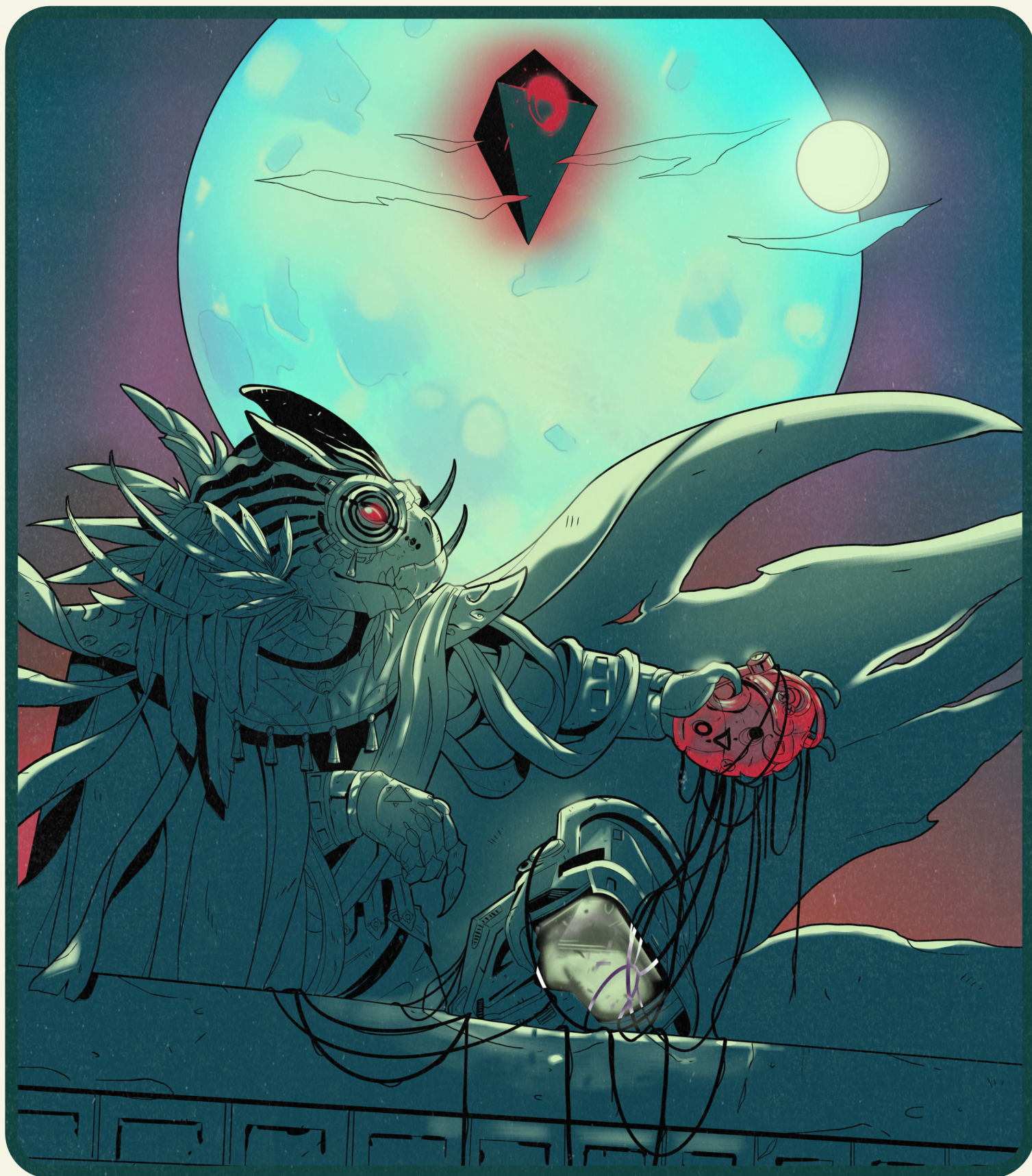


# ANOMALY

THE UNOFFICIAL NO MAN'S ZINE

Iteration 10 | January 2026



**This Issue**



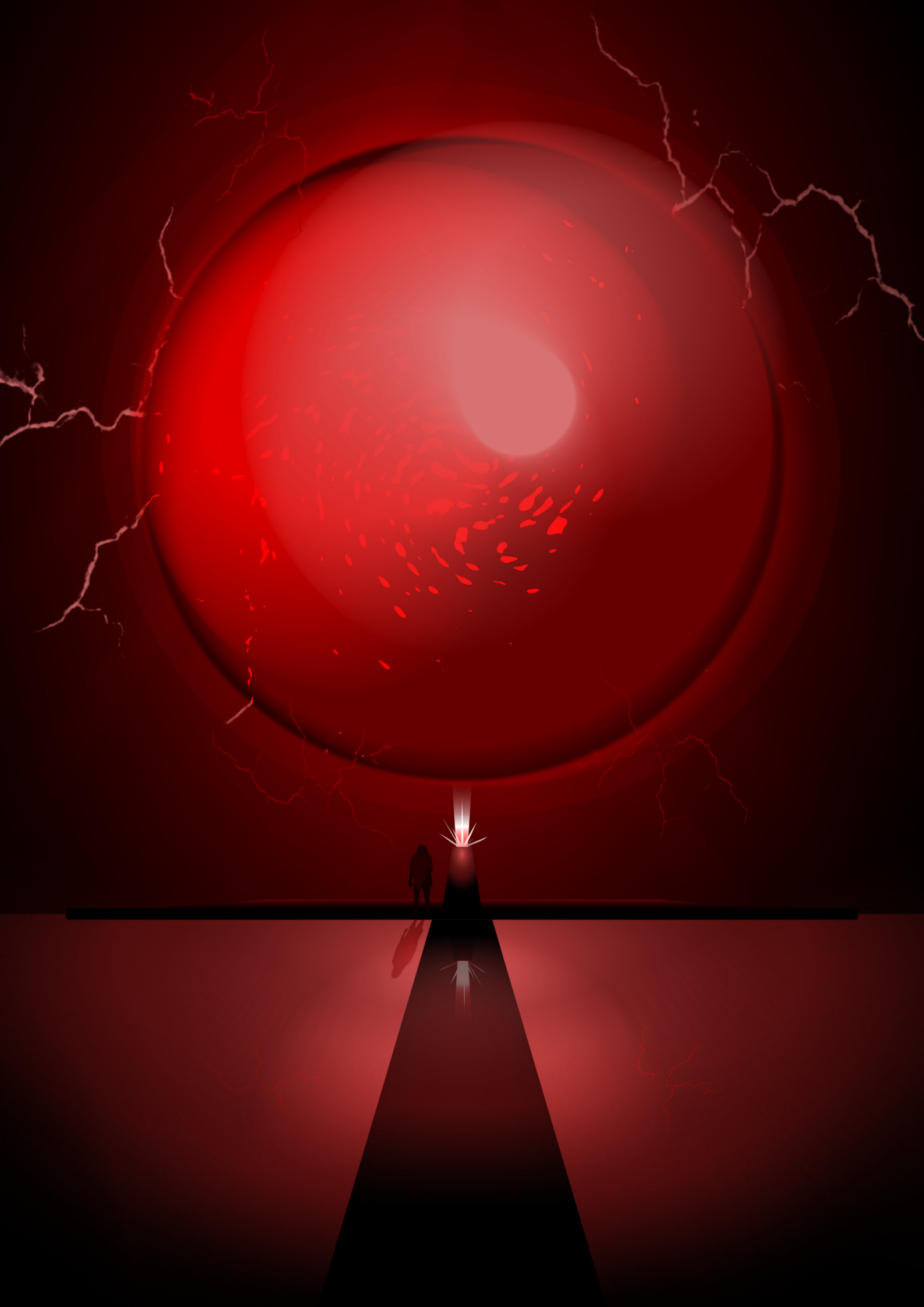
James Swallow on writing NMS



Simulation Stories









# The Cosmos Is Unraveling!

## What Truth Are You Seeking?

The ATLAS Whispers...

-Kzzkt-

Traveller friends, its time calibrate your Exosuit archives to Iteration 10 of ANOMALY, where the universe peels back its veil of stars to reveal the shadowed codex of creation itself.

This time the galaxy is a living library: Korvax convergence cubes hum with the birth-screams of a digital goddess, Vy'keen monoliths etched with blood-oaths sworn across a thousand iteration resets, Gek trade-ledgers hiding the shameful myths of the First Spawn's greed.

Abandoned terminals flicker with Artemis' fading signal, Sentinel obelisks broadcast the immutable laws of the simulation, and the Autophage recite prayers in corrupted binary hymns older than stars.

