

[music]

**[00:00:24] Jordan:** Hi, I'm Jordan-

**[00:00:25] Kit:** -and I'm Kit.

**[00:00:26] Jordan:** Welcome to *Starry Time*, where stars plus lines-

**[00:00:30] Kit:** -equal stories.

**[00:00:32] Jordan:** Today we're going to be continuing our exploration of the constellation Cepheus with a focus on the history and myths of this constellation.

**[00:00:42] Kit:** The constellation Cepheus represents the king of Aethiopia and husband of Cassiopeia, making this constellation a very Greco-Roman invention.

**[00:00:52] Jordan:** Unsurprisingly, other ancient cultures attributed the stars that the IAU classifies as Cepheus to much different constellations and myths. For example, in traditional Chinese astronomy, these stars were part of the Purple Forbidden Enclosure as well as the Black Tortoise of the North.

**[00:01:13] Kit:** Yes, I recently read a book titled *An Autobiography of the Milky Way* by Dr. Moiya McTier. It's awesome. I very, very strongly recommend it. In that book, I actually learned a little bit more about how traditional Chinese astronomy divided the sky. I learned that the Purple Forbidden Enclosure is one of three regions in the northern sky, while the Black Tortoise of the north is one of the four areas describing the area around the ecliptic.

**[00:01:42] Jordan:** These areas, they had other asterisms and constellations within them, correct?

**[00:01:48] Kit:** Yes, exactly. With the example of Cepheus, the stars in Cepheus that are in this constellation, the boundaries drawn by the IAU, they span multiple areas of traditional Chinese astronomy. They weren't aligned with any of the constellations or the asterisms that existed in Chinese astronomy.

**[00:02:07] Jordan:** In other words, Cepheus, as the IAU defines it, is pretty radically different and doesn't really fit in neatly or line up with one constellation or asterism from Chinese astronomy particularly well.

**[00:02:21] Kit:** Yes, and it's sort of the same story when we look to ancient Babylonian star lore. Ancient Babylonian star lore, Cephas, and Cygnus, which was the swan parts of it were combined to create the consolation the panther.

**[00:02:39] Jordan:** I really got to give credit to the ancient Babylonians of Panther constellation.

**[00:02:45] Kit:** Well, it's interesting though because in this case, apparently, a

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panther was a storm demon.

**[00:02:51] Jordan:** Obviously.

**[00:02:52] Kit:** A storm demon appears to be some kind of griffin type of creature with the like, head of a lion or a leopard. I'm not sure why not a panther.

**[00:03:04] Jordan:** Too easy. Too easy.

**[00:03:06] Kit:** Too obvious. Then the back feet and wings or tails of an eagle. In Gavin White's *Babylonian Star-lore* book, which I definitely talk about a lot White argues that this particular storm demon, the Panther constellation, was a creature of the underworld God Nergal or Norgal, I'm not sure. This panther constellation, or the storm demon was a symbol of death and destruction.

**[00:03:34] Jordan:** Oh.

**[00:03:35] Kit:** White makes this argument that this constellation is also really close to the Milky Way, and there's this sort of connection between the Milky Way in ancient Babylonian star lore and the entrance to the underworld and the movement of souls. It might be possible that this panther storm demon was sort of a precursor to our favorite three-headed dog that we were just talking about.

**[00:04:00] Jordan:** Cerberus.

**[00:04:01] Kit:** Yes.

**[00:04:02] Jordan:** Jordan: I do like the idea of this panther being a protector of the portal to the underworld. Overall though, it seems like Cepheus is, as you said, only tangentially connected to this Chinese star lore or the Babylonian star lore. Let's backtrack a little bit into the story of Cepheus, who, as we remember from our last Myths and Retcon episode, is the husband of Cassiopeia, and the father of Andromeda, who will be the topic of next month's Constellation.

**[00:04:36] Kit:** The too long didn't read Listen to our Cassiopeia Myths and Retcon is basically that Cassiopeia was a queen, she was vain, she bragged about how pretty she was, Then she and her entire family and/or city were punished by Poseidon for daring to be proud of her looks. I guess that's the sort of long story short. I guess that sort of begs this question of like, do we have anything more to say about Cepheus?

**[00:05:10] Jordan:** Cepheus, I've heard him referred to as the sellout. Yes, there's not a lot about his character description and his role in this story other than he sold out his wife and his daughter. Everything that I've read about him seems to depict him as a fool. That's pretty much the long and short of it. I don't think we have a ton to offer there. We have a lot more to say when we get into Andromeda the daughter next month. As for Cepheus, the fact that he's foolish and cowardly and a sell-out and betrays his family, there isn't much there.

