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# Live encounters

YOUNG POETS & WRITERS

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DECEMBER 2020

EILEEN CASEY  
LIGHT AND DARK

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE





Wild flower, Luang Prabang, Laos, photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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*Live Encounters Magazine* (2010), *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* (2016), *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers* (2019) and now, *Live Encounters Books* (August 2020).

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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## CONTRIBUTORS

EILEEN CASEY – GUEST EDITORIAL

IRELAND :

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- ORIN
- KUSH
- CLAIRE
- SARAH
- KATIE
- SAOIRSE

AUSTRALIA:

MELBOURNE

- BRITNEY
- FARIA
- SIMRAN
- AARABI



Eileen Casey

Poet, fiction writer, journalist, Eileen Casey was born in County Offaly, now based in South Dublin. Most recent poetry collection, 'Berries for Singing Birds' published October 2019 (Arlen House). Poetry is published widely in anthologies and journals by Dedalus, The Stinging Fly, The Nordic Irish Studies Journal, Poetry Ireland Review, Lisburn Linen Museum, The Moth, The Ulster Tatler Literary Miscellany, among others. Poetry awards include The Oliver Goldsmith International Prize, The Hanna Grealy Awards (Roscommon Libraries) and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship, among others. Five poetry collections (including two in collaboration with Offaly Visual Artist Emma Barone) are published by Arlen House, New Island, AltEnts (Alternative Entertainments, Rua Red Arts Centre, Tallaght). 'The Lea-Green Down', a response anthology to the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh and featuring works from over 60 poets was published in 2018 by Casey's small press Fiery Arrow. Currently working on a series of poems documenting her Stonemason heritage, an undertaking supported by Creative Ireland Support for Artists and County Offaly Arts.

## EILEEN CASEY

### FLUCTUATIONS BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK

Yehudi Menuhin wrote that 'Blake's tiger would never have burnt bright in the forests of an adult's night, but simply have gone out like a light while the adult died of fright.' Menuhin maintains that things are not as fearful in the innocent world of the child 'because there, one has curiosity instead of terror and a suppleness of mind that adjusts itself to the wonder of the unexpected as easily as the pupil of the eye to the fluctuations of light and dark.' The child's world is the poet's world which is why adult poets should read work by children on a continuing basis. Luckily, a friend, Lynda Tavakoli, gifted me *People Can't Cry on the Moon*. Published by Down Lisburn Trust, I read it on a regular basis. It reminds me to have clarity, 'a sense of the ludicrous, wit, humour and pathos and makes me mindful to try and conjure up the same honesty and sensibility' (Lorna Hastings, Director, Arts Care).

Because of the time of year, I'm including a poem from this wonderful anthology,

I'm off school.  
I've got a ghost at home  
And a mask.  
Mum hid my ghost.  
I'm not scared  
I believe in ghosts.  
I've never seen one.

Hallowee'en, *People Can't Cry on the Moon*, author unknown

It's easy to see why this poem is a poet's joy. Poets, especially at a young age, perform conjuring acts in such subtle ways. The opening line 'I'm off school' implies a sense of no longer liking this institution as well as being 'off' on a mid-term break. Belief is gifted by a willingness to experience the unseen with inner vision. Children are not like Doubting Thomas. A child poet is confident enough in their creative world to boast of their own ghost...where else but at home; hidden by an adult authority figure. What the adult hides, the child will find. 'And a mask'.





Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

The ability to shape-shift, to re-invent and to be an identity Houdini, escaping mundanity via pen and paper. Poetry has no rules, it can rhyme or not. 'Hallowe'en' is a capricious poem. It may have no logical meaning yet it works.

