

INSIDE FIRE

Poetry by M. Laine

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I owe endless
gratitude to my wife
for her everlasting patience, love,
and support, so I want to start repaying her
immediately. Thus, no preface—
but you, please enjoy
this book.

Part I

A Man Who Tried to Build the World

*All pieces nothing but
sand through my fingers.*

How could I build?

To the Reader

It is in the nature of language
to hide
the very things we set out to share.

Ad Initium

I would rather watch the world burn
and be at peace
with myself

than not know
who I am
in a perfect world.

An Existential Chair

The longest night
of my whole life

was lived in despair
of not being certain

whether a chair
is

a chair.

On Perception

You ask whether you can trust
your perception.

What mean you? You are
your perception.

If you can not perceive without your perception,
it constitutes the prison of your reality.

Even if you escaped, and saw something new,
you would only experience another prison.

Fathom: knowledge is a satellite,
 nothing is absolute.

At University

I knew I had entered
through the right door

when everyone mastered
mathematical induction

but struggled with
a cookbook recipe.

Delusions of Grandeur

If I am to speak,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to be heard,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to be understood,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to be loved,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to be hated,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to be remembered,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to be forgotten,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to live,
 it should only be as a human,
if I am to die,
 it should only be as a human.

Free the Will

Embrace free will
but know it is wired

to the brain, which is,
in turn, affected by

- A. the weather outside,
- B. the meal you were served,
- C. the environment you grew in,
- D. the book you chose not to read,
- E. the hug you desperately needed,
- F. and the chaos we call life.

On Death

Futile contemplation:

what is death,
what comes after.

Look and see—

if you have the patience, wait.

Why settle for anything but certainty
when it is already marching
to shake your hand.

Richer Every Day

The fact that your life ends gives it value;
the alms of the poor weigh more
than the alms of the rich.

Empa[thy]nada

A shark with cut fins,
a cat with severed legs,
a butterfly with detached wings,
an ant under a shoe of size 8.5.

How human to claim pain
 human—
did we expect fish to weep?
They *breathe* tear-matter.

How human to define empathy
and then confine it
 in a dictionary—
next to *empanada*.

Convince yourself you are deaf,
convince yourself you are blind,
and forget not to remind yourself:
to be comfortable is to be numb.

Two Halves Make Not One Whole

Half of me desires solitude,
half of me an intimate connection.

Half of me follows my rationale,
half of me will not succumb to it.

Half of me is always thirsty,
half of me wants no more.

Half of me is warm,
half of me is cold.

Half of me is not
half of me.

Lost Echoes

Some of us feel
the most lonely
amidst people:

being a puzzle piece
of the wrong puzzle
is bleak business.

*Solitude can be
the most beautiful lover
but the most ugly friend.*

Finding an echo
to a feeble voice:
rather otiose

in a world
filled with
megaphones.

Dreamer's Elegy

A cynic is a dreamer
 who gave in to reality

and a dreamer still fighting to resist
risks feeling like a fool.

Unable to give in,
too weary

to dream. Tell me,
what life is there

for people like me?

—

*In a world / that is burning
enjoy the warmth / but get not
too close / to the flame.*

I Am

A cloak life carries,
a face pain takes,
a seed earth pushes out.

There is no life for me to claim;
life claims me.

A teardrop frozen solid,
a smile someone else wears,
a snowman not afraid of summer.

There is an end after a beginning;
all only causal.

A lifeboat lost at sea,
a house silence inhabits,
a miracle hidden from itself.

New Testament

Let me erect the cross,
let me find the hammer,
let me grab the nails.

Bring me faith,
and I shall nail it down.

Bring me hope,
and I shall nail it down.

Bring me love,
and we shall bear witness.

*Faith and hope slept;
love alone was awake.*

Redefinition

A death wish is

a wish to not be yelled at,
a wish to not be hit,
a wish to not feel helpless,
a wish to not fall asleep crying,
a wish to not wake up to nightmares,
a wish to not experience pain,
a wish to not endure suffering,

a wish to be seen,
a wish to be heard,
a wish to be forgiven,
a wish to be understood,
a wish to be appreciated,
a wish to be safe,
a wish to be loved.

A death wish is *not*
a wish for death.

Tick-Tock

For every act of consumption,
there is an opposite act

of creation.

For every act of repression,
there is an opposite act

of expression.

For every act of ignorance,
there is an opposite act

of compassion.

—

A second given to one act,
a second taken from its opposite.

Shared Loss, Shared Blame

This poem
consumed

our
time.

