

Algol, the Demon of the Sky *(Algol, el demonio del cielo)*

Based on an Arab legend

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Mohamed was wandering through the desert under the blazing sun, collecting stones, watching the lizards and contemplating the colours of the sand, scrambling up and down the dunes. It was really hot and Mohamed was sweating. It was also rather late and his family was beginning to worry about him. But Mohamed loved to wander in the desert whenever he felt like it. He used

to get really bored doing the same things over and over again.

He walked and walked until he came to an oasis with a big pool and lots of palm trees. He decided to lie down close to the water and rest. Then Mohamed fell asleep and when he woke up it was already dark. The young boy contemplated the stars, which his



grandfather had told him about. Mohamed knew the sky well and could name many stars.

His favourite was Algol. This star seems to be alive because sometimes it is really bright and sometimes really faint. At that moment it was shining brightly in the sky and Mohamed imagined that

Algol was wandering through the sky just like he was wandering through the desert. He also thought that this star might not like doing the same things over and over again either.

He knew that people call this star the Demon. They are afraid of it because it varies in brightness, because it is different. But Mohamed did not feel afraid. His grandfather had told him that Algol, the Demon, was a young and impulsive star, just like Mohamed. Mohamed waved to Algol, got up and went home. He wanted to be with his family. When he reached home, his mother scolded him, kissed him and then gave him food and water. His grandfather hugged him and smiled saying: "Oh, my little Algol! My little demon!"



Variable Stars

There are stars in the sky that vary in brightness. There can be many reasons for this: processes taking place inside the star during its lifetime or around it. The latter is the case of Algol, an eclipsing binary star. In fact, Algol is a system of two stars that revolve around each other. When one star passes in front of the other, eclipsing it, the overall brightness of the system diminishes. This system has the particularity that the two stars exchange matter, a characteristic that makes this "demon" very interesting for astronomers.

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