

# **TETHERED: ADDISON & ELEONORE**

A play in one act

By Craig Houk



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A retired business mogul, Addison Spratt, and his wife Eleonore are hosting a cocktail party at their stately mansion in Bethesda, MD. Heavily intoxicated, the pair unwittingly reveal curious details about their son's childhood, which raises some questions about his virility. Nevertheless, their money, power and influence serve to save the evening and to guard their son's character.

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.)*

**ADDISON:** 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. *(Beat.)* 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.)*