Saeculum

Pampers,
Crayola,
LEGO,
Apple,
Disney,
Coca-Cola,
Google,
TikTok,
Nike,
Levi's,
Ray-Ban,
Honda,
LinkedIn,
British Airways,
American Express,
The North Face,
Starbucks,
Bacardi,
Hilton,
Durex,
Netflix,
Aspirin,
Tiffany's,

Pampers,
HSBC,
IKEA,
Amazon,
KitchenAid,
Ralph Lauren,
Allianz,
Rolex,
TIME,
Facebook,
Mercedes-Benz,
Four Seasons,
Skechers,
Titleist,
Viagra,
Steinway,
Birkenstock,
National Geographic,
Trivial Pursuit,
Tempur,
Omron,
TENA,
God.

Force Majeure

Nothing I know of is more sad than
 passion
 sacrificed

on the altar of reasonability.

ER

What is the meaning of life?

Everyone is so eager to find an answer
they never see
the question
bleeding.

Examine the question,
patch each vagueness,
& see answers line up
to thank you.

On Wisdom

I was asked:
 who is most wise?

I answered:
 the one who considers herself most dumb.

The closer one looks, the less one understands.

Grains of Sand

It is inside your oyster,
inside the mother-of-pearl walls;
beyond your common existence,
outwith your comfort zone,
within your comfort zone.

That is where you paint,
or are painted by,
both your saviour,
and your captor.

It is inside the beautiful shades,
encased deep inside your mind;
beyond terrene light,
outwith others' judgement,
but within your own judgement.

That is where you remember,
or try hard to forget,
both your beatitude,
and your torment.

Written for Rattle's Ekphrastic Challenge, March 2025

Inversion

How odd
to embark
on a quest
for certainty

and end up
with a bag
filled to the brim
with nothing

yet still find
comfort
in the fullness
of that bag.

After All, 1/2

Inhale,
exhale,
inhale,
exhale.

Drink water.

Observe,
question,
observe,
question.

Hug a tree.

Learn,
unlearn,
learn,
unlearn.

—

Repetere usque ad mortem.

Part II

A Man Who Tried to Reach Love

*All emotions nothing but
poison through my veins.*

How could I love?

Steps

I follow a seductive scent,
I follow a bright light,
I follow a beautiful sound,
—that is all I do.

And somehow, near you,
the scent grows stronger,
and the light shines brighter,
and the sound surrounds my being.

Why all the words:
I follow an invisible path,
laid out for me not by humans;
this sacred route only trespasses unholy land.—

Such a journey is best described by the lover's heart,
for the lover feels two emotions after each step:
the joy of being one step closer, and the pain
of still being not close enough.—

Love is the pilgrimage of never-close-enough,
and it is the pilgrim's heart that affirms love
through both the joy
and the pain.

Speak

Your heart wishes to say something;
listen, hear, understand.

Everything that is dammed
wants to break out,
everything that is hidden
screams to be found.

Joy calls joy,
love answers to love,
 despair bears despair,
sorrow weeps with sorrow.

*We all travel on a worn-out path
thinking we are breaking trail.*

Speak.

Emotions and I

Pandora's box;
I never foresaw it,
you never foresaw it.

Inebriated by love,
 drowned by love.
I know—it is too much.

I found what I looked for;
I got what I so longed for.
How could I act differently?

Love expresses itself in pain;
 love incurs pain.
It suffocates you, me.

Burn and rise from the ashes;
 my love is the phoenix.
Why burn with me you not?

Madness, pure violent madness.
Do you think the lover minds?
I burn, and I burn with delight.

Why would reason restrain me?
 It brought me here.
I would not love if I ran away.

Forget the world,
ignore the reality;
this is my story: me, you.

Retrograde

Reach towards love,
—pause.

From dream to reality:
a reverse leap of faith.

Life
inquinates everyone.

Oyster

You can condemn behaviour
but not emotion.

Love and hate,
two sides of the same coin.—

The more you feel,
the more vulnerable you are,
and the more vulnerable you are,
the more you suffer.

This world surely finds
your most tender points.—

—

Open up your shell
and hope no one eats you up;
lock yourself in
and make solitude your lover.

Incognito

Something beautiful

in a book no one reads,
in a song no one sings,
in a thought no one hears,
in a longing no one answers to,

in love no one will ever know of.

A Paper Heart

Last night you folded two small cats out of paper. It was snowing heavily outside and my heart was light. Little did I know, watching you make the intricate folds, how your thoughts and emotions were folded inside your heart.

