

# 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 cannot 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 loneliest  
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  
risks feeling like a fool.

Unable to give in,  
too weary

to dream. Tell me,  
what life is there

for people like me

?

## **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.

## Question

*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 in 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.

I follow an invisible path,  
and each step fills me with joy,  
and each step fills me with pain  
for I get closer, but 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.



## 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.

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 rotten 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,  
pain 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        *together,*  
weep        *together,*  
laugh        *together,*  
weep        *together.*

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.*

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