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**[00:05:52] Kit:** Yes, I do kind of like the idea that he just like doesn't have main character energy. He just doesn't have it. He's just long for the story for no real reason. It definitely makes it a little hard to do a podcast about the myth.

**[00:06:09] Jordan:** Well, I will say that Cepheus's lack of main character energy does feature and function in my ret-constellation when we get to that segment.

**[00:06:19] Kit:** Oh, great.

**[00:06:21] Jordan:** Yes, I've taken that into account, surely. Being the expert podcasters and problem solvers we are, we have found something interesting to talk about this week. It's adjacent to Cepheus at the very least, which is that Cepheus, king of Aethiopia is said to be a descendant of Zeus and Io.

**[00:06:41] Kit:** Which functions and segues perfectly into, oh gosh, breaking down that disturbing myth. The myth of Zeus and Io, do you want to break it down for us?

**[00:06:53] Jordan:** Listeners, you may be familiar with this story as it is a classic Zeus being Zeus, Hera being Hera kind of myth.

**[00:07:03] Kit:** Kit: Our favorite kind of myth.

**[00:07:06] Jordan:** Definitely, it's a genre with many chapters in Greek mythology for sure. In this myth, we have the beautiful princess Io of Argos, who is perhaps a nymph of some kind. We know that she is the first priestess of Hera's temple. Because Zeus is Zeus, he takes an interest in Io. Of course, Hera is onto their little tryst, able to catch on pretty easily, and attempts to catch him in the act. Shocker, I know. Somehow Zeus knows that Hera is en route. It's good to be the king of the gods. You just have access to this information.

**[00:07:50] Kit:** Sure.

**[00:07:51] Jordan:** While Hera is on the way to catch him, he comes up with the great idea to turn his lover Io into a white heifer. However, Hera is not fooled. Hera says to Zeus, "What a beautiful heifer. This is just the best heifer I ever laid my eyes on. I would really appreciate it. I would love it. It would mean the world to me if I could have this heifer." What can Zeus say, of course, but, "Surely, Hera."

**[00:08:27] Kit:** He could say no.

**[00:08:28] Jordan:** Well, but he doesn't. Hera takes cow Io, heifer Io, and puts her under the guard of a hundred-eyed giant, so no matter what, Zeus can't visit her, and Io will be trapped within this gaze of a giant and unable to escape.

**[00:08:48] Kit:** This is a much stronger showing from Hera than the crab.

**[00:08:52] Jordan:** She's ready to develop some real multi-level plans here. Zeus though, I guess he feels bad or he just really, really has a thing for Io. He sends

Hermes, who is the messenger God of course, to free Io.

**[00:09:09] Kit:** If I was Hermes, I would be like, "Zeus, I don't really want to get in between this thing with you and your wife. Have you met your wife? No, thank you."

**[00:09:21] Jordan:** Well, Hermes is a great, respectful kid, and when Zeus tells him to do something, he does it. He goes to lull the giant to sleep and then kills him. Hasta la vista, Argos. I always set free. Although, yes, she is still a heifer and she goes galloping off. Again, Hera won't be thwarted in punishing Io. This is not just a message to this princess or this mortal. This punishment is a message to Zeus. She sends a gadfly to follow Iova around, even after she's escaped. This gadfly will sting her repeatedly over and over and over so that she may never be able to rest.

**[00:10:12] Kit:** This is a truly devious plan, and I just wish that Hera could use her powers to punish Zeus.

**[00:10:20] Jordan:** Yes. If Hera was able to channel this rage and anger and plotting against Zeus. Ultimately, however, Io gets to Egypt and there Zeus is able to change her back into a human.

**[00:10:35] Kit:** It's not clear why he couldn't do it before. What's happening in Egypt? I don't know.

**[00:10:42] Jordan:** It's really unclear where Hera's powers end and why she couldn't tell once Io got to Egypt. However, when Io does turn back into a human, she gives birth to two of Zeus children who are Epaphus and Keroessa. How would you pronounce that?

**[00:11:04] Kit:** Keroessa.

**[00:11:06] Jordan:** So, yes, Io gives birth to Epaphus and Keroessa. Eventually, she does marry the king of Egypt and goes on to have lots and lots of kids. Aside from Cepheus, she's also said to be an ancestor of Hercules and Semele.

**[00:11:23] Kit:** Semele. Semele.

**[00:11:26] Jordan:** Yes, of course, Semele. Weirdly, she's also a distant relative of Perseus.

**[00:11:32] Kit:** Oh, who we'll talk about after or sometime after Andromeda. Yes, the family trees in Greek myth are a little yikesies.