It's a pleasure to include a section devoted to spooky poems by LCC (Coláiste na Tulchann), Dublin. One such offering is by Saoirse. This young poet shrouds the school in grey and uses technological language to introduce the teachers. 'The site of the teachers is frightening,/they will eat you with just one bite.' The language in the poem is an indication of how technology intrudes on poetic consciousness. On the surface, 'Hallowe'en at LCC' seems like a moan but it's quite a deep poem and reveals a fearfulness of the adult world...very rite of passage. The journey from childhood to the world of adults is a 'walk' not a run, a warning, not a prescription.

This edition welcomes older poets from a girl's school in Melbourne, Australia, written by students whose ages range from 15 years to 17 years. These poems already show a maturity regarding choice of subject matter and its execution. Britney chose the character Iago from *Othello*, in a poem which demonstrates how the master of mischief himself may have been slighted and deceived by others. Britney creates an authentic framework for the poem, using archaic language and for a poet so young, her imagery is very fresh, 'My sleeves have wrinkles like my enemies' sheets' is a memorable description but there are many more to be enjoyed from *Motivated Malignancy*. Fara's *Land of Poems and Pomegranates* is a sensory delight. Wistful and whimsical, the repetition of the opening line sets up a rhythm that is trancelike and seductive. 'My mind is woven like a rug/-immortal in its colourful intricacies/,' is a perfect way to highlight the many poetic threads from which this poet weaves her narrative. An amazing achievement in one so young.

Simran, a Year 11 student, uses music, in particular the violin to transport us from 'silence, swelling and blooming' to 'the other side of the earth'. Clearly, music is a passion for this poet and where there's passion, there's *light and shade*. Music, as well as being an instrument, is also a weapon; 'This music pierced me, with each/Master stroke I bled a little more/.'

Aarabi reaches into mythology for her poem *The Sun and his Lover*. This young poet, with chutzpah it must be said, sets up a sun monologue addressed to both Icarus and Apollo. It's a complex poem, revealing at its heart disappointed love, the lover Icarus doomed in his quest yet triumphant in his dreaming. Ultimately, it makes the argument 'why you should not love a god'. However, love will have its sway and love endures despite tragedy; 'The song songs will say you plummeted in agony/You flew, Icarus, even as you fell'.

What I find intriguing is that the poems contain nothing at all about Covid-19. I honestly expected this terrible virus to rear its head in all its monstrous manifestations. Perhaps it needs the passage of time when, hopefully, it will enter the realm of lore, when it will no longer be visible, merely a ghostly presence haunting imaginative corridors for generations to come.

Going forward, I offer the advice to read as much as possible (clearly evident in the work published here) and to journal on a regular basis. Writing is like music or any other creative pursuit. Practise on a regular basis and develop that special relationship between the pen and the page. Practise makes perfect or so the saying goes. Striving for perfection is not the goal, we poets know that. It's what slips through the cracks when we least expect it that excites us.

All of the poems in these pages are worthy of praise. Writing poetry is a tremendous achievement, yet, it takes courage to put the poems 'out there' in the universe. Thanks to *Live Encounters* a vital global platform exists. I also commend teachers and mentors who are also invaluable creative stepping stones for young poets and writers everywhere.





## HALLOWEEN AT LCC

The following poems have been written  
by students aged between 12 yrs and 13 years,  
of Coláiste naTulchain, Dublin 15.

A traditional Irish Halloween turnip lantern. By Rannpháirtí anaithnid at English Wikipedia,  
CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7788068>

## BY ORIN

Haunted halls,  
Infested walls,  
Filled with children's desperate calls

Revolting bathrooms,  
Gruesome classrooms,  
What hidden horrors lurk in the gloom?

Carnivorous creatures,  
They call them 'teachers',  
Feast on the flesh of boys and girls

Kids disappear,  
Every year,  
Made-up excuses to quell our fear

They end up dead,  
On a platter, their head,  
The monsters' mouths, with blood run red

I hope you heed,  
This warning creed,  
Watch out! Or you might get 'LCC-ed!'

