

(DRAFT: 08 Mar 2021)

TETHERED: ADDISON & ELEONORE

A play in one act
By Craig Houk



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Cast of Characters

ADDISON SPRATT: Edwin's Adoptive Father (77 Years Old)

ELEONORE SPRATT: Edwin's Adoptive Mother (72 Years Old)

Place

Bethesda, MD

Time

Present

SETTING: *The Reception Hall in the Spratt Mansion.*

AT RISE: *A business mogul and his wife, a US Circuit Judge's adoptive parents, are entertaining guests at a small pre fundraising gala cocktail party. They are both drunk.*

ELEONORE

He was all alone.

ADDISON

He looked light in the loafers to me.

ELEONORE

Eight years old.

ADDISON

And as soft as a chocolate teapot.

ELEONORE

I had to have him.

ADDISON

The runt of the litter.

ELEONORE

He turned out all right.

ADDISON

I should say so. And he'll soon be an Associate Justice to the United States Supreme Court.

ELEONORE

That's right. And you don't become a Supreme Court Justice if you're as soft as a chocolate loafer, now do you?

ADDISON

You're mixing them up, dear.

ELEONORE

What do you mean?

ADDISON

You've mixed them up. You've combined 'light in the loafers' with 'soft as a chocolate teapot'.

ELEONORE

Did I?

ADDISON

Yes.

ELEONORE

Well, what does it matter anyway? Everyone knows what we're saying. I mean, let's be honest; we thought for certain he'd grow up to be a brownie queen.

ADDISON

All right, dear. Anyway, it took a lot of hard work, but I turned that boy around.

ELEONORE

More like you turned him over your knee.

ADDISON

Please, Eleonore, not in front of the guests. All right, yes, I've got a reputation for sternness. But there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with uncompromising discipline.

ELEONORE

We think his birth parents were hippies.

ADDISON

Pot smoking, acid dropping liberals.

ELEONORE

Shocking, but likely true.

ADDISON

There's no doubt in my mind. That boy got some kind of contact high from the hashish they were smoking. Irreversible brain damage. Screwed up his testosterone.

ELEONORE

He turned out all right.

ADDISON

US Circuit Judge.

ELEONORE

And soon to be Associate Justice to the United States Supreme Court.

ADDISON

And you don't get to be a Supreme Court Justice if you're brain damaged or limp wristed, now do you?

ELEONORE

You do not.

ADDISON

We had to pry a doll from his hands when we brought him home from the orphanage. He wouldn't let go of it.

ELEONORE

Bubble Cut Barbie.

ADDISON

I'm sorry, what?

ELEONORE

It was a Bubble Cut Barbie, dear. A vintage 1963 honey blonde bubble cut Barbie doll. It was probably worth something, except that you tore off its head and ripped its arms and legs from its torso.

ADDISON

It had to be done.

ELEONORE

And lit it on fire.

ADDISON

I may have gone too far. I think I made my point, though.

ELEONORE

I still have a scar on my ankle from the lock of melted hair that fell from its scalp.

ADDISON

All right, dear. No need to get graphic.

ELEONORE

We're extremely proud of our son.

ADDISON

He has a beautiful wife.

ELEONORE

And two adoring... [children]

ADDISON

...Yes, indeed, his wife is beautiful. She could be one of those... What do they call them? Power models?

ELEONORE

Super model.

ADDISON

Super model, yes. She's stunning.

ELEONORE

I think you might be overstating it a bit, dear. She's pleasant enough to look at, yes.

ADDISON

Gorgeous.

ELEONORE

She certainly isn't repellent; I'll give her that much. Of course, she does otherwise possess the social graces of a domesticated turkey.

ADDISON

That's entirely inaccurate.

ELEONORE

Is it?

ADDISON

And even so, turkeys are beautiful birds. So, there's that.

ELEONORE

There's what?

ADDISON

Turkeys. They're spectacular creatures.

ELEONORE

If you say so, dear.

ADDISON

I do say so.

ELEONORE

So, that's settled then. Oh, which reminds me. Did you know, there's a farm nearby that gives customers the opportunity to slaughter their own turkeys...?

ADDISON

...You've gone off track, dear...

ELEONORE

...I'll need to bookmark that...

ADDISON

(He raises his glass.)

...A toast.

ELEONORE

(She raises her glass.)

Oh, yes. Of course. A toast. To... To what, dear?

ADDISON

To our son. To Edwin James Spratt.

ELEONORE

Yes. Of course. To Edwin Xavier Spratt.

ADDISON

The next US Supreme Court Justice.

ELEONORE

If he gets confirmed.

ADDISON

Yes, if he gets... I'm sorry, what, dear?

ELEONORE

Well, of course, there's no guarantee that he'll actually be seated.

ADDISON

Nonsense.

ELEONORE

Pish posh.

ADDISON

Claptrap.

ELEONORE

Twaddle. No, but really, dear. Edwin is not exceedingly popular with the Democrats, now is he?

ADDISON

Well, none of us are. It's a badge of honor, though, isn't it?

ELEONORE

One we wear proudly.

ADDISON

Exactly. So, there's nothing to worry about, now is there?

ELEONORE

I suppose not.

ADDISON

And anyway, we control the Senate.

