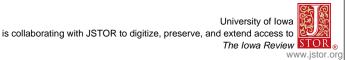
# Loitering with Intent · Hooper Thorne

Disclaimer: Persons mentioned in these lines are not now, nor have they ever been, either living or dead. Does that narrow it down a bit for you? -C. J. Cooley

LET US NOW CONSIDER AN IMPERFECT WORLD WHEREIN THE SKELETON IS TRUTH THE FLESH CONJECTURE

The celebration. old as the first of all our days is old, has begun. A fragile woman, with mindless concern, walks her dog along the path. Couples wander, arms about, and some, good friends, lie on the grass, obeying the stern command of spring; they are, or seem to be, in lovenothing is certain at this time of year. It is a time for dreaming and some, I know, dream of wolves who stand erect like men and howl at trifles.



Dear Grandfather: Can it be a year? It has been nearly three since Kate left us; we miss her, but otherwise we're all fine.

My hands remind me of yours they show the stains of years. I don't recognize them they belong to a stranger.

Oh, yes: today your great-greatgranddaughter planted a red geranium on your grave.

\*

Custom asks for grief, but I would grieve in any case, dear Caesar.

This last brutish land will be yours, I have no doubt, but know this forever: the dagger in your back was always there what matter if poor Brutus drove it home?

## TUESDAY AT NINE

Set loose the wild witches we said Smash the idols we'll raise our own And we danced with much laughter and the gin turned nights into days and months and years Our lives were pale as wind Ah, how we sinned!

\*

Street sounds are not breakers on the coast of Maine nor is lunch at Guido's a picnic on the sand and seventy is not seventeen. No matter: I held a pretty girl's hand last summer.

\*

I asked my grandfather always laughing why he never cried. Same thing, he said, weeping.

## UNPROVOKED ASSAULTS ON OLD LOVES

ANTONIA Recently I culled this from the confusion: the most we ever had in common was the handicap of innocence. Symphysis was not likely.

#### Camilla

The unexpected sight of you recalls my bondage and the heavy golden chains too fine to see.

#### **EVALINA**

Time, being fluid, leaks away, drop by drop a few are sweet.

#### Fortunata

A small part of wisdom is knowing that much of what one expects to happen happens only in stories—and often not even there.

## Ludmilla

Stand there, unmoving, by the salt marsh, where, unique but lost, are countless thousands of tears, and, looking down, say this (if you can): nothing here—only grass.

## HATE II: THE SEQUEL

This is the agreement: I will place hers on her lips and she mine on mine; she will drink my wine and I hers, and we will smile and lie down side by side holding hands and wait.

\*

If there is a plan, she wrote, then this is the way it should be; but if there is none, as I suspect to be the case, then no rules will have been broken.

\*

Friend Gorshen, in his autobiography, hoping it might be read by his enemies, wrote at the end, And then I died, with a kiss on my lips so sweet it got me into heaven.

## IN THE VALLEY OF NAGGING DOUBTS

#### Music

Music is stuff that uses up a lot of notes, and if you are good at it you are a very special person, but if you are not you are just one of the guys.

#### SCIENCE IOI

The reason fish smell as they do is that they are evening things up for their dreadful dissatisfaction with their lot, it being the belief among fishes that *they* were supposed to be in charge and what is it with these barbaric fishhooks anyway? Similar beliefs are held by a few human beings.

#### Party

The house bounced with music loud enough to loosen your bolts and people, too young to give a hoot, danced like Primates in delirium. After about two hours of it Casey caved in. She scooped up all my Oreos, stuffed them in her bag, kissed me carelessly, and left. It was not such great fun after that.

#### HILL SKETCHES

#### MRS. CULLEN

She watched her husband coming from the fields and catalogued his tribute to the years: the seasons spent in coaxing stunted yields from rocky land had justified her fears. His backward glance before he reached the door was common reflex for the man who farms; the weariness his stooping shoulders bore would drive him to her bed but not her arms. The lines which doubt had cast into his face were chiseled deep from squinting at the sun. She looked, and knew that time had won the race for hope, for love, for labors yet undone; she recognized the hunger in his eyes as not for her but for her apple pies.

#### ALICE FOGGY

After it was over but before she told them what she'd done, she sat beside the door and thought the things she had to think, still trembling. It took such strength to do— What now? she said aloud, and breathed deep down to still the uproar in her breast. Inside he lay and he was dead for sure; no need to verify that detail. Brutally he'd lived and died as brutally. Offenses to the body, mind and soul were meat to him and she his feast. Now, she said, pushed back her hair, and started down the hill. At least, what wanted doing had been done; now he the wronged and she the brutal one. OLIVER BUCKLES He recognized the beauty of the plan the seeds that struggled through the rocky soil fought sun and drought and frost and flood and perished by the scythe. Design he saw in all he saw, and understood the pattern as his own: to birth in labor, live in pain and die in fear, peace in resignation, acceptance of defeat, unspoken and unspeakable knowing.

Faithful husbandman, inarticulate philosopher, gasping out the last of life in unaccustomed whiteness, air heavy with isopropyl alcohol, recall the good brown earth, the flavor of the fields, the sweet spring air, and go in peace.

### LOITERING WITH INTENT

Love lies in that sad place where junk words go to die.

It was an abused word, beaten into inanity by the mindless.

It was born a beautiful and gracious word, prized above all by the Keeper of Words,

A counterfeit, which sounds the same, is tossed about a thousand times a day by thieves and swindlers.

\*

In that place where Laura lives, just beyond Obscurity, her only duty is to gather in her arms the black sheets of night and spread them on the grass, corner-to-corner, to catch the dew & brew her lover's tea.

## LOVER, GO BACK TO HIM

This photograph is of the author improbably in the arms of another writer who seems not to mind, but he is plainly terrified by this baffling propinquity.

\*

Heartbreakers pop into my head catching me unwarned: a good love strayed or stolen; an old and joyful dog when I was ten; the long-legged Nob Hill girl who might have stayed, but didn't. They burn there for a moment and go, leaving holes to store uncertain wonders in. My uncle, in his later years, played the saxophone. Badly. He was not a man of complexities it was his view that the experience was more important than the result. His real talent was simply this: Enthusiasm for all things on this earth. He always looked as if he had just walked through a patch of sunlight and enjoyed it.