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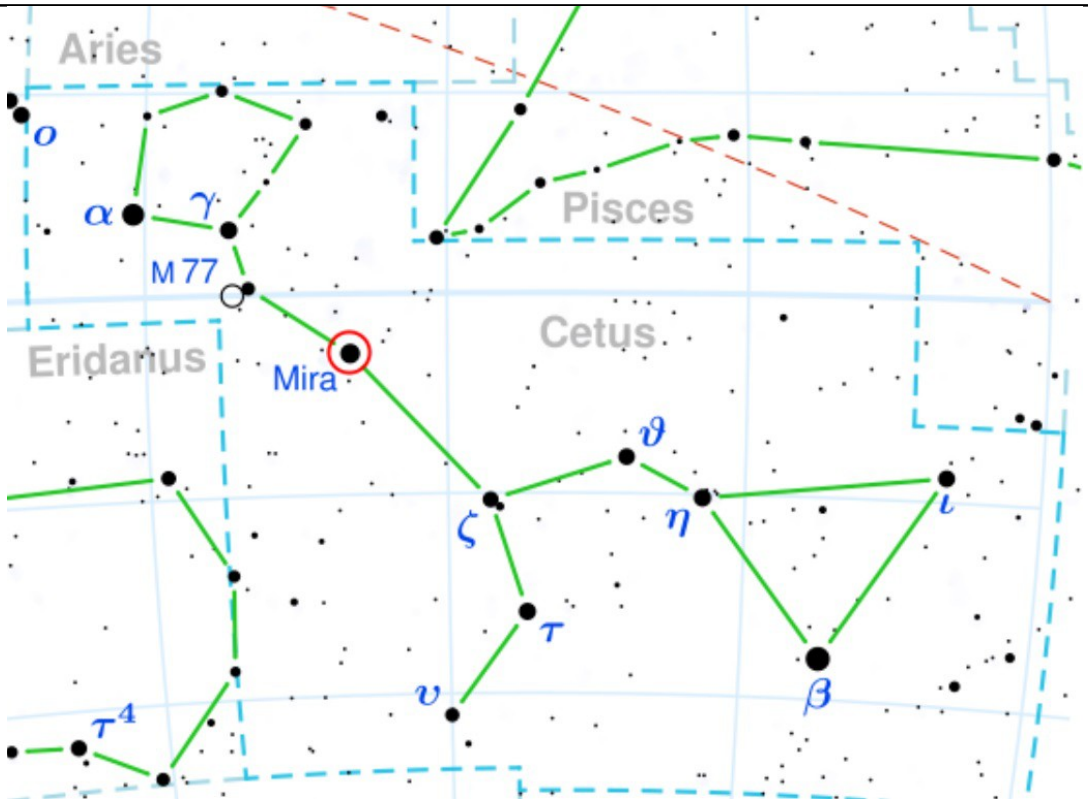

Quick Facts:

Distance: 300 light-years. Constellation: Cetus.

One of the first documented variable stars other than supernovas, it's a pulsating red giant star changing brightness by a factor of 1700 times, going back and forth in and out of naked-eye visibility over a period of approximately 330 days. It's losing mass in a huge comet-like tail 13 light-years long (only visible in UV light observed from space).

Find it: Drop south of Hamal and Sheraton in Aries to find the tail of Cetus. Go off the tail's SW corner star-hopping 10 degrees SW to find the "wonderful" star. GOTO: VARIABLE STARS.

Image: Torsten Bronger. Quick reference card by Derek Wallentinsen.