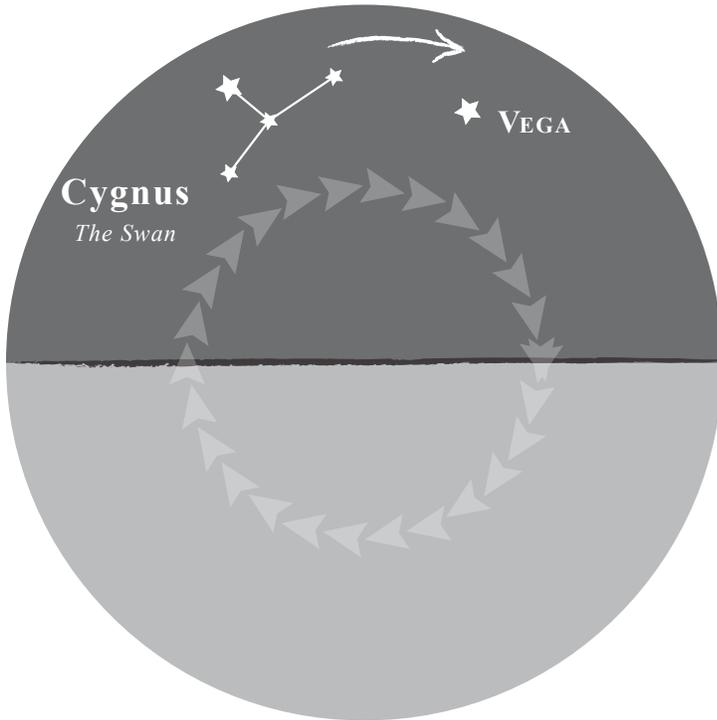


Cygnus Happens Upon a Battle

Orion and the Big Dipper are not the only constellations with stories to tell.

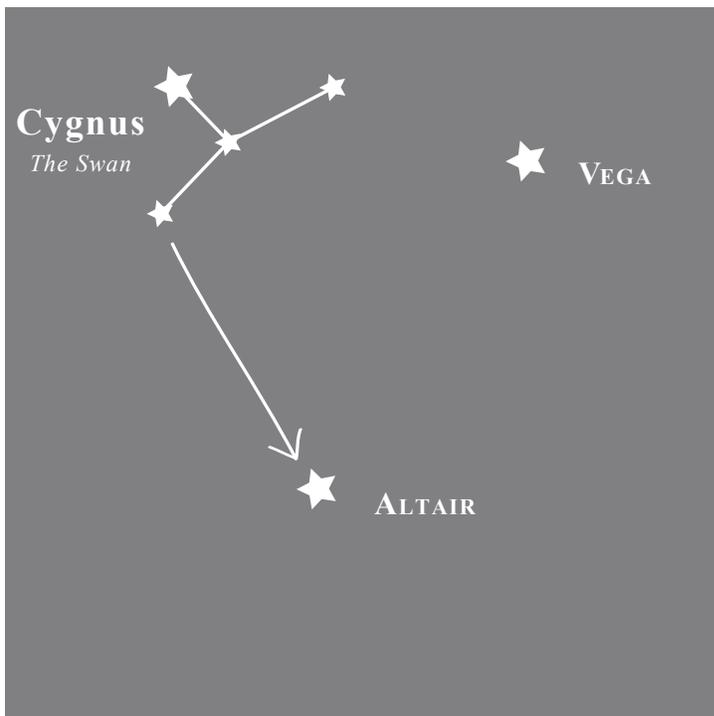
Cygnus *The Swan* points us to an action-packed scene. Cygnus is inadvertently flying toward a battle raging between the Scorpion and the Archer.

Scorpio *The Scorpion* has turned his stinger toward the Sagittarius *The Archer*, who in turn raises his bow at him. An eagle flees the mayhem, flying up to warn Cygnus of the danger. Meanwhile, the hapless Swan flies along peacefully, following the music of Lyra *The Lyre*.

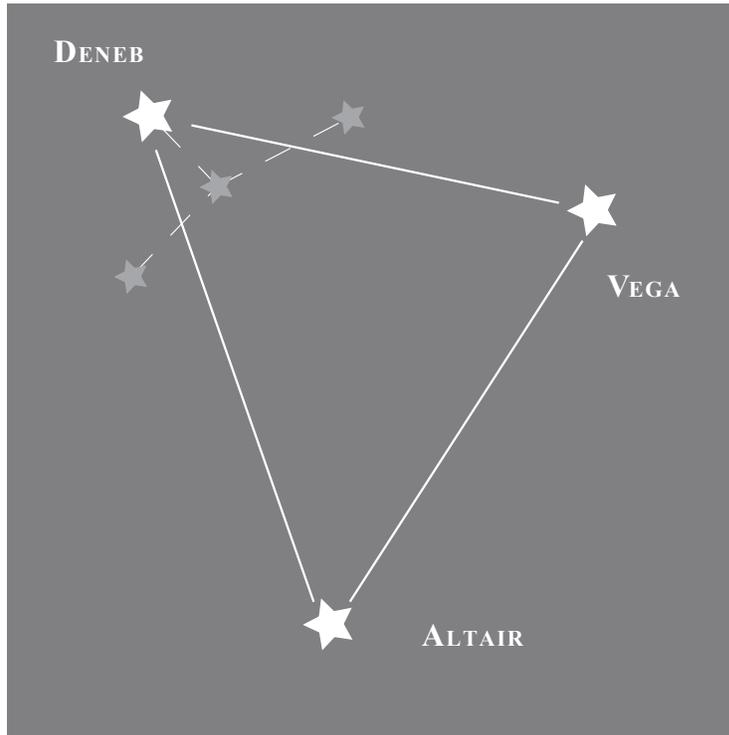


Before we continue our story, let's take a look at the bright stars near the Swan.

Cygnus moves sideways across the sky as though being blown by a strong wind. The bright star Vega leads the Swan in its travels.

