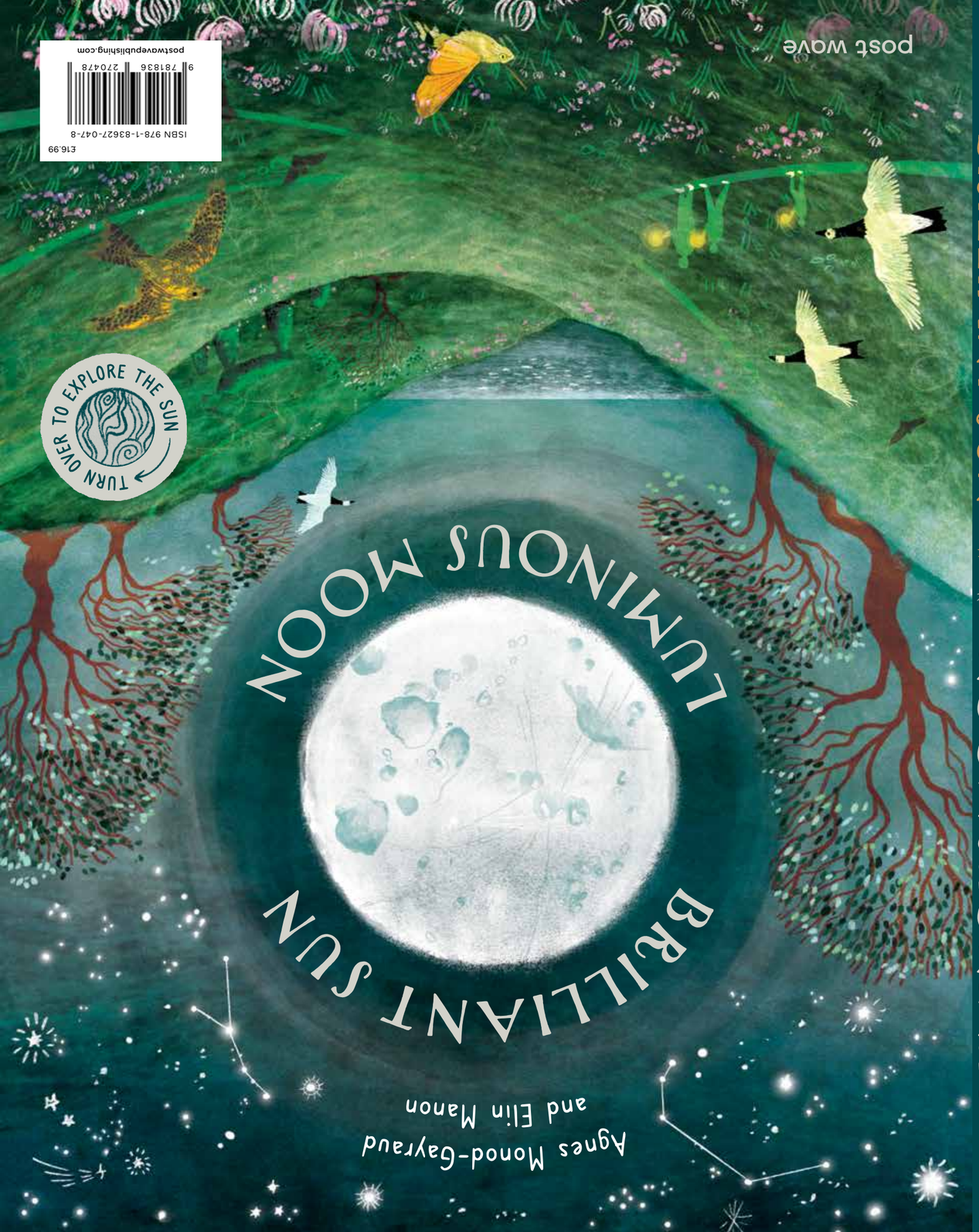

Agnes Monod-Gayraud
and Elin Manon

BRILLIANT SUN
LUMINOUS MOON

TURN OVER TO EXPLORE THE MOON

post wave

Dedicated to Fred and Charlotte,
my little Sun and my little Moon – A.M.G.