Just as the original form of the paper disappeared into the piece of origami, so did your inner folds escape my eyes. If only I could unfold your heart as easily as the paper cat.

Sitting here, looking at a flat piece of paper embossed with countless creases, recognising I have no way of putting the paper cat back together, I ask myself whether it is for the best to not hold your unfolded heart in my hands.

In-Waves

An ocean between your thighs,
waking me from a dream,
inviting me to dive
into another.

This morning, I am a dolphin:
born of sea, bereft of saltwater
after an endless night
above the surface.

I plunge and swirl,
embrace the tide,
kiss the shore,
and dive back in.

Following you to the depths,
savouring each stroke,
I feel a storm rising
and quiver.

In the heights of the storm
you plead for an offering,
to appease the gods,
and I gaily comply.

Pleased, we and the gods,
I rise from the heavenly water
and see the storm go still
in my reflection.

This morning, the ocean and you:
predominantly gentle,
transiently violent,
always divine.

Flickering

I want to travel
far away
just to long
for you.

Love escapes to return.

I want to re-kiss
your fiery lips
turned to ember
in my absence.

Love returns to escape again.

I want to cry
every morning
you wake up
not beside me.

And love demands a steady flame.

I want to end
this tug-of-war
to be free
for you.

But love burns brightest in the wind.

Reflexion

I guard your sleep
and admire

life

unaware
of itself.—

I give you a kiss
you do not acknowledge

even if your lips move

when they
meet mine.

The Power of Language

The merging of our bodies:
partial.

The merging of *you* and *me*:
complete.

—

Our language merges *us*
better

than coitus.

Chameleons

Inside every moment:

a thought
not said,

a hand
not held,

a lover
not loved.

Metric

All I was waiting for was a passing touch, the running-down of your fingers, a silent phrase with your cool, soft skin as subject, my manhood as object.

Why did you get out of the bed so early, so easily? My body is dying to speak in the language all know but few are fluent in.

—Can expected touch ever surpass the unexpected?

My mind once again seeks refuge within itself, realising the tangent of reality is already in the realm of cloth-covered bodies, daily chores, and suppressed fantasies.

I resign, and am astounded to notice the ever-growing distance between us stays constant: one touch.

Coming of Age

When did you first realise

mixing blue with yellow
gives you green,

licking frozen metal
is a bad idea,

trust is hard to earn
but easy to lose,

there is no good
without evil,

you are shaped
by your childhood trauma,

getting older
makes you no wiser,

vows of eternal love
are—at best—expressions

of present love?

Nonlinear Dynamics

Stable

The things that push us
apart

are the same things that bring us
closer.

Unstable

The things that push us
apart

are the same things that take us
further apart.

—

*We climb mountains
but settle valleys.*

Sleeping on the Sofa

Last night there was slight pain in my chest,
a small spot somewhere in the middle,
and I found it impossible to sleep.

Now the pain is stronger, and has spread
wider, and I am twice as tired, or more,
and find it impossible to sleep, again.

They always start small—the fights—but grow
like snowballs down the mountainside,
and result in us buried in an avalanche.

We know the pain, and its source,
yet remain unable to handle its weight;
the snowball snowballed into an avalanche.

I escaped the room, the floor—27th, and the building,
and never felt so low. I came back hours later,
kept silent, and let anger take over me.

You were silent—which was good, from experience.
I went to take a shower, filled with rage, and punched
the washing machine on the way, hurting my hand.

I swore in the shower, in my native language,
at such volume you and the neighbours heard.
It is good none of you speak my language.

I rushed to bed, noticing you on the sofa,
your weary look buried in your tearful hands.
You too, surely: deep under an avalanche.

I wanted to break things, divorce you, fight,
—and here I am, alone in bed, writing a poem,
feeling calmer, and less deranged—at least a little.

You settled on the sofa, perhaps scared of me—
naturally, for a reason. What can one possibly do
with a man to whom a snowball equals an avalanche?

I lie here, the pain in my chest fading away,
feeling rather certain it was me who triggered
this avalanche, and all the ones before it.

Lord have mercy on me, an atheist and a sinner,
and have mercy on my poor wife in the next room,
sleeping on the sofa, under my avalanche.

Inside an Apology

Within you a thousand songs,
melodies of delight,
and one voice.

Within you a thousand words,
overflowing grace,
and one heart.

Within you a thousand dreams,
hope that lifts you,
and one love.

Within you a thousand excuses,
a reason to curl inwards,
and one grief.

Without you a thousand tears,
sorrow to last forever,
and one regret.