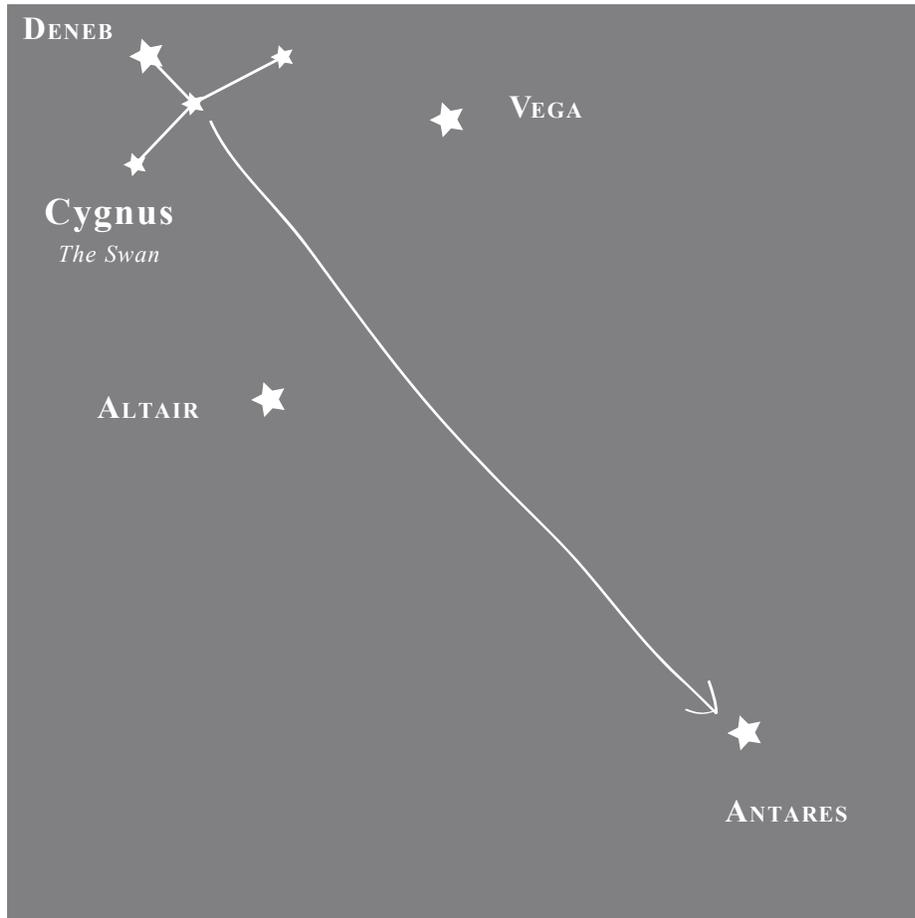


Another bright star, Altair, is forward of the Swan's other wing.



These three stars, Vega, Altair, and Deneb create the famed asterism the Summer Triangle. It may actually be easier to pick out the whole triangle than to find just the swan since Vega and Altair are much brighter than the Swan's body and wings.

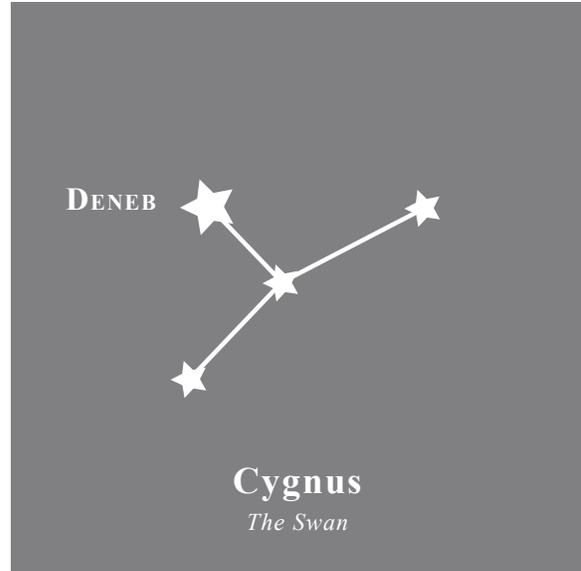
The Swan is poised to fly right between Vega and Altair. Vega is on its leading wing, and Altair is on the trailing as Cygnus moves sideways through the night.



If you look farther across the sky, you can see that the Swan is aimed directly at another bright star, Antares.

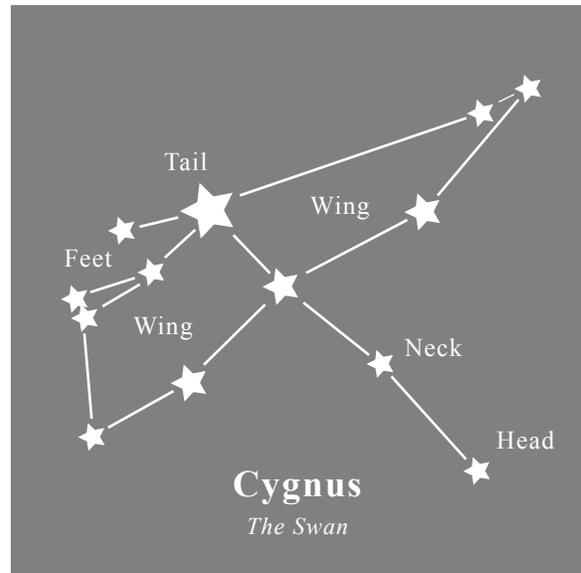
These four bright stars (Vega, Altair, Deneb and Antares) set the stage for the Swan's story.

Cygnus is most easily recognized as simply a T-shape. Its brightest star is Deneb, which means “tail of the hen.”