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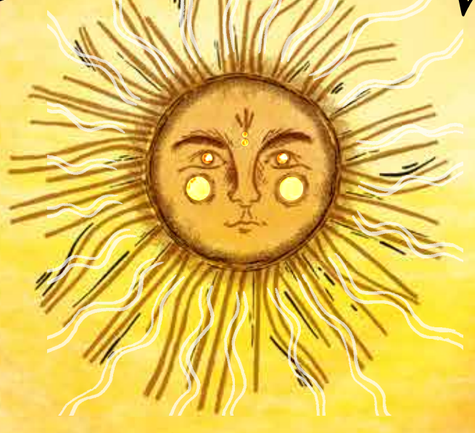
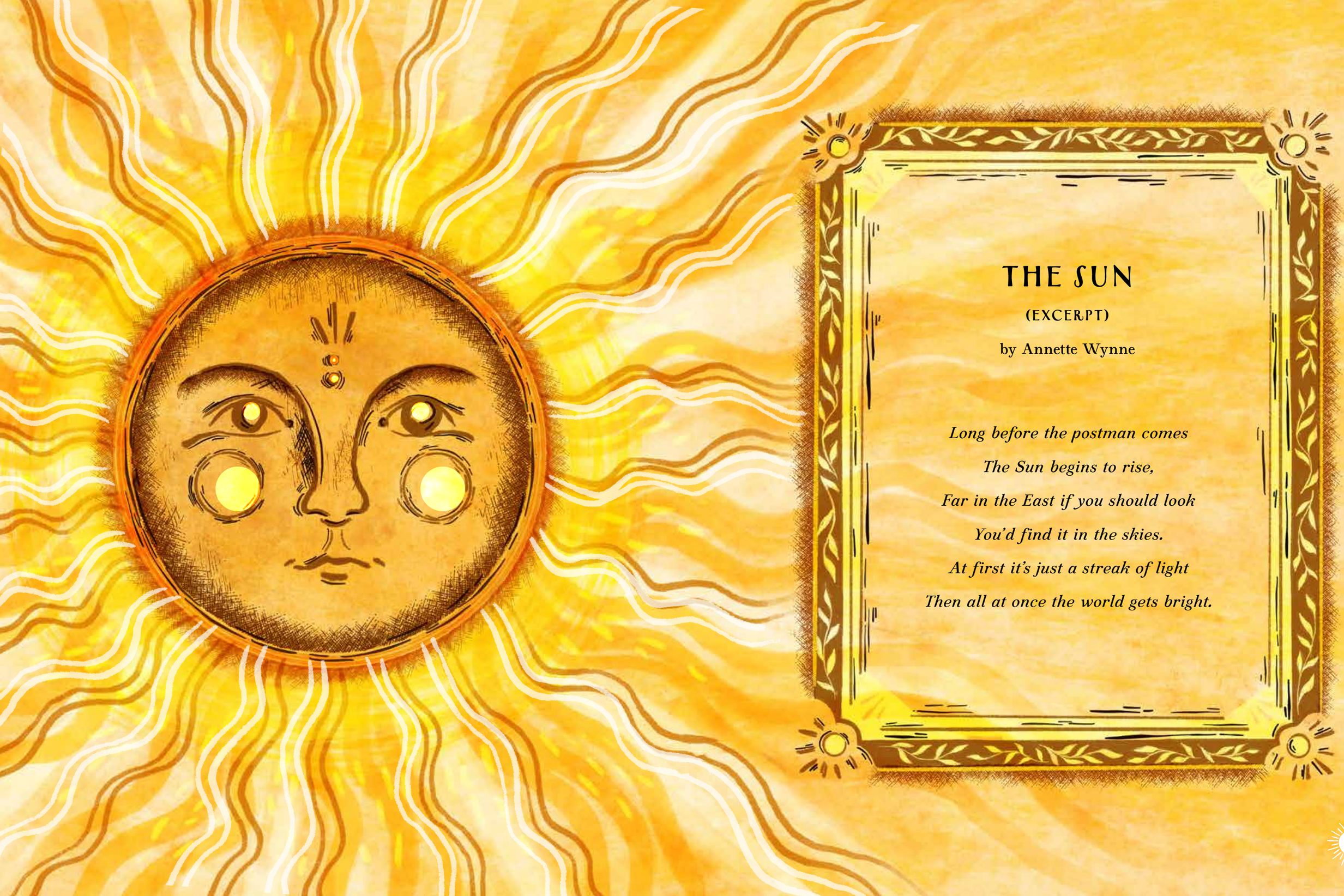
You can flip this book upside down to read the other half –
where the Sun's story ends, the Moon's begins.

BRILLIANT SUN



THE SUN (POEM) 5
RAY OF LIFE 6
SOLAR STUDIES 8
CENTRE STAGE 10
FOUR SEASONS 12
BIRTH OF THE SUN 14
FROM CORE TO CORONA 16
SOLAR ACTIVITY 18
VITAL SUN 20
PEOPLE OF THE SUN 22
CREATURES OF THE SUN 24
COUNTING THE DAYS 26
SUN SALUTATIONS 28
WORSHIPPING THE SUN 30
SOLAR ECLIPSE 32



THE SUN

(EXCERPT)

by Annette Wynne

Long before the postman comes
The Sun begins to rise,
Far in the East if you should look
You'd find it in the skies.
At first it's just a streak of light
Then all at once the world gets bright.

