

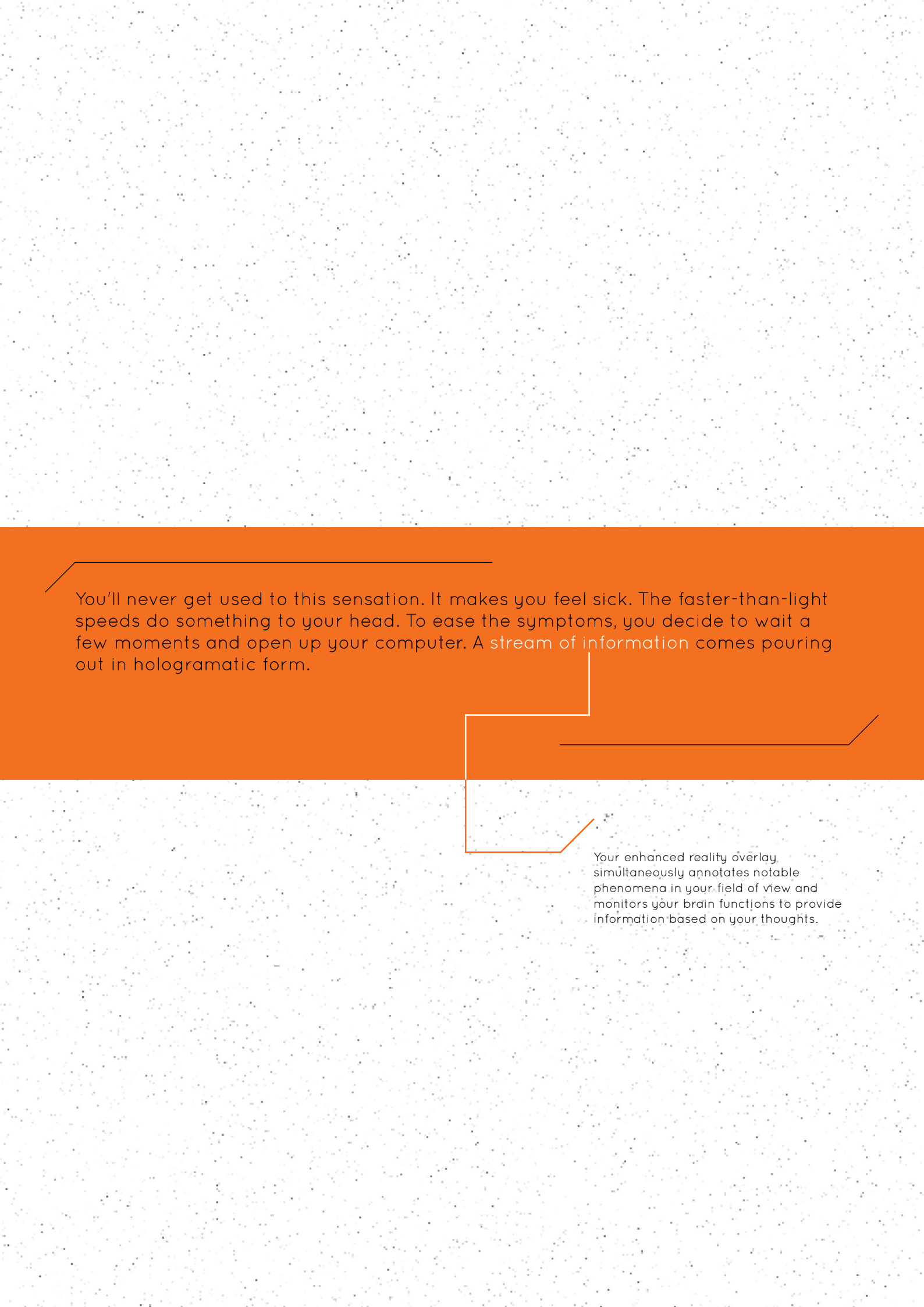


Stars rush by as trails of light flitting past outside your cockpit windows.

You feel your body tense as the velocity dampeners kick in.

The trails of light reform into sparkling orbs.

The various lights and displays on your dashboard reactivate and your cockpit is filled with light. They appear first as blurry spots as you struggle to re-orientate yourself; then as you turn your head, as streaks of light like a long-exposure photograph.



You'll never get used to this sensation. It makes you feel sick. The faster-than-light speeds do something to your head. To ease the symptoms, you decide to wait a few moments and open up your computer. A stream of information comes pouring out in hologramatic form.

Your enhanced reality overlay simultaneously annotates notable phenomena in your field of view and monitors your brain functions to provide information based on your thoughts.

Reports from the early days of hyperspace flight give accounts of cosmonauts losing their memory and never remembering who they were ever again.

It seems a smidge of amnesia is standard fare for each jump - but after five minutes or so memories return. You feel much better for knowing that.

Luckily, what truckers call 'hyperspace lag' affects one's memories more than motor skills. You ponder what to search. Maybe the history and symptoms of your current condition, your destination or something completely different.

Your star map shows a three-dimensional hologramatic display of the local system. It reads you at *Boucher Station*.

You find yourself looking at a blog dedicated to photos of cats in space. On second thoughts, maybe you should concentrate.

You shift your focus to the controls of your craft. You feel better, but maybe a moment to relax wouldn't hurt before you push on.

Breathe in. Breathe out. That's better. You flex your fingers and grip the flight stick. Muscle memory kicks in. You've got this. You begin your approach.

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Most ships these days use an Alcubierre drive to warp space ahead of the craft, essentially shifting space rather than the craft itself.

Generally, the technology is seen as a vast improvement in terms of efficiency and safety over the old dimension-punch drives.

You find that what begins to ground you in the present is the bassy thrum of your craft's engines as they climb down out of hyperspace to sub-light speeds.

Before you is a vast, rotating ring of light in the darkness. A space station with a Stanford torus.

The Stanford torus has emerged as one of the most popular space station design styles over the last century.

Simulated-gravity habitats like this are dime-a-dozen; a good couple thousand families live here.



These snub fighters have very little in the way of cargo storage. They're small and fast, but intimidating thanks to their dual anterior 30mm **mass-accelerator cannons**.

Weaponized mass-accelerators are only authorized for use by law enforcement vessels. Following the **Boer Disaster**,

use by commercial or civilian pilots was made illegal; they have only recently been reclassified as safe-for-sale.

The Boer Disaster of 2586 remains humanity's largest disaster by death toll. Before Boer, only natural disasters had incurred similar numbers of casualties.

Eight million were killed when a Dreadnought-class ship fired its 1500mm ventral cannon - designed as a 'nuclear option' for use against enemy capital ships in deep space - without a proper firing solution. The resulting shot missed the intended target and continued through space, hitting a colony on the edges of the systems.

Your ship is a Type 28-2 *Roebuck* cruiser; it was once **security vessel**.

If not operated by **law enforcement**, most ships of this type are stolen, but they can be acquired legally. You can't remember how you got yours.

This region of space is monitored by the East Dromedan Defense Force - a subdivision of the Greater Dromedan Nebulae Security Detail. They have a reputation for being...a little lax with their application of the law.



Two distinct possibilities come to mind...two competing scenarios.

You check the flight log; you entered hyperspace somewhere in the Phaedra Nebula. But where did you get your ship?

The two scenes play over in your mind, each as vivid as the other.

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