## BY KUSH

Halloween is finally here  
Voices fill the halls with fear  
Monsters hide behind each door  
Waiting to feast on children galore

If you go to LCC  
You'll never make it 10 past 3  
It's day but a full moon still shines bright  
And in every shadow lurks a gruesome sight

Ghosts and ghouls roam the halls  
Their voices wail and chant and call  
Gory faces riddled with holes  
Husky remains of tortured souls

## BY CLAIRE

Goop, goo, gunk and grime  
Shocking, sickening, slippery slime  
Come with me and you shall see  
A hideous school called LCC  
Sloping staircases, filthy floors  
What horrors lurk behind these doors  
Of the boys' toilets you dare to peak  
The blood dripping walls will make you shriek!  
There is a plague within these walls  
Where pestilent ghouls infest the halls  
Goop, goo, gunk and grime  
Shocking, sickening, slippery slime  
There you have it, now you see  
You'll never come back to LCC

## BY SARAH

Through the door and down the halls,  
Is where you hear the children's calls,  
They cry and scream as loud as can be,  
Kneeling and shouting as they plea.  
It was on this day many years ago,  
A first year went and burned his gateaux,  
The whole Home Ec kitchen went ablaze,  
Leaving everyone inside a smoky haze.  
That day forever haunts those who've left LCC,  
and the Home Ec room is still a pile of debris.



## BY KATIE

It's Halloween in LCC  
In costumes are my class and me  
As sassy sixth years toss their hair  
They literally do not give a care

And as I go to my English room  
A shadow moves just by that broom  
I brush it off, it's just the wind  
If only I know what danger I'm in

I realise the teacher's not yet here  
"Where's Mr. Craven?" I ask my peers  
Rachel shrugs "He's probably late"  
"It's happened in many classes to date"

After 10 minutes my patience is low  
Yet our English teacher is still no-show!  
Then Lorcán leaps from his chair with a shout  
"IS THERE BLOOD ON THAT PLASTIC SKELETON'S MOUTH?!"

We stare at the blood and everyone pales  
"IT ATE THE TEACHER!" Eimear wails  
"Nah that's impossible!" Manus replies  
As the skeleton watches with hollow eyes  
"We should find a teacher" Ailbhe mumbles  
"It's just a dumb joke!" Cormac grumbles

No one seems to agree on a choice  
But then the skeleton raises his voice...  
"Yes I ate your English Master  
Getting caught would have been a disaster  
But nosy you children had to be"  
He growls as he points a finger at me  
"So now that you've all figured it out"  
He raises his voice and begins to shout  
As he detaches himself from the wall  
"I guess I'll have to eat you all "

## BY SAOIRSE

I walk to the school  
With grey walls and dull uniforms

The site of the teachers is frightening,  
they will eat you with just one bite

Beware, beware for the teacher is near  
They will drown you in the paperwork of their fear



A Jack o' Lantern. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jack-o%27-Lantern\\_2003-10-31.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jack-o%27-Lantern_2003-10-31.jpg)





## MELBOURNE

The following poems have been written  
by students aged between 15 yrs and 17 years,  
of Melbourne, Australia.

Green leaf in Goa. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Britney is a student from Melbourne, Australia. Her poem is inspired by Shakespeare's careful craftsmanship of the character Iago from "Othello" and takes an ironic spin on the frequent commentary and literary analysis that suggests his malignancy may be unmotivated. Instead, the following poem explores the possibility that he, the master of mischief, may indeed have been slighted and deceived by others instead.