RAY OF LIFE

Each morning at dawn, the Sun lights up our world, its rays chasing away the darkness of night and ushering in a new day.

When the first humans looked up at the sky, they were amazed by this mysterious ball of light. We have always been curious about the Sun – what makes it burn so bright and appear to rise and fall each day. The Sun provides all living creatures on Earth with the light, warmth and sustenance we need to thrive.

Many of the world's earliest religions placed the Sun at the centre of their rituals, building monuments to trace its path across the sky and pay tribute to sun gods and goddesses. Even the seventh day of the week (Sunday) takes its name from the vital role our brilliant Sun plays in everyday life.

Let's embark on this journey to the Sun as we explore how the centrepiece of our Solar System came about – its origins, structure and the vital role it has played in the story of humankind.

FOUR SEASONS

Our planet is slightly tilted on its axis, which means it isn't perfectly upright. This tilt causes most of the Sun's light to hit Earth's surface at an angle. As the Earth makes a full trip around the Sun each year, different parts of our planet receive different amounts of sunlight. This affects the weather in specific regions of the planet and gives us four different seasons in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Tilted Axis

When part of the Earth is tilted closer to the Sun, it gets more sunlight, making it summer. When it is tilted away, it gets less sunlight, bringing on winter. We have summer in the northern hemisphere when the North Pole is tilted towards the Sun, which is then winter in the south. Conversely, it is summer in the south and winter in the north when the South Pole is tilted towards the Sun (see Sun page 11).

Naming the Seasons

The names of our four seasons come from old words that describe the special changes in nature during each time of year. 'Spring' comes from an Old English word meaning to burst forth or sprout. 'Summer' may come from an old idea of togetherness, because it was a time for festivals and gatherings. 'Autumn' comes from a Latin word that means harvest, and 'winter' likely comes from old words meaning wet, windy or even white.

CARPATHIAN CAROL

(EXCERPT)

by Alexander Nikolayevich Afanasyev

Let's dive down to the bottom of the sea,
Gather up grains of sand,
A fine sand, a blue stone.
We'll cast this fine sand,
We'll lift this blue stone.
From the fine sand – rich earth,
– ice cold water, green grasses.
From the blue stone – a blue sky,
a celestial sky, a brilliant sun,
Brilliant sun, luminous moon,
Luminous moon, and all the little stars.

MANY MOONS AGO

The Moon is more than just a big, bright rock in the sky. Its position and movements have shaped human history. If we imagine the sky as a stage, the Sun, Moon and stars are dancers performing precise celestial turns and spins. Long before we had tools to measure time, people looked to these objects to understand the world.

Our ancestors watched the Moon's changing face to track how long each phase lasted and how it moved from new moon to full moon and back again. Each rising and setting of the Sun marked a day, while each moon cycle grouped those days into months.

The Moon offered light in darkness, hope, and the comforting rhythm of its cycle. This helped people plan vital tasks for survival, such as planting and harvesting.

Let's journey to the Moon to discover how our luminous neighbour came to be, what it's made of and the secrets behind its many faces.

ONE MOON, TWELVE MONTHS

For thousands of years the Moon gave early humans a sense of control over nature. Before clocks and calendars, the regularity of the moon cycles allowed us to track time based on the 28 days of the lunar month. In some cultures, the Moon was believed to be more important than the Sun because it offered light in the darkness of night, long before electricity. Humans have always looked to the changing face of the Moon as a symbol of new beginnings.

Moon Time

In English and other languages, there is a clear link between the words for 'moon' and 'month'. This is because it takes about a month for the Moon to complete a full orbit around the Earth. 'Moon' is also related to the words for 'measure', 'metric', 'matrix' and even 'meal'.

In ancient Egypt, the Moon myth was embodied by the timekeeping gods Khonsu and Thoth, who played an ancient game called senet to decide who would guide its journey across the sky each month.

Patterns in the Sky

The first observatories were temples, where early astronomers watched the Moon, stars and planets. They looked for patterns, such as how the Moon changed shape or when certain stars appeared in the sky. By studying these patterns, they could predict special events or phenomena, like when an unusual full moon or bright planet appeared. Over time, their careful observations helped them understand how cycles in the sky repeated.

The ancient Sanskrit word for 'moon' is chandra, meaning 'shining'. Chandra represents the bright, lifegiving nature of the cosmos and embodies the moon god in Hindu and Buddhist traditions.