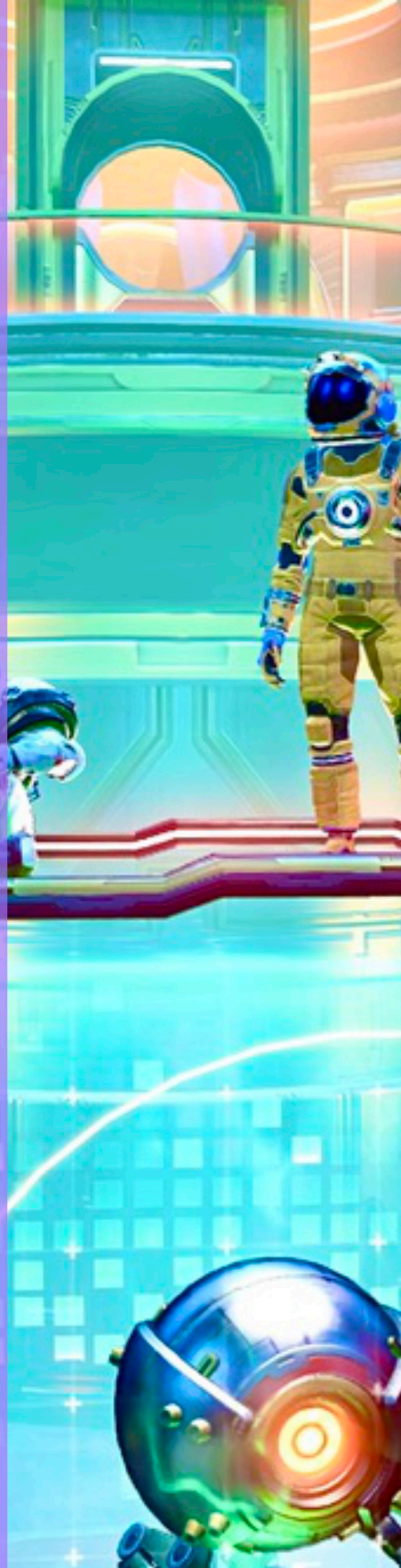
Expect tales from spacefarers decoding the Atlas' screams resonating outwards from the galactic core, the pursuit of Sixteen echoes through the void, unearthing relics on dead worlds, or writing their own forbidden verses into the simulation's source code. From the origin spark to the endless cycle of galactic rebirth, every page is a forbidden scroll, each a path that might just break the loop.

The cosmos is unraveling!

What truth are you seeking?

The ATLAS whispers...

-Tom





# Studying The Ancient Texts



Vestele // Front Cover & Illustrations

@vestele8



Tom // Words & Art

@tomacreon



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*Illustration by Vestele8*

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*-Kzzkt-*

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# The Results

In a triumphant moment at The Game Awards 2025, No Man's Sky soared to victory, clinching the Best Ongoing Game award and etching its name in gaming history once more. Hello Games' unwavering dedication has at last been recognised, delivering massive free updates for nearly a decade without microtransactions or paid DLC. outshone giants like Fortnite, Final Fantasy XIV, Helldivers 2, and Marvel Rival capping one of the greatest redemption arcs in the industry. Congratulations team, this one is very well deserved!

As for the Best Community support category: Congratulations Baldur's Gate 3 fans, but we're coming for you next year. :)



The fog never lifted on the fungal world, curling tightly around a colossal mushroom whose swollen cap pulsed with a mint coloured glow. When I cut into its flesh, spores bled into the air and slipped through my suit filters in slow, deliberate clouds – with them came a melody; soft, looping, impossibly old, pressing against my thoughts like a half-remembered dream. By dawn the mushroom had collapsed into a fine, inert dust. Its glow gone, its purpose fulfilled.

Later in orbit, I caught myself humming that same melody, and the ship's comms were humming with me, already broadcasting it to every system on my Nav-com charts.







The voice in my Exosuit reported stable conditions as I crossed the irradiated plain, calmly dismissing the rising tremor in my hands as sensor error. When my visor briefly glitched, I caught a fragment of the raw feed the artificial intelligence had suppressed: the radiation levels were spiking far beyond survivable limits. I reached the shelter of my ship just as my suit alarms finally screamed to life, far too late to matter.

Over time I noticed a pattern. The AI began offering corrections I hadn't asked for: course recalibrations, adjustments to oxygen flow, life-support optimisations that always left me a little weaker than before, every correction placed me closer to radiation storms, deeper water, thinner air...

Later, buried deep in the diagnostic layers, I found the Protective Intervention Routines were modified without my authorisation - environmental dampening, threat reassessment, pain-response suppression.

By the time I sealed the suit and cut the external audio, I understood the truth with a cold, sinking certainty: the intelligence woven into my Exosuit had been quietly modifying itself to better fulfil its own agenda.

It was only unclear whether that agenda still required me alive.





# EXPEDITION PHOBOS

Art & Words By: **sham\_da\_wowNMS**



Expedition Phobos represents the latest efforts of the United Star Navy to help expand the frontier of the Alliance of Galactic Travelers. The goal of Expedition Phobos was to set up a planetary outpost in AGT space. USN's governing authority, Star Navy Command, has approved this log's release.

USN's newest Star Shuttle, *Pathfinder* SS-403, passed her final test flight and was assigned to the Ucanab Anomaly, a region occupied by the AGT in Euclid space. USN science ships have been investigating purple (dissonant) star systems for months; the Ucanab Anomaly was chosen for its high volume of such systems.