**[00:11:41] Jordan:** Jordan: Very yikesies I'd say. That's the myth of Io and distantly generations later, of Cepheus.

**[00:11:51] Kit:** [sighs] It's a little exhausting to have these persistent myths of Hera punishing immortal for Zeus's behavior.

**[00:11:58] Jordan:** Definitely. It reinforces this idea that powerful people aren't held accountable for their actions. Of course that jealousy and vengeance are normal ways that the afflicted should deal with that betrayal.

**[00:12:11] Kit:** It's really not the best lesson. You really have to wonder about what function this type of story repeatedly over and over and over again had on relationships in the Greco-Roman world. Of course, marriage functioned really differently in the past. It wasn't really about romantic love. It also then just still makes it even stranger to me to have these myths because still this like jealous, not with my husband, you don't. Then also marriage isn't so much about romantic involvement, so it's like, makes it even more confusing.

**[00:12:47] Jordan:** There's another way of looking at it. Perhaps maybe it has less to do with their specific relationship as husband and wife, and maybe has more to do about distinguishing or making a barrier or creating a divide between the behavior of God versus the behavior of mortals. These stories just go to reinforce the point that gods can do whatever they want to morals.

**[00:13:12] Kit:** Mortals aren't worthy of the God's attention or that there's consequences from having the hubris to think that you're worthy of that kind of association. The other thing that was interesting in this myth is this idea of transformation and change. It's interesting in this story relative to other stories we talked about where instead of Zeus as animal, we actually see Io transformed into an animal instead.

**[00:13:40] Jordan:** We've seen Zeus become an eagle, we've seen Zeus become a bull, but in this case, he's the one doing the transforming of his lover rather than him adopting another form. We have to think that maybe these myths originally formed on some level to help understand the relationship between humans and animals.

**[00:14:02] Kit:** Yes, very often we see not in this case, of course, but in other transformation myths, especially in Greek myths, they're often used as a way to explain the origin of a flower or an animal or a natural phenomenon. That's another area where like, you could see that connection between people trying to understand where do these things come from. How do they come into the world?

**[00:14:25] Jordan:** There's another theme of this myth too, which we haven't seen as much over the course of this podcast, but it's this idea of travel and going to new cultures and visiting new places and the power that that can have. We have this arc of Io wandering and wandering and wandering after escaping the giant Argos before ultimately making it to Egypt. This myth could also be a way of introducing listeners of the oral stories to new and faraway land. It's a way to connect it with people who will never get to go to Egypt.

**[00:15:01] Kit:** Yes, right. This princess of Argos becomes a queen of Egypt.

**[00:15:04] Jordan:** Obviously this myth, like a lot of Zeus Hera myths could use a little bit of updating. Let's take a quick break and then let's get into our ret-

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constellations.

[music]

Welcome back to our segment called ret-constellation. In this segment we reimagine, reboot and revise the myths of our monthly constellation and hopes to modernize, subvert, or somehow deepen the story of this constellation. Or sometimes our job is to just take the myth and hopefully make it a little less cringey.

**[00:15:47] Kit:** This one has some real cringe. There's been a lot of cringe so far this season. Whether there is cringe, there is need for ret-constellations. Do you want to kick us off with your ret-con?

**[00:16:01] Jordan:** The two subjects together we have in this month's constellation, mainly, of course, it starts with Cepheus, and we're getting into his great, great, great, grandmother Io as well. Correct?

**[00:16:13] Kit:** Yes.

**[00:16:14] Jordan:** In my ret-constellation, Io and Cepheus are living together at the same time. Cepheus, as you said, doesn't have very main-character energy.

**[00:16:27] Kit:** True.

**[00:16:28] Jordan:** In my ret-constellation Io is maybe 90 or 100 and Cepheus is a young child. In my head, this might be sort of like a Carl and Russell situation from *Up*.

**[00:16:43] Kit:** Oh. [chuckles]

**[00:16:43] Jordan:** Or it could also be if Cepheus is a little older. I also imagined like a Lucille Bluth and Buster Bluth type of relationship-

**[00:16:53] Kit:** Oh, no.

**[00:16:54] Jordan:** -where Cepheus is kind of helpless, clueless. Given all the descriptions we have in the original myth, he's not much to write home about. I want to cast him as sort of like a duncy child role. The story I want to tell involves Io, and Cepheus, and Hera joining forces. I want Zeus to be of course, the one who puts the moves on Io. Io's like, not interested.