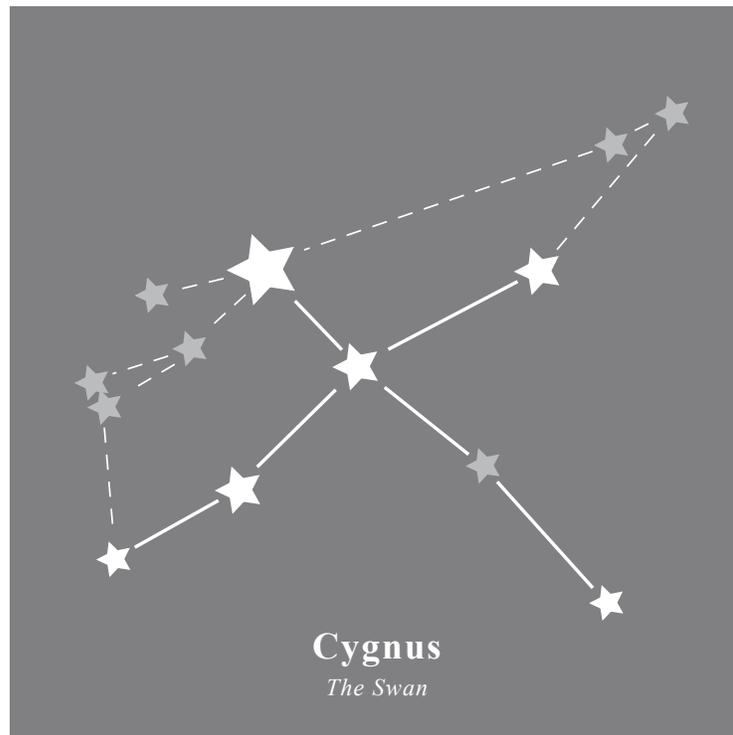


Tail of the Hen

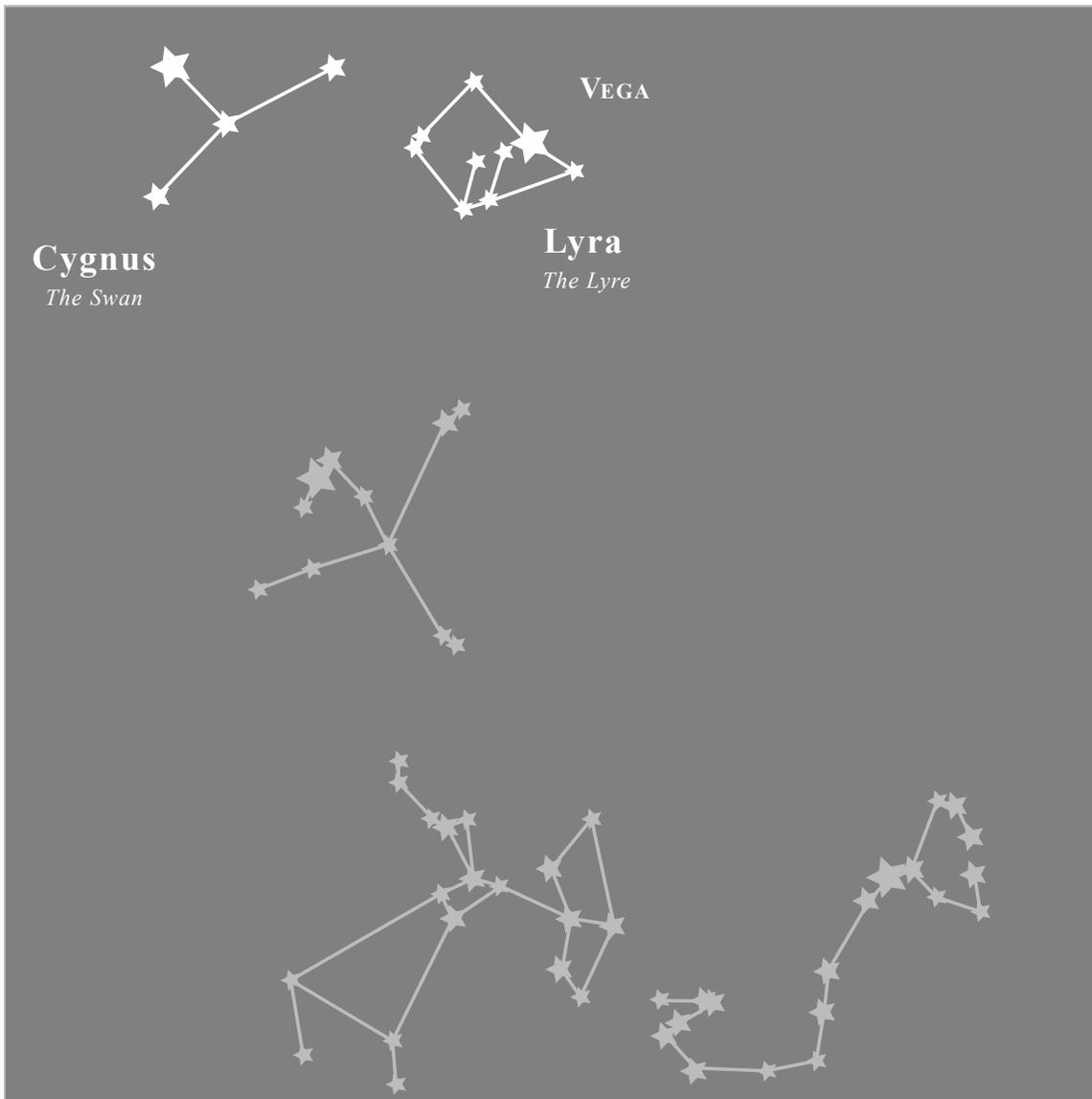
When skies are dark and clear, Cygnus forms a complete bird with long, outstretched neck, wide wings and trailing feet.



The Whole Bird



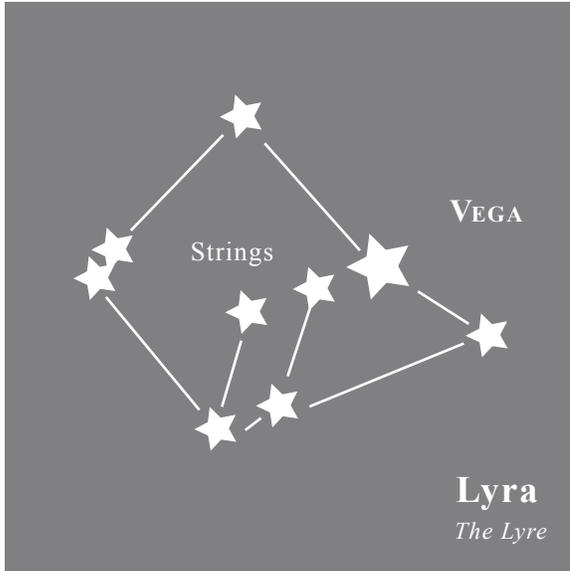
The four main stars of Cygnus that form the T-shape are bright enough to see any time stars are out. The stars marking the Swan's head and one wingtip are next brightest, so look for these next. The rest of the Swan is only visible on a darker sort of night.



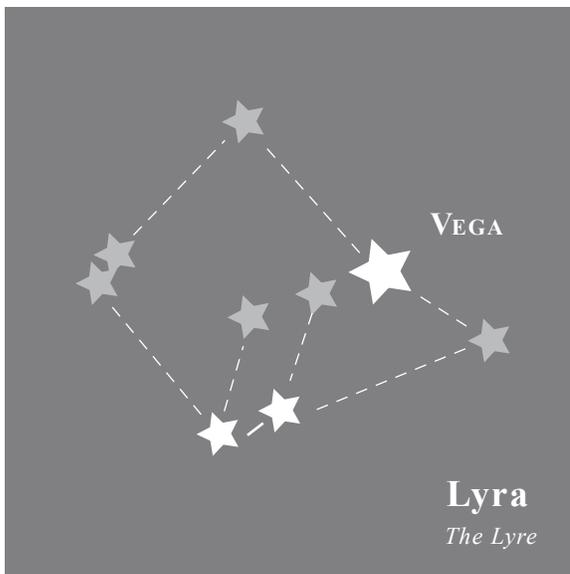
1. Sirius
2. Arcturus
3. Vega
4. Capella
5. Rigel
6. Procyon
7. Betelgeuse
8. Altair
9. Aldebaran
10. Antares
11. Spica
12. Pollux
13. Fomalhaut
14. Deneb
15. Regulus

Lyra *The Lyre* appears just forward of one of the Swan's wings. Even though the Swan is pointed south, he actually moves in the direction of the Lyre.

