

2007

# THE PROTECTRESS OF MARRIAGE (or, Get Your Own Business in Order Before You Tell Me How To Run Mine!)

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### Recommended Citation

Hanna, Jeff (2007) "THE PROTECTRESS OF MARRIAGE (or, Get Your Own Business in Order Before You Tell Me How To Run Mine!)," *The Messenger*: Vol. 2007 : Iss. 1 , Article 52.

Available at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol2007/iss1/52>

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With Emily Post's one-year time limit breathing down my neck, I just picked up the eighth and final wedding present I'm on the hook for. (When are those online registries going to let me sort by price? They get cherry-picked early.) With four weddings scheduled this past June, I found myself wondering why June is such a popular month for nuptials.

"Mom, yours was a June wedding. Why June?"

"Ah...I don't know, the weather?" was her reply.

You'd like to think so. But that would involve logical thinking, something that rarely peeks its head into the realm of today's wedding. The actual reason is that Juno, wife of Jupiter, is the protectress of marriage. Getting married during her month is, folklorically speaking, a petition for her to bless and protect your marriage.

Wait a second, Juno is the protectress of marriage? That's as logical as picking Mickey Mantle as your AA sponsor. Hers wasn't what I would call an ideal marriage, starting with her selection of a partner: Jupiter. Although he was a good score as a deity, sitting in the number one seat, he was also her *brother*. And, while we're on the topic of incest, their parents were also brother and sister, and Jupiter got it on with another sibling, Ceres, producing their lovely daughter/niece Persephone.

In his defense, Jupiter had a rough adolescence. After his father tried to kill him, his mother shipped him off to Crete where he was raised suckling a divine goat. Get over it - there were never enough Debbie Gibson tickets to go around when I was a kid either.

Juno made Doug Christie's jealous, hand-jiving wife look like June Cleaver. When Jupiter knocked up Alcmena—deceiving her by first morphing into her husband—an extramarital coupling that produced Hercules, Juno sent over a couple of serpents to his crib as a baby shower gift. Not exactly the nurturing bosom of motherhood.

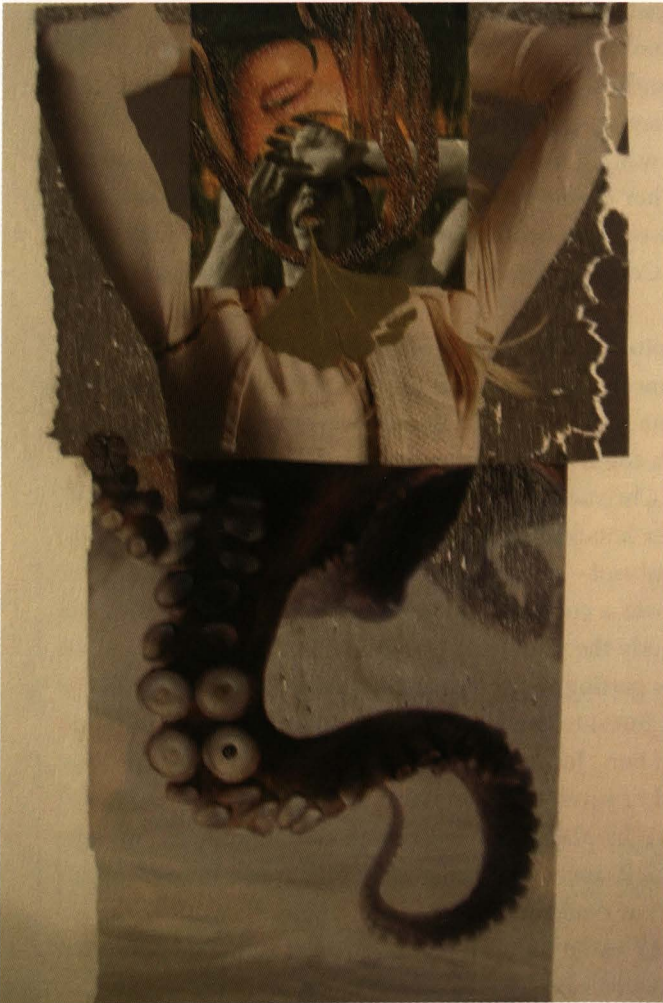
When Jupiter was getting it on with Stimula, she requested (courtesy of a spell cast by Juno) to see him in all his splendor, a sight so powerful that it killed her. Jupiter then protected their illegitimate son, Bacchus (the god of revelry and arguably a much more logical figurehead for weddings), by placing Bacchus in his side. I've heard of guys covering up lipstick smears and suggestive text messages, but a child in your side? What could he have said? "I'd better lay off that ambrosia—damn gout!" or "It's a cyst, I'll have to get it looked at."

I'm not saying he wasn't entitled to a little crazy sex. He was the god of gods. Paris Hilton is a lowly celebutante and she gets hers. But

Jupiter got really creative. He turned himself into a swan and produced twins via a laid egg with Leda. He got Danae's attention by appearing as a shower of gold—insert your own joke there. He seduced and impregnated the virgin nymph (any words derived from that?) Callisto by morphing into Diana, *goddess* of the hunt. OK, can't mark him down for that, that was inspired infidelity. Hey folks, they don't call him the god of gods for nothing.

Since Juno could do little to Jupiter, her scorn and enmity were focused on the women and children of his trysts. He kept her busy. They had four children together (one of whom, Mars, they both hated), and, by my count, Jupiter sired 45 other children. Take that, Shawn Kemp and Osama.

To protect Io from Juno, Jupiter turned her into a heifer, which Juno requested as a gift. She set Argus—he of the hundred eyes—to “protect” her. Jupiter sent Mercury



to kill Argus, after which Juno sent a gadfly plague on Io, driving her mad. That's just petty.

The next time you order beef at a June wedding, think twice. That just might be one of Jupiter's mistresses you're biting into. Or that salt shaker? Might be one of his bastard kids. And, if you're thinking of getting married, maybe Juno isn't the goddess you want blessing your marriage, what with all the rampant infidelity, incest, bestiality, and pederasty. Oh yeah, did I forget that one? Ole Jupes kidnapped and abducted a young prince as well. But I'll let Dateline NBC's Chris Hanson tell you that story.

—Jeff Hanna