay for your education since you were born. I thought you wanted some of the things we wanted for you. But you are trying to go as far away from anything I wanted for you as you can. We've even asked you if this is what you wanted too. You looked us in the face and said yes. We're grown, people tell us no all the time, people tell us what they want every day. I thought we had given our son these same options.

Jordon

Dad I made a mistake. I know it was senseless – it just happened – it seemed like a good idea at the time. I didn't know Kareem – I had never seen him before in my life.

Stuart

A mistake? You shoot someone four times and you say you made a mistake? You bump into someone's car in a parking lot or misspell a word – those are mistakes son. This foolish thing you've done – (he is finally overcome) you killed someone.

Jordon

Dad –

(Stuart pulls his son to him – hugs him. His concern shows on his face. Lights down.)