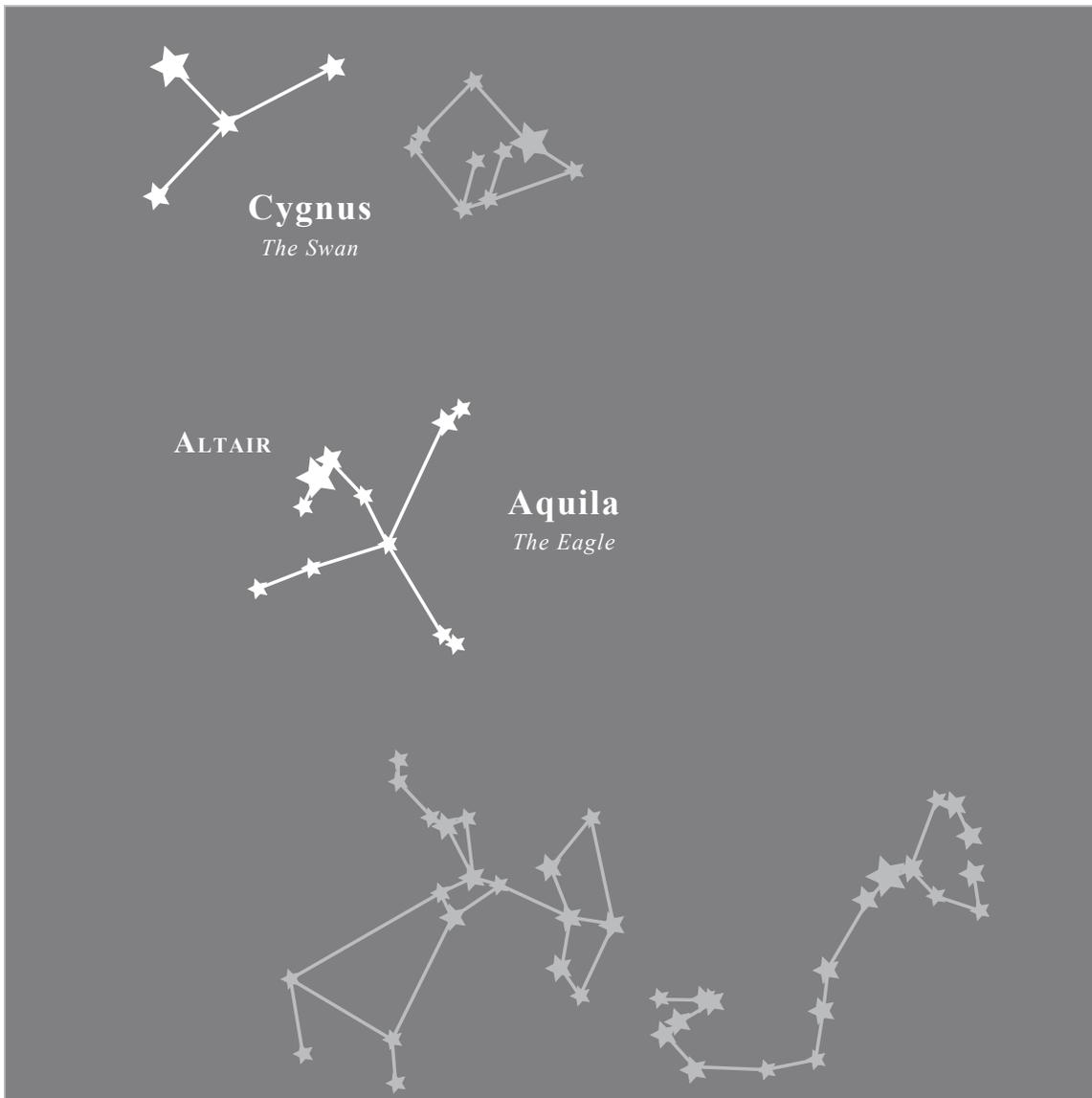
You can imagine that the sweet music of the Lyre mesmerizes the bird and beckons it to follow.



Lyra is a compact constellation made up of nine stars. There is not much to see in this group, a squarish frame with two strings. It would be unremarkable except that it is home to our third-brightest star, Vega.



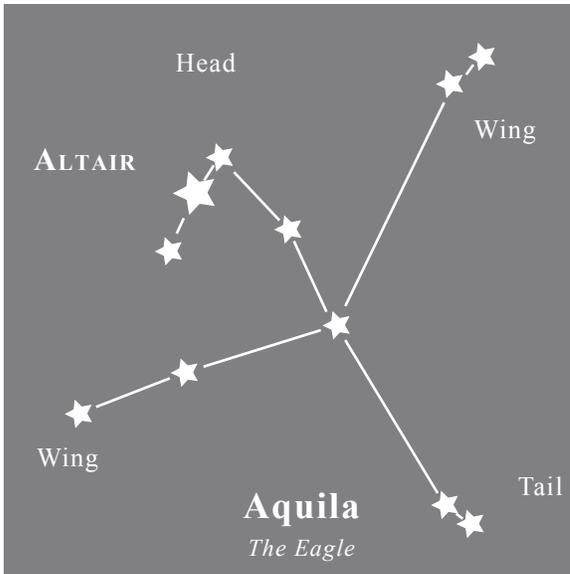
You won't usually notice any stars of the Lyre except the very bright Vega. The two stars at the base of the strings may be visible, but the rest drop off to 4th magnitude so they require excellent viewing conditions.



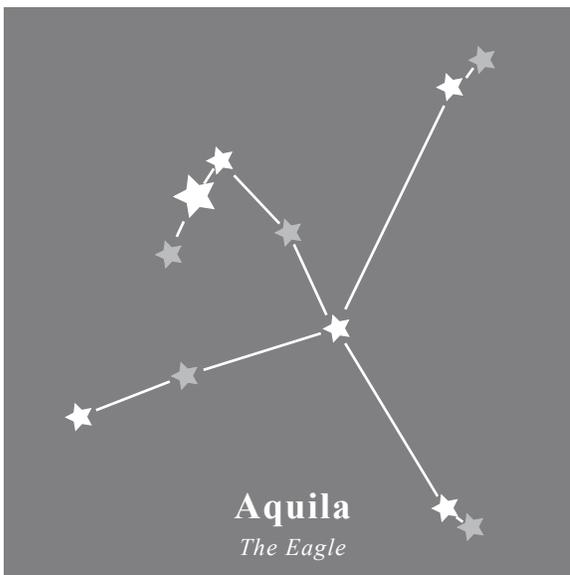
1. Sirius
2. Arcturus
3. Vega
4. Capella
5. Rigel
6. Procyon
7. Betelgeuse
8. Altair
9. Aldebaran
10. Antares
11. Spica
12. Pollux
13. Fomalhaut
14. Deneb
15. Regulus

Aquila (AK-weh-lah) *The Eagle* is in front of the Swan's other wing. The Eagle is flying directly toward Cygnus. Aquila has its brightest star in its head instead of its tail.

