

*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.