## MOTIVATED MALIGNANCY

My sword and hand are all but one  
     Sworn to speak for a sorrowful tongue  
 Which once bore fruits of truth and grace  
 Of honesty and trust... misplaced  
 Old Honour has died, so long defaced  
     Both sport and profit amounted to none

Slick words now fall to ears half deaf  
     Pegs tuned to play in some broken clef  
 Naught is heard but the footsteps of rain  
 As Cyprus heaves in settled pain  
 Of diplomacy, too soon slain  
     Masterless, Life's music hangs, bereft

Old friends not as friendly as they are old  
 Now lost to daws, hearts and gold  
 My sleeves have wrinkles like my enemies' sheets  
 Their dreams wrecked with faltering fleets  
 Of ships once virtuous now drenched in pitch  
     If only they remembered the stories I told

To warn of deception is to wake the deceived  
     I knew naught of the lies that they had received  
 It seems that in serving their own reputations  
 Even Generals forget their true motivations  
 Before thinking, they spew out cold accusations;  
     Falsehoods too pestilent to be retrieved

Perhaps ancient, but my words are not slow  
     My command was once lost, to men who now throw  
 Their cloaks to citizens, who bow in their stead  
 Fast to call treason once duty has fled  
 Their praise fell from "honest", to "knave, dog and dead"  
     So here lies an ode from the man you *think* you know  
     As Jealousy's harbinger, and its thief -

- Iago.



Faria, 15 years old, is a Year 10 student from Melbourne, Australia. She enjoys playing clarinet and piano, listening to music, watching films (particularly classics and horror movies!), playing soccer and netball, and reading. She enjoys reading from a range of genres but one of her favourite novels is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. Her favourite poets include Leonard Cohen and Wisława Szymborska as well as a number of Persian poets, some of whom are mentioned in her poem. This piece was inspired by her Persian culture and personal experiences in Iran, as she moved to Australia at a young age but is still very much connected to her Persian heritage. It includes references to aspects of Iran's geography, history, art and literature. She hopes that this poem will allow her to share the Persian side of her culture and identity with a wider audience.

## LAND OF POEMS AND POMEGRANATES

I had fallen in love in my childlike way  
with cheek-pinching and cosy embraces -  
just as sweet and warm  
as that familiar, wafting  
aroma of fresh bread  
overpowering my senses.

I had fallen in love in my childlike way  
with shimmering snowflakes drifting  
down to my expectant tongue,  
pristine, white blankets  
in bustling streets whose alleys  
serve as children's soccer fields.

Yet I could not tell you what I loved best  
and my love swelled and swelled,  
a burgeoning balloon on a string  
filled with bittersweet emotions.  
It tugged at my small heart as I waved,  
threatening to explode.

Overcome with emotion,  
I allowed myself to weep.  
I hid, as children do,  
hoping that I could stay  
with my roots running deep  
into the soil of my land.

Wherever I go, I always know  
that this wine-red blood in my veins  
contains verses from the greats -  
the words of Rumi and Hafez and Khayyam.  
It sings of the rise and fall of kingdoms,  
tells stories from antiquity.

My mind is woven like a rug -  
immortal in its colourful intricacies,  
patterns, symbols and texture,  
but keeping certain flaws.  
It remembers the calloused hands  
of the women who toiled at its loom.

My mane is that of a Persian cat.  
My scent is that of rosewater.  
My lips are the colour of pomegranates.  
My body is a stark mountain,  
reflecting sunlight from its peak.

I keep the music of the mystics in my soul  
and following that rhythm,  
I whirl on -  
but when all is still, I stop and stare,  
and whisper to myself,  
"We used to live there."

Simran, 17 yrs old, is a Year 11 student from Melbourne, Australia. She loves to go for walks in the rain, the smell of old books, and watching the sun melt in the evening. Her favourite authors are Sandra Cisneros and Anthony Doerr. This poem was inspired by her love for music and its mysteries.

## REFRAIN

I was among the usual stampede  
Of girls in blue when I sat down  
Unaware that when I joined this sea  
Again I would be changed,  
I would be hurt.

The drumming of leather shoes  
Softened and a quilt of silence  
Blanketed us as she glided to the  
Center of the stage and raised her  
Violin to her shoulder.

The first sounds pierced through  
The silence, swelling and blooming,  
Steeping every corner in the room.  
An audience shivered, too far to see  
That below her sealed eyes her eyeballs rolled  
To the other side of the earth where a tide  
Tore across a sheet of pristine sand.