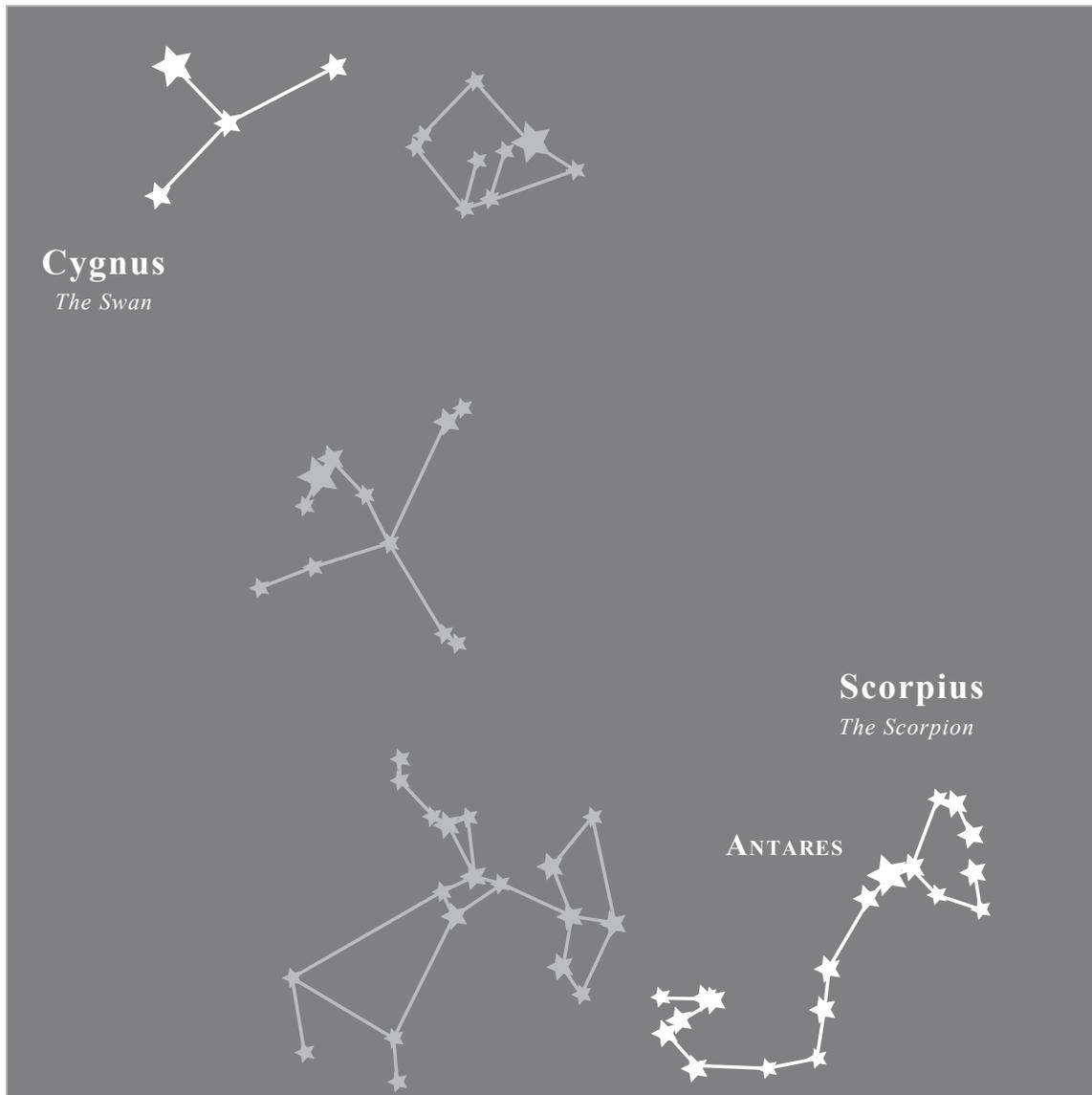
Aquila is flying away from where Cygnus is heading. He seeks to warn the peaceful Swan that it is flying straight toward a raging battle.



Aquila *The Eagle* has outstretched wings similar to the swan. But this bird remains a stick figure even in a dark sky. You can imagine that the bright star Altair marks the bird's eye.



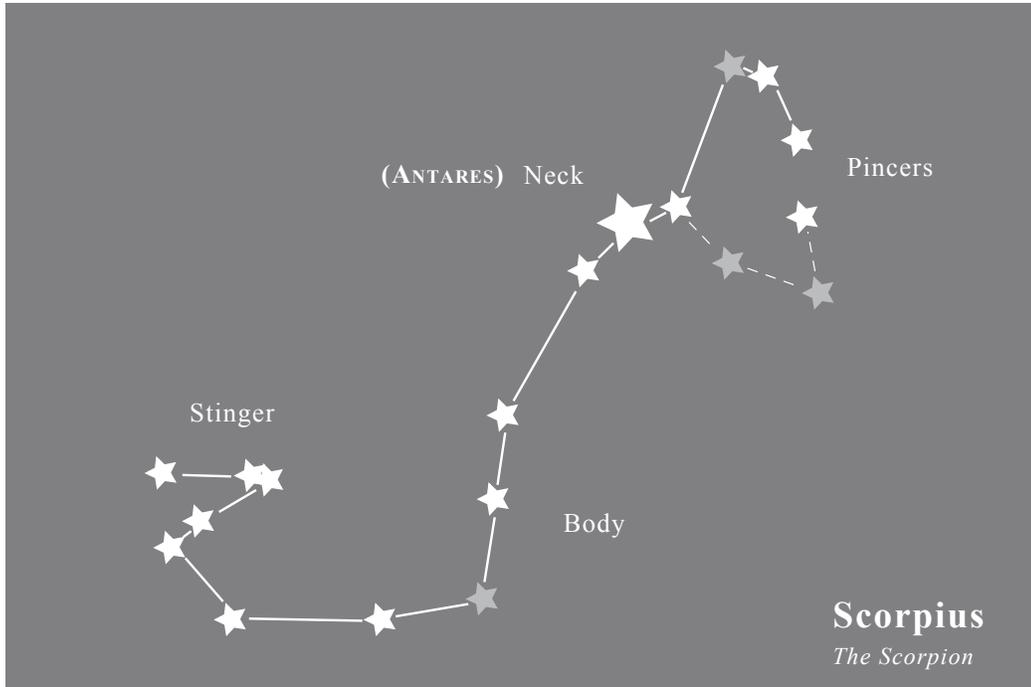
The Eagle is a fun constellation to find even when conditions are not great. Besides number eight Altair in the head, bright stars mark the body, wings, and tail of the bird.



1. Sirius
2. Arcturus
3. Vega
4. Capella
5. Rigel
6. Procyon
7. Betelgeuse
8. Altair
9. Aldebaran
10. Antares
11. Spica
12. Pollux
13. Fomalhaut
14. Deneb
15. Regulus

