

Exile

Volume 20 | Number 1

Article 22

1974

Big AI

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Recommended Citation

Mercurio, Phil (1974) "Big AI," *Exile*: Vol. 20 : No. 1 , Article 22.

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BIG AL

- I You will be born with a big nose
and black kinky hair.
It will be all right because your parents are Jewish
because you have a strong left arm
and because your grades are high.
You will play ping-pong until you are good enough
to quote obscure rules.
You will play RISK with your friends
and you will lose.
You will play football on gravel
and you will lose even if you win.
Your friends will laugh
and point at your bloody knees.
They will call you "boogy".
Your mother will yell at them almost as much
as she yells at you and your new name.
You will not disobey her strong right arm.
Your father will crouch and split his seams;
he will feel sorry for you.
- II When you come home from school
you will do HOMEWORK
go to Hebrew school, come home again
and do more homework.
In stolen moments, with food warming in your bed
you will watch the Yankees
and old movies on t.v..
Women will make love passionately
to men in the dark
and you will idolize women.
At sixteen you will not get your learner's permit
because driving is serious business;
and your chance to make love to women
will diminish with the upsurge of your thoughts.
You will mow the lawn
and the next day
your father will remow it.
Your thoughts burn like cigarette smoke.
They will try to divide you.
They will try to tell you
not to be divided.
They will push you further.
- III You will go to teachers in school
and they will consider you strange.
You will chase girls in the halls
and ask them to marry you.
They will consider you strange.
You will read many books
and you will consider yourself strange.
You will then beat your sister
in hopes that she will understand your strangeness.
Inside your head sounds are reverberating
to your pulse.
Inside your head you will hear
a ping
It will be a quiet gentle sound.
Inside your head there is no sound.
The door to your room closes
with a hush of wind.
Your heart flutters and slows
to a murmur.

IV Hospitals, yes. And doctors.
OUR SON HAS A COLD.
Medication, yes.
HE WILL GET BETTER SOON.
Money, money, money, yes, yes
No. OUR SON IS NOT INSANE.

You will come home
and your friends will be in college.
You will play with their younger brothers
and their younger brothers' friends.
They will not call you "boogy".
They will grow up too soon.
You will mow your lawn
eyeing pretty young girls
returning from school.
You will invite them up to your room
and show them your graduation picture,
but they will not know you.

V Your friends will come back from college
and your eyes will glow.
This black glow of the pupil
will speak to them
but they will scatter like leaves in the wind.
They will no longer play RISK.
At night your bed will address itself
to the room.
It will hint at leaving home
and "Physical Jobs".
Headlights will pour into the window
and you will ask:
Where is the music in the dark to comfort me?

Phil Mercurio

