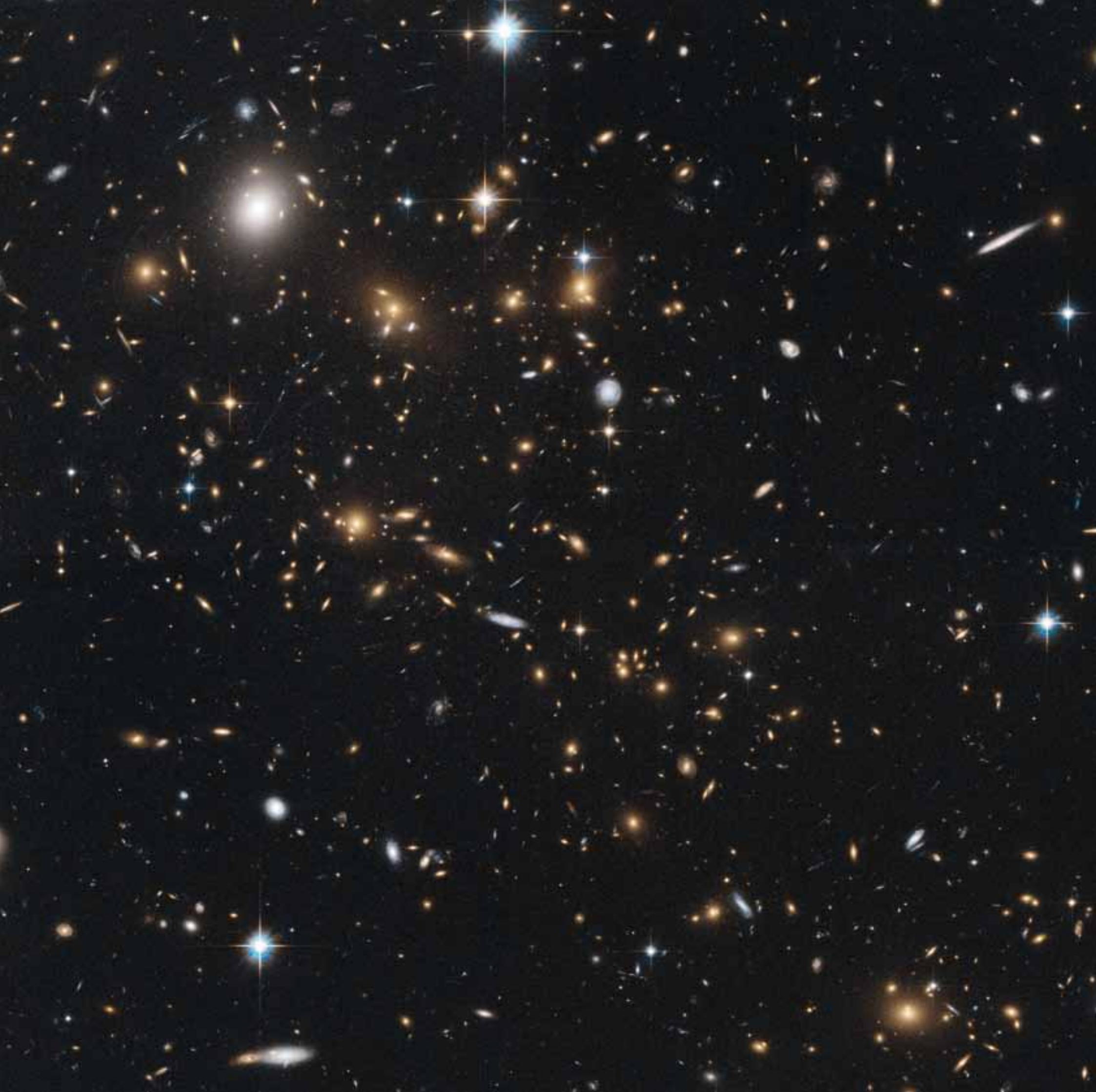




A Snowstorm of Distant Galaxies

At first glance, the scatter of pale dots on this NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope image looks like a snowstorm in the night sky. But almost every one of these delicate snowflakes is a distant galaxy in the cluster MACS J0717.5+3745 and each is home to billions of stars. This apparently placid scene also hides a storm of epic scale. This picture shows a region where three galaxy clusters are merging and releasing enormous amounts of energy in the form of X-rays.

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