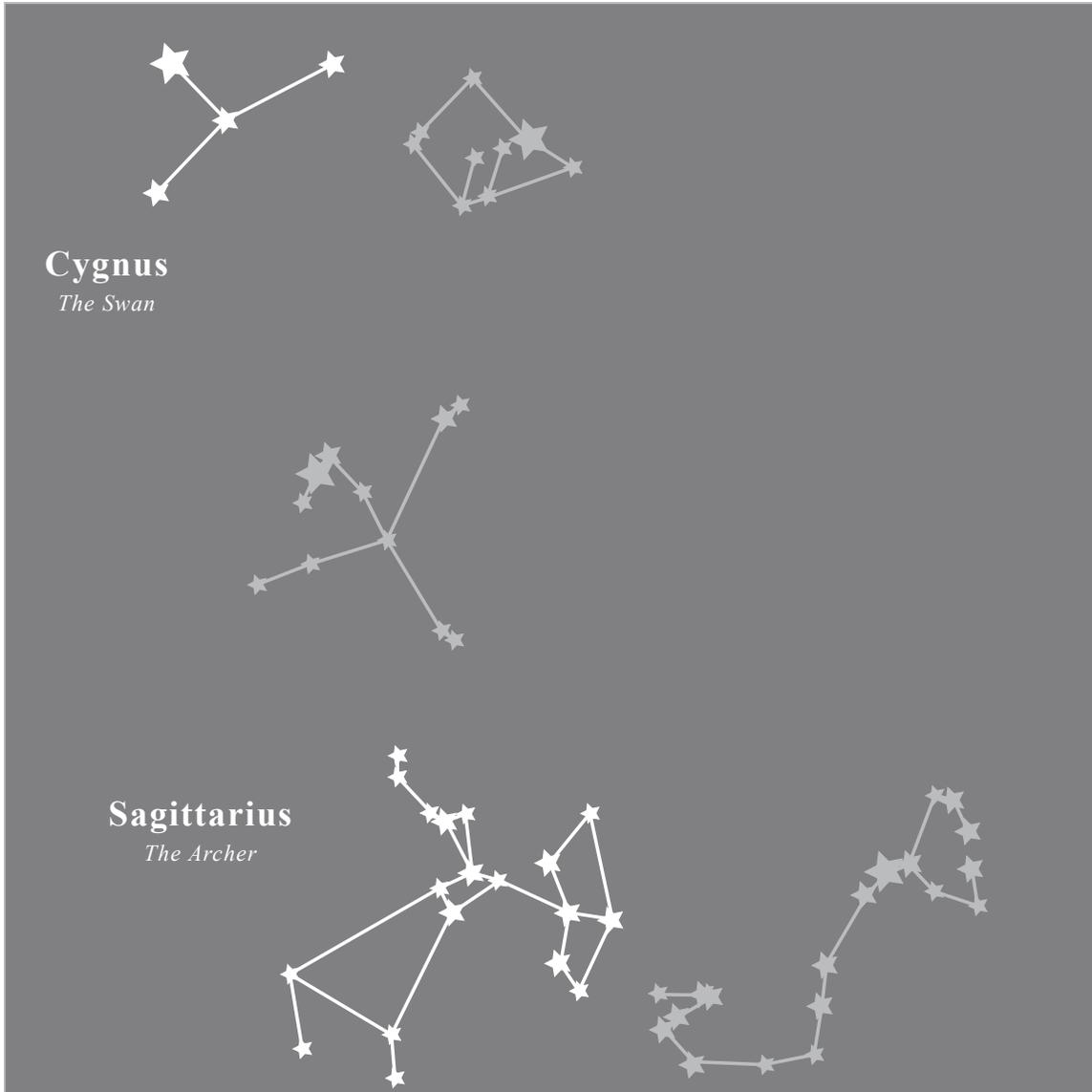
Scorpius *The Scorpion* has his stinger turned toward the Archer and is ready to strike. The bright star Antares is directly in the path of the Swan.

The Scorpion takes a low arc across the southern sky and is right along the path traveled by the Sun, Moon, and planets. In fact, the name “Antares,” means “rival of Mars,” because the bright red star can easily be mistaken for the red planet.

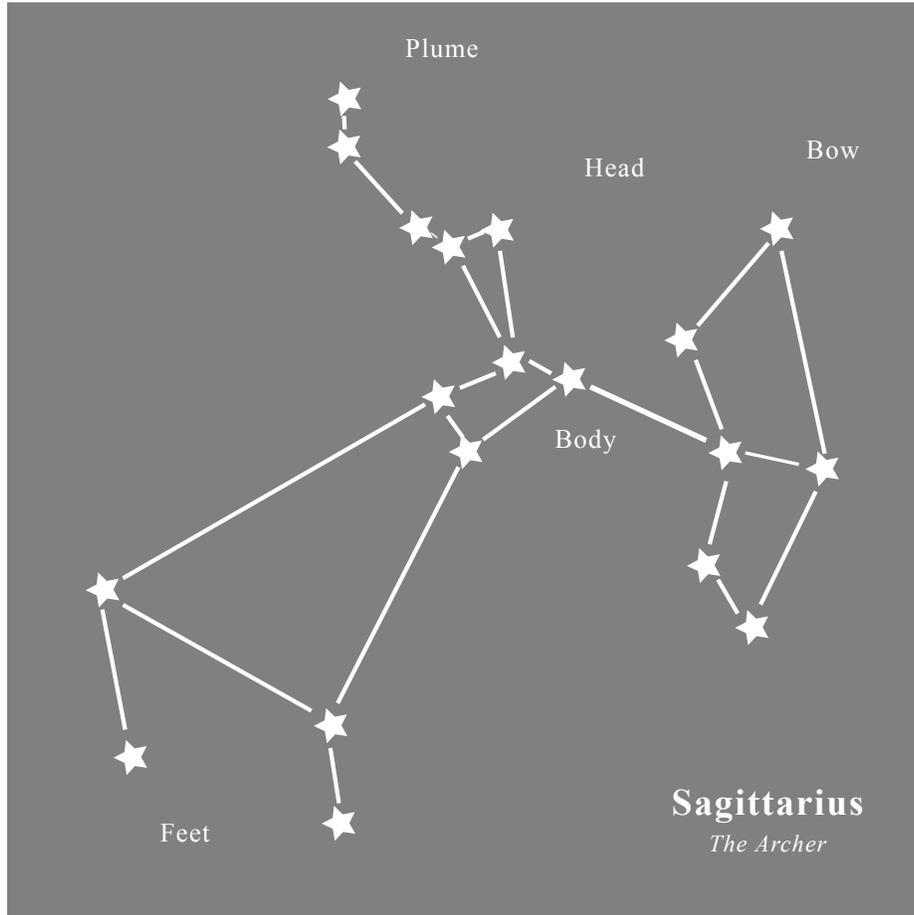


Scorpius has 14 stars that are 3rd order magnitude or brighter, making it one of the most complete constellations you will see in medium-darkness skies.

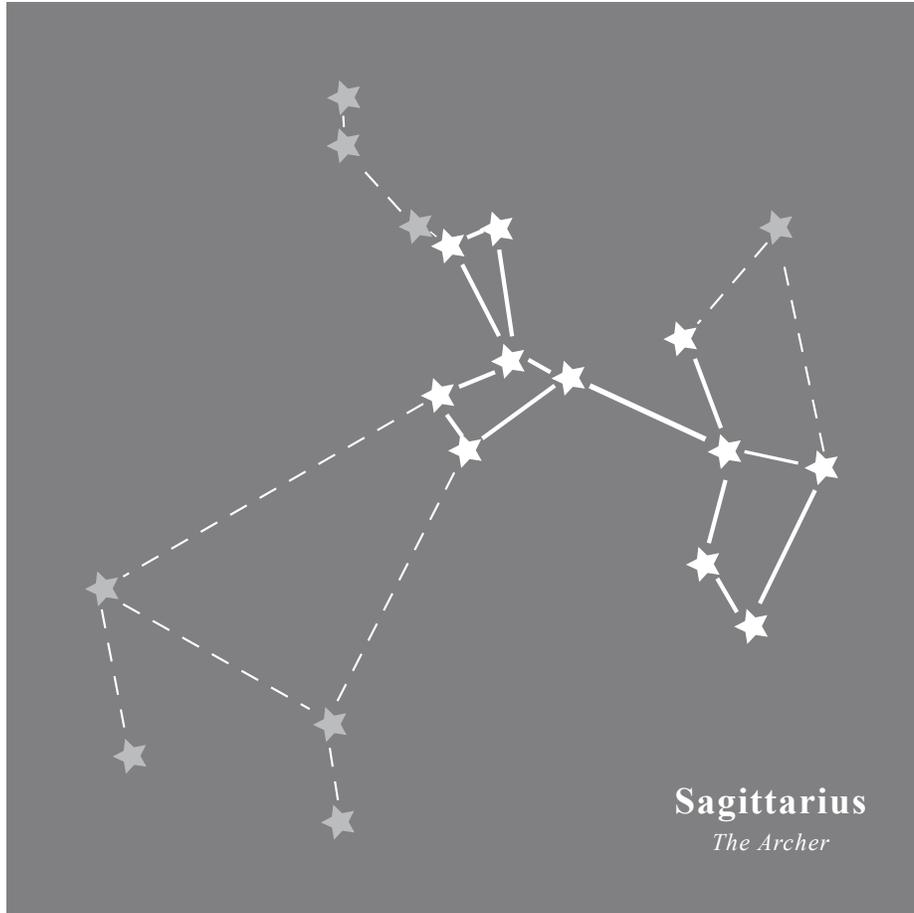
Antares defines the neck and makes a great anchor point for your eye while you pick out the rest of the stars that form the pincers, body, tail and stinger of the Scorpion.



