

THE ALTOS

The Time: *Present*

The Place: *Nutley, NJ*

Characters:

TONY ALTO. A 5'2" Mafia boss with a very suburban family. Talks like he's on helium.

CHOCOLETTA. Tony's wife. Has a New Jersey accent.

TA. Tony's 15 year old son. Very aristocratic and british.

VALLEY. Tony's 18 year old daughter.

MAMA. Tony's self-deprecating, hatred-filled mother.

JIMMY-CHRISTOPHER-JOHN. A mob crony that works for Tony. Hey, that rhymed.

UNCLE SENIOR. Tony's elderly uncle, who is a bit batty.

BIG BONE. A rival mob boss. Smart but slow.

BOY SCOUT. Hit by Tony's car.

THE KITTYY. A persecuted family cat.

HORSE'S HEAD. The disembodied head of Mr. Ed.

JEFF PROBST, HOST OF TV'S SURVIVOR. Jeff Probst, host of TV's Survivor.

AL CAPONE. The somewhat strange ghost of Al Capone.

FBI GUY. Agent Gaygent, the long arm of the law.

LAWYER. Works for CBS, very blunt and buff. More like a thug.

PIZZA GUY. Young and nerdy.

BIRD. Loud and screechy.

AMERICAN PUBLIC. Guy or girl dressed very generically. Speaks like a TV announcer.

Set:

The play is designed to be carried out on a relatively empty stage. Different parts of the stage should represent different places. Anything which adds to the correlation between the play and a certain HBO mob drama is encouraged. A simple set of chairs, a kitchen area with a fridge, and a table are all that's necessary. Guns and knives can be mimed or real, although the gatling gun is probably more effective if real.

Note:

This play is conceived as a sequel to Clyde Hendrickson's The Merchandise King. Back-to-back performance is encouraged.

(Tony is standing in front of a mirror. JCJ enters, frantic)

JCJ. Tony! Tony! Big Bone killed Little Rod and he says you're next!

(Tony stares)

JCJ. What should we do? Tony?

TONY. *(Looking into mirror)* Does this suit make me look short?

JCJ. Yeah... but youz is Five foot two

TONY. Don't hate the playa, Jimmy-Christopher-John. Hate the game.

JCJ. Tony! I have some bad news.

TONY. Well make it quick, I have a stripper waiting in the back room.

JCJ. Ohhh.... She gonna, y'know, polish the cannoli?

TONY. No. She's a very talented seamstress and she's gonna teach me how to sew buttons. It's an important skill to have, Jimmy-Christopher-John. Now what's your bad news.

JCJ. Big Bone wants to kill you. He says he wants your territory.

TONY. Well ring up the Lord tell him the Virgin Mother Mary's pregnant, cause that *is* news. *(quietly)* But - did he say anything about my nuts?

JCJ. What?

TONY. My nuts are very precious to me.

JCJ. It's good to know that.

TONY. Yeah, you know, I had my whole swimming pool filled full of brazil nuts. I did it to give back to nature, you know, sort of a giant bird feeder, but I think it might have made Big B. jealous.

JCJ. He didn't mention it. Anyway, we need to be prepared for war.

TONY. Oh, we will be.

JCJ. I know, when it comes to preparedness, you're a foot below the rest, Tony. *(there is a very uncomfortable silence, then JCJ realizes his mistake)* Above! I mean, uh, above the rest. *(another silence)* Crap.

TONY. So, Jimmy-Christopher-John, how'd you get such a long name?

JCJ. Well, Ma didn't know who the father was, but she wanted me to be named after him, so she just covered all the possibilities. Hey, now that we're bein' all philosophical and such, can I ask you..

TONY. Yeah?

JCJ. How'd you get... y'know, like you are?

Tony Alto: Ah, on the way here, a lawnmower chopped up my nuts.

JCJ. What!!!?

TONY. Yeah I had this nice bag of peanuts and they just went... *(he acts out nuts getting sucked up by lawnmower)* Vuh-boom, y'know. That's why I'm so angry.

JCJ. Oh. Yeah.

TONY. Then it went straight up and got my balls.

JCJ. *(Even bigger reaction)* Whattt????!!!