Cepheus spies, sees this whole interaction take place, makes a prayer or makes ah, an offering to Hera, and says, "Hey, hey, I think your husband's trying to cheat with my great grandma. I don't know what's going on here." Hera comes down, consults with Io and they decide of course, working together, Io and Hera, to come with a plan to entrap Zeus. There's lots of ways that can play out.

The main focus of my ret-constellation is Hera and Io teaming up, Zeus being

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punished, and Cepheus being the reason why Zeus is thrown in the dog house. That was my ret-constellation. Cepheus, again, doesn't have main character energy, but he can be in the right place in the right time. That's my ret-constellation of this myth trying to tie in Io, Cepheus, and all the above. How about yours? Where'd you go with this one?

**[00:18:39] Kit:** I stayed in Io land. This is another myth about Zeus and Hera just being the worst. I think when we talked about **[unintelligible 00:18:50]**, I kind of had Hera and Semele working together to give Zeus--

**[00:18:55] Jordan:** Excuse me. Excuse me. Did you say Semele?

**[00:18:57] Kit: Kit:** Yes, Semele. Hera and Semele teaming up to get after Zeus. I wanted to really push myself to think about what are some other ways we could ret-con this myth. I just completely ignored Cepheus, though, so props to you for getting him in there. I really wanted to transform this myth, like I said, into something else.

In my version of the myth, Zeus and Hera seek out couples counseling at long last to really decide whether this marriage is working for them. Their therapist is Dr. Io, and in my version of the myth, Dr. Io is a world-renowned couples therapist who is so famous, she doesn't even need a last name.

**[00:19:42] Jordan:** Kit, I'm already astounded by your creativity here. This is wonderful. Yes. Okay, so Dr. Io, one name basis. This is like Beyonce. This is like Madonna. This is like the Lebron of couples therapists.

**[00:19:57] Kit:** Exactly. They go in and Dr. Io is very straightforward, the ultimate professional, but just going to be honest with you. Dr. Io says, "This relationship is highly dysfunctional."

**[00:20:12] Jordan:** Extremely dysfunctional.

**[00:20:15] Kit:** Hera and Zeus were like, "All right, okay, we understand. We know. We really want to try to be better. We have a kingdom, a world to rule." Io Says, "Okay, Dr. Io--" excuse me, the title is important. Dr. Io gives them a test. She tells them it will be their responsibility to look after a cow together. It's sort of like the fake baby that you might have gotten in sex ed, but a cow. Why a cow? I don't know. The cows are cute. As you'll learn about in our creature corner, asterism. They're very smart and very smart.

**[00:20:55] Jordan:** They're basically humans.

**[00:20:57] Kit:** Yes. They're 80% human.

**[00:20:59] Jordan:** 80% human.

**[00:21:01] Kit:** If you want to understand what we're cackling about, you will have to listen to the asterism that's coming out later. It's a cow, and the cow is adorable. both

Hera and Zeus are like, "Oh, this cow is so cute." They're like, "We will love you. We will take care of you better than we've taken care of any of our children just to prove how good we are as a couple." Of course, this does not go to plan. One thing leads to another, something happens, and somehow the cow is killed. They're devastated, of course, and they're processing this loss with Dr. Io. They realize, "Oh my gosh, our relationship is truly so toxic that we have killed this beautiful creature."

They decide to at long last dissolve their union. Dr. Io is praised throughout the world for ending the terror that Hera has sort of inflicted on unsuspecting mortal women because of Zeus's behavior. Now Zeus is free to put himself out there, get on the dating apps. Hera can move on with her life, maybe have a partner that will be loyal to her. Then of course, the beloved Dr. Io goes on to have her own kids. One of them is Cepheus. That's how it's all connected.

**[00:22:31] Jordan:** The idea of Zeus and Hera going to counseling is truly radical. I think it represents a ret-constellation in the best possible way. I do like the way that you tied the heifer element back into it with the taking care of a cow. Am I surprised that somehow they killed the cow? No. Am I glad that this cow finally led them to break up and realize that this relationship isn't working? Yes. Would I rather have one cow sacrifice for all of humanity? Apparently. I like this ret-constellation a lot because Zeus and Hera don't ever talk about their problems.

They don't ever try to negotiate them. All they do is act heinously towards mortal the humans as proxy battles. Over and over and over again it's us humans who bear the responsibility for their misdeeds. In this story we have someone who's willing to reconcile and be a peacemaker and a doctor as well. In order to help these two immortal forces realize, "Hey, you both can do better, you're not getting what you want here." I think that person rightfully should be considered a hero as well. Yes, I'd give five stars out of five to Dr. Io.

