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From "Jack's Beans: A Five-Year Diary": The Man on Saxophone, June 12; The Flow, June 9; Shadows, April 17; Lady Is Enough, July 21; Promised Land, August 19

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from Jack's Beans: A Five-Year Diary
Tom Smith

THE MAN ON SAXOPHONE
JUNE 12

- 1950 So I took Laura
to the Junior Prom
& flirted with the man
on saxophone
while we danced.
- 1951 Miss Shrimp won't live in words:
her sleeplessness, aversion
to food, & bitchery.
She is a case.
Nobody believes case histories.
- 1952 Hermes is home. Theresa
comes with him. Hot Fudge
calls from Connecticut
putting her Muff on the phone.
Puss in glass slippers.
- 1953 We have a weekend
before Lilian goes home.
With Hermes at Howard Johnson,
we have to meet each other newly.
I have a girl.
- 1954 We're parked
on some sidestreet
in Albany.
"Lilian, wait:
I want a wedding night."

THE FLOW
JUNE 9

1950 Hera & Zeus & Aphrodite.

Artemis, Pan, Apollo.

Ares & Dionysus. Hermes:

messenger & friend.

The winged foot.

1951 Ignorant rumor

is my theme. Watch all

the world conform

to reputation in the hall

of fame.

1952 I am amazed

so poor a fool as Walter

could have enspelled me.

My flesh bleeds clean

to welcome Hermes home.

1953 I come from the john.

My morning bath

gurgles down the drain

like birdsong: here's my son.

Take away the stone.

1954 Her sisters haul

strange luggage down the hall.

Their passage turns the gloom

to aviary or aquarium.

SHADOWS
APRIL 17

- 1950 On Uncle Skunk's bike
I pedaled out to meet the family:
Toad Hall.
Where do we come from?
Changelings.
- 1951 We played a game of toss.
The sun was our ball.
"Clap hands, clap hands,
hie Jack Dandy."
How well she knows her rhymes!
- 1952 He meets my bus in Saratoga,
drives me through the ghost town,
a hand in my pants.
He likes to ring changes on old saws:
a stitch in time gathers no moss.
- 1953 I had a little shadow
who went in & out with me.
What use?
What use
was more than I could see.
- 1954 Jesus is condemned to death.
He takes the cross. He falls the first time.
He meets his blessed mother. Simon helps him.
Veronica wipes his face.
He falls the second time.

LADY IS ENOUGH
JULY 21

- 1950 I missed my latency.
Marty was largely
the instrument
of my untimely passion
& unripe Pandora.
- 1951 I like to watch her in the window
while the sunlight through her ears
illuminates the tracery of veins.
I'd call her Celeste.
The family says Lady is enough.
- 1952 "Woman is the bridge to the unconscious."
Grandmother Raven coughing up her crow.
Sybil's chignon in the rain.
Mostly—mostly Laura
showing me her bugs.
- 1953 Finally I spoke to Laura as we sat
together in the college gardens.
She said, "I knew you'd come around someday
to women. I always knew: it won't be me."
Then she stood up & walked away.
- 1954 Somewhere, distant
as a star, distant
as snowfall, I will
replace my past
with Lilian.

PROMISED LAND
AUGUST 19

- 1950 She took me
to meet him:
eternal bus.
I scrubbed myself raw
& put on modesty.
- 1951 I am the cat.
Am I grave
digger too?
We sing & grin:
it ain't no sin.
- 1952 Laura & I
make a farewell.
She will be gone
when I return from Brooklyn.
We will not see each other everyday.
- 1953 Stone crumbles though.
I remember the sorry mummy
at an Albany museum: more
like sand & Laura said,
"I think it's a dirty joke."
- 1954 Her breasts
have swollen:
wonderful
beehives
& bibles.