ELEONORE

That's a fair point. But things could get ugly, dear. Very ugly.

ADDISON

Ugly is an ugly word, Eleonore. We are not pessimists. We are not doom-mongers. We are not quitters. And we most certainly are not losers. We are winners. And in fact, we are going to win so much that you're all going to be so damned exhausted from all the winning.

ELEONORE

I'm exhausted already.

ADDISON

Well, that's ridiculous. The night is still young. We have so much to celebrate. And several of our closest acquaintances have joined us this evening to mark the occasion in case you haven't noticed. So, the night goes on as planned. What do you say to that, dear?

ELEONORE

I say, "The night may be young, but we're not."

ADDISON

Buck up, dear. And drink up. It's nearly time to go.

ELEONORE

Oh, you're right. The gala starts in less than an hour.

ADDISON

Tell you what. Now that we've made our toast, and everyone seems to be suitably juiced, why don't we take a short break, have another drink or two, help yourselves to more hors d'oeuvres, mingle, use the water closet if you must, insult the servants, and then we'll gather in the motor court in about forty minutes.

ELEONORE

Sounds like a fantastic plan, dear.

ADDISON

Yes. And if you need access to your hosts in the meantime, Eleonore and I will be in the study.

ELEONORE

We will?

ADDISON

Yes.

ELEONORE

The study?

ADDISON

That's what I said.

ELEONORE

Sounds ominous.

ADDISON

Does it? I didn't mean for it to sound that way.

ELEONORE

Of course, you didn't.

ADDISON

So, Eleonore and I will be in the study if you need us. We won't be long. Let's go, dear.

(They escape to the Study.)

ELEONORE

Is something wrong, Addison?

ADDISON

Yes, something is wrong. Something is off. You made a complete fool of yourself out there.

ELEONORE

I did? How?

ADDISON

You said too much.

ELEONORE

As did you if I recall correctly.

ADDISON

I disagree. My remarks were perfectly nuanced and decisively misleading. Everything I said, I said in jest. You, on the other hand, accused our son outright of being a homosexual and his wife of being a foul fowl. And in front of our nearest and dearest confederates, no less.

ELEONORE

Perhaps I'm mistaken, but I'm fairly certain you contributed considerably to those topics as well.

ADDISON

Hogwash.

ELEONORE

Hooey.

ADDISON

Flapdoodle.

ELEONORE

Applesauce.

(Pause.)

I want a divorce, Addison.

ADDISON

You'll get no such thing. You haven't earned it. You're miserable. You're weak. You're outdated. You're virtually useless. And what's more, no one else will have you.

ELEONORE

Sticks and stones, dear.

ADDISON

If only I had both right now.

ELEONORE

So, that's decided then?

ADDISON

Unquestionably.

ELEONORE

No divorce?

ADDISON

That's right.

ELEONORE

Frankly, I'm relieved. I mean, I really don't know what I'd do without you, Addison. I crave purpose, as you know. And without you, I have none.

ADDISON

That's the God's truth. And without me, there'd be no one around to remind you of your appointed position in life. Unless otherwise instructed, it's best to stay quiet and let the men lead.

ELEONORE

Agreed.

ADDISON

I have an idea.

ELEONORE

You do?

ADDISON

We can fix this.

ELEONORE

How?

ADDISON

It's very simple. In the end, we maintain the power, the influence, and the money in this country. Am I right?

ELEONORE

Always.

ADDISON

So, there's nothing that we can't undo. Follow me.

(They return to the grand parlor.)

Excuse me. Yes, hello, can I have everyone's attention, please? Thank you. My precious wife, Eleonore, and I would like to take this moment to formally welcome all of you to our modest estate. We are thankful for your attendance at this festive little cocktail party and we are especially grateful that you have consented to be our guests at tonight's fundraising event to be held at the Four Seasons. Now of course, we don't want to take up too much of your time. After all, we did invite you here to unwind a bit and to loosen up before you're compelled to part with a small fraction of your acquired wealth. Rest assured, though, it's all for a particularly fitting cause, a cause that, in the end, will in fact benefit each of you in significant ways. I've made sure of that.

Now, before we give you all a little time to yourselves to perhaps have another drink or two, or to maybe help yourselves to more hors d'oeuvres, or to mingle, or to use the water closet if you must, or to insult the servants, we would like to make a special toast. To our son. Edwin James Spratt.

ELEONORE

To Edwin James Spratt.

ADDISON

Soon to be Associate Justice to the United States Supreme Court.

ELEONORE

We couldn't be prouder.

ADDISON

I knew, from the moment the wet nurse presented him to me, that Edwin would one day make an impact, that he would serve all of us in

upholding moral order, and to protecting our customs and conventions, to securing permanency, to being prudent and firm, and to showing great restraint...

ELEONORE

...He certainly showed great restraint when I gave birth to him, didn't he, dear?

ADDISON

He sure did.

ELEONORE

Nearly three days in labor. And a very big boy, wasn't he, Addison?

ADDISON

Nine pounds, four ounces.

ELEONORE

Our little man.

ADDISON

Our little alpha.

ELEONORE

As sturdy as an oak.

ADDISON

As smart as a fox.

ELEONORE

As handsome as a ransom.

ADDISON

As white as snow...

(End of Play.)