



PHAETHON

One day, young Phaethon, son of the sun god Helios came home very upset and complained to his mother: “No one believes my father is a god. They all laugh at me and tell me I’m making it all up!”

“But your father is a god. Look up. The sun, rising from the horizon every morning and climbing the sky, that is your father. He’s looking at you from up there, watching you grow, learning new things and playing with your friends,” explained his mother softly.

“Let me go see him. I want to meet my father,” insisted Phaethon.

His mother finally agreed and showed him the way. “You have to keep going east until you reach a high rock. Then you take a winding path to the top of a mountain. There you will find the Palace of the Sun and inside your father Helios.”

Phaethon quickly packed his things, shut the door behind him and departed on his long journey east. When he arrived at the rock, he could already see the shining palace from afar. Golden flames from its walls were blazing all the way up to the sky.

Phaethon entered the palace gate and covered his eyes. The glaring golden light flooding the courtyard shone so bright, he thought it would blind him. Gods

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were passing by everywhere he looked and nymphs were playing divine melodies on their harps. When he entered the main hall, he saw the god Helios sitting on a throne in front of him.

“Welcome, dear son. To what do I owe this pleasant surprise?” said his father and embraced him.

The boy started explaining: “Everyone laughs at me. They say that I lie and that I am not your son at all. Please, do something to prove to them that you really are my father!”

Helios approached Phaethon, caressed his hair and told him: “You are my son. You can ask me for anything and your wish will come true.”

Phaethon clapped and rejoiced. He didn’t think long before saying: “You rise to the sky every morning in your sun chariot pulled by your golden horses. I want to ride the chariot once all the way from dawn to dusk. When they see me in the sky, everyone will finally believe I am your son.”

“You can choose anything you want my son, but that chariot is way too dangerous for you. I always have my hands full steering the horses as they climb sharply to the sky in the morning. And at noon, when the chariot is the highest, even I get dizzy from the height,” discouraged him Helios. But Phaethon insisted and his father couldn’t take his promise back anymore.

And so Helios walked his son to the chariot, rubbed magical ointment in his skin to protect him from the blaze and shared with him some last few words of advice: “Be careful not to fly too high or you could burn the sky itself away. But don’t fly too low either, or you will leave the ground scorched like a burning plain and the water in the seas and rivers will boil away.”

Phaethon nodded, but his mind was already up in the skies and he was picturing himself waving to his friends from above. He jumped into the shining chariot and fiercely took off.

At first, the horses trotted on their usual path and kept to their tracks. But soon they felt the inexperienced hand guiding their movement and deviated from the route. They galloped anywhere they wanted and young Phaethon lost all control over the sun chariot. The horses rose high to the stars and then sprinted all the

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way to the ground where they burned everything in their way. The earth twisted and writhed in the flames, cities burned to ash, fields lost all their crops and water disappeared from the rivers.

But the king of gods, Zeus himself, couldn't watch this mess anymore. He cast a lightning bolt at Phaethon and threw his lifeless body off the chariot and down to the burning ground.

Every night since then Helios wept for his son and tears fell from his cheeks.

To this day, you can still find them in the grass in the morning. People call them morning dew.