Was it I who denied you
 silence
 to let your voice fill it,
an ear
 to let your thoughts speak,
a future
 to let you fill it with wonder,
my strength
 to help you bloom,
my love
 to carry you through?

Dear God.

After Some Math

We hurt ourselves
the most

when we hurt
those

we

love.

Polar Gravity

The weight of not knowing:
manageable.

The weight of not loving:
crushing.

Nightfall

In countless cities,
in various countries,
on multiple continents.

We stood together.

During dark hours,
after setbacks,
before way-outs.

We stood together.

We used to dream a lot—
now only I dream,
with every dream born frail.

What happened to us?—

I notice I am biting my nails again;
it was you
who got me out of that bad habit.

I let you down.

You are fast asleep, as you should be at 5 am.
I am in my office, drowning myself in words,
wondering if it makes me feel better or worse.

I let myself down.

Life takes turns I struggle to understand,
and my choices make me go in circles,
with each taking me further from you.

—*Why?*

A new day is dawning and I am blinded by the light.
Deprived of sleep, I thank the words I wrote here,
and let the sun push me next to you.

At least we shall sleep together.

Hand in Hand

Is it love or foolishness
that keeps us together
when we both know
our future is stuck
at a cul-de-sac

and only letting go
gives much-needed solace
when the endless road cuts short
and the turning point appears
too narrow

to pass

hand

in
hand

?

Grey Skies

The choice between missing you forever
and surviving the loneliness
that already blankets
too many years:

much more difficult
than deciding between brown
and blue, now that autumn unfolds
and the sky summons a palette of earth.

Love Life

Success:

a series of little things
done right.

Failure:

a series of little things
done wrong.

After Life

Sometimes
the greatest expression of love

is that of grave sorrow
and unending grief.

Some things will never be all right,
and they never ought to be either:

love breathes
through pain.

—

*Cherish those around you,
for life is both a mother
and a gravedigger.*

Daybreak

Tomorrow is a ray of light
clearing the sobbing sky,

leaving only the land
to recall and mourn

the withdrawn kiss
as flowers open

their hearts
to the sun.

A Note to Future Self

Not every thought requires logic,
not every word means confrontation,
not every emotion demands justification.

Accept fault in yourself and others;
apologise and forgive,
make peace.

The only winner in a fight
is the one who hears the other
and comforts them without judgement.

Be present,
stay present,
love in the present.

Corollary

There is no greater joy
than that of

being

seen,
heard,
understood,
and loved,

&

seeing,
hearing,
understanding,
and loving

in return.

After All, 1

Inhale,
exhale,
inhale,
exhale.

Hug your lover.

Laugh	<i>together,</i>
weep	<i>together,</i>
laugh	<i>together,</i>
weep	<i>together.</i>

Always embrace

love,
love,
love,
love.

—

Repetere usque ad mortem.

About the Author

A human, being, writing, of necessity.

Born: AD 1988, in Finland

Location: Europe and South America

Family: Yes, infinitely forgiving and loving

Education: Astronomy, Mathematics, books

Obsessions: [

“understanding complexity”,

“simplifying complexity”,

“unhealthy behavioural patterns

disguised as something innocent

humans fixate on

with joy \& with pride”

]

Part III

Poem Titles and Page Numbers

*For those among us
who appreciate*

*both words
and numbers.*

A Man Who Tried to Build the World

5

To the Reader

6

Ad Initium

7

An Existential Chair

8

On Perception

9

At University

10

Delusions of Grandeur

11

Free the Will

12

On Death

13

Richer Every Day

14

Empa[thy]nada

15

Two Halves Make Not One Whole

16

Lost Echoes

17

Dreamer's Elegy

18

I Am

19

New Testament

20

Redefinition

21

Tick-Tock

22

Shared Loss, Shared Blame

23

Saeculum

24

Force Majeure

26

ER

27

On Wisdom

28

Grains of Sand

29

Inversion

30

After All, 1/2

31

A Man Who Tried to Reach Love

33

Steps

34

Speak

35

Emotions and I

36

Retrograde
38

Oyster
39

Incognito
40

A Paper Heart
41

In-Waves
42

Flickering
44

Reflexion
46

The Power of Language
47

Chameleons
48

Metric
49

Coming of Age
50

Nonlinear Dynamics
51

Sleeping on the Sofa
52

Inside an Apology
54

After Some Math
56

Polar Gravity
57

Nightfall
58

Hand in Hand
60

Grey Skies
61

Love Life
62

After Life

63

Daybreak

64

A Note to Future Self

65

Corollary

66

After All, 1

67

About the Author

68