This music pierced me, which each  
Master stroke I bled a little more,  
It went a little deeper as she tore  
Through space, cutting tunnels for each note  
To travel through.  
Those tiny, vibrating hairs that shook a school  
Broke something in me - something even more  
Delicate than her tiny fingers slipping through  
The strings, plucking music out of still air.

In the final note I felt the weight of years  
Ring through the air, each note heavy and strong  
Like threads of twine forever woven through the air.

The thunder of applause  
Filled the wake of her  
Music. And as I rose  
I felt a kind of pain  
Bloom from this refrain.



Aarabi is a 16-year-old Year 10 student from Melbourne, Australia. Aside from writing, she enjoys playing and making music as well as baking! Currently, her favourite author and poet are Haruki Murakami and Richard Siken. This poem, retelling the myth of Icarus as a love story, was inspired by an artwork that depicted Icarus and the sun as two people in the sky. Aarabi takes a great interest in mythology and classics, and was inspired to retell the Icarus myth having loved Madeline Miller's retellings in 'Circe' and 'The Song of Achilles'.

## THE SUN AND HIS LOVER

This tale is the cost of loving a god  
It is this; Icarus touch-starved, Apollo longing  
Naive yearning coalesced  
With desire and hubris  
These stories end the same,  
in flames.

Bony, boyish fingers beckon the blazing sun  
Glistening with the sweat of a thousand lovers  
Strands of dark hair dancing softly  
Coerced by the rush of the wind that  
Cocoons the dreamer in his descent  
Illuminated by heavenly fire, you are  
incandescent Icarus, iridescent Icarus  
Ill-starred Icarus.

Icarus, my love  
Why did you yearn for me,  
Long for me so very much  
That you would lose all your wits  
Hurtle into this feverous frenzy  
Just to bask in my affections

Icarus, my darling  
I know there is nothing beautiful about  
4th-degree burns,  
or plummeting at  
three hundred and twenty-five kilometres per hour  
But you have never looked  
as lovely as you did  
In your fall from grace  
Shining like a flood of unfiltered ichor  
You were the sun, and it was I,  
Crashing into you

Icarus, you dreamer  
How was I to know we would become a myth  
That they would have it all wrong  
That they would forget to pen down  
The seconds when I held you in my arms  
When my kiss singed your lips  
And still you smiled  
An instant of bliss and a lifetime of death  
In a single embrace

The poets will call you arrogant, devoured by hubris  
The songs will say you plummeted in agony  
You flew, Icarus, even as you fell  
Head thrown back, and mouth wide with laughter  
The epics forget who you were before the fall  
Forget that you were made of magic, of  
Crooked grins and brilliant inventions  
Eyes like runny honey in the sunshine  
Liquid melanin, your eyes  
That should have been enough for me to hold on to

Icarus, I was a fool to have watched  
As your fingers clutched at the air  
As they met the empty promise of my love  
As your wings ignited,  
As my heat seared through skin, flesh, bone  
I could have caught them, Icarus  
Your hands  
Gentle, now scarred  
Why didn't I?  
This is why you should not love a god.