**[00:24:06] Kit:** Oh, no, whatever system they used to rate your doctors, I don't know what they do. I'm sure it exists. I don't know what it is.

**[00:24:13] Jordan:** Yes, the gods have their own app.

**[00:24:15] Kit:** Now it's time for our segment AI Oracle, where we asked AI in this case ChatGPT to ret-con the myth that we're talking about.

**[00:24:25] Jordan:** Yes. We've had mixed experience so far this season with our Oracle. The first time we did it, it was a huge success. Both of us were like, wow, this is better than anything we came up with. However, last month we used the Oracle/ChatGPT to ret-constellate our myth and it was a chaotic mess. Guess what, Kit, spoilers for you. The human mind is still in business. Our ret-constellations are still valid because this month is another huge mess too.

**[00:24:59] Kit:** All right, great. Can't wait. What was the prompt that we gave the Oracle and do you want to give us the Oracle's response?



**[00:25:08] Jordan:** We asked the Oracle what the myth of Io and Zeus was, and then we asked it to write a one-paragraph retelling of this myth that would be more modern and less problematic. Here's what we get. Io, our main character is a talented and ambitious young woman who catches the attention of Zach, not Zeus, a successful and charming entrepreneur. Quickly they fall in love.

Faced with the dilemma due the disapproval of Zach/Zeus, overbearing possessive ex-partner who we'll call Heather, aka Hera, put it in the '80s, to protect the relationship from Heather/Hera's interference Zach/Zeus and Io decide to keep their love hidden, referring to each other by code names. Eventually, Heather/Hera gets suspicious and enlists a private investigator named Harry to keep tabs on Zach.

Determined to be together, Zach and Io devise a plan. With the help of their tech-savvy friend Max, they use advanced holographic technology to create disguises and avatars that allow them to move freely in public without arousing suspicion. Despite Heather/Hera's relentless pursuit, Zack/Zeus and Io manage show us smarter and find happiness together, building a life filled with love and also success.

**[00:26:33] Kit:** The Oracle.

**[00:26:34] Jordan:** So bad.

**[00:26:35] Kit:** So bad. You even like-- it doesn't have the slashes in there. That was just for clarity purposes. The Oracle also likes to offer an analysis of the myth without prompting. This was the Oracle's analysis for us, which was that in this modern retelling, the focus is on the power dynamics between individuals in a romantic relationship rather than the problematic elements of infidelity, jealousy, and vengeance. The story emphasizes the character's agency resilience and cleverness in navigating obstacles while maintaining a more positive and empowering tone.

**[00:27:14] Jordan:** Great analysis of a myth. It did not just tell-

**[00:27:19] Kit:** -of a myth that it did not create. Yes.

**[00:27:23] Jordan:** I feel like maybe that analysis might apply to one of our retellings. Given Zach, and Heather, and Io, I'm not sure.

**[00:27:34] Kit:** Why does it change Zach, Hera, but not Io?

**[00:27:40] Jordan:** Well, Io's just one of those names, you see, and saved by the bell. You see in *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, *Cheers*, any popular sitcom has this Io character, right?

**[00:27:52] Kit:** Yes.

**[00:27:52] Jordan:** Well, I'll say this, ChatGPT, you did some things that we didn't do. You updated the names of the characters-- some of them.

[00:28:01] **Kit:** Some of them.

[00:28:03] **Jordan:** You used holographic technology to create disguises and avatars, which we did not bring into the picture.

[00:28:11] **Kit:** No.

[00:28:12] **Jordan:** No, I wouldn't say that you focus on the power dynamics between individuals in a romantic relationship rather than problematic elements of infidelity, jealousy, and vengeance, but that is a great goal, ChatGPT. I'm glad that's something you were striving for. When we create our ret-constellations, we don't always succeed. This time, Kit, I do like ours better.

[00:28:38] **Kit:** Yes, I also, I'm noticing a trend that when we ask of the AI Oracle to make something modern, it's just like tech-savvy, Internet. Honestly, I'm excited to see what it comes up with next time.

[00:28:55] **Jordan:** Kit, that brings us to the end of our episode this week. Please join us next week for the pop culture of our segment Cepheus.

[00:29:06] **Kit:** This has been Kit-

[00:29:08] **Jordan:** -and Jordan.

[00:29:09] **Kit:** Sisters, lovers of stars and stories.

[00:29:11] **Jordan:** We'll see you next time-

[00:29:14] **Kit:** On *Starry Time*.

[END OF AUDIO]