

Excerpt from:

[Stargazing for Beginners: How to Find Your Way Around the Night Sky](#)

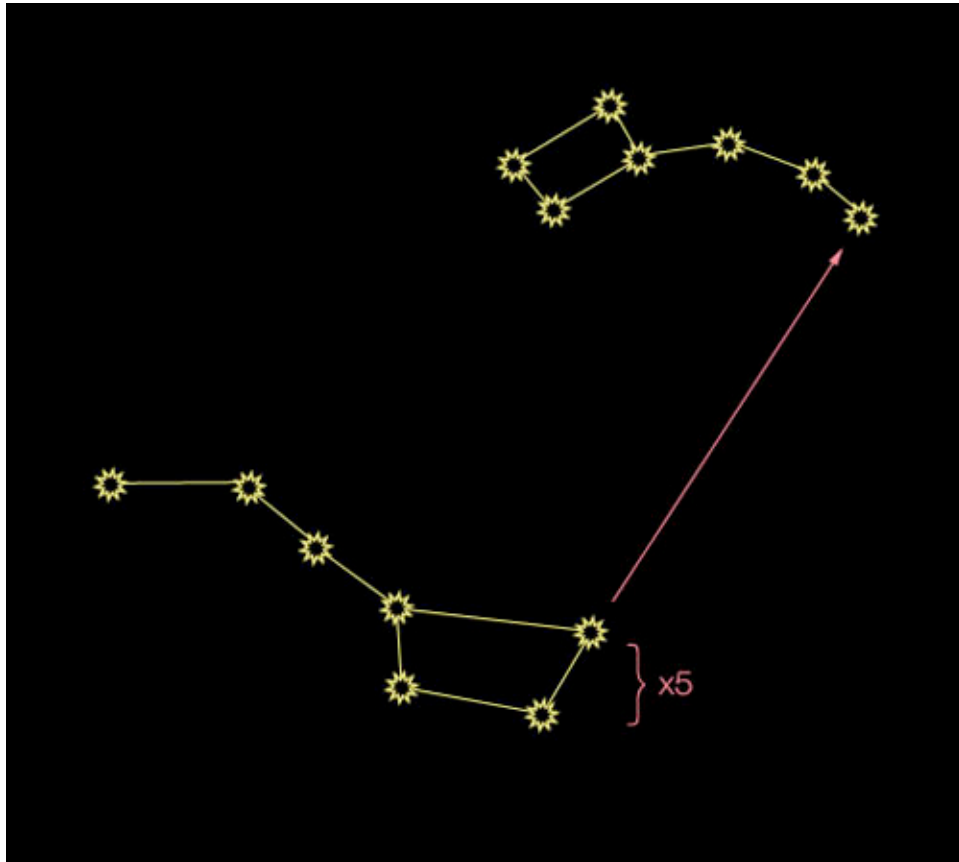
by Lafcadio Adams

Step-by-step instructions and diagrams for finding constellations in the night sky. The following pages represent a sample, and are not found consecutively in the complete work.

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## The Little Dipper and the North Star

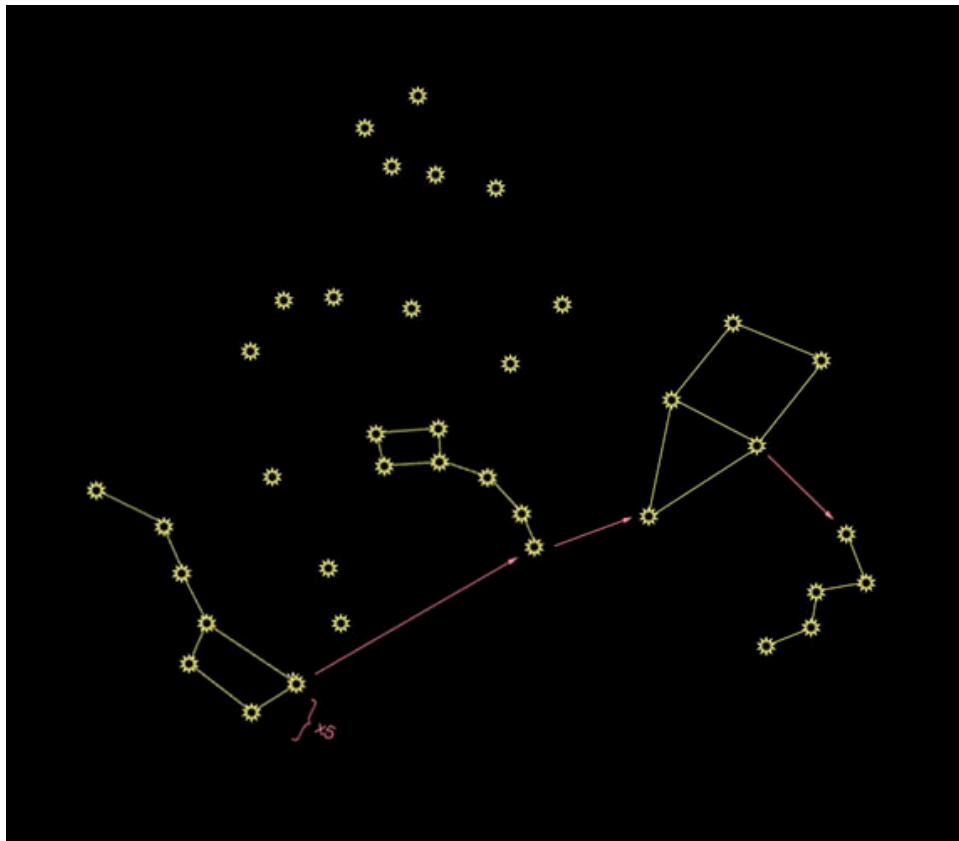
The two stars on the front end of the frying pan part of the Big Dipper are called “pointer stars.” They point to the North Star, or Polaris. If you take the distance between those stars and extend the line out 5 times that distance, you'll arrive at the North Star.



The North Star is at the tip of the handle of the Little Dipper, or Ursa Minor. The North Star is bright, as are the two stars at the end of the pan of the Little Dipper. The rest are tricky to see unless it's really dark. With bright city lights around, you may only be able to see Polaris and the two stars at the end of the Little Dipper.

## Cassiopeia, the Queen

There are two stars marking where Cepheus's crown meets his face. Cepheus always looks away from the little dipper and toward his wife, Queen Cassiopeia, so the star farther away from the Little Dipper is his eye. Follow Cepheus's gaze to Queen Cassiopeia. She looks like an "M" or a "W" in the sky. The shape represents her royal throne, in which she sits admiring herself all day.



## Canis Major, the Big Dog

Follow Orion's belt down to the left. You'll come to a bright star, Sirius (SEE-ree-us; it's a seriously bright star). It's so bright, in fact, that it's the brightest star you can see from Earth, other than our sun. That makes it the brightest star you can see from Earth *at night*. Sirius is the diamond on the collar of the big dog. It is sometimes called the "dog star."

