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The Death of Phaethon

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The Death of Phaethon

How does a god mourn: with fire, with falling
Leaves from the limbs of his daughters, all bark
Golden and ridden in lymph or amber
Which flows into the seas burned by his son.
The four horses scattered, chariot torn
To and fro. Clymene laved her breasts in the
Waters of the ocean by her son's grave.
Phoebus could not keep Jupiter from his
Striking, his bolts of fury, that would kill
Phoebus's son. The grieving of a god
Is silence, the sun not burning the earth
For one day, men lighting feeble fires,
None to rival the jeweled flames of heaven.
One tear for innocence, one for false pride

One tear for innocence, one for false pride,
His strength too human, and too hot his pride.
Torn from the skies, fearing the sting of the
Scorpion, the claws of the crab, he dropped
The reigns, let the horses take him away,
As so many of us have done, allowed
Life to lead us down limitless caverns
Of sorrow and joy. Many have been burned
As the sun grazing the earth, turning it
To desert. We dare not speak how or who
It was that scorched our skin, made us doubt. We
Know only what we tell ourselves, the lie
That grief has a limit, emotion a
Flat bottom, a shell's surface to be sought.

Sarah Bishop, '06