

# ADDIS TARKINGTON

## CHARACTERS

Addis Tarkington

A famous and successful historian, charismatic. He wears a red pocket square in nearly every scene, his trademark. Also appears as Voice of Young Addis.

Cress Tarkington

His daughter. Begins the play as a woman in her twenties. In flashback, she appears as a high school senior and a college student. Also plays Second Heckler, a grad student.

Nora Tarkington

His wife. A lovely middle-aged woman. very well turned out, coiffed and manicured. SHE doubles as Voice of Maritza of *Late Night*, and Voice of the Committee Secretary.

Jared

A bright young man, assistant to Addis, also plays Heckler.

Note to actors:

Slash marks (/) indicate the point at which the next speaker begins.

An additional photo may be projected other than as indicated, but projections should be used sparingly.

**ADDIS TARKINGTON**

Projected photo of an upscale suburban great room.  
An autumn evening. Cress, a high school senior, in  
in sweats. Her mother is in cashmere. They hold,  
*Colbert Show* mugs. ADDIS is taking off his tie.

ADDIS

...So when he came to see me after the sign-off it felt like we were old friends. He's exactly the way he seems on television, except that he is out of his tie and jacket and has untucked his shirt before the lights on the set are turned off.

CRESS

That is so / excellent!

NORA

It sounds as if you were a complete / success!

ADDIS

I have to say, shaking hands with Obama, interviewing the Clintons, guesting on Meet the Press, Nothing was as cool as hearing Stephen Colbert say, "Can you stick around for a bit?"

CRESS

/ Wow!

ADDIS

He really seemed interested in my angle on the parallel roles of Cheney and McNamara.

NORA

/ Ooooh!

ADDIS

I would have liked for you both to be there, (*to CRESS*) but it didn't seem to make sense for you to miss the game since you can see it tonight, and we'll Tivo it.

NORA

All the Soccer Moms asked, "Where is Addis?"

ADDIS

(*to Nora*) How did you manage my jobs?

NORA

I didn't have any trouble with the orange slices and Gatorade. But they all said they missed your color commentary.

CRESS

It was amazing to be able to say you were on Colbert!

ADDIS

I'm so glad you guys won! Country Day has a pretty strong team.

CRESS

We clobbered them.

NORA

If you can call a three-two finish "clobbering / them."

CRESS

No, but we dominated. We were in possession of the ball for almost the entire game.

ADDIS

Well! Today was a triumph, all around. *(To Nora)* How about you, my darling? Did you have a great day?

NORA

I'm happy to revel in the successes of two of my three favorite people in all the world.

ADDIS

/ Excellent!

NORA

We will cherish our mugs, won't we Cress?

CRESS

I'm taking mine to college.

NORA

I'm putting mine in the china / cupboard.

ADDIS

I'll drink to that.

NORA

I've got a new bottle of Chivas for the / occasion.

ADDIS

Yaaaay!

NORA

You want stuffed grape leaves?

ADDIS

Perfecto!

NORA

*(To Cress)* Would you like a limonata with your grape leaves?

CRESS

I'm going to text Emily and Jess to make sure they remember to watch Colbert tonight.

*CRESS exits.*

NORA

You've scored big with your daughter.

ADDIS

Pretty good for a hick from the sticks.

NORA

Come talk to me while I fix us a couple of drinks.

*THEY move off on the CROSSFADE.  
CRESS is lit at a podium. SHE is dressed in  
a skirted suit. SHE speaks to the audience. A  
photo of Addis' parents is projected.*

CRESS

My dad's parents and grandparents were farmers.

... I knew that would surprise you. I think he was always a little ashamed of it. Although they were wonderful people. If you went to the grocery store with Gramma, she knew everybody and she'd say, *(Minnesota accent.)* "Hi there! Golly, do you know my little grand-daughter?"

They had cows. You don't get to be licked by a cow in Westport.

I grew up in in Westport, Connecticut.

Did you know that dad changed his name back when he first started writing? Addis Tarkington is a made-up name. His real name was Richard. Gramma called him Dickie. He was "Richard Abner Tarkus." You can see why he changed it.

My father taught me to swim and to ice skate and to ride a bike, and a horse, and to drive stick shift and quote Longfellow and to make a perfect cup of coffee.

*MUSIC. On the CROSSFADE, CRESS takes off her  
suit jacket and heels and dons a prep school tie and  
sweater. LIGHTS up on ADDIS' study. HE is  
correcting a manuscript. CRESS enters the playing  
space, barefoot, carrying an Ipad mini. ADDIS is at  
work.*

Daddy! CRESS

Cressie! How was your day, darlin'? ADDIS

Um. Fine. CRESS

Wasn't your paper on Eleanor Roosevelt due today? ADDIS

Yes. / Can I CRESS

How did you feel about it? ADDIS

Good. Thanks for the quotes on Human Rights. That whole section was the best part. CRESS

Well, I'm delighted. I hope you get an A plus. ADDIS

It's just pass-fail since we've already heard from colleges. CRESS

Well, I'm proud of you. ADDIS

Thanks. / I need to CRESS

No point in being a grade grubber. ADDIS

Um. No. CRESS

What's wrong? ADDIS

I...You...Did you know about this? CRESS

ADDIS  
 What?...What is it?

CRESS  
 It's...um.. an article about you.

ADDIS  
 Oh? Which article?

CRESS  
 You really don't know?

ADDIS  
 You need to help me out here, my lovely.

CRESS  
 It says...it says you ripped off some other guy's book

ADDIS  
 Yeah? One time there was a thing that said I was a secret communist.

CRESS  
 Okay, it isn't the *Times* or anything, / but

ADDIS  
 Let's only worry about it when it hits the paper of record.