Sagittarius *The Archer* does battle with the Scorpion.
He follows the arthropod across the sky, keeping it in the
sights of his bow.

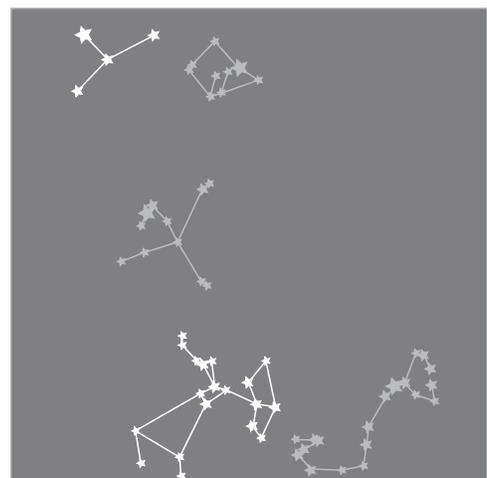


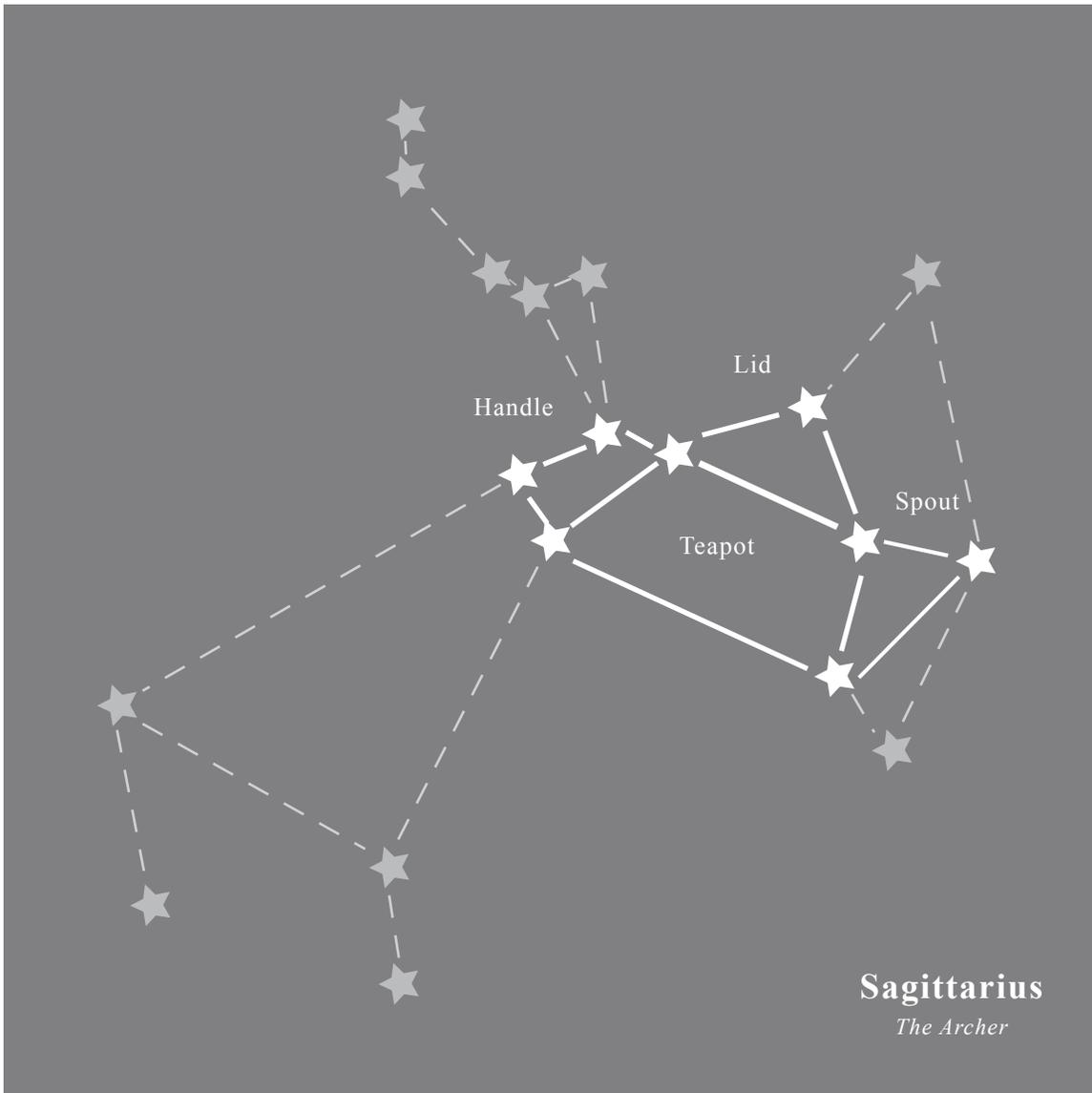
The stars of Sagittarius form the shape of an archer aiming his bow. He leans forward pointing his bow at the Scorpion, with his head tilted back. A plume curves up from the back of his head.



Sagittarius does not have any first-order magnitude stars, but he is easy to find because of his proximity to the scorpion and the uniform brightness of the stars in his torso, head, and bow.

It takes a darker night to pick out his plume and feet.

