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

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:
er 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.