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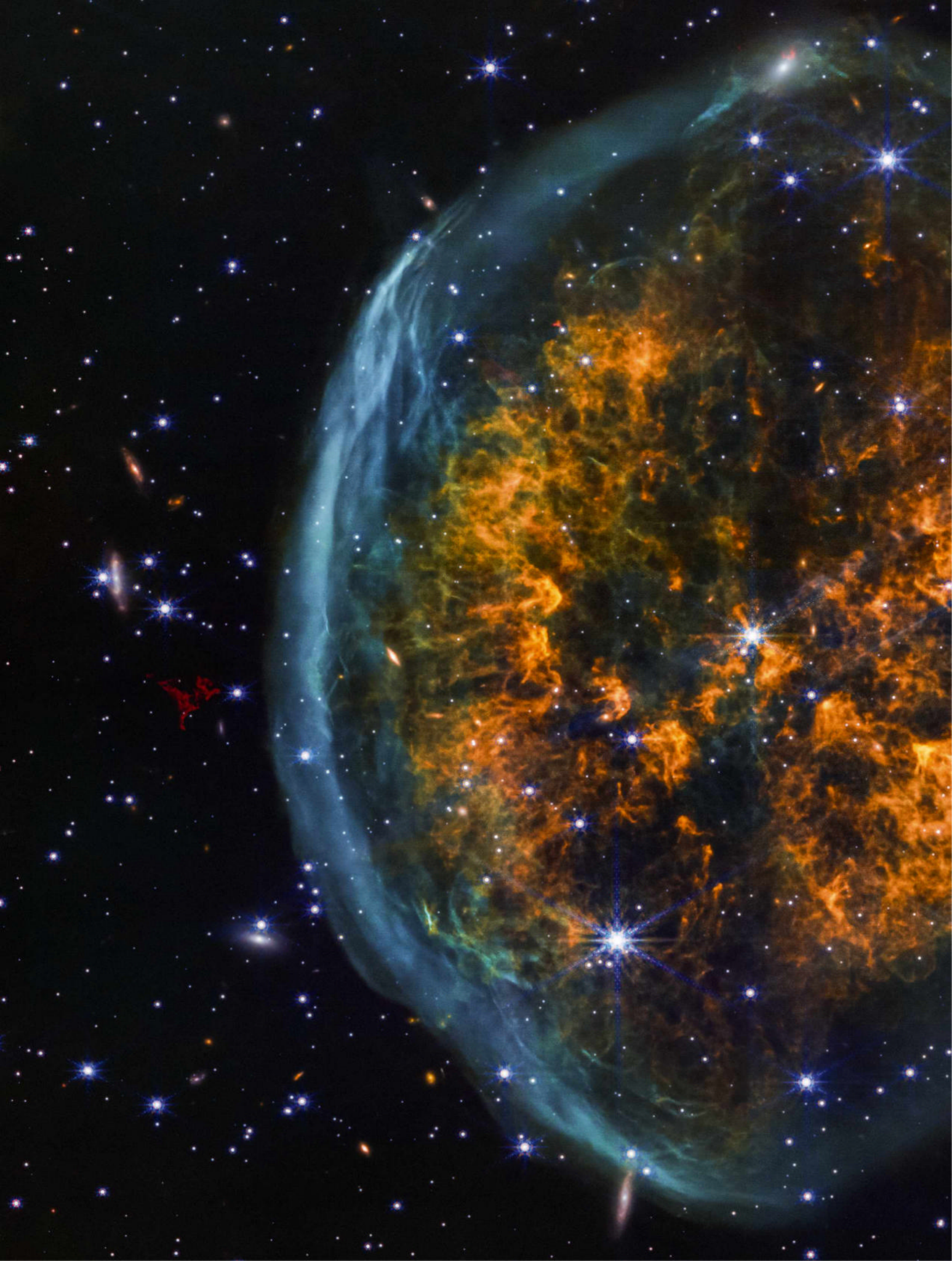


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## EYE OPENER

### Space brain

The greatest names in science are often said to be 'big-brained', but this cosmic wonder puts them all to shame. Nebula PMR 1 – otherwise known as the 'Exposed Cranium' nebula for its distinctive shape – measures around 3.2 light-years across.

Although we've known about PMR 1 for nearly 30 years, this image, captured by the James Webb Space Telescope's Near-Infrared Camera (NIRCam), offers the clearest view of it yet. And it's offering up new clues about how the nebula formed, but also what might happen to it in the future.

Splitting the stunning golden-orange glow of the two cosmic dust clouds is a dark central lane. Scientists think that hidden in the centre is a star nearing the end of its life, rapidly losing mass and spewing out jets from its poles to create that dark dividing line.

The real mystery, though, is how that star will end. Some scientists have suggested it's in the rare Wolf-Rayet stage, when an extremely massive and evolved star rapidly loses its outer hydrogen envelope through intense stellar winds. Scientists have so far been unable to determine the star's mass, so it's also possible it may be destined to end its life as a supernova.

NASA/ESA/CSA

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