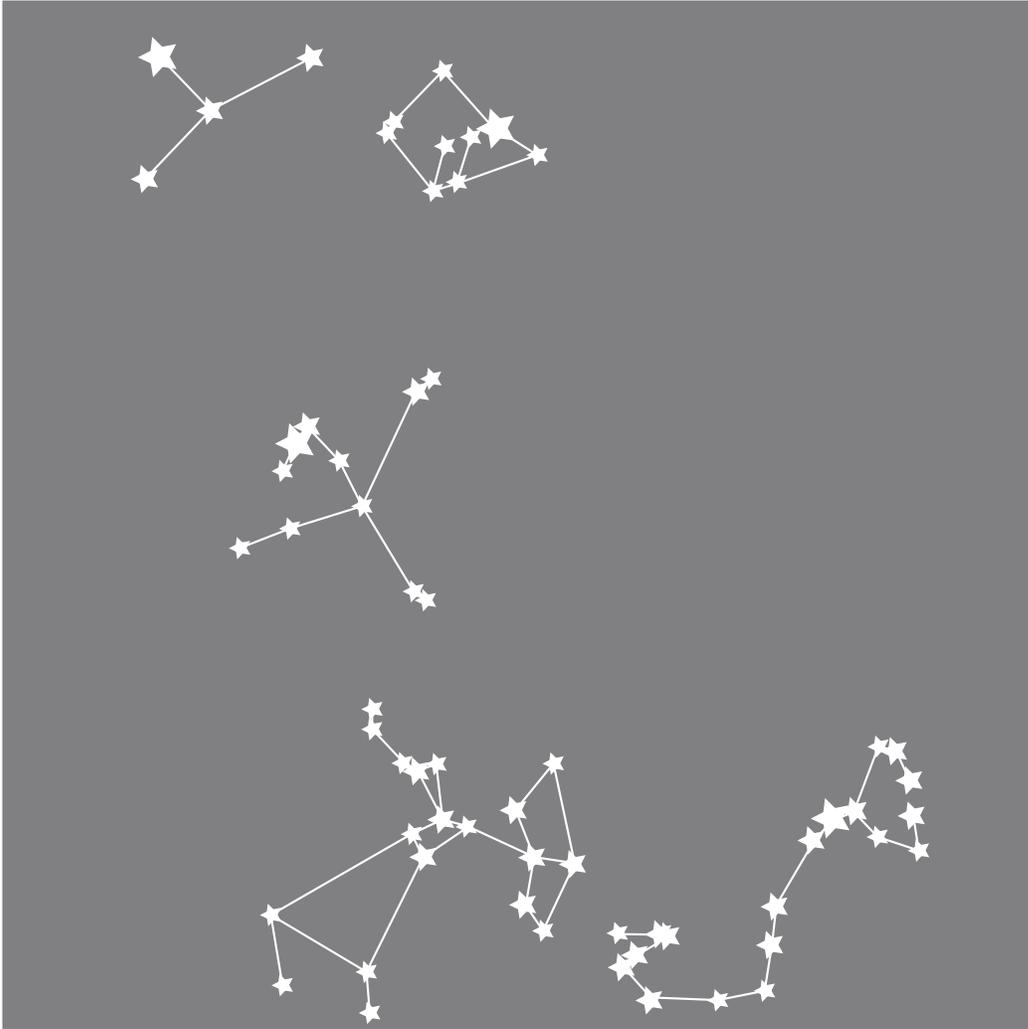




Some folks don't see an archer at all when they look at Sagittarius. It is common for people to view this constellation as a teapot, and it's easy to see why.

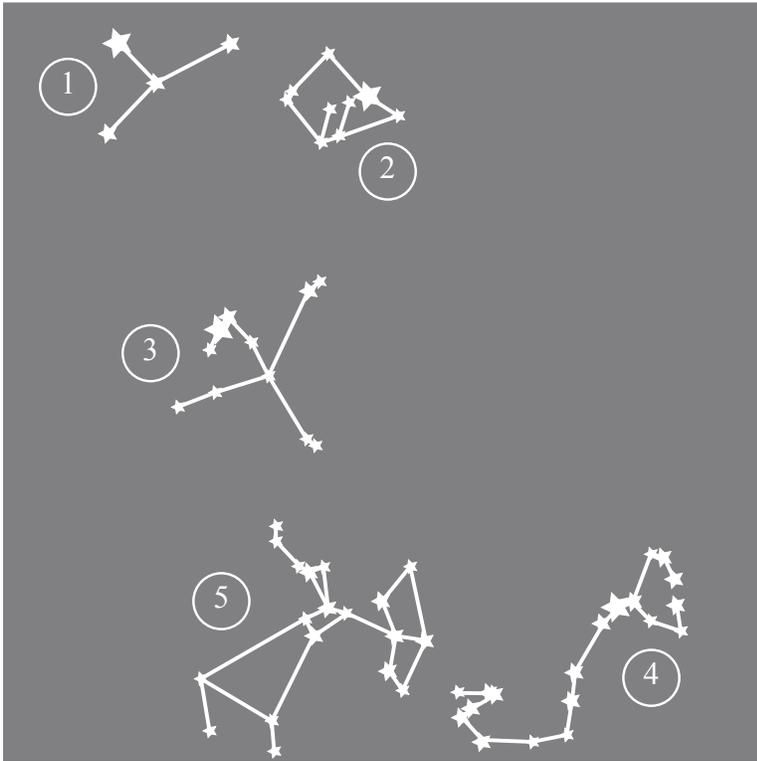
The teapot shape is compact and is formed using just the bright stars of Sagittarius. The pot, handle, lid and spout are clearly outlined.

Whichever shape you imagine, these stars are satisfying to observe.



This completes our story of **Cygnus Happens Upon a Battle**.
If Cygnus is visible, you'll have stories to tell to your friends about
your new friends in the sky.

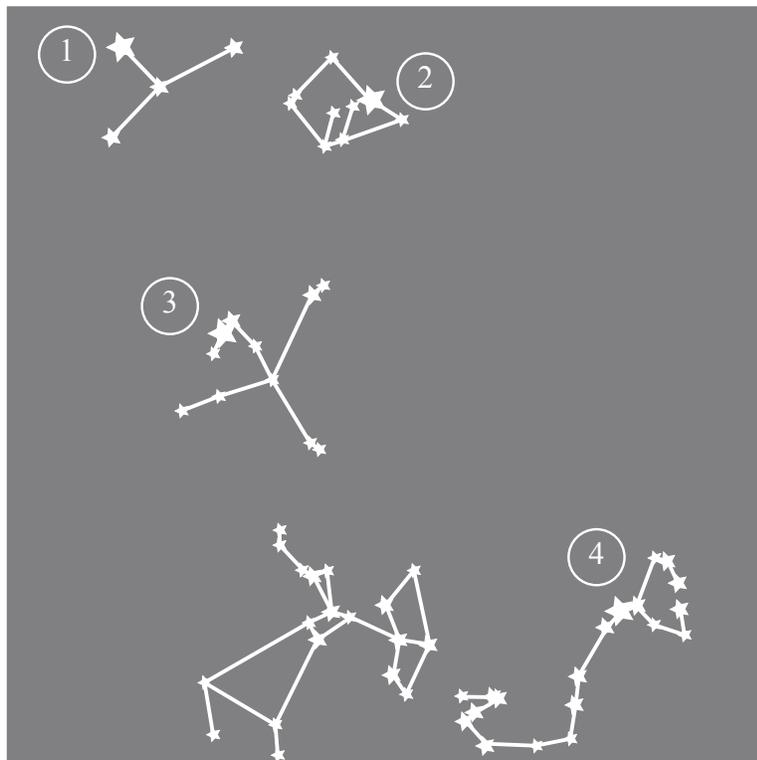
Test your knowledge on the next page.



Cygnus Happens Upon a Battle

Name the Constellations:

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____
- ④ _____
- ⑤ _____



Name the Bright Stars:

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____
- ④ _____