CRESS  
 It's the *Boston Review*. So it's not just somebody's Blog.

ADDIS  
 Don't pay any attention to that / Cressie

CRESS  
 Don't pay attention? They've...it says you used pages, a whole section from somebody else's work on the Tet Offensive, in / your

ADDIS  
 Does it really seem likely to you that I would need to borrow somebody else's work?

CRESS  
 No. No. But there's detail. The guy's name is Louis Nadal. Do you want / to see?

ADDIS  
 Never heard of him.

CRESS

There's some good stuff. (*Looking for it.*) That you're the um (*finds it*) "pre-eminent authority on American Foreign Policy in South Asia."

ADDIS

And this guy is...?

CRESS

Louis Nadal. He teaches at Missouri State.

ADDIS

Missouri State. Probably trying to help his tenure chances by making a splash.

CRESS

(*handing the ipad to him*)

*The Review* put a couple of paragraphs of his book that was published Years ago -1980 something - next to yours, and it's almost word for / word

ADDIS

This kind of thing always comes out when one of my books starts getting a lot of attention.

CRESS

/ But

ADDIS

Luckily Random House watches my back on this crazy / stuff.

CRESS

*Boston Review* says that's why you were... called on it, because you listed him as a source. That without that he might have been too obscure to even merit / any

ADDIS

You see, I did him a favor. He's one of my – what? – twenty-one hundred sources?

CRESS

But you can't....What if I had - ?....You know what happened to David Prendergast.

ADDIS

Who's David / Prendergast?

CRESS

He's the guy in my class who lost his place at Harvard because he worked with another kid on a / paper.

ADDIS

And well he should have. That's against the rules in prep school. But research for a professional historian – well, you know. You've helped me. You've gone on line and looked / up hundreds of

CRESS

But I recorded the references carefully.

ADDIS

Of course you / did.

CRESS

But if somebody uses another writer's words and put them in his own / book - !

ADDIS

My *Village Warfare* is nearly seven hundred pages long. And this guy is – what? – claiming I failed to put a couple of sentences in quotation marks?

CRESS

See: You were supposed to...I was supposed to ask you – today – if you would speak at graduation. It came down to you and Sean McAdam's father. He's the founder of Upcharge? And he made a gazillion dollars in the / last five years

ADDIS

Well, is he a writer? Has he been on eleven book tours? Does he know how to engage an audience?

CRESS

I don't know. Sean's the lacrosse captain and a lot of people like him, but when Emily proposed you, Dr. Pearson was all over it, and he didn't seem to be that taken with the idea of Mr. McAdam. And then Miss Sebastian chimed in, and pretty soon everyone was talking about how Sarah Jessica Parker narrated your documentary and Beyoncé sang *America the Beautiful* for it, and and I said I would ask you.

And then I got a Google alert and that's how I found out about Professor Nadal's book...So, it might have to be Sean's father because everyone will know –

ADDIS

Everyone will know some low level academic accused me of misquoting him?

CRESS

Academy is a small school. People will talk about it. David Prendergast is in disgrace for cheating / on his

ADDIS

Cheating? You said he worked with / another



CRESS

They each wrote half a paper and then handed in the whole paper to two different history teachers, but they were caught and it went on their transcripts, and now, instead of going to Harvard and Penn, they're going to two dinky schools nobody ever heard of.

ADDIS

Well, they didn't do the work. They handed in a paper that they'd only half...

CRESS

It's a ...it's a violation of the Honor Code.

ADDIS

Let's see what Random House wants me to do about this – if anything. Maybe they'll release a nice little tribute to Mr. What's-his-name at Missouri State, explaining that in subsequent / editions of

CRESS

Louis Nadal. That's his name. Professor Louis / Nadal

ADDIS

Yes. Yes. Maybe we'll give him his own autographed copy of the second edition.

CRESS

Daddy! Can you / really just - ?

ADDIS

Oh my sweet girl! You know me. I never heard a Joke I didn't steal, but about Scholarship? In my own field? I work my tail off. I would never -

CRESS

Should I...Should I text the Graduation Committee that you - ?

ADDIS

*(hugging her)*

Tell them I would be delighted to accept their very gracious invitation to speak. You're going to get that journalism prize, aren't you? I want to be on the platform with you.

CRESS

But / what if - ?

ADDIS

Look, if this Nadal character comes up, just explain that he's a wannabe academic and that it's been taken care of.

CRESS

And / you're sure that - ?

ADDIS

I'll get the fixer at Cowan and Reiner to make sure this nonsense doesn't go any further.

CRESS

Okay...Okay / then.

ADDIS

We'll quote Dorothy Parker: "I might repeat to myself, a list of quotations beautiful, from minds profound; if I can remember any of the damn things."

CRESS

Okay.

ADDIS

As always my Lovely, you've given me a lot to think about.  
Hey! Do you want to take Emily out to lunch at Le Farm, on me?

CRESS

Really?

ADDIS

As a thank you. Didn't you say she suggested me as the speaker?

CRESS

Can I take Jessica too?

ADDIS

You may.

CRESS

You're the best. (*SHE kisses him.*)

ADDIS

No. You are.

*CRESS moves to the podium.*

CRESS

By this time he was in demand. He was one of the people they'd call on whenever they wanted to compare Iraq or Afghanistan to the Viet Nam war. He brought me a jacket that said, "I'm on Dave Letterman's Top Ten list." *Village Warfare* had been on bestseller lists. So he was already this really famous guy. My mother and Rory and I called him – only partly joking – we'd call him: "The Great Man." (*SHE looks off right.*) Jared was working as my dad's assistant then and...Do you want to tell this part, Jared?