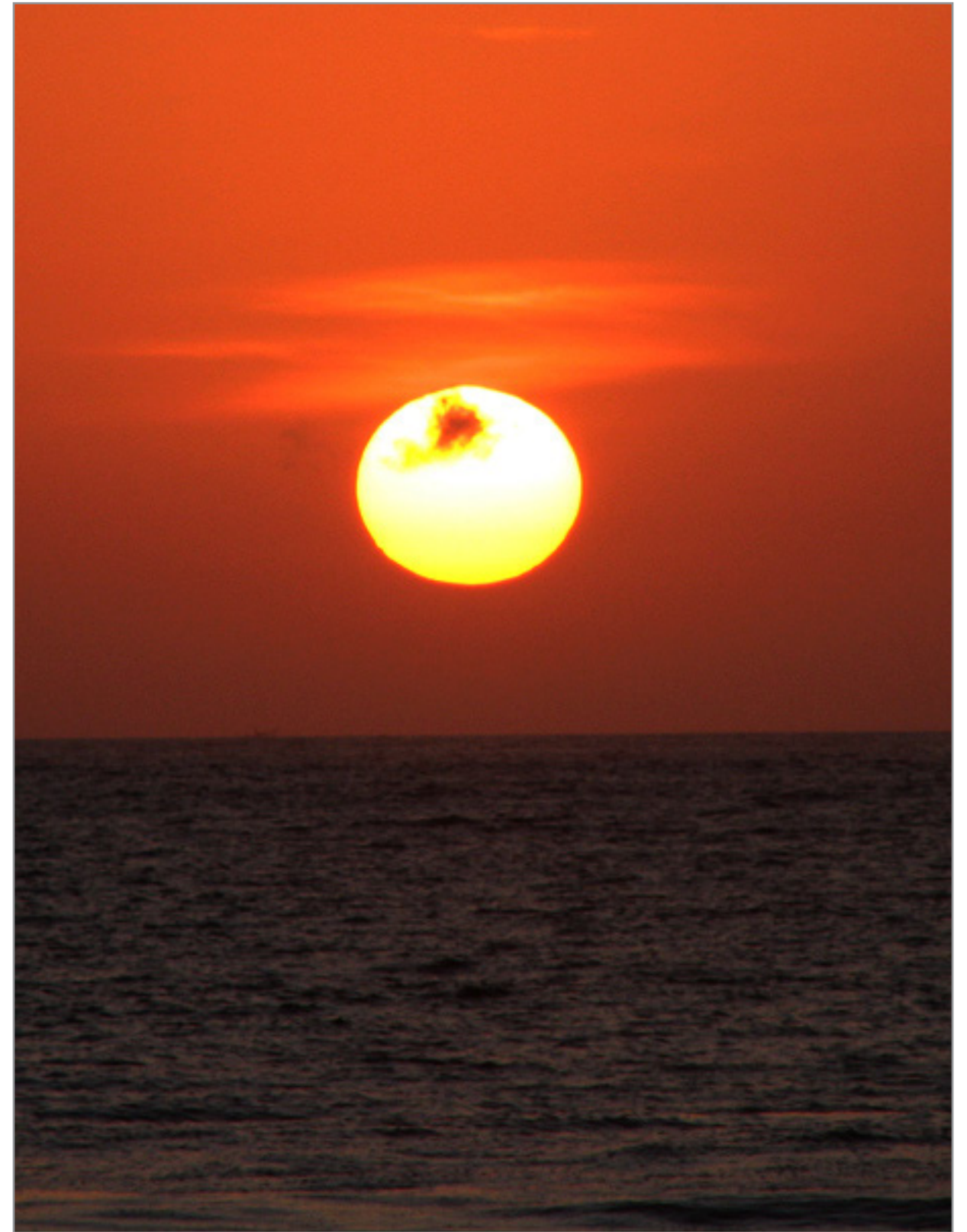
## THE SUN AND HIS LOVER *contd...*

Dearest Apollo,  
 You beckoned me from the darkness of the Labyrinth  
 What choice did I have, but to ache for your light?  
 There is nothing worse than destruction by a lover  
     to drown in your own creation,  
     to be unmade.

I will remember the way my ribs pressed  
     Against the underside of my skin  
     As I struck the ocean surface,  
     pain bleeding into numbness  
 I will remember reaching terminal velocity,  
     Time slowing to leave me to my thoughts  
     Will remember awaiting death patiently

Yet, I will remember the deliverance it gifted me  
     When I brushed fingertips with the sun  
 I will remember sun-streaked locks and golden eyes  
     sending me to my demise.

Mortal and god, bound by yearning  
 Given a single moment of catharsis.  
 Was it worth it, Icarus?



Sunset in Bali. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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