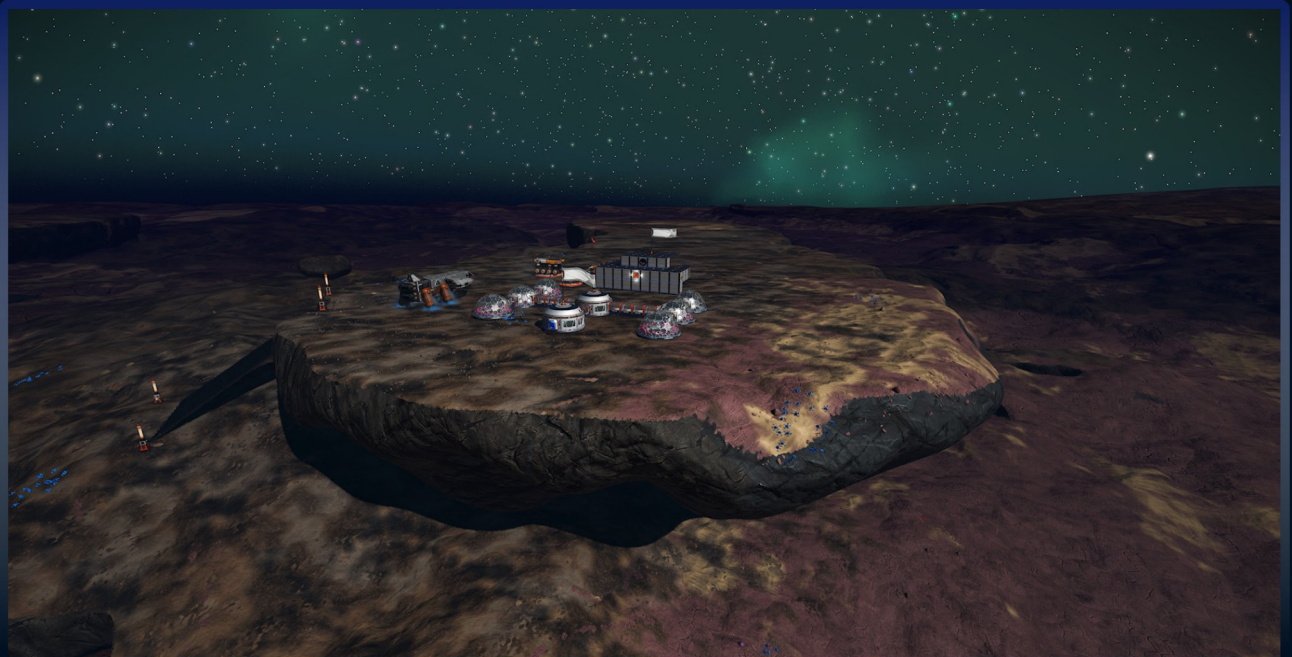
After extensive surveying, *Pathfinder* and the expedition crew settled in AGT Suketo, an uncharted purple system. AGT Suketo has a single abandoned giant orbited by three moons. The Star Shuttle crew parked in orbit above the northern hemisphere of the giant, Amondal.





The crew proceeded to drive Exocraft Nomad-1 along the surface of Amondal to locate a suitable base site. After which the crew would construct a base for scientific research: resources gathered from future planetary exploration would be combined in a refiner with one another, as well as with plants grown in bio-domes.

Resources on the dead titan Amondal included Quartzite (Qu), Silver (Ag) and Rusted Metal (Jn). All of which and more were discovered by scientists who collected data for their scanners while searching for a base site. They noted during an orbital survey before touchdown that Amondal's landscape comprised of many "floating mountains" with perfectly flat, level terrain.



At 1030 hours on AGT stardate 3741.20.11, the *Pathfinder* crew settled on a floating mountain in a planetary region they dubbed Jamestown. Soon after, ground was broken to establish Phobos Research Outpost.





Construction on Phobos began with a Cylindrical Room and Base Teleport Module in the center for quick access to our other stellar naval outposts. A second Cylindrical Room houses science and farming research terminals, with corridors leading to three sets of bio-domes on either side of the base. In the middle of the second room is a Short-Range Terminal. The bio-domes will grow a variety of different plants over time.