TONY. Yeah I had this sack of baseballs for TA's little league game, and they got chewed the fudge up.

JCJ. Oh. So... that's why you're so tense.

TONY. No, I'm tense because I'm short and talk like a pygmy midget dwarf's newborn daughter. But I would've liked to have some nuts, as well.

JCJ. We all need our nuts.

TONY. Indeed we do, Jimmy-Christopher-John. Indeed we do.

(They leave. Uncle Senior enters, as we are now in his house.)

UNCLE SENIOR. I'm singing in the rain, just singing in the rain, what a glorious feeling, I'm happy again. Wow, who could have thought that an old man could be made so happy just by one of the simple pleasures in life.

TONY. *(entering)* And what might that be, Uncle Senior?

UNCLE SENIOR. Why, prostitutes, of course. Prostitutes and Raisin Bran.

TONY. Uh...

UNCLE SENIOR. There is nothing more wonderful than sharing a bowl of nutritious breakfast cereal with a fine young woman of the night. Now, what can I do for you, my daughter?

TONY. Nephew.

UNCLE SENIOR. Same thing. You both get screwed in the will.

TONY. Uncle Senior, I need some advice. As you know, I'm kind of uh, a small man.

UNCLE SENIOR. That's not what your wife tells me!

TONY. Nah, nah, I don't mean the cannoli. My cannoli is delicious, creamy and huge. I'm saying I have uh, a small stature.

UNCLE SENIOR. A small statue? Oh that's practically useless. You need a big, marble statue. I always wanted a big statue for the lawn, maybe uh, a horse, or uh, uh, a whaddayacallit?

TONY. I have no idea what you're talking about.

UNCLE SENIOR. Uh... a prostitute! Yeah. A big horse, or a big prostitute. Those are the only statues worth having.

TONY. Yeah... look, Senior, Big Bone is movin' in, and I ain't got the image to stand up to him.

UNCLE SENIOR. You can't stand up? Back problems. Probably from all the prostitutes!

TONY. Teach me how to be tough, uncle. I can talk it, but I gotta walk it, y'know? Can you do that?

UNCLE SENIOR. My Son. Nephew. Whatever. I will make you the next Marcus Digrullio.

TONY. Who's Marcus Digrullio?

UNCLE SENIOR. See, you're tougher already! *(Doorbell rings)* Sweet Mary and Joseph. Are you expecting someone?

TONY. No. I don't live here

UNCLE SENIOR. Who could that be? *(Doorbell rings again)*

PIZZA GUY. *(offstage)* Pizza Delivery!

UNCLE SENIOR. *(pauses for a moment)* Oh, it's just the pizza.

(He walks to the door, opens it)

PIZZA GUY. Hey, special delivery for Mr. Alto?

UNCLE SENIOR. What? A trap! I got your special delivery right here.

(Uncle Senior pulls gun, unloads 3 rounds straight at Pizza guy)

PIZZA GUY. *(high, screeching)* Ahhh!!! Ahhh!!!

UNCLE SENIOR. He brought birds! I hear their vicious calls! *(Shoots wildly at the air. Chandelier falls, he catches it)* Tony! I got a big turkey! Look at this!

TONY. Great, Senior. You plugged the chandelier. Now we gotta bury it in the back, so it's relatives the lamp and the nightlight don't get suspicious. Why don't we go see if you killed the pizza schmuck as well?

(They look to Pizza Guy. He staggers to his feet.)

PIZZA GUY. They always made fun of me for wearing kevlar on the job. But I showed them. I showed them.

TONY. I'll leave you two to finish this battle of the minds. I'm going home.

(Tony gets in his car, and mimes moving the seat all the way up and forward so that his head is over the steering wheel and he's practically coming out the windshield. At the same time, he's humming "Macho Man" by the Village People. As this takes place, the house is set up, Mama and Chocoletta enter. Tony gets out of the car and steps into the house.)

TONY. Hello? I'm home!

MAMA. Just a little closer... *(She stands with butcher knife above her head)*

TONY. Ma? You tryin' to kill me again?

MAMA. No... no... I was just... stabbing ants with this butcher knife. Don't accuse me all the time. You're such a terrible son

TONY. Super, ma, super. *(He turns. She raises knife again and slowly walks after him)*. What's for dinner, sweet cheeks?

