

SPACE SCOOP
NEWS FROM ACROSS THE UNIVERSE



The Mouth of the Beast

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Glowing menacingly in this new photograph, like the gaping mouth of a gigantic, cosmic creature, is an object called CG4 or the Hand of God. It is what we call a 'cometary globule'.

Although these cloudy patches of sky are very different from the lumps of rock and ice we call comets – they do share a similar shape, with thick, dark, dusty heads and long, faint tails, although they are much, much bigger.

These comet-like objects were discovered for the first time in 1976 on pictures of a huge patch of glowing gas called the Gum Nebula. There were several of them, each with a thick, dark, dusty head and long, faint tail.

The part that we can see on this image is that head. The tail, which is not visible in the image, is about 5 times longer than the head. However, the head still contains enough gas to create several Sun-sized stars!

Why CG4 and other cometary globules are shaped this way is still a mystery to astronomers. However, two main theories have been developed.

Number one is that cometary globules begin as spherical clouds before the energy from a nearby supernova explosion knocks them into their comet-like shape.

Other astronomers believe that cometary globules are probably sculpted by the strong winds and radiation from hot, massive stars.

▲ **COOL FACT!**

Although it looks very bright in this photograph, CG4 is actually very faint. In fact, it's about the same brightness as Pluto.