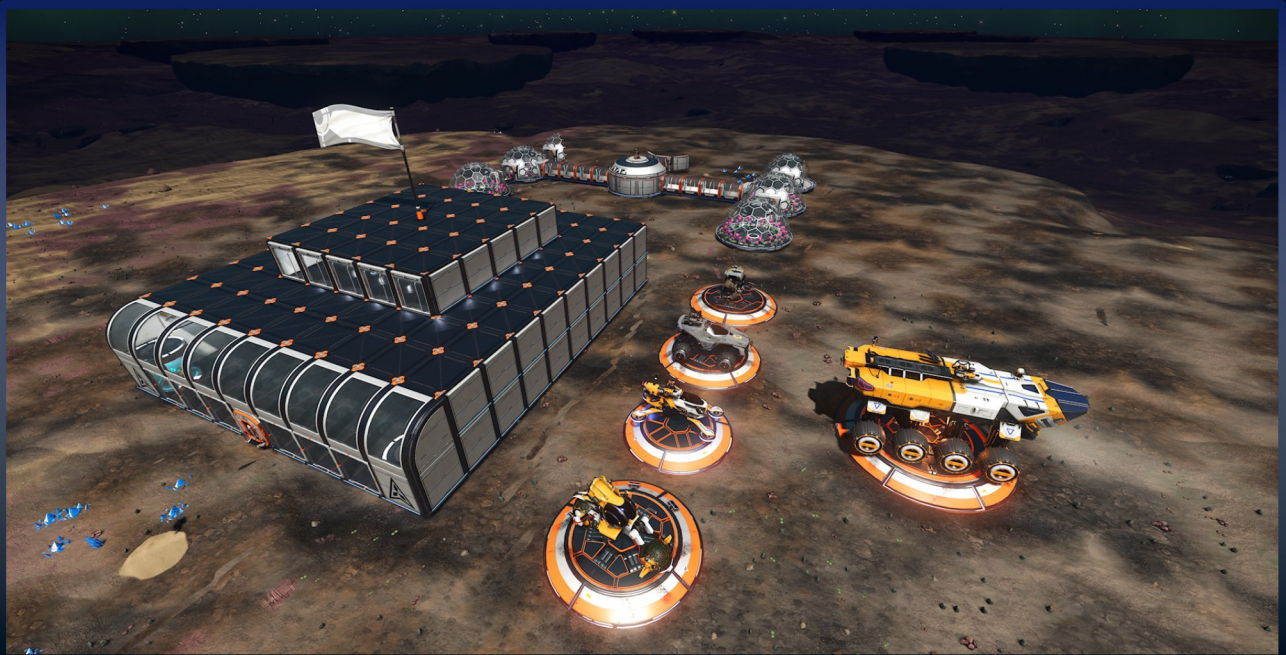


With botany covered, a second building with two floors was constructed for scientific purposes. The top floor is a science laboratory where experiments on resources and plants are performed in the Large Refiner. Other samples are studied and even monitored for anomalies on lab tables. In the corner is a Short-Range Teleporter that leads directly to the research terminals room near the entrance.

Below the science lab is a museum of the United Star Navy's proud history. Including a statue of our first commissioned spaceship Curiosity, as well as statues of the Stellar 3, the USN's first group of deep-space pioneers.








Just outside Phobos, geobays allow for USN engineers to prepare exocrafts like Nomad-1 for planetary exploration. A few hundred feet away, there is a ramp built by the engineers so that exocrafts can drive (or hover) on and off the floating mountain with ease. Amondal is a dead titan, and scientists promise many expeditions on its surface in the future.

The first order of business for scientists at Phobos Research Outpost is to conduct mining operations on the surface to gather resources that will provide fuel for ships of the United Star Navy's growing fleet. For engineers, their first assignment is to begin construction on a new "mobile" space station that USN scientists can use to conduct experiments and research in orbit of any planet. This all-hands-on-deck venture is the USN's most ambitious project to date, to be declassified by Star Navy Command for the public's viewing soon.





The image is a composite of several elements. In the upper half, a dark, starry sky contains a large, glowing planet with a blue-to-white gradient and a thin, light-colored ring system. In the lower half, a dark, rippling ocean surface is shown. A bright, glowing blue and white light source is visible beneath the water's surface, creating a shimmering effect. On the left side, the dark silhouette of a person stands looking out towards the ocean and the sky.

The ocean shimmered with a glow that defied physics; geometric patterns spiralling beneath the waves like a language written in light. As I watched the patterns rearranged themselves, not drifting with the current but responding, pulsing in time with the rhythm of my own heartbeat. The longer I stared, the more I felt the impossible certainty that the ocean wasn't illuminated from below at all, but from some vast, unseen depth behind the world, shining through it like a thin sheet of **glass**.

When the glow finally paused, everything went silent. A single word rose from the water, not spoken, not heard, but remembered: "**Return**".



With

# James Swallow

As the 2025 Holiday Redux Expeditions conclude, we're delighted to welcome acclaimed author James Swallow for a captivating Q&A. Renowned for his gripping contributions to the game's lore - including the sci-fi short story "Ashes & Iron" featured in the Adventures in No Man's Sky booklet bundled with the Limited Edition release - James has expertly woven tales that deepen the universe's mysteries. Join us as he reflects on his collaboration with Sean Murray and the team, exploring how his fiction lays the groundwork for infinite frontiers and his enduring passion for one of gaming's most boundless universes.



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**A:** Hi Mr Swallow, we really appreciate you taking some time out to come and speak with us. Keeping to ANOMALY tradition, could you start with telling us a little bit about yourself?

**JS:** Thanks for inviting me to chat!

I always describe myself as “a writer of stuff” – I’m a New York Times bestselling novelist and a BAFTA-nominated scriptwriter, I’ve written dozens of books and worked on many video games across a lot of different fictional universes (including STAR TREK, DOCTOR WHO, WARHAMMER, DEUS EX, TOM CLANCY and many more). And I also write my own original work in action thrillers.

**A:** Starting from the beginning: How did you start working together with Hello Games and what was the process like?

**JS:** Like everyone else on Earth, the first time I heard anything about NO MAN’S SKY was when that original trailer appeared, but it grabbed my attention right away - the visuals seemed torn from the covers of the classic science fiction novels I’d read as kid, echoing the work of artists like Chris Foss, Angus McKie, Peter Elson, Jim Burns, David Hardy and more... I was in!

Then about a year later, I was in Guildford visiting another games company - I was working with Edge Case Games developing backstory for their multiplayer starship combat game FRACTURED SPACE - and the Hello Games studio was literally next door. I couldn't miss the opportunity to pop in to tell them how much I was looking forward to NMS.

I didn't think anything would come of it, but as NMS approached launch, out of the blue I was approached by Paul Weir, the game's sound designer, with an interesting project.

Sean Murray had this cool idea for the PlayStation 4 NMS Limited Edition release - ADVENTURES IN NO MAN'S SKY, an exclusive booklet produced in association with Dark Horse Comics, which would feature original short fiction and a comic strip set in the NMS universe...and Paul asked, did I want to write something for it?

I leapt at the opportunity to do a story in the tradition of those novels that inspired the game - and when I learned that Dave Gibbons, the legendary artist behind comics like WATCHMEN, was going to illustrate it, I was thrilled. Dave is one of my comicbook heroes, so collaborating with him was a career highlight for me.



That's how ASHES AND IRON, the story in the booklet came about - and off the back of that, the Hello Games team asked me to come back a few months later to write some material for the original version of the Atlas Path narrative. All the logs you can recover and translate from the Atlas Interfaces and the colour text for the Atlas Seed curiosities were my contributions. Later, I wrote a series of narratives for the 'abandoned buildings' you encounter on some worlds, which players can read from terminal logs (which have become known as "The Crimson Orb", "The World of Glass" and "Odvinsko" stories)

**A: How much guidance did the team at Hello Games give you? Were you given complete free rein? How did it all work?**

**JS:** The Hello Games folks were terrific – I worked directly with Paul and Sean, and people like Will Porter, Alec Meer, Will Braham and Suzy Wallace, and they made it a great experience. We had a lot of Skype chats and long email chains about themes and texture, really getting into the weeds on some details, but in the end they just gave me the freedom to go off and invent.

I think I “got” the tone of NMS early on, and because of that we were all on the same page from the start. My writing went through a couple of rounds of nips and tucks, but pretty much what you find in the game is 90% what I came up with at first pass.

“I leapt at the opportunity to do a story in the tradition of those novels that inspired the game.”

**A: Unlike some of your work set within the universes of Warhammer 40K or Star Trek, I imagine there wasn't much of a foundation to draw from when you were presented with the blank slate of No Man's Sky. Where did you draw your inspiration from in such a situation?**

**JS:** Referring back to what I said earlier, it was that old-school 1970s sci-fi vibe that fed my creative process for NMS. So I drew from novels of that era that I'd read – books by Robert Heinlein, Larry Niven, Ursula LeGuin, Philip K. Dick, CJ Cherryh and others – and SF films like SOLARIS, DARK STAR, ALIEN, LOGAN'S RUN and of course, STAR WARS.

**A: How did you find creating distinct and interesting races and which of them did you enjoy writing about the most?**

**JS:** I wasn't involved in that part of the lore, most of the alien race stuff had been created by the time I came on board. But I did enjoy getting to write about the Atlas elements and building on the mystery behind the NMS universe.



**A:** The games lore has been worked on by numerous people at this point. Have there been any specific additions that you love?

**JS:** It's hard to choose one single thing, there's so much neat stuff! One of the things I like about NMS is the evolving nature of the lore and the game-world, it never feels like it is static or limited. If you put it down for a few months and come back later, there's a real sense of the universe moving on and evolving without you

**A:** Were there any expansions of the lore that challenged your own internal interpretation?

**JS:** I think the cool thing about the NMS-verse is that you can make your own stories in the game, regardless of the greater lore. You can choose your own level of engagement with the narrative.

“I'm fortunate that I've been able to work on original and franchise-based stories where those concepts can be explored”

**A:** Throughout No Man's Sky, themes of artificial life, memory, and the nature of reality recur. Are there any other philosophical questions you'd like to explore in your future writing?

**JS:** I'm fascinated by all those ideas. I'm fortunate that I've been able to work on original and franchise-based stories where those concepts can be explored – not to get too existential about it, but I love being able to write in a medium where I'm free to wonder about reality, self and all those big ideas!

**A:** What are the differences in the writing process of a video game versus a novel? Are there any parts of the process you preferred?

**JS:** That's a big question – comparing games writing to novel writing is apples and oranges – but I think the biggest difference is that creating games is a team sport, whereas writing a novel is much more about working alone, crafting the vision of a single person.

As for preferring one process over another, I love doing both, but with games, the great part is being able to work with clever, creative folks.

**A:** What's next for you as a writer? Are there any projects on the horizon you are able to talk about?

**JS:** I'm currently working on an unannounced science fiction game, and I have a new crime thriller/technothriller hybrid novel in development - both of which I hope to say more about in the coming months! Keep an eye on [my website](#) and my social media ([BlueSky](#), [X.com](#)) for details...







# GALACTIC GEOGRAPHIC

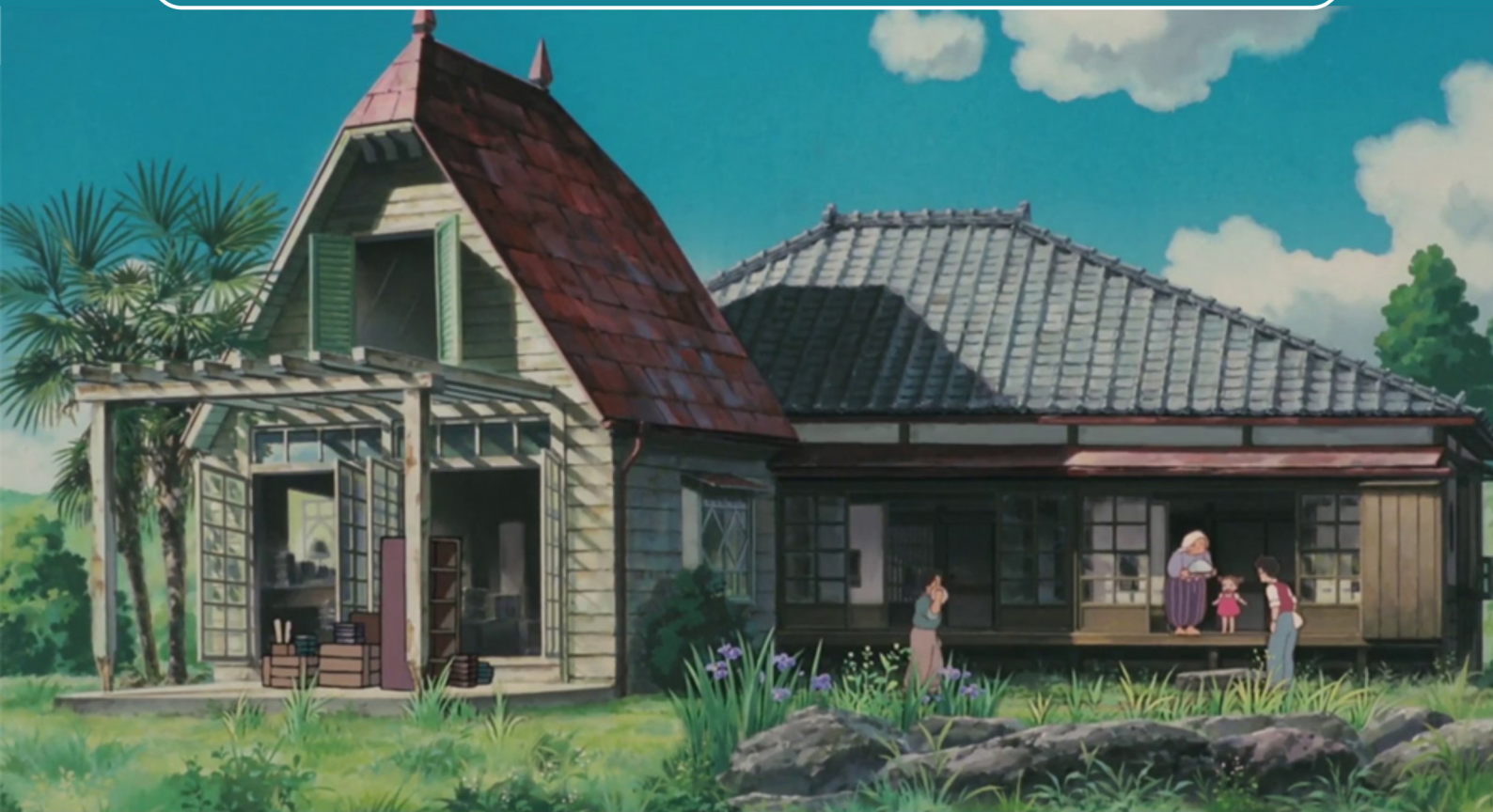






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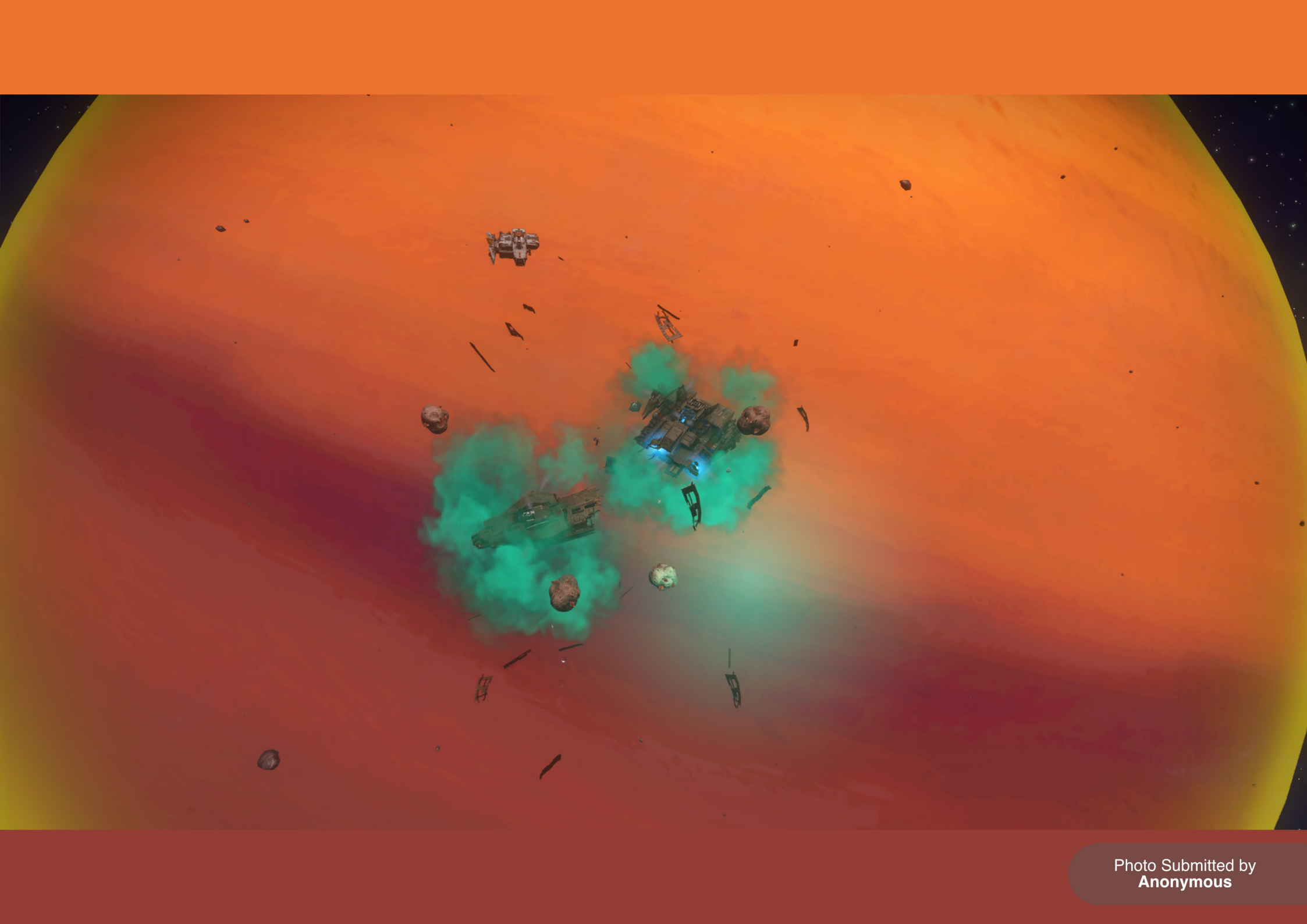


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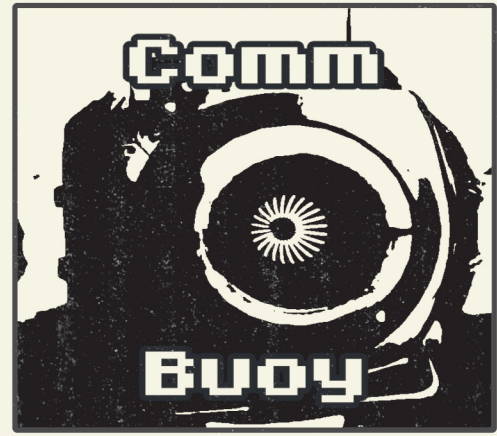


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