CHOCOLETTA. Tony, do you know how many times people tried to kill your mobster son at school today?

TONY. Ah geez.

CHOCOLETTA. 47! And he did not even shoot one of them. There is something wrong with that child.

TONY. My little ricotta rabbit...

CHOCOLETTA. Don't pastacize me, buster. You need to fix your son. Or give me money, that works too.

TONY. Sometimes I feel like he's not related to me at all.

(TA enters, dressed in all white. He speaks with an aristocratic british accent.)

TA. Oh hello daddy! Dropped in for a spot of tea before the afternoon riff-raff arrives?

TONY. Yeah, something like that.

TA. Daddy, will you come to my polo match this afternoon? It will be ever so fun!

TONY. Hey, TA, look, I'm sorry, but I have business to tend to.

TA. Awww...

CHOCOLETTA. Tony! You need to do some nice things for your son.

TONY. Yeah, alright. Hey, TA, to make up for it... take this .44 magnum. *(he produces a gun)*

TA. Oh, sweet! Thanks, daddy!*(he takes the gun, removes safety and cocks it)* Here, kitty kitty kitty....

CHOCOLETTA. That was adorable. You can be such an angel sometimes, Tony.

(Tony smiles. Mama approaches him with a bowl of soup.)

MAMA. Here, eat this, I made it myself.

TONY. Ma, this soup is black, and it has a dead rat floating in it.

(pause)

MAMA. Your father was never a good husband to me. No one cares if I'm alive or dead.

CHOCOLETTA. *(changing the subject)* Sounds like your granddaughter's home, Ma! Hi, Valley.

TONY. How are you, Valley. How was your day at school and/or college and/or work?

VALLEY. Yeah, Dad, I'm pretty inconsistent as a character, so I'm gonna go get beaten and mugged while dating a bisexual african-american, then come home to start selling drugs to neighborhood kids from your own garage while I sleep with every old guy that you hang out with. Then I'm going to start a career as a teen pop star, watch it fail horribly, and come back to you, begging to be "written in" to more of your life.

(Tony thinks for a moment, then kills her)

CHOCOLETTA. Tony!

TONY. *(whipping out diamonds just in time)* Here. I got you a diamond necklace, baby.

CHOCOLETTA. You... are such a good father.

TONY. Phew, parenting is hard work... let's see if there's any ice cream. *(he opens the freezer)* Ahhh!
There's a horse's head in the freezer!

CHOCOLETTA. Oh my god!

HORSE'S HEAD. Hello, I'm Mr. Ed!

TONY. That is not funny.

HORSE'S HEAD. I'm sorry, would you like me to go back to searing the living crap out of you?

TONY. Chocoletta, I'm getting out of here. This means that Big Bone is ready to strike.

CHOCOLETTA. I had no idea! I thought a mob boss like you was totally safe from death threats and hitmen. What's gonna happen?

TONY. He could hit anywhere. Our house, my office, my mistress's house if I had a mistress which of course I do not... he could even hit my nuts.

CHOCOLETTA. Oh Tony, no one's going after your precious swimming pool filled with brazil nuts. Honestly, I don't even know why you keep them there.

TONY. It's a hobby, alright? I'm giving back to nature. Anyway, I'm gonna figure this out. If you need me, give my mistress's cellphone a call.

CHOCOLETTA. Ok, I will, but you better not be with her.

TONY. Right, of course not, I love you honey and I only ever even *look* at you. See ya later.

(he exits, stuffing the horse's head into an icebox. TA enters, and Mama is again in the conversation)

MAMA. That son of mine. If he loved me, he would do more nice things for me. Like die a horrible, painful death.

CHOCOLETTA. Ma! That's a terrible thing to say in front of your grandson.

MAMA. Why do you have to be so mean about every little thing I do? "Mama, why do you have so many guns?" "Grandma, don't throw the blender at people while it's on." "Grandma, you shouldn't have covered the front lawn in Napalm." Well, I had had enough with those squirrels, god rest their souls, and I like the lawn all black and charred, for your information. Just like my son's mother's heart, he's so cruel to me.

(TA looks in the freezer)

TA. Mother, did you take my horse's head out of the freezer?

CHOCOLETTA. What?!

TA. It was for my biology project.

CHOCOLETTA. Oh honey, dearest, sweetie... I'm sorry, your Dad thought it was put there as a threat on his life from a rival mob boss. Not that we're in the mob.

TA. What? Now I shall surely fail! How I do detest being in a mafia family

CHOCOLETTA. Can I do anything to make it up to you? Not that there's anything to make up for because we're not in the mob.

TA. Well... you could help me find a new head for my project.

CHOCOLETTA. Of course! You know, the kitty *is* getting pretty old.

THE KITTY. Meow?

(Tony is driving again. He's clearly panicked.)

TONY. My family is falling apart... Big Bone is coming after me... My nuts are in constant danger...

BIRD. Sqwawk!

TONY. That bird on my hood... it's like he's trying to say something to me.

BIRD. Sqwawk! Your doom is near! Sqwawk!

TONY. Probably just my imagination...

BIRD. Sqwawk! I'm going to eat your nuts and sully your daughter! Sqwawk!

TONY. My nuts! No... no....

(He passes out. Dream sequence begins. Al Capone enters, carrying a limp figure.)

TONY. Who are you?

AL CAPONE. Al Capone.

TONY. Whatcha doing?

AL CAPONE. Brushin' my teeth. What does it look like I'm doin'?

TONY. It looks like you're making out with Daffy Duck.

AL CAPONE. Yeah, well, you say potato, I say... there can be true love between a man and duck. *(To Daffy)* Isn't that right, sweetcakes?

(Daffy does not respond)

TONY. Your duck looks dead.

AL CAPONE. Look, I don't talk about your ducks, you don't talk about mine, capiche? *(Throws duck away)* Anyway, you need help. I brought someone along to, y'know, teach ya a thing or two.

JEFF PROBST, HOST OF TV'S SURVIVOR. Hi, I'm Jeff Probst, Host of TV's Survivor.

TONY. Ok...

JEFF PROBST, HOST OF TV'S SURVIVOR. Now, with just three weeks left, things are tense on the island. Who will win? Is it the dead gangster come back to life, the pygmy midget dwarf in a poorly-tailored suit, or the disembodied horse head of Mr. Ed? Only time will tell. Time... and the strength of these three competitors to *survive*.

AL CAPONE. Now, whaddaya want do to him?

TONY. Bite him in his freakin nuts.

AL CAPONE. Try it out, shortie.

(Tony bites Jeff Probst in the nuts.)

JEFF PROBST, HOST OF TV'S SURVIVOR. That's two more voted off the island!

AL CAPONE. My friend, now you know the key to success.

TONY. That's it?

AL CAPONE. That and the ducks.

TONY. Why is it always the ducks and the nuts?

AL CAPONE. Life is strange. Now wake up, you just ran over a boy scout.

(Dream ends. Boy Scout runs out and flings himself on the floor)

BOY SCOUT. My spleen hurts.

TONY. Hey, that's great kid. Do you know where Big Bone's hideout is.

BOY SCOUT. Yeah, it's in the back of that erotic cake store over there. Can you call me an ambulance?

TONY. Sorry, I'm, uh.. don't speak english. Good luck!

(Boy Scout crawls off. Big Bone enters, sits, waits for Tony)

TONY. Big Bone.

BIG BONE. Geraldo.

TONY. No, I'm Tony Alto.

BIG BONE. Yes?

TONY. You want to kill me.

BIG BONE. Right, right. Would you like a peanut?

TONY. No... I only eat... *brazil nuts*.

BIG BONE. ... Oh.

TONY. I have in this icebox something which I hope will solve our little disagreement.

BIG BONE. Brazil nuts?

TONY. No! You'll never see my nuts.

BIG BONE. Disappointing.

TONY. *(takes out can from icebox)* See, we're a lot like this beer can here. It's a very dangerous situation. If you don't relieve the pressure... *(Tony grabs can)* you're lookin' to get crushed *(can, full and unopened, does not crush)*.... You're looking to get crushed *(can is not crushed again. He pauses, then quickly opens it and empties it to the side. Big Bone smiles understandingly, then realizes how strange the situation is)*... Yeah, you're looking to get crushed, y' hear? *(can crushes)*

BIG BONE. Did Al Capone come to you in a dream and tell you how to do that?

TONY. No... he taught me to do this! *(he leaps forward and bites Big Bone in the groin)*

BIG BONE. Arrrggg... get off! *(he shakes him off)* Now you'll see why they call me Big Bone *(reaches into his pants)*... Well, actually, no you won't. It has to do with a trombone and a girl and a fire truck... it's really quite a long story. Hey, is that a horse's head in your icebox?

HORSE'S HEAD. Hello, I'm Mr. Ed!

BIG BONE. Yeah?

HORSE'S HEAD. Don't you want to sing with me? *(The Head proceeds to sing the theme song to his television show, the lyrics to which are not reprinted here due to possible copyright violations. But, in the middle of the song, the horse yells...)* Now, Tony!

TONY. Eat lead, Big Bone! *(he shoots him)* Wow, that was really cool. Thanks, Ed. Anything I can do for you?

HORSE'S HEAD. Yeah, think you could maybe *reattach me* to my body?

TONY. No, but I do know a Boy Scout who could use a new spleen. Maybe you two will hit it off. Anyway, I'm gonna make like a banana and split.

(FBI Guy enters and cuts him off)

FBI GUY. Tony Soprano, I'm Agent Gaygent from the FBI, you're under arrest for violation of FDA rules and regulations regarding the collection and storage of nuts.

TONY. What?

FBI GUY. Your pool full of brazil nuts, under federal law, is considered to be a house of ill-repute, as well as a disruption of the natural order.

TONY. That's ridiculous.

FBI GUY. The law is the law.

TONY. No, I mean, your name... it's Agent Gaygent.

FBI GUY. Hah! This isn't about me, it's about you.

TONY. My acorns are my business.

FBI GUY. You should have thought about that more carefully before your nuts got so big. I saw the pool with my own eyes... frankly, you disgust me sir. Who needs so many brazil nuts?

TONY. The ducks! I was giving back to nature!

FBI GUY. Well now you can give back to it from the electric chair!

TONY. What? The FDA can give people the chair?

FBI GUY. Did I say electric chair? I always do that. I meant probation.

LAWYER. Hold up there. I represent CBS, leader of the free world, champion of the press.

FBI GUY. *(snickering)* Do you really think that CBS is the leader of the free world?

LAWYER. That's libel. Your *behind* now *belongs* to CBS.

FBI GUY. Uh, I work for the federal government.

LAWYER. Shut up! *(shoots FBI Guy)*

TONY. Oh! You can do that? Maybe I'm in the wrong profession.

LAWYER. Tony Soprano, CBS hearby charges you with a debilitating assault on Jeff Probst, host of TV's survivor and champion of the world. You're coming with me

TONY. Wait... what are you saying?

LAWYER. No more of this HBO, commercial free, "I can swear whenever I want to" B.S. From now on, you're going to be wearing Nike products, with clips of you shooting a machine gun sandwiched between ads for Starbucks and The Gap for Kids.

TONY. *(Determined, steeled)* I'd rather be dead.

LAWYER. *(cocking gun)* That can be arranged...

(Mama enters with gattling cannon)

MAMA. Take this you son of a...

(Gunshots miss Tony, hit lawyer)

TONY. Good shot Ma!

MAMA. Ah I missed... I mean, uh, I got him!

TONY. See, Ma, everything turned out OK with me in the end.

TA. Daddy, I am so proud of you!

THE KITTY. *(holding gun)* Meow! *(kills TA)*

TONY. Oh no, TA! The kitty has taken vengeance upon you! What have my reckless gun safety standards done? Ma, help me! *(he puts his hand on her shoulder, she loses her balance, falls over, and dies.)*

MAMA. Maybe you should try not killing someone for a change? *(dies again)*

TONY. I killed everyone I love. Surely I must need some come-up-ins.

AMERICAN PUBLIC. Hi, we're the American Public.

TONY. Yeah, and don't you think I should get what I deserve?

AMERICAN PUBLIC. No, we love you! You're our secret role model, because we need validation for screwing over the rest of the world.

TONY. Yes